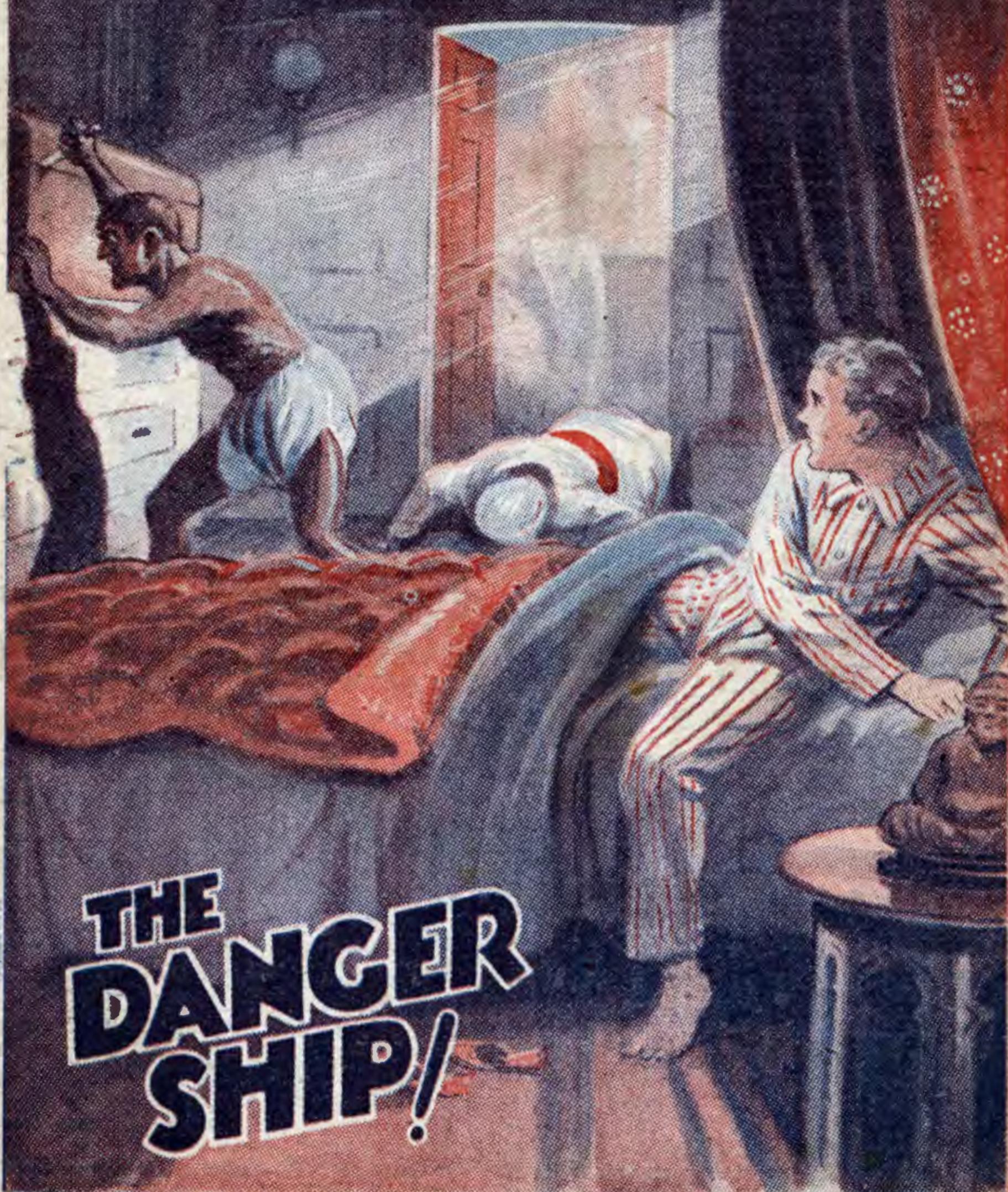


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**THE
DANGER
SHIP!**

New Series No. 122.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

May 21st, 1932.

Gripping Long Detective-Thriller of Adventure on the High Seas . . .

THE DANGER



CHAPTER 1.

The Boy in White Flannels!

"WELL, it's good-bye to India, guv'nor," said Nipper cheerfully. "I'm not sorry. Cricket will be in full swing at St. Frank's, and I'm sure I don't know how the Junior XI is getting on without its skipper!"

Nelson Lee laughed.

"I fancy the St. Frank's Junior XI is doing quite well, young 'un," he said dryly. "Don't forget the old adage—'out of sight, out of mind.'"

"And another one, sir," said Nipper promptly. "'Absence makes the heart grow fonder.'"

"You win!" chuckled the great detective. "That's the worst of these old

Starring Nelson Lee and his Boy Assistant Nipper!

SHIP!



Homeward bound from India, the giant liner "Orient" ploughs majestically through the shimmering seas, carrying among her passengers Nelson Lee, the famous detective and his boy assistant, Nipper. No thought of danger is in Lee's mind, but for all that, danger in diabolical form stalks close at hand. Suddenly, the peaceful voyage back to England becomes transformed into a nightmare of horrors, with Nelson Lee and Nipper struggling against unknown foes for life itself.

proverbs; you can generally find one which contradicts another."

The famous pair stood on the promenade deck of the liner, Orient. Bombay sweltered in the glare of the afternoon sunlight. From where Lee and Nipper stood they could gaze down upon the busy activity of the dock; and they had a wide panoramic view of the Island City of India.

"When do we push off, gov'nor?" asked Nipper.

"Very soon now, I think," replied Nelson Lee. "Passengers' friends will soon have to be going across the gangways. Fortunately, there's nobody to see us off. Such partings are embarrassing."

"Even Otho and Zenn haven't had the decency to come along and wave to us,"

said Nipper, grinning. "By the way, gov'nor, I suppose those beauties aren't on this boat? That would be pretty rich, wouldn't it?"

"No; they're not aboard the Orient," answered Lee. "I don't think we shall be troubled by those gentry for quite a while."

They were referring to Count Ivor Otho and Dr. Zenn; the two daring criminals who have escaped from a train on its journey to Puljara. It was because of these crooks that Lee and Nipper had come to India; but that episode was now definitely over, and they were turning their faces homeward.

"You'll be glad to get back again, won't you, you hulking old ruffian?" said Nipper, as a cold nose nuzzled against his

hand. "I'm afraid you'll have a pretty lean time of it, as far as exercising goes, while we're on this voyage. If you start romping around these promenade decks with any degree of boisterousness you'll create havoc."

Wolf, the great Alsatian, who was squatting on the deck near by, cocked his head on one side and gravely pretended that he understood all that Nipper was saying.

"St. Frank's—that's your real home, my son," went on Nipper. "If it comes to that, it's our real home, too," he added wistfully. "But we'll soon be back—and then you'll be able to romp about the playing fields and the paddocks to your heart's content."

He patted the enormous dog's shaggy neck, and Wolf wagged his tail. It was at that moment that a child, playing with a tennis ball, threw the ball with unintentional force down the deck. It skimmed past Wolf, and went bouncing along merrily.

It was far more than Wolf could resist. With a joyous bark he was after that tennis ball in a flash.

"Here! None of that, you silly disguised elephant!" shouted Nipper, starting after him. "Come back! Hey, Wolf!"

But Wolf was going all out now, and he was just skimming past the open doorway of the outer lounge when a figure in white flannels sauntered out.

Crash!

The figure in white flannels went flying—for when Wolf collided with any ordinary human being, that human being was certain to get the worst of it.

"What did I say?" groaned Nipper. "Once that dog starts gambolling he's liable to turn the giddy ship on its beam ends!"

As he was running up the deck an expression of mingled amazement and horror came into his eyes. For a dark-skinned man, who had immediately followed the white flannelled figure out of the doorway, had flashed a wicked-looking knife from his sash, and he was turning upon Wolf with deadly purpose. Nipper was still too far off to take any action.

"Put that rib-tickler away, Zafar, you old idiot," said the figure in flannels, as he made a grab at the Indian's arm. "What the dickens will you be up to next?"

The man spoke volubly in his own tongue.

"Rats!" said the other. "The dog was only romping; it was my fault as much as his."

Nipper arrived, breathless.

"Thanks—that was decent of you," he panted. "Wolf is the clumsiest mongrel alive—and he looked like being dead a second ago."

"Mongrel? Surely not?"

"I only call him that when I'm wild with him," said Nipper. "You ought to see him droop his ears when he hears it. He knows it's a term of disgrace. Look at him now! Yes, you ought to be jolly well ashamed of yourself, my lad!"

Wolf looked duly penitent.

By this time Nelson Lee had arrived. Zafar, the servant, was standing motionless, immobile. His master was a clean-limbed boy of about fifteen. His face was pleasant, and when he smiled his eyes twinkled with mischief.

"I'm always having trouble with Zafar," he said apologetically. "He insists upon following me about, and guarding me. It's an awful nuisance."

"I hope you weren't hurt just now, when this canine battering-ram bowled you over?" asked Nipper.

"A bruise, perhaps," said the boy in flannels. "What does it matter? You are fellow passengers of mine, perhaps? I'm glad to get acquainted so soon. My name is Maynard, and I am bound for England."

"Then we ought to see quite a lot of each other on the trip," said Nipper, as he shook hands. "My name's Dick Hamilton—but I'm known to my friends as Nipper. This is my guardian, Mr. Nelson Lee."

The boy's eyes opened wide with astonishment and delight.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" he ejaculated. "This is wonderful! This is most marvellous!"

"We are very flattered," smiled Nelson Lee.

He turned to Nipper.

"Perhaps you do not know, young 'un, that our fellow passenger is the son of General Maynard, V.C., Governor of the State of Oom?"

Clive Maynard groaned, his sudden joy all gone.

"When I stepped aboard this ship, sir, I was hoping that I shouldn't hear any more of that," he protested. "I can give you my word, it's not all honey being the son of a governor. I am going to a great English public school, and it is my hope that I shall be treated in just the same way as the other boys."

"A great English public school?" repeated Nipper curiously. "What is the name of it?"

"It is called St. Francis College—but I believe it is commonly referred to as St. Frank's," replied Clive Maynard.

— —

CHAPTER 2.

A Commission for Nelson Lee!

"ST. FRANK'S!" ejaculated Nipper. "Why, that's my school!"

"I know," replied Clive. "A fortunate meeting, eh? And you, sir—you are my headmaster," went on the boy, turning to Lee. "I can see I must be on my best behaviour."

"Oh, no," laughed the detective. "I shall have no control over you until you actually become a St. Frank's scholar. I urge you not to look upon me as a schoolmaster during this voyage."

"How did you know?" asked Nipper. "I mean—about us?"

"It is not a mystery—as you shall presently discover," laughed the other. "It has been my one dream to go to England. I have had English tutors, yes; I have been to a great school here, in Bombay. But it is not the same. I am English, but I have never seen my Mother Country. And now I'm going!"

A steward approached at this moment and paused hesitatingly.

"Mr. Lee, sir?" he asked, looking at the detective.

"Yes."

"Mr. Walters would like a word with you at once, sir, in the lounge."

"I'll come," said Lee.

He had not the remotest inkling as to who Mr. Walters was; but he soon discovered that this genial individual was the Orient's second officer.

"There's a sort of Brass Hat asking for you, Mr. Lee, and he's accompanied by two posh-looking native attendants," said Mr. Walters. "They've been shown into your state-room and are awaiting your pleasure."

"H'm! It sounds quite mysterious," smiled Lee. "I'll go at once."

As he walked towards his state-room he wondered if these important personages, who so urgently sought an interview, were in any way connected with Mahommed Ali Khan, the Rajah of Puljara. Not long ago Nelson Lee had had the audacity to force his way into the Rajah's palace, and his highness might be concocting a spot of bother.

But Lee was wrong.

The Brass Hat proved to be a stout, genial officer, giving the name of Major Mansell.

"Sorry to butt in just as you're on the point of sailing, Mr. Lee," he said breezily, after the introductions. "But it wasn't until practically the last minute that my chief learned that you were sailing on this liner. I happened to be in Bombay, so he wired me, and here I am."

"I am still at a loss," smiled Lee.

"My chief is General Maynard, the Governor of Oom, and it so happens that his son is aboard this packet," explained the major. "You may have seen him already. He is going to St. Frank's. You're connected with St. Frank's, and you're on the same ship. That's the position in a nutshell."

The major carried on. Boiled down, it appeared that General Maynard wanted Lee to keep a watchful, friendly eye on the general's son during the voyage; and, in fact, to take nominal charge of him.

"I shall be only too pleased to look after the youngster," said Lee readily. "As for this commission, it's quite unnecessary——"

"Not so unnecessary as you think," broke in the major, becoming serious. "I'm not empowered to say anything, but between you and me, and strictly under our hats, the general has half an idea that the youngster might not have a peaceful voyage."

"Oh!" said Lee slowly. "Can't you be a little more explicit?"

"Afraid not," said the major. "I can't—because I don't know anything for certain myself. The very fact that the general wired to me, and asked me to see you, is queer. I believe something happened to the boy on his journey to Oom—somebody tried to get at him, or something."

"Do you mean an attempt was made on his life?" asked the detective, who was irritated by this mystery.

"I don't think it was as bad as that," replied the major. "Anyhow, the general wants you to keep an eye on the kid, and I am empowered to pay you, in advance, any fee——"

"Confound it, Major Mansell, this is absurd," interrupted Lee, quite annoyed. "I couldn't think of accepting any fee for such a friendly service."

"India's a rum place," said the major heavily. "And Oom is one of the rummiest places in India. As for young Clive, he's a decent enough kid, but he was born in India, brought up in India, and half the time he speaks the native lingo. Even his English is a bit stilted, you'll notice. It's a good thing he's going to England—it'll change him a lot."

"I've seen the boy, and I don't know that he needs changing," smiled Lee.

"He does," declared the other, shaking his head. "Up there, in Oom, the governor is like a ruling prince—and the son of the governor is kow-towed to by everyone. The kid's all right, but he goes about with a native servant, and ever since his childhood he's been able to have his lightest wish granted. That's not good for a boy."

"He'll have the rough corners knocked off him at St. Frank's," said Lee dryly. "There are no special privileges in the English public schools, as you know."

"You bet I know," said the major. "I'm an old public school boy myself." He became grave again. "Clive has been saying that he means to finish with ceremony," he went on. "He wants to be free, like any other English kid. His father thinks that this sudden change might affect him. And that's why he wants you to keep your eye on the boy."

Nelson Lee did not believe it. There was something else behind this. Either Major Mansell did not know any more, or, for some obscure reason, he kept it to himself. Anyhow, the major had executed his little commission, and he went ashore contented.

Clive Maynard was by the detective's side as the latter returned from the gangway; and Clive was looking indignant.

"That fussy old fossil!" he exclaimed rebelliously. "What did he want, Mr. Lee? There's always fuss! They'd like to wrap me up in cotton wool. I'll bet my pater sent him to ask you to see that I don't get into any mischief."

"Something like that," replied Lee, with a chuckle. "But don't worry—I'm on your side."

"Good egg!" said Clive, with relief. "What can happen to me on this liner? In Oom I may be important—or the people think I am. But here I'm as free as the air."

Little did he know what the voyage was to lead to!

CHAPTER 3.

The Figure of Mystery!

DURING the first week of the voyage Nelson Lee enjoyed a well-earned rest. It just suited him to loaf about, frankly and wholeheartedly lazy.

He was such an active man, and his life was so full of perils, that he always looked upon a sea voyage as a holiday. He spent his days lounging in deck-chairs, dozing,

or reading; and at night he slept like a top. Usually he was fed up to the teeth long before a voyage was over—champing at the bit, so to speak, in his impatience to get to solid work again.

More than once he and Nipper had chuckled heartily over Major Mansell's visit. For Clive Maynard was likeable, inoffensive, and the thought that any harm could come to him was absurd.

He got very friendly with Nipper; and within a few days he knew as much about St. Frank's, almost, as Nipper himself. And when it came to cricket, Clive was almost fanatical.

"Cricket! It's the king of all games," he declared, his eyes glowing. "I have played cricket, yes. It is even said that I am a very fair batsman—but of that you shall judge. What a pity it is we cannot play cricket on board. Such foolish games as tennis and quoits, yes." He shrugged with disgust. "Could we not tip the stewards and get them to rig up nets for us?"

Nipper laughed outright; Clive's way of talking always amused him.

"If you get behind a cricket-bat, my son, I can see you swiping out so vigorously in your enthusiasm that you're liable to do a hefty slice of damage," he said. "Cricket balls aren't soft—and there's lots of glass about these decks, to say nothing of human heads and other anatomical parts. No; I'm afraid cricket is off."

"But on the boat deck—right at the top?" suggested Clive hopefully.

"Worse than ever," said Nipper. "We should have the whole ship a playing field, and we should brain somebody in less than two minutes. Keen on cricket, aren't you?"

"I have a bat—a present from my father," said Clive softly. "Oh, yes, I have more than one bat. I have three bats. Shall I be considered impudent, at your school, for owning three bats?" he asked anxiously. "Is that very ostentatious? I hope you will say 'No,' as I prize my bats above all my other possessions."

Nipper grinned.

"Some of our chaps have half-a-dozen bats," he said genially.

And Clive Maynard was overwhelmingly relieved.

Not once, but a dozen times, he took Nipper down to his luxurious state-room and proudly showed him the cricket bats. Nipper examined them and admired them with becoming gravity. They were English-made, of course, and they were quite topping bats. But Nipper did not mention that equally good bats were to be

Silently Clive stole up behind the midnight intruder and with a cat-like leap landed fairly on the native's shoulders. "Caught you red-handed, my friend!" patted the boy.



found by the dozen knocking about the various houses of St. Frank's.

"I believe he goes to bed with those giddy cricket bats, gov'nor," remarked Nipper one night, as he and Nelson Lee were undressing.

"I'm glad to see that he is so enthusiastic," returned Lee. "But in my celebrated rôle of schoolmaster," he added primly, "I hope he is equally enthusiastic about his studies."

Nipper was not far wrong; for at that very moment Clive Maynard was standing in the centre of his state-room making

wild swipes at the air with his favourite bat of the three. Zafar, who was standing by in fear of his life, watched with a sort of despairing terror. Catching the man's eye, Clive desisted, and sighed.

"Honestly, Zafar, you give me the pip!" he said with refreshing candour. "You think I'm crazy, don't you?"

"My young master desires to undress?" asked Zafar, who was far too wise to commit himself.

"When I desire to undress, you image, I'll undress," replied the other. "As for you, you can buzz off! How many times

have I told you that I don't want you at my beck and call? I shall have to fend for myself at St. Frank's—so I might as well start now."

Zafar, who did not fully comprehend, looked stolid.

"You needn't think I'm going to talk to you in anything else but English—because I'm not," continued Clive. "I suppose you're shocked because I use a few slang words? I'm getting in training for St. Frank's, my ugly-faced friend! I've heard, on the best authority, that slang is much in vogue at the English public schools. The chaps don't have servants to undress 'em, either. So are you going of your own accord, or shall I kick you in the slacks?"

Zafar, with much bowing and scraping, and with an infinitely sad look on his face, departed. Whereupon Clive continued his swiping to his heart's content.

Zafar slept in the next cabin, which could be reached by a communicating door. Before commencing this voyage he had been ordered to watch over his young master; but he had long since given it up as a bad job. Clive refused to be watched over.

Soon Zafar was asleep. And Clive, being healthily tired, turned in almost immediately afterwards.

The sea was calm, and the great liner ploughed sedately on her way. It was towards midnight when a shadowy figure, entering Zafar's cabin like a will-o'-the-wisp, padded silently over to the bed. Zafar's breathing was regular; it suddenly became forced and unnatural, and the bed spring creaked.

And then—silence.

CHAPTER 4.

Thanks to Cricket!

CLIVE MAYNARD dreamed.

It is rather a contradiction of things for one to have a day dream at midnight; so it will be correct to say, perhaps, that Clive indulged in a waking dream.

He lay in bed, long after he should have been fast asleep, thinking of green fields, of closely-cropped turf, of white flannelled figures.

Cricket!

Ever since he could remember, he had dreamed of cricket in England, where the grass and the trees are green. And before very long he would actually be amid those scenes. Sleep would not come to him. He was trying to picture, in his mind's eye, the stalwarts of St. Frank's Junior XI.

Nipper had told him so much about them that he felt that he almost knew them.

The burly Edward Oswald Handforth, famous leader of Study D—a great slogger, but not a really pretty bat. Then there was Reggie Pitt, of the West House; and Vivian Travers and Sir James Potts and Harry Gresham— Yes, rather! Harry Gresham was the son of a famous England cricketer. His mind went back to Handforth. Handforth was the fellow who could knock the ball right over the pavilion roof for a six. Handforth could keep the whole field fagging away—

Subconsciously, Clive noticed that the communicating door was softly and slowly opening. There was a certain amount of motion on the ship, but it was rather pleasant than otherwise. And all the time there was the gentle "throb-throb" of the powerful engines, far below in the bowels of the vessel. And that sound had now become such an integral part of life on shipboard that it was no longer noticed.

"My only sainted aunt!" breathed Clive.

There was no light in the state-room, but the windows opened right out upon the promenade deck—and there were lights there. The curtains were closely drawn, and the faintest glow came through them, filling the interior of the cabin with an intense gloom which was just better than complete darkness.

And Clive, whose eyes were keen, saw a shadowy figure creeping through the communicating doorway. He knew Zafar's dog-like devotion to duty. The silly fellow was probably creeping in so that he could sleep on the floor, close to his young master. And Clive decided, then and there, that he wouldn't have any of it.

The figure, at that moment, was silhouetted sharply against one of the curtained windows. The boy did not stir, but a quiver passed through him. In that flash he knew that the intruder was not Zafar! This man was skinny, and the silhouette indicated that he was bare to the waist. It was such an extraordinary happening that Clive wondered, for a tense moment, if he was really dreaming it all.

But no; he knew that he was wide-awake. He saw the intruder move over to a cabin trunk and insert a knife into the top. Then he stopped.

At that moment, Clive slid out of bed on the further side. It was not a berth, such as one usually associates with a ship's sleeping cabin; for this state-room was a really sumptuous bed-room, and although the inlaid rosewood bed was clamped to the floor, it was nevertheless a conventional bed.

And there was plenty of room beneath it.

Clive was not afraid—he was merely agog with inward excitement. Having reached the space beneath the bed, he lay absolutely motionless, face downwards—and now he had reversed his position, so that his head was at the bed's foot.

In the gloom, he saw, faintly, the bare feet of the intruder. The man was creeping nearer and nearer to the bed; now he was next to it. Clive felt, rather than heard, the slight depression of the springs and the mattress. He did distinctly hear the sharp intake of breath which immediately followed.

"That's given him something to think about," thought the boy.

For almost a full minute the intruder did not move. Then, unexpectedly, the beam from an electric torch shot out. With quick movements, the man padded to the door, and satisfied himself that it was securely fastened. He had evidently come to the conclusion by now that Clive was not in the state-room. Perhaps he had been attacked by sea-sickness, and had been obliged to pay a hurried visit to the ship's side.

At all events, the intruder proved, by his very actions, that he had no suspicion of the boy's real presence. A slight metallic jingle sounded, and, to Clive's surprise, he saw that the man was trying to force the trunk again.

The boy could now see that his visitor was dark-skinned—a lean, scraggy individual, and his only clothing was a loin-cloth. Clive saw all this in the reflected light from the electric torch. The man was systematically going through the drawers of the wardrobe trunk.

Yet it was inconceivable to think that this fellow was an ordinary petty thief. The very fact that he was an Indian was significant.

He had not come to this state-room by chance—but he had selected it deliberately. And he had taken the precaution to deal with Zafar first. What had happened to Zafar? A sudden premonition of danger—of tragedy—came to the boy.

And in that moment of tension he proved his mettle.

Without making the slightest sound, he wormed his way out from beneath the bed, the soft carpet deadening his movements. Once completely clear, he raised himself inch by inch, his gaze never for a second leaving the intruder, whose back was towards him.

Clive stepped forward—one pace—two paces—three paces. Then, tensing his muscles, he sprang.

CHAPTER 5.

The Mystery!

IT was a perfectly-judged leap. The plucky boy landed fairly and squarely on the intruder's shoulders.

A gasp sounded, and the man, with mingled consternation and fury, staggered back. But try as he would, he could not shake his attacker off.

"Caught you red-handed, my friend!" panted Clive. "You're a pretty poor hand at searching, aren't you? Why didn't you look under the bed?"

Finding it impossible to shake the boy off,

the intruder adopted new tactics. Lanting heavily, he suddenly dropped full length to the floor. Clive rolled on the carpet, but, in a flash, and with the agility of a trained acrobat, he was on his feet—just in time to grab at the dim figure of the intruder as it made a dash for the communicating door.

Crash!

The boy's fist hammered with terrific force into the other's face, and a thin gasp of agony sounded. The man reeled back under the shock of the blow, and, as luck would have it, his hand fell upon one of the cricket bats which stood against the wall. He gripped the bat and swung it round.

Instead of aiming a direct blow at Clive, however, he rammed the end of the bat into the boy's middle. It was a most effective form of attack—for Clive, for all his pluck, was instantly doubled up.

Momentarily winded, he reeled back, groaning, and in that fateful moment the intruder leapt through the communicating doorway and whipped the door to.

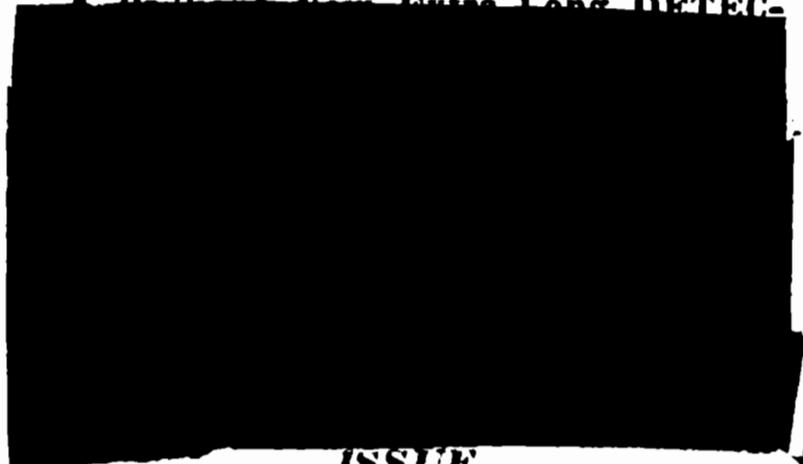
Clive was not eight seconds in getting to the door and opening it—for there was no means of securing it on the other side. Although in pain still, he reached the electric light switches and pressed them down.



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ISSUE.



The intruder had gone.

Flinging open the door which gave on to the deck, Clive stared up and down. There was not a soul in sight. The promenade deck was deserted as far as the eye could reach. The sound of the swishing water as it surged past the vessel's side came to the boy's ears, and from somewhere far distant there sounded the vague clanging of a bell, followed by some gruff orders. But in the immediate vicinity—silence.

"Rats!" muttered Clive. "And I didn't even get a glimpse of his face——"

He broke off, for he had caught sight of Zafar on the floor. Zafar was motionless. Running up to him, Clive seized the servant by the shoulders and shook him. But he might as well have shaken a dummy. The man showed no signs of life. Horrified, Clive backed away.

"He's dead!" he gasped. "Zafar—dead!"

His first thought was to sound the alarm; then, running back into his own state-room, he whipped up a dressing-gown and put it on. He got into a pair of slippers, and a moment later he was racing for Nelson Lee's cabin, which was on the same deck and not far distant.

The door being unlocked, Clive burst in.

"Hallo! Who's that?" came Nelson Lee's inquiry in a keenly wakeful voice.

Clive felt for the light switch and pressed it down. Lee had been soundly sleeping a moment before, but he had a faculty of becoming widely awake at an instant's notice.

"Why, Maynard, what's this?" he asked, slipping out of bed. "What are you doing here at this hour of the night?"

Nipper was awake by now, and blinking in the light.

"My servant, Mr. Lee," panted the young visitor. "He is dead!"

"Dead?" echoed Lee in amazement.

"I think murdered!"

"But this is incredible!" said the detective, getting into his dressing-gown. "I'll come with you."

Nipper came, too. They all ran back to Clive's suite—and it was just as well, perhaps, that none of the ship's officers or men saw them, or there would certainly have been an inquiry.

Nelson Lee bent over Zafar, and after a brief examination an expression of relief came into his eyes, and he turned to the anxious boy.

"No, this man isn't dead," said Lee. "He is only drugged."

"Oh, I am glad," said Clive gratefully. "I have sometimes been much annoyed with

Zafar, and I have called him bad names; but he is a faithful fellow and a good servant."

"I cannot name the drug at the moment," continued Nelson Lee. "It might be some hours before he comes to himself. But his pulse is firm, and his breathing, although soft, quite regular. I imagine the drug was injected in some way. Do you know anything about this extraordinary occurrence, Maynard?"

Clive, in simple words, related exactly what had happened.

"Let me compliment you upon your courage," said Nelson Lee, at length. "But at the same time, my boy, I must condemn you for your rashness. It was very foolhardy for you to attack that man single-handed."

"I did not think of that," said Clive.

"Well, it is a very mysterious occurrence," said Lee. "Do you know of any reason why

your servant should be drugged, and your state-room ransacked? I suppose you realise that but for your presence of mind in getting under the bed you would probably have been drugged, too?"

"That, sir, had occurred to me," nodded Clive. "But I know of no reason why this thing should have happened."

Nelson Lee looked very thoughtful; he was recalling the visit of Major Man-

sell, before the liner had left Bombay.

CHAPTER 6.

The Man in State-room No. 27.

CLIVE seemed to read Nelson Lee's thoughts.

"You believe that Major Mansell was expecting this when he asked you to take charge of me, sir?" he asked. "But no, I am sure that that was only my father's whim. He found out that you were aboard this ship, and his suggestion that you should watch over me was induced solely by his love of me."

"But for the drugging of Zafar, I might be inclined to think that your midnight visitor was merely a member of the crew—a lascar, perhaps," said Lee slowly. "There are quite a few lascars in the stokehold, I believe, and many of them are thugs of the worst type."

"But why should they pick on me?" asked Clive, in wonder.

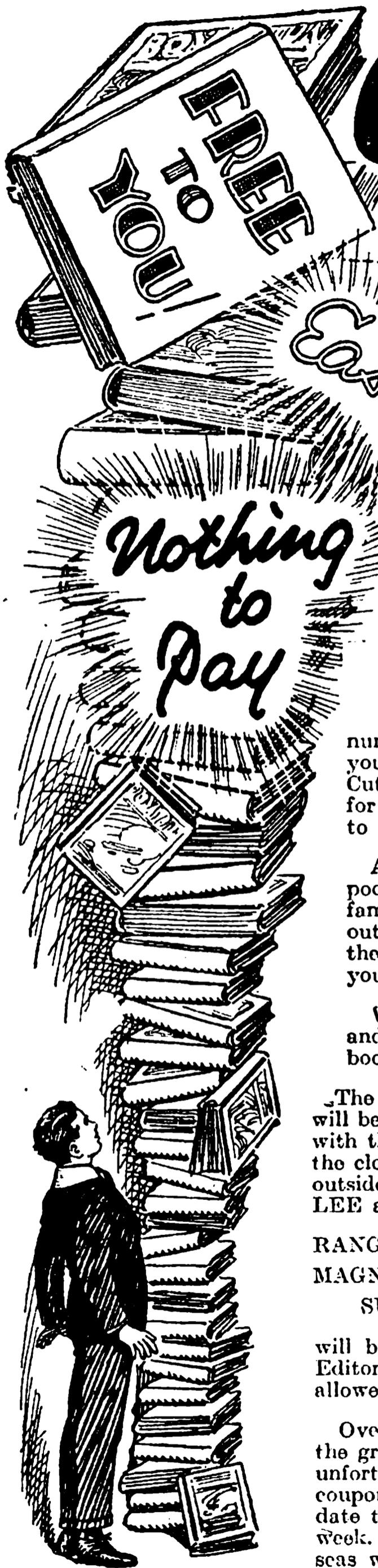
"They know of your father's position—and this man might have come to your cabin for the purpose of commonplace robbery," said Lee. "Yet I do not favour that explanation. Zafar would not have been drugged, but knocked on the head, or possibly knifed. Is

(Continued on page 12.)

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THE DANGER SHIP!

(Continued from page 10.)

there anything amongst your possessions, Maynard, which is of particular value?"

"I have money—yes, a good bit," replied the boy. "But I wasn't foolish enough to keep it in my state-room. It is deposited with the purser. I have some jewels, but they are quite simple."

"Was there anything entrusted to you by your father?"

"Nothing."

"H'm! I suppose I ought to report this matter to the captain——"

"Please do not, sir," said Clive quietly. "If you do, there will be talk, and that will be so embarrassing."

"Well, I'll see," replied Nelson Lee. "It all depends upon Zafar's condition in the morning. I don't think there is any possibility of your mysterious friend paying another visit to night. You had better get to bed, my boy."

After they had bade him good-night, they returned to their own state-room; and Nelson Lee's first task was to rapidly dress.

"You'd better turn in again, young 'un," he said crisply. "It seems to me that this job of watching over young Maynard is not so formal as I first thought."

"I'd better get dressed, too, gov'nor——"

"Nonsense! You get your sleep," said Lee. "There's not a chance in a thousand that anything else will happen during the night. I just want to be on the safe side, that's all."

He was right. By the time morning came nothing had happened. Zafar awoke with a splitting headache, but, beyond that, he was quite himself. And he knew nothing of the nocturnal visitor. He did not remember being drugged, or even disturbed in his sleep.

Clive did not give him full particulars of the occurrence, making light of the whole affair. And Zafar was given strict orders to hold his tongue.

Before the usual breakfast hour, Nelson Lee got hold of one of the engineer officers and asked to be taken down to the engine-room and the stokehold. He went on quite a tour—and during the course of that tour he saw several lascars. But as far as he could see, not one of them was suffering from a bruised face.

According to Clive's story, he had "got home" a regular pile-driver, and it was certain that he had marked the intruder. By making casual and guarded inquiries, Lee ascertained that none of the Indians amongst the crew were showing signs of a fight.

It was at breakfast-time, in the big dining saloon, that Lee, with his usual keenness, noticed something different.

Since the commencement of the voyage two quiet-looking men had taken their meals at another table on the other side of the saloon. This morning, for the first time, only one seat at that table was occupied. It was a

small enough point, but Lee was looking for small points.

If either of those two men were to be affected by sea-sickness, the malady would have manifested itself before now. But they had always eaten heartily; and, moreover, Lee had given them rather close attention, because he had an idea they were not the quiet, respectable people they pretended to be.

Lee had an eagle eye for crooks. And on shipboard crooks are to be found in the most unexpected guise. Lee had never definitely suspected the two men, but, in a subconscious way, he had docketed them in his mind for further attention. Their conduct, since the beginning of the voyage, had been exemplary; they were American University professors on a tour of general knowledge.

And this morning one of them failed to appear at breakfast!

There might be nothing in it. But Nelson Lee also recalled that the pair occupied State-room No. 27—and it was on the same deck as Clive Maynard's own suite. Another small point, but interesting.

The meal proceeded, and Lee, after a while, made a show of feeling in his pockets.

"I must have left my cigarettes in the cabin," he said casually. "As I'm missing this course, I'll slip away for a minute."

"I'll go if you like, gov'nor," said Nipper.

"No—you get on with your breakfast."

Lee sauntered out, fully aware of the fact that his cigarette-case was snug in his pocket all the time.

He did not go to his own cabin—but to State-room No. 27.

He walked straight in without knocking, and, having got in, he looked round with a sudden start of surprise. The missing American University professor was partaking of a solitary—and substantial—breakfast near the window.

"I really beg your pardon," said Lee, backing out. "Most inexcusable on my part, sir! I'm afraid I came into the wrong cabin."

His confusion was well assumed as he departed without waiting for the other to reply. And Lee had found out all that he wanted to know.

The man in State-room No. 27 could see out of only one eye—the other being so bruised that it was completely closed!

CHAPTER 7.

Nelson Lee's Theory!

THE detective was frowning thoughtfully as he went back to the dining saloon. The fact that Mr. Walter Digby had a black eye proved nothing—except that he had received a violent blow on that section of his physiognomy. But, to say the least, it was an extraordinary coincidence.

Clive Maynard had got home a terrific swipe on that unknown intruder; and here was this man so self-conscious of an injury

that he refused to appear in public! And last night he had been unmarked.

"I've had my doubts about Mr. Walter Digby and Mr. Kendrick Holland for some time," murmured Lee. "I fancy that those learned men warrant some close attention on my part. Why did Digby brown himself and search young Maynard's cabin in the middle of the night?"

Back at the breakfast table, Lee, without appearing to do so, gave Holland more attention than usual. He looked a respectable enough man. He was quite at his ease, too.

Lee was intrigued.

"I want to have a talk with you, young 'un," he said, taking Clive aside after breakfast. "We'd better go to your state-room."

Clive was willing enough. Indeed, anxious, for the night's adventure had troubled him. Nipper went, too, and Lee carefully closed the door. Zafar was not present.

"You're quite sure that your servant is to be trusted?" asked Lee. "I'm not really doubting him, but there's a possibility that he willingly succumbed to the drug—"

"I don't believe it, Mr. Lee," interrupted Clive quickly. "Zafar has been a sort of guardian to me ever since I was a tot. He's accompanied me everywhere. I didn't really want him to come to England, but he begged my father to permit it. He's as faithful as a dog. He'd die for me, if necessary—and sometimes I feel quite uncomfortable about his devotion."

"Then we can dismiss Zafar as a possible factor," said Nelson Lee. "He was just a victim. Now, Maynard, the man who drugged Zafar came into this state-room with a definite object. He was searching for something—and we can assume that the something is of value."

"But that's impossible," protested Clive. "I've got nothing of value in my trunk. That fellow was an Indian—"

"Not necessarily," interrupted Lee. "You only caught a glimpse of him in the gloom; a brown man dressed only in a loin-cloth. A very efficient sort of disguise, in case of any possible inquiries. It even had me on the wrong track at first. I'm certain—now—that the intruder was a white man."

Clive looked helpless.

"But that makes it all the more mysterious, sir," he objected. "You're implying that one of the passengers deliberately faked himself up as an Indian and broke in here, thinking I was a nigger."

"Did your father entrust you with anything?" asked Lee suddenly.

"I don't understand, sir."

"It may seem trivial to you," went on the detective. "A charm of some kind, perhaps—a letter to somebody—a token to some friend or relative in England?"

"No, nothing," replied Clive.

"Well, I'm going to look through your things, with your permission," said Lee. "It's pretty clear that the intruder didn't find what he was searching for—you interrupted him too soon. I'll have a look."

Clive was only too eager to help.

And Nelson Lee conducted a microscopic search of every inch of the boy's baggage. And he was compelled to confess, at the end of it, that there was nothing to warrant the singular adventure of the previous night.

Moreover, Clive had only deposited his money—a considerable sum for a boy, but a miserable prize for a crook—with the purser.

"Well, we shall have to keep our eyes skinned, that's all," said Lee, at length. "We've drawn a blank here, but there may be another line of inquiry."

He did not say what that line was. Even Nipper knew nothing of Lee's interest in the two Americans. Lee remembered the visit of Major Mansell, and the general's anxiety for his son's safe arrival in England.

It really seemed to Lee, in fact, that the Governor of Oom had entrusted Clive with some valuable object—without Clive knowing anything about it. That meant that the "something" was hidden.

Lee was compelled to admit that he was at a loose end; and, as far as he could see, his only chance of getting any further was to concentrate upon the men of State-room No. 27.

At that very moment the men of State-room No. 27 were concentrating upon him!

CHAPTER 8.

The Plotters!

KENDRICK HOLLAND joined his friend in State-room No. 27, after breakfast, in a fairly good humour.

One look at Digby startled him. For Digby was visibly shaken; he was pale and agitated.

"Lee's on to us!" snarled Digby hoarsely.

"What do you mean?" said the newcomer, staring. "What's rattled you? You're not telling me that that fool English detective—"

"Fool nothing," interrupted Digby. "That guy's not such a sap as you think. I'm telling you, boy, he's poison!"

"Don't make me laugh!" retorted Holland contemptuously.

In the privacy of their cabin there was a startling difference in these men. They did not trouble to use the correct English which, at other times, characterised their conversation. Nelson Lee, in fact, had "got their number." They were members of the crook fraternity.

In Chicago, from whence they hailed, Walter Digby would have been recognised as a desperado who went by the name of "Snake" Beratti; his nickname had been bestowed upon him because of his slippery ways.

Mr. Kendrick Holland, prior to his departure from Chicago, had been a notorious killer in that celebrated city; so notorious, in fact, that his intimates knew him as "Butch"—this, of course, being short for

"Butcher." Like Snake, he was Italian born, and his real name was Menzini.

In brief, a very ugly pair.

But for all their ugliness these men possessed a veneer of culture. Dressed in fine clothes, using false names, they found it comparatively easy to pass themselves off amongst decent citizens as respectable members of society.

However, in private, no pretence was necessary.

"We'd better get this thing straight, Butch," said Digby in a low voice. "I'm telling you that that guy, Lee, is dangerous."

Butch laughed with derision.

"Forget it!" he sneered. "That English bonehead? Say, I'll tell you something—"

"Tell me next week!" snapped Snake, grasping his companion by the jacket and staring straight into his face. "Listen to me, Butch—and listen good! Lee crashed in here not long ago, pretending that he had made a mistake. He saw this eye of mine. Say, do you think that bluff fooled me? He's on to us, I tell you. He hasn't any proof, but he's figured me out as the guy who busted into the kid's cabin during the night."

Holland became uneasy; there was a snakish light in Digby's eye. Holland could never stand that look. He was the bigger of the two men, and he was far more ruthless; but Digby was his master when it came to brains.

"All right!" he muttered. "Gee, Snake, mebbe you ain't so far wrong at that!"

"I'm telling you that if we're going to get that seal we shall have to settle with Lee first," said Digby. "And the faster we work, the better! Lee's no bonehead; I'm telling you."

"Yeah, but what can he do?"

"He can prevent us making another search—and that's the least he can do," replied Digby, pacing up and down. "We don't need to worry about Protheroe and Denney. They think they're sitting pretty, and they're not worrying any. They figure they've got us beat."

"Maybe they're right at that," growled the other. "Seems to me, Snake, that things ain't breaking our way. We thought we were on a cinch when we came aboard this boat—"

"We'll pull this job yet," interrupted the other. "Now, listen. I'm figuring on getting rid of this Lee bird pronto."

"You don't mean—bump him off?"

"You bet I do."

"Gee, but that's impossible! We can't gun a guy on a ship."

They talked, and Butch Holland was soon converted. He agreed wholeheartedly that it would be better from every point of view if Nelson Lee "went out."

"Maybe it seems kind of rash, but that guy is going to cause a whole lot of trouble if we let him stick around," said Snake Digby. "You know me, Butch. When a guy starts butting into my racket, he soon finishes. He finishes because I finish him."

"Oh, sure!" said Holland. "But seeing as we're on this ship, and there's no sort of getaway—"

"We can do it easy," interrupted Digby. "We didn't travel in India for nothing, huh? India's a darned queer country! Providing a feller goes to work the right way, he can pick up some useful dope."

"You said it!" agreed Butch, watching his companion fascinatedly.

For Digby had taken a tiny metal box from his pocket, and, opening this, he revealed two or three needle-like spikes stuck through a scrap of paper, like pins.

Holland looked at them and shivered.

"Gosh!" he muttered. "Do you think that blamed old fakir was right about those?"

"Sure he was," said Digby. "We paid him real money, too. Now, listen, Butch. We're going to get the Seal of Oom—and we're not going to let any blamed English detective butt in on our racket! He's asked for this bit of trouble."

SOMEWHERE about mid-morning, Nelson Lee, having taken his usual "constitutional" round the spacious promenade decks, settled himself in a chair for an hour's reading.

Nipper and Clive Maynard were sitting on deck, too, chatting.

It was a fine, sunny morning, and the sea was smooth. The Orient ploughed her way onwards, a little world of her own on the bosom of the ocean.

Holland made his appearance, and, like the refined American university professor he pretended to be, he stood in the doorway of the outer lounge, chatting with one of the ship's officers. Actually, he was keeping his eye on Nelson Lee and Nipper—ready to make a move if either of them got up from their chairs.

Meanwhile Digby left State-room No. 27, and it was the easiest thing in the world for him to slip unobtrusively into Nelson Lee's own suite. He chose his time well—after the steward had paid his usual morning visit.

There was very little fear of a disturbance, and it was not Digby's intention to remain long. In Lee's own cabin he quickly set to work.

Opening the detective's dressing-case, he took out one of the hair-brushes. There were two brushes, but Snake Digby was only interested in one. From his pocket he took the little metal box containing the curious needles. And now, lifting one of the needles out with a small pair of pliers, he gripped it tightly.

Carefully parting the bristles of the brush, he forced the metal end of the spike into the wood base—so that the needle point projected upwards, but remained completely hidden amongst the bristles. By using the pliers he did this safely, without the slightest risk of his own hand coming into contact with the needle point.

He worked with skill and precision. Slipping the pliers into his pocket, he took out a silk handkerchief, and with this he carefully and methodically rubbed the polished back and sides of the brush, obliterating any possible fingerprints he might have made earlier.

Then, still holding the brush with the handkerchief, he carefully slipped it back into the dressing-case.

The work had taken him no longer than three minutes, and he succeeded in getting out of Nelson Lee's cabin in the same manner as he had entered. No living soul saw him.

Back in his own state-room, the man smiled evilly.

"The poor fish won't know what's bitten him!" he muttered, his eyes glowing with triumph.

It was half an hour before Butch Holland joined him.

And Butch, killer though he was, looked pale.

CHAPTER 9.

Flower of Kashmir!

THE first gong for lunch had sounded, and Nelson Lee and Nipper were in their cabin tidying up for the meal. Clive Maynard had come in with them.

"Everything is so—so ordinary this morning, Mr. Lee, that I can't believe that that affair happened in the night," said Clive. "It seems almost like a dream now. In just the same way, I can't think there's any danger. After all, who aboard this ship would want to steal anything out of my trunks?"

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"O.K.?" answered Butch, after he had closed the door.

"You bet!" said the other. "It's a cinch!"

"You weren't seen going in or out?" snapped the other. "When Lee uses that hair-brush, he'll use death!"

"Gosh! You kind of scare me, Snake!" muttered the other crook. "I'll pull a gun on a guy, and I guess I'll pump lead into him. But this poison racket sure gives me the shivers!"

"Aw, what's the difference?" said Digby. "That bird had interfered with us, so he's just getting what's coming to him! The poison on that needle acts in about one minute. That's all! The tiniest scratch, and I guess he won't have time to say his prayers!"

"What about when they find him?" asked Holland in a whisper.

"That's the best part of it!" replied Snake. "There'll only be a scratch on his scalp—right amongst his hair. Get that? It won't be seen—it won't be suspected. The doctor will say that poor sap died of heart failure."

"What about that spike in the brush?"

"Easy enough," replied Digby. "When we hear the commotion, we'll rush in with the crowd. Leave it to me—I'll get that spike out. Not that it really matters," he added. "Lee's hair-brushes aren't likely to be touched afterwards. All we've got to do now, Butch, is to wait."

young 'un," said Lee, busy with the towel after a wash. "Later on I may have something to tell you."

"I believe you've twigged something, gov'nor," said Nipper eagerly. "Why not tell us now?"

"Oh, no!" laughed Lee. "Here's a good opportunity for you to use your eyes, Nipper. You've had the same opportunities as I have had. Let me suggest that you should make a careful but unobtrusive study of our fellow-passengers. There are one or two at least who are of great interest."

The detective had not been so engrossed in his book that morning as he had appeared to be. He had, in fact, been fully aware of Mr. Kendrick Holland's presence during a certain half-hour. And Lee had had a shrewd idea, in fact, that Holland had been watching him.

And Lee was very much on the alert; his senses, normally acute, were now trebly so. Indeed, when he had first entered his cabin he had taken a swift, comprehensive look round, but had noticed nothing different.

"I wish I could do something to help," said Clive, troubled. "But it's such a mystery. I feel so completely helpless, sir. I mean, there doesn't seem to be any rhyme or reason in that queer adventure."

Nelson Lee had just combed his hair, and now with his two hair-brushes in his hands, he raised them to his head.

"The advantage of being on a ship is that there is no particular hurry——" he began.

And then abruptly he broke off. He had not yet touched his head with the brushes; and a curiously alert look had sprung into his eyes. He stood, in fact, motionless, as though abruptly turned to stone. Then he sniffed the air delicately, holding first one brush under his nose, and then the other.

He rejected one brush at once and turned to Nipper.

"You don't use perfume, young 'un, do you?" he asked.

"Me?" ejaculated Nipper, so indignant that he was careless in his grammar. "Here, I say, gov'nor! You know jolly well——"

"A perfume known as 'Flower of Kashmir' is singularly fragrant, and quite distinctive, too," continued Lee softly.

"What are you getting at, sir?" asked Nipper, staring.

"You haven't used these hairbrushes of mine, by any chance?"

"Of course not."

"H'm! I must admit that I am intrigued," said Lee. "More than that—I am extraordinarily suspicious. Perhaps I am unduly cautious, but I have always found that in our profession, Nipper, precaution costs nothing."

He spoke almost mechanically for his thoughts were busy. Again he sniffed at the hairbrush, and again he caught the faintest whiff of perfume. A man with less delicately-trained nostrils would have noticed nothing. But Nelson Lee's sense of smell was quite remarkable.

And as he had put those hairbrushes up to his head he had caught the first vague waft, and on the instant he had recognised the perfume. And he remembered.

He had smelt exactly the same fragrance in State-room No. 27 when he had "blundered" in during breakfast.

He recognised the perfume—Flower of Kashmir. The detective's reasoning powers were at their acutest. The man Digby used that perfume obviously or the cabin would not have been so distinctly scented. And it was any odds that Digby used the perfume on his handkerchief.

Lee found himself looking at the polished hairbrush with great care. The inference was that Digby had not only touched the hairbrush, but he had wiped it with his handkerchief, thus leaving on it a faint but distinct trace of perfume.

And why should Digby go to the trouble of polishing Nelson Lee's hairbrush? For what other reason but to obliterate any possible finger-prints? And why only one brush? Lee sniffed at the second one, and again he put it down.

Moving across to the window, which looked right out upon the promenade deck, he examined the hairbrush in the strong sunlight which flooded in.

"What are you doing, gov'nor?" asked

Nipper curiously. "Is there anything wrong with that brush?"

"I have an idea that there is something exceedingly wrong with it," replied Lee, who was inwardly startled. "Yet it is fantastic to assume that—— By James! What's this?"

In the sunlight he had seen a tiny metallic gleam amongst the bristles. And now with extreme caution he parted those bristles, taking care to slide his fingers in at the roots, so to speak, for already an awful hint of the truth had come to him.

Nipper and Clive were so astonished that they came nearer, staring in wonder. They saw Nelson Lee take a pair of jeweller's pliers from his pocket, and with these he withdrew an almost invisible needle-like object from amongst the bristles.

"This is quite an interesting discovery," said Lee in a hard, steady voice.

"But what is it, gov'nor?" asked Nipper quickly.

"By all the laws of chance I ought now to be stretched dead on the floor, that's all," said the detective grimly.

"What!" ejaculated both youngsters.

"I'll admit that I'm surprised," went on Lee. "I really did not think that the situation was so dangerous. Our unknown friends are very much afraid of me, Nipper. They even go to the length of inserting a poisoned spike in my hairbrush. A diabolical contrivance, indeed. Seldom have I encountered such a fiendishly-cunning murder plot, and so simple, too."

Nipper and Clive Maynard were horrified as much by Lee's calmness as by his words.

"You can't be serious, sir!" panted Clive. "Oh! You don't mean that—that the man who came to my state-room last night has tried to murder you. But why?"

"Because I saw him this morning, and he knows that I suspect him," replied Lee. "That's why, my boy. Look at this. If I had used the hairbrush in the ordinary way this needle point would undoubtedly have scratched my scalp."

"But—but that wouldn't have killed you, sir," protested Clive.

"You think not?" retorted Lee, almost curtly. "Why should this needle have been placed in the brush? You don't imagine, do you, that it was done as a practical joke, so that I should harmlessly scratch myself? People don't play jokes like that. If this point isn't impregnated with a deadly poison you can call me a scare-monger. I wish I could prove it. It's far too risky to apply any sort of test. But one moment, though," he added, a sudden gleam coming into his eyes. "I have an idea. Give me the cork out of your bottle of hair lotion, Nipper."

Nipper did so, and Lee, with the pliers, carefully inserted the spike, embedding it firmly, so that the "business" end stuck outwards, untouched

Then replacing the cork in the bottle, Lee slipped the bottle into his pocket.

"Poison or not, the little needle is safe enough there," he said. "Don't say anything about this, boys, and don't look so scared. I'm not dead, and not likely to be."

"What's that you said about an idea, gov'nor?"

"I am going to put something to the test if possible," replied Lee, as with the utmost coolness he brushed his hair. "I want you youngsters to go down to the dining-saloon as usual. I'll join you in a few minutes."

"Yes, sir," said the wondering steward. "If you'd like luncheon here in the cabin, sir——"

"No; I haven't been thinking about luncheon, Robbins," interrupted Lee. "You were telling me, earlier this morning, about your unfortunate colleague, Harper. Is Harper still worried about that poor cat of his?"

"Why, yes, sir," replied Robbins. "I told you about it. It's a nice cat, but it's mangy, or something—caught some disease while we were in dock. Mr. Page, the chief steward, is awful particular about that sort of thing."



The ship's boat reached the man and a sailor caught his collar in a firm grip. Then to everyone's amazement they saw him clutching desperately at a cricket bat, holding it up as though it were more precious than his own life!

"Hold on, sir," said Nipper. "How did you know that there was anything 'squiffy' about your hairbrush? I can't see— By Jove! You said something about perfume, didn't you? That's how you twigged it!"

"Men who use perfume should be more careful, particularly when they take steps to murder people," said Lee calmly. "Maynard, my boy, I am becoming vastly entertained by this little problem of yours. That somebody should want to 'bump me off' proves quite conclusively that your mystery is well worth solving."

Lee refused to say any more, and he sent Nipper and Clive away at once—for by this time the second luncheon gong had sounded. The detective himself rang the steward's bell; and within a minute a cheerful-faced man appeared.

"I've been thinking, Robbins," said Nelson Lee.

He saw Harper again this morning, and he said he won't stand any nonsense. 'The cat's got to be destroyed. You see, there are other cats aboard, and——'

"I understand," said Lee. "So Harper's ailing pussy is to be destroyed? Do you know how Harper is to do the deed?"

"Oh, easy enough, sir—chuck it overboard," replied the steward. "Harper's doing it now, I believe——"

"We must look into this," said Lee crisply. "I'm surprised, Robbins! Ill though the cat undoubtedly is, throwing it overboard is unnecessarily cruel."

"Cruel, sir?" asked Robbins, staring. "But there's nothing in drowning a cat——"

"Well, I think I can put the poor creature out of its misery much more rapidly—and quite painlessly," said Lee. "Come along, Robbins; take me to your fellow steward."

Robbins, very puzzled, obeyed with alacrity. Passing down the sumptuous staircase until they were two or three decks below, Robbins opened a bulkhead door, and now he and Lee passed along a drab-coloured, electrically-lit passage.

This was a part of the crew's quarters—and very different, by contrast, from the passengers' sections of the ship.

Opening a metal door, Robbins entered a stuffy little cabin, where another man in steward's uniform was engaged in the task of sewing a button on a white jacket. He jumped up as soon as he saw Nelson Lee.

"Harper's not on duty just now, sir," explained Robbins. "This gentleman is worried about your cat, Jim."

"It's no good, sir," said Harper dolefully. "The chief won't change his mind. I suppose he's right, really. I'm going to drop Clement overboard soon—Clement's the cat, sir."

"Let me see him," said Lee. "I think I can dispatch him very easily for you."

The cat, very ill indeed, was produced from a corner of the cabin. Lee wasted no time. Watched wonderingly by the two stewards, he produced the hair-lotion bottle, removed the cork, and with one quick jab he lightly inserted the needle point into the animal's skin.

The effect was startling.

The poor creature tried to cry out, but failed; it leapt up, all four legs clawing at the air. Then, with a convulsive shudder, it thudded to the floor and lay still, except for some slight twitchings.

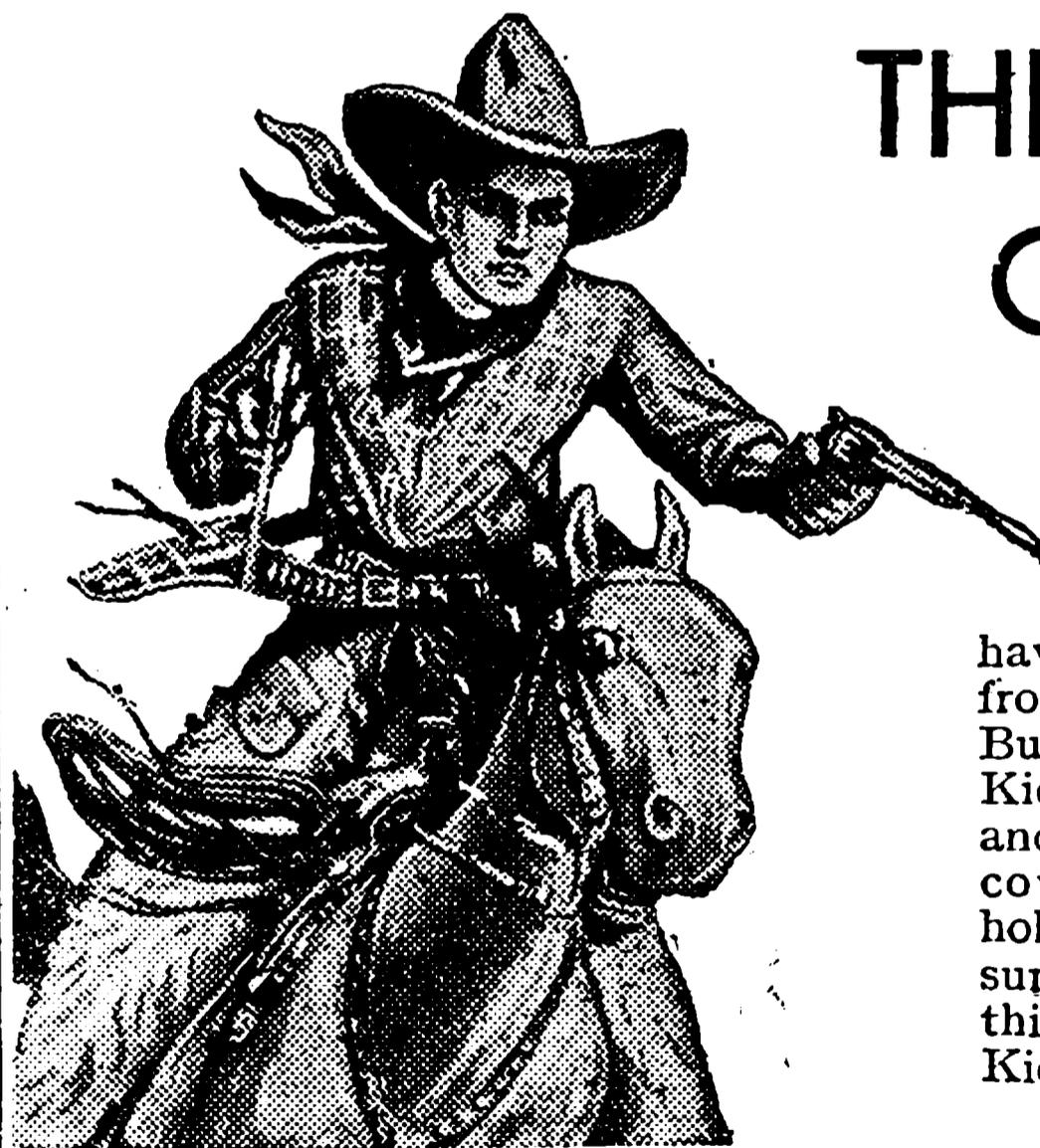
"Strike me!" muttered Robbins. "Never saw anything so quick in all my born days!"

"So much better than drowning, Harper," said Lee, with the utmost calmness. "Even a cat should not be caused unnecessary suffering."

"I'm much obliged to you, I'm sure, sir," said Harper, who was still staring fascinatedly at the dead cat.

"That's all right," replied Lee, and with a nod he went.

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In his pocket he held that lotion bottle, with the cork once more tightly screwed in. And the great detective was thoroughly satisfied.

But for his alert wits, he would have suffered the fate of that wretched cat! The great detective had had one of the narrowest escapes of his adventurous career.

CHAPTER 10.

A Spot of Bother!

"THE guv'nor's a long time," said Nipper uneasily.

He and Clive were sitting at the table in the dining saloon, which they had shared with Nelson Lee since the commencement of the voyage. The first course of the luncheon was over, and Lee had not yet made his appearance.

Nipper and Clive were troubled—so troubled, in fact, that they had not noticed the unusual pallor of Mr. Kendrick Holland, who sat, in solitary state, at a small table on the other side of the saloon. Again, Mr. Walter Digby was taking his meal in the seclusion of his cabin.

But "Butch" was here—and he had no appetite. The non-arrival of Nelson Lee did not surprise him, knowing what he did, but he was puzzled. Nipper and Clive Maynard knew nothing obviously—or they would not have been calmly partaking of their luncheon.

Perhaps Lee had stayed behind after the boys had gone; and now Lee was lying stretched on the floor of his state-room—

Butch, with a loaded fork half-way to his mouth, started. The food dropped from the fork and spilt itself over the snowy-white table-cloth. A choking sound came from Butch's throat.

For Nelson Lee, smart and spruce, with his hair perfectly brushed, had just come striding briskly into the saloon.

And Lee, in order to reach his own table, passed fairly close to Holland's. And Lee was looking at Holland deliberately—with a steady, challenging, mocking light in his eyes. Only for a moment did the two men gaze at one another thus—Lee calm, Holland terrified. Then Lee passed on.

The detective thoroughly enjoyed the situation. It was just as well to let the enemy know that he knew; that he was very much on his guard. Lee, from this minute onwards, would revel in this grim battle of wits.

"You've been a long time, guv'nor," said Nipper. "Clive and I began to think that something was wrong."

"No; everything is all right," replied Nelson Lee, as he unrolled his serviette. "I have just completed the little test I spoke to you of. That needle point, as I suspected, was deadly."

"I can't understand why you're so cool and calm about it, sir," said Clive breathlessly.

"If you had had as many narrow escapes as I have had, you wouldn't be so mystified,"

replied Lee dryly. "I'm not pretending that I take attempts on my life as a matter of course. Fortunately, such experiences are comparatively rare."

"Bo a sport, guv'nor," said Nipper eagerly. "You know who played that murderous trick, don't you? You must know—or you couldn't have twigged it."

"Yes, I know," nodded Lee. "But we're not going to discuss the matter here, Nipper. Luncheon is far more important."

Even after the meal, when Lee once again passed Butch Holland with a dangerous twinkle in his eyes, he kept his own counsel.

"There's no earthly reason why you youngsters should bother your heads," he said lightly. "On a sea voyage you should enjoy yourselves. Later on, perhaps, I will tell you how much I have discovered. But, frankly, it is so very little that it's not worth telling. I am hoping to increase my knowledge. I'd give a great deal to know, Maynard, what your cabin contains to make it worth somebody's while to obliterate me."

IN State-room No. 27, Walter Digby, alias Snake Beratti, was looking at Kendrick Holland, alias Butch Menzini, with a cold, contemptuous eye. This was literally true, as his other eye was out of commission.

"You're yellow, Butch!" he said sourly. "You're so darned scared that your imagination——"

"Imagination nothing," snarled Holland. "I tell you, Lee came into the dining saloon with his hair all brushed. And he looked straight at me! Yeah, looked at me in a way that couldn't be mistaken. He knows! That blamed stunt of yours has failed, and now that 'dick' is on to us."

"Don't make me laugh," retorted Snake. "Maybe he only used one hairbrush—and he'll get what's coming to him later on. He might have used the kids' brushes. Anyway, I fixed that needle in such a way that there can't be any mistake."

Tap—tap!

It was a discreet knock on the door, and the two men exchanged quick glances.

"One moment, please," said Holland, speaking in a refined voice.

But the door opened before either he or Digby could move, and Nelson Lee stood there. The great detective was a believer in the policy of carrying the war into the enemy's camp. There was no surer method of getting the enemy thoroughly rattled.

"I hope I am not intruding, gentlemen?" asked Lee smilingly.

He closed the door softly behind him.

"Of course not—of course not!" said Holland, with an effort. "I think you are Mr. Lee, are you not, sir? I'm sorry to say that my friend was unfortunate enough to trip over last night——"

"Your friend did not, by any chance, come into contact with a youthful fist?" interrupted Leo gently.

"May I ask exactly what you mean, sir?" asked Digby haughtily.

"You both do it very well—but I am not in the least fooled," said Lee. "By the way, what I really came about was this."

He took the bottle out of his pocket, withdrew the cork, and displayed the deadly needle.

"Here, gentlemen, we have an interesting little object," he went on smoothly. "Let us refer to it as Exhibit A. If you feel this point, Mr. Holland, you will find that it is quite sharp."

Holland recoiled with a gasp as Lee suddenly thrust the cork forward, and he went as white as death.

"My dear sir, are you ill?" asked Lee, with concern. "Do you imagine that a mere prick would hurt you?" He eyed them both steadily. "Is it possible that you gentlemen have seen this needle before?"

The two crooks were dumb—terrified by Nelson Lee's extraordinary attack.

"I thought I would just let you know," continued the detective. "By the way, Mr. Digby, I would like to point out that while 'Flower of Kashmir' is a delightful perfume, it is also distinctive—and it possesses the quality of hanging about. You really should be more careful when you wipe other people's hairbrushes with your handkerchiefs. And let me suggest that you are playing a very dangerous game. Exactly how dangerous it is you will realise, if you attempt any more of those delightful practical jokes."

And, nodding, Lee passed out of the cabin and closed the door behind him. The two discomfited crooks had never had such an experience as this in all their careers; and even Snake Digby was looking white about the gills—for he had had the greater shock of the two.

"Well, you big sap?" panted Holland, when he could find his voice. "What did I tell you? I guess you'll believe me now!"

"Sure! I believe you!" muttered Digby. "Say, that guy has sure got nerve!"

"We're sunk!" snarled Holland. "You big fool! You and your poisoned needles! Lee's on his way to the captain right now—and the captain of a liner is a No. 1 Big Noise! He'll put us under arrest—"

"Don't be a fool, Butch," interrupted Digby. "Lee can't do anything—that's why he came here. He hasn't a shadow of proof, and he knows it. We're safe from the captain; but I'm telling you that we're not safe from Lee! Gosh! That guy's sure got nerve!" he added, his voice full of grudging admiration and wonder.

THE starboard promenade deck, being the sunny side of the ship, was more or less deserted—for it was a hot day, and the sun was glaringly powerful.

Taking advantage of this opportunity, Clive Maynard had dodged to his state-room, and had returned with his favourite cricket bat and a ball. Nipper regarded these implements with a doubtful eye.

"So that's why you buzzed away just now?" he said. "You don't expect me to help you in this sinister plot, do you?"

"I thought we might have a bit of a knockabout," said Clive. "The other promenade deck is practically empty—"

"And baking like a griddle!" nodded Nipper. "Of course, you don't mind it. The hotter it is, the better, eh? Well, all right, I'm game. But if any windows are broken—"

"It's not a cricket ball," protested Clive. "It's a tennis ball."

"My poor child, haven't I got eyes?" said Nipper. "And do you imagine, in your babylike innocence, that a tennis ball won't break windows? I remember once, at St. Frank's— However, why rake up unpleasant memories? Let's begin."

Nipper, in fact, was rather piqued. Nelson Lee's attitude annoyed him. It was quite clear that the detective knew something, but he was keeping it to himself. Nipper felt that a spot of cricket—even this pretence of cricket—would relieve his feelings.

They went round to the sunny starboard promenade, and a middle-aged gentleman, meeting them, smilingly shook his head.

"Boys will be boys, eh?" he said, his eyes twinkling. "Are you allowed to play ball on deck?"

"I don't think anybody will object, sir," said Nipper.

"I hope not," replied the other. "That's a fine-looking cricket bat you have, young man. My word! A beauty!"

He took it almost lovingly from Clive Maynard's hands, and, turning it over, weighed it in the air and tried the balance. Then he sighed.

"Pity I can't be a boy, too," he said regretfully. "Well, go ahead! Enjoy yourselves!"

Nodding and smiling, he passed on, and Nipper noticed that Clive was looking thoughtful.

"What's on your mind, old man?" asked Nipper.

"I'll swear I've seen that man before—except, of course, on this ship," replied Clive Maynard. "But this is the first time I've heard his voice—and although it's an unfamiliar voice, I seem to know it, somehow. It's different—and yet it reminds me of something, and I don't know what."

"My dear chap, that's nothing," said Nipper. "We often meet people like that—whose voices are reminiscent of somebody else's."

"Yes, I suppose so," said Clive. "When I looked at the man just now, too, I thought for a second that I half knew him. Funny sort of feeling."

But he dismissed the matter a minute later, when, bat in hand, he took up his stand at an imaginary wicket, and Nipper bowled to him.

It was necessary to be careful, for a false hit would mean a lost ball—and an irretrievably lost ball. Then there were the cabin windows to be careful of, too. However, the deck was wide, and as everything proceeded merrily, Clive became bolder.

(Continued on page 24.)

As An Unconscious Humorist Handy Takes the Whole Bag of Biscuits!



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WITTY
WISDOM

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 Editor E. O. Handforth
 Chief Sub-Editor E. O. Handforth
 Literary Editor E. O. Handforth
 Art Editor E. O. Handforth
 Rest of Staff E. O. Handforth

May 21st, 1932.

NIPPER'S
PUZZLE
POEMS

PROFESSOR TUCKER has been growing a beard for some time, but this morning he was without it again. Evidently he forgot not to shave.

It's a good thing that Fatty Little isn't as absent-minded as Professor Tucker. Instead of eating his dinner, he would probably eat the fellow next to him. This would be terrible, for it would almost certainly affect Fatty's digestion.

The other day, Handy's car ran out of oil just as he was about to drive it out. He had no reserve supply, so he was forced to look about for a substitute. But this is all to the good, as Handy knows for certain now that hair oil is not suitable for motor-cars.

Archie Glenthorne went to sleep in the German lesson yesterday, and started snoring. But it was quite all right, of course. The German master thought he was construing.

I was bitten in a very nasty spot (the coal-cellar) by Willy Handforth's greyhound this morning. I suppose pets find it easy to make pests of themselves.

Talking of pests, I was supposed to interview Crowell at five o'clock, but I didn't show up until six p.m. Crowell was wrathful. "I told you to come at five," he roared. "What time do you call this?" "Six," I said meekly. "I'll give you six!" bawled Crowell. He did!

A HANDY ANSWER

When Willy saved a lady's pram
 From underneath a car,
 She murmured, "Thanks, my little lamb!"
 But Willy answered, "Bah!"

(A. McC.)

I'M not a poet (thank goodness!) so these two verses aren't very good ones. But that doesn't matter really, for they are only puzzles disguised as poems.

In this verse you will find four blanks. Each of these has to be filled with a four-letter word made from the same four letters. (For instance —TRAP, PART, RAPT etc.)

"I cannot" quoth William Browne,
 "For all the big in the town;
 The comes in about a minute,
 And something for me, old, is in it."

The next verse has five blanks to be filled in the same way. One of these blanks is actually the name of a St. Frank's junior, so this should be easy.

A trick on a West House man
 We once heard Bernard Forrest plan;
 But told him to his shame
 That he'd found out his game;
 He could not his fell intent.
 So he will now to repent.
 Answers below.

NIPPER.

SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES.

1st Verse: STOP, POTTS, POST, TOPS.

2nd Verse: VILE, LEVI, EVIL, VEIL, LIVE.

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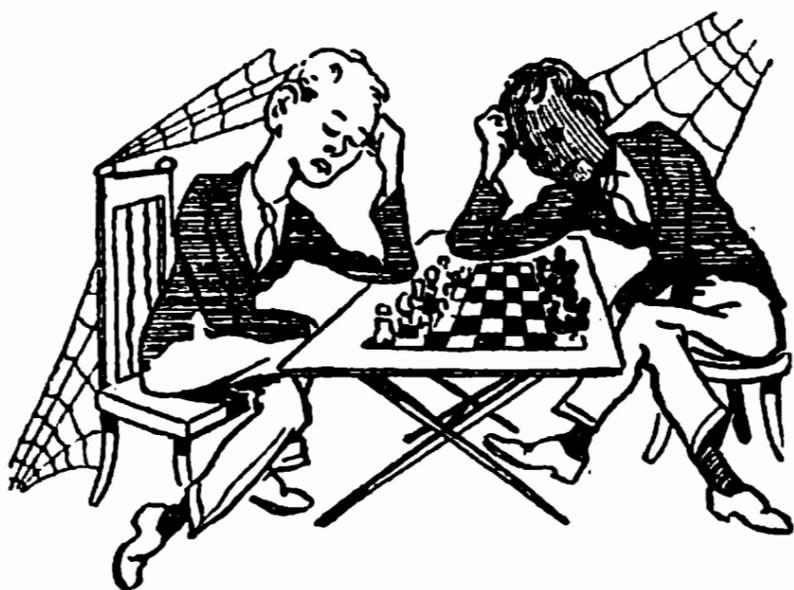
(Advt.)

HOLIDAY NOTE

When you go to the seaside always take a straw with you in case you see a drowning man.

THE GREAT CHESS FINAL

A report, just slightly exaggerated, by HARRY GRESHAM



IN October, 1928, Hussi Ranjit Lal Khan, Esq. (of India's coral strand) met Sir Montague Tregellis-West (of Tregellis Castle and Bannington Gaol) in the final of the great chess tournament. Amid excited shrieks from the spectators Mr. Khan moved a pawn, changed his mind, and moved it back again.

On Christmas Eve he moved it forward again, and all through the Christmas Vac. there were breathless speculations about what Montie would do in the matter. In the New Year Tregellis-West proved

himself a master of strategy by moving one of his own pawns, and covering his opponent's attack.

Here the matter rested until July, when it was thought that Hussi Khan was dead. Upon a pin being inserted into his flesh, however, it was discovered that he was still alive, though in an advanced state of coma. In August he woke up and moved his pawn back again.

In October the caretaker dusted both players very carefully and in doing so flicked a couple of pieces off the board. The noise aroused Montie, who sneezed twice and checkmated his own king with an opposing pawn. As the Indian player had not awakened, Montie swiftly moved back out of danger, squashing a spider which had made a web on his queen's topknot.

A year went by and Hussi Khan, awakening at last, called out "Play!" in a loud voice, and asked what the score was. When he discovered that Montie was winning by two pawns to one, he threw all Montie's pieces (except his king) on the fire, and checkmated him all over the board. Having done this, he went up to the dorm for a small nap.

Sir Montie is expected to wake up at any year now, and what he will say when he finds that he has lost we cannot think.

HOPELESS LONGING

If I was only a millionaire,
I'd do the thing I want;
Just one small thing—for I don't care
To be extravagant;
I'd do it at once, I do declare,
If I was only a millionaire.
If I was only a millionaire,
I'd heartily rejoice;
No cloth of gold or satins rare
Would be my humble choice;
For my desire's a small affair,
If I was only a millionaire.
If I was only a millionaire,
I'd go it rather strong;
With a grandly patronising air,
I'd seek out Teddy Long,
And give him enough to cut his hair,
If I was only a millionaire.

(C. DE V.)

FINIS

This year I thought I'd really do
My best to keep a diary,
But when my pal had read it through,
He said it was a "liary":
My cash affairs each day I'd state,
Which turned it to a "buyery,"
And now it's fallen in the grate,
At last it's rather fiery.

CATCHING CROWELL

SCENE: *Remove Form-room.*

TIME: *Yesterday.*

CROWELL: Watson, is that an ink-spot on your collar?

TOMMY: No, sir.

CROWELL: What is it, then?

TOMMY: A spot of ink, sir. (*Sniggers.*)

CROWELL: What do you mean by that, boy? There is no difference at all between a spot of ink and an ink-spot, Watson.

TOMMY (meekly): Isn't there, sir? Then I suppose there is no difference between a drop of acid and an acid drop, sir? (*Crowell collapses amid loud applause.*)

A SQUARE DEAL

Our Study Table.

LAUGHABLE ERROR

We hear that a Sixth-former, who keeps a pet monkey, recently stroked his fag on the back of the head and kicked the monkey for burning his toast. The mistake was very excusable, of course.

STANLEY

tells us

SURPRISING

I'VE had a good my young god of the biggest was when I stage with my theatre in Paris de stuff, and the audi very heartily. We and again and, at tired, we stagg dressing-room.

Before we could manager of the said (in French, was an African p and he had been our show. Would be presented to hi

"Bring in yo means. old son "We shall be ho Highness."

So presently chamberlain or s our room and bow gentlemen were a and they looked wanted to laugh. though, and fat speech.

"My son and respectively, "an by this meeting. most dutiful and are overwhelmed that our little a Highness pleasure.

The chamberla speech to the pri began to talk.

Ye gods! I ha who could talk li hands and rolled until dad and La alarmed. A torri out of him; for mi kept it up, spout as though he was course we couldn he said, and we was in a terrible thing.

"Ookah muss dirrocketer dum "Testawivito me —or something lik

After he had fashion for abou dropped exhauste panted for breath chamberlain.

"What did he s The chamberla that split his dusk

"He say dat Don't menshun it

CRICKET PROSPECTS

WALDO

his most

MOMENT

many surprises in but I think one surprises I ever had playing on the We were at a our strong man's once applauded us were encored again last, feeling very and back to our

ress, however, the (atre came in and course) that there in the audience, hly delighted with allow ourselves to

r prince, by all laughed father. ured to meet His

he prince and a nobody came into d to us. The two black as charcoal, so funny that I le were very grave, r made them a

I, sire," said he greatly honoured We give you our mble respects, and with joy to think t has given Your

a translated this te, who thereupon

never met a man ft! He waved his is eyes frantically, gan to feel really of words poured ate after minute he ng his awful lingo ing it for a bet. Of nderstand a word vere afraid that he passion about some-

aminoo possunka o," he shrieked. aka alakita lossoo " that.

carried on in this ten minutes he into a chair, and We turned to the

" asked dad. n unloosed a grin ace in halves. " quite all right. he replied.

IT is surprising how necessary cricket practice is when the bat and ball have been put away in a cupboard for a few months. Cricket seems worse than football for making a fellow out of practice.

Jerry Dodd, for instance, who knocks down wickets with his deadly bowling, has done some surprising things in the practice games this season. He has accounted for two slips and a square leg already, and once, in trying to make the ball turn on a hard wicket, he put such a spin on it that it hit the ground and bounced back to him like a boomerang. It was pretty to watch, but it is hardly cricket, after all.

Handy has accomplished many worthy feats. His best effort was when he got hold of an old bat which was weak at the splice. In lunging out for a terrific six with his weapon, he was amazed to see the blade leave the handle, sail up into the air, turn two somersaults, and drop with a dull thud on his own brain-box. Naturally, he missed the ball entirely. The wicket-keeper (Buster Boots) was too interested in looking at the bat to bother about what was happening to the ball. He lost interest in the bat, however, in just about one second. It is difficult to feel interest in anything with a fast ball on the tip of your nose.

Another curious incident happened when

Bernard Forrest was standing by the playing fields, and a hefty "six" from Gresham gave him a jolt in the small of the back. He turned round with a yell. Not seeing anything of the ball, he immediately concluded that Hubbard, who was standing just beside him, had punched him there with malice aforethought. Without a word he gave Hubbard a clout under the chin, which stretched him on the grass.

Now Gore-Pearce was standing with Hubbard, and when he saw Forrest's unprovoked blow he rushed at the Cad of the Remove and punched him sharply on the jaw. Bell and Gulliver jumped at him, Hubbard, who had risen from the ground, jumped at Bell and Gulliver. In a moment a record fight was raging.

Handy, who had come to retrieve the ball, managed to catch an accidental straight left from Gulliver. Then he joined in with tremendous gusto. Altogether it was as good a scrap as any within oldest memory. Gresham, especially, enjoyed with keen delight the row he had started, and egged the combatants on until Fenton and Morrow arrived with ash-plants. Then there was a scrap of another kind.

It is the general feeling that our cricket prospects this year are very bright. May it prove that the general feeling is quite right.



OUR CRICKET GUYED

Proving that Stone-walling Pays

Out in Australia, in a no-time-limit match, two stone-wallers won a match for their side. Bangancrashem Wanderers went in first and knocked up 358 in a day. Then Neverhittit sent in their two best stone-wallers, who mechanically stopped every straight ball, and left every other ball alone. In this way they won the match in the third month of their innings, amid great applause. The final score was : Neverhittit.

| | |
|----------------------------|-----|
| I. Blockem (not out)..... | 0 |
| O. Stoppett (not out)..... | 0 |
| Byes..... | 359 |
| <hr/> | |
| Total, 0 wickets..... | 359 |

HALF BREAD DOGS

The local butcher's pork sausages.

OUR UNIQUE POET

Since all sorts of fellows
Are writing verses
About spring; I am resolved
To be quite different, and
Express my thoughts
In prose
For a change.

(T. W.)

QUITE TRUE

A proverb is told of
The longing for tin:
The more you get hold of,
The more you rake in;
When I hadn't any
I thought this untrue;
But now I've a penny,
I badly want two.

(M. T. W.)

THE DANGER SHIP!

(Continued from page 20.)

Nipper was pleased with him. This youngster handled his bat well. He shaped like a real cricketer.

Nipper bowled again—a medium-paced ball which bounced temptingly. Clive simply could not resist it; he swiped with considerable energy.

"Catch!" he yelled.

The ball left the bat as true as a die, Nipper leapt, but the ball was just out of his reach. It hummed past, and landed fairly and squarely, with a terrific thud, on the neck of an elderly gentleman who had just emerged from the lounge doorway.

"That's done it!" groaned Nipper. "Oh, you silly ass, Maynard!"

"Hi! What the— Good heavens! Who hit me?" roared the sufferer, charging round and revealing a red, infuriated face. "Huh! Cricket! You infernal young rascals! How dare you!"

He came striding round the deck, rubbing the back of his neck with one hand, and shaking his fist at the young cricketers. Nipper now recognised him; he was Colonel Tracey, a typical Indian army officer going home on leave. And his temper was of the true peppery type.

"It was my fault, sir!" said Clive, running up, very concerned. "I'm really awfully sorry—"

"Sorry be hanged, boy!" roared Colonel Tracey. "You might have brained me!"

The gentleman who had previously spoken to Nipper and Clive appeared on the scene.

"I don't think the boys are much to blame, sir," he said gently. "It was quite an accident—"

"And who the deuce asked you to interfere, sir?" barked the colonel. "Do you think I'm going to allow this sort of thing? That ball might have hit me in the eye—and I wear glasses! I should have been blinded!"

And with a sudden wrench he pulled the cricket bat out of Clive's hand, and with one swoop he flung it overboard.

"That's to teach you a lesson!" he said triumphantly.

"Oh! That's the bat my pater gave me!" shouted Clive, in despair.

He rushed to the rail and stared down at the blue-green sea. He caught a glimpse of the cricket bat as it floated to the surface. Nelson Lee, attracted by the little commotion, was coming along the deck, too.

The middle-aged man who had tried to intervene on the boys' behalf had gone to the rail with Clive and Nipper, and now he was leaning perilously over.

"That was too bad!" he said in a strangely strained voice. "There it is—look! I can see it—"

As he was pointing he leaned farther over, and suddenly, with a wildly alarmed shout, he lost his balance.

Down he went, clean overside, to plunge into the sea.

CHAPTER 11.

The Mysterious Mr. Protheroe!

"MAN overboard!"

The cry went up as though by magic. The scene on the sunny promenade deck became a drama instead of a comedy.

Deck hands and officers appeared; life-belts were flung overboard. And already the liner's engines had stopped, and an officer was shouting out orders in preparation for the lowering of a boat.

The man who had fallen overboard, fortunately, appeared to be a strong swimmer; he was in full sight, and there was no indication that he was in difficulties.

"Maynard, my son, there's going to be some trouble over this," said Nipper sympathetically.

"For me, do you mean?"

"You bet I do!"

"I believe you're right, too," said Clive in a scared voice. "That man wouldn't have fallen overboard if we hadn't been playing cricket, would he? It was my fault. Think of it! This great liner being stopped in mid-ocean because of a cricket bat!"

"There'll be an inquiry—and I can see you on the carpet, in the captain's cabin," said Nipper. "At a rough guess, I should think you'll be put in irons for the rest of the journey."

But Clive Maynard was in no mood for such remarks.

"What if that man drowns?" he asked huskily. "Oh, it's too dreadful to think of! He was looking at the bat, and he accidentally tumbled over—"

"Don't be an ass," said Nipper. "That wasn't your fault. He shouldn't have been so reckless."

Nelson Lee, who had witnessed the whole incident, had come to a different conclusion.

In fact, the detective was more than startled. He had seen Colonel Tracey fling the cricket bat overboard; and he had seen the expression of utter consternation come into the face of the middle-aged stranger—whose name Lee knew to be Protheroe.

Why had Mr. Protheroe turned pale at the sight of a cricket bat being flung over-side? And why had he deliberately fallen overboard—ingeniously pretending to have fallen by accident?

Lee was certain of it. Protheroe had tipped over the rail purposely—and his only object in doing so could have been to recover Clive Maynard's cricket bat.

"This is becoming vastly entertaining," murmured Lee. "In fact, we have a definite clue here. That bat of Maynard's is not so innocent as it looks."

Lee was at the rail, watching the activities. Mr. Protheroe had already obtained one of the life-belts, and he was now floating securely. The liner had reversed her engines, and after a considerable commotion, with a great churning of the water, the engines were silent again. Sailors were in

a boat, others were lowering it from the davits. Scores of passengers, attracted from their afternoon naps, were at the rails.

Nelson Lee noticed a quietly dressed man near him; a man who was looking overboard anxiously, agitatedly. And in his hands he held a heavy travelling rug.

"Quite exciting, my friend," remarked Lee suddenly.

The man looked at him.

"I don't know about being exciting, sir—it's scared me," he said. "I'm Mr. Protheroe's valet. Denney's my name, sir."

"You needn't be scared," said Lee. "Mr. Protheroe will come to no harm. They'll bring him back all right."

"I hope so, sir," said Denney. "I can't think what made my master fall overboard. Are there any sharks in these waters, sir?" he added suddenly.

"I hardly think so," replied Lee. "We're not in the Indian Ocean now. Still, it's a point. The sooner Mr. Protheroe is aboard, the better. It seems that your master leaned overboard to look at a cricket bat—"

"Yes, I know—I heard!" muttered Denney. "The blamed fool—"

He checked himself in some confusion.

"Mr. Abel Protheroe is a rich tea merchant, sir—going home to England for a vacation," he explained. "Now and again he has attacks of giddiness."

"Oh?" said Lee.

"Yes, sir. I expect that's what happened to him just now," continued Denney. "Usually Mr. Protheroe wouldn't go to the rail at all. I do hope he comes back all right. Why are they so long? Can't they get that boat lowered? I wonder if he's got that bat?"

"The bat, after all, is of very small importance," said Lee dryly.

"Oh, yes, sir—of course!" said Denney. "The bat doesn't matter at all."

He spoke so hastily that Lee was secretly amused. The man's gratuitous information—and quite inaccurate information, for Lee had often seen Mr. Protheroe leaning over the rail—was in the nature of a colossal blunder. If Denney had made those remarks to any other passenger it would not have mattered so much. But to make them to Nelson Lee was quite fatal.

Lee had already formed his own conclusions about Mr. Protheroe's "accident" and the valet's words, uttered injudiciously in his agitation, were enlightening.

THERE was a good deal of amusement amongst the passengers when Mr. Protheroe was lifted into the boat. For it was seen that he had, indeed, recovered Clive Maynard's cricket bat. He was holding it tightly, and he would not even allow the sailors to take it from him. He did another curious thing, too; no sooner was he in the boat than he pulled his wet jacket upwards, inside out over his head, in a kind of hood, so that his face was more

or less hidden. And he sat in the boat, hunched up.

To the watching passengers these little eccentricities meant nothing. To Nelson Lee they meant a whole lot.

"Many thanks to the peppery Colonel Tracey," murmured Lee softly. "He unconsciously did me a good service when he threw that cricket bat overboard."

At last the boat drew alongside, and by this time an accommodation ladder had been lowered. Mr. Protheroe, still grasping the bat, climbed up, with a sailor in advance and an officer just below. Another officer stood on the rail, and some more sailors kept the interested passengers back.

But Denney forced his way forward, explaining that he was Mr. Protheroe's valet. And no sooner had Mr. Protheroe stepped on deck than Denney enveloped him completely in the big travelling rug.

"Thank you, my man—thank you!" said Mr. Protheroe. "But I'm all right—I'm quite all right. Let me get to my cabin."

Nelson Lee, standing near at hand, felt a little thrill pass through him. In that moment before Denney had flung the rug he had seen that Mr. Protheroe's wig was out of place; he had also seen that Mr. Protheroe's bushy eyebrows had slipped! And this was an exceedingly significant point. A man may wear a wig and be considered a normal individual; but false eyebrows are hard to explain! Lee now understood why Mr. Protheroe had pulled his jacket so completely over his face.

Clive Maynard, forcing his way through, grasped at the cricket bat.

"It was awfully good of you, sir," he said breathlessly. "I'm afraid it was all my fault—"

"Nonsense!" came Mr. Protheroe's muffled voice from within the rug. "As I was in the sea—I don't know how I came to topple over the rail—I happened to see the cricket bat floating by, so I thought I might as well retrieve it. Nothing to thank me for, boy."

Clive took the bat; and it seemed that Mr. Protheroe relinquished it with reluctance.

"Thank goodness he was decent about it," muttered Clive, as he and Nipper moved off. "I was afraid he was going to make an awful fuss—"

"Why should he? It wasn't your fault he fell in," said Nipper. "In any case, Colonel Tracey is making enough fuss for a dozen."

It was true. The colonel, very red of face, was shouting at the top of his voice to Mr. Walters, the second officer.

"Confounded boys!" he stormed. "How dare they play cricket on the promenade deck! I'm going to make it my business to report this matter to the captain. Huh! A man nearly gets drowned and the ship is delayed, and—"

"Yes, sir," interrupted Mr. Walters patiently. "It might have been better if you had reported the boys' conduct to an

officer instead of throwing that cricket-bat overboard. That seems to have been the start of all the trouble."

"Eh? By gad, sir, if you are suggesting that I'm to blame——"

Colonel Tracey broke off, more red in the face than ever, and he stalked away in some discomfiture.

The incident was over as far as the ordinary passengers were concerned.

But Nelson Lee had never been more keenly on the alert. As the Orient continued her voyage Clive Maynard went to his own state-room carrying the cricket-bat. He was accompanied by Nipper, and Nelson Lee immediately followed.

The detective had a clue to the mystery, and he was determined to follow it up while it was red-hot.

CHAPTER 12.

The Seal of Oom!

"WELL, the bat doesn't seem to have come to any harm," said Clive with relief. "It might split, or something, when it dries, and that would be a shame. It was a special present from my father."

"My dear chap, the bat is twice as valuable now," said Nipper dryly. "Think what you'll be able to tell the fellows when you get to St. Frank's. How many cricket-bats can boast of such a record? This bat, alone and unaided, caused the ocean liner Orient to reverse engines and——"

"I say!" interrupted Clive, with concern. "There's a sort of swelling here. I believe the bat's ruined."

Before Nipper could make any comment Nelson Lee came forward, took the bat, and carried it to the window. Clive was right. The immersion in the sea-water had had its effect; in the large "bulgy" part of the bat, three or four inches from the bottom, a sort of blister had formed on the batting surface.

"Very curious," said Lee, and his voice was hard and grim.

"What do you mean, gov'nor?" asked Nipper quickly.

"I mean that we have the solution of the problem here," replied the detective. "This bat was given to you by your father, Maynard, was it not?"

"Yes, sir."

"It was a very special present—your most prized possession?"

"Yes, sir."

"It was the one thing you would value and keep safe?"

"Why, of course, sir," said the surprised Clive.

"Then it looks as though your father played a harmless little trick on you," said Lee. "There must be a cavity in this bat, containing some article of remarkable value."

"What!"

"Don't be so surprised," said Lee. "Why do you suppose Mr. Protheroe deliberately throw himself into the sea?"

"But—but. he didn't!" protested Clive. "He fell over the rail by accident."

"Yes, I'll admit he did it very well, but it was no accident," said Lee. "Mr. Protheroe knows the secret of this bat, and when he saw it flung overboard he was so startled that his one and only thought was to recover it. He could not dive in deliberately, for that would have looked too obvious, so he did the next best thing, and accidentally fell over the rail. Quite a clever little dodge."

"Ye gods and little fishes!" ejaculated Nipper. "So that's the explanation. That man who came in the night, who drugged Zafar and searched Clive's state-room, was looking for this bat!"

"No, not the bat, but the thing the bat contains," replied Lee. "He only knew that it was hidden somewhere in young Maynard's belongings. He did not suspect that bat, or he would have taken it at once. Now before we do any more talking let's have a closer look."

Nipper and Clive were fascinated as Nelson Lee got to work with his penknife. But for the bat's immersion the secret might have remained undiscovered. But Lee could now see quite plainly that a section of the wood had been cunningly glued into place, and so perfectly had the work been accomplished that the join was absolutely invisible.

Nelson Lee knew that there was a cavity in the thick part of the willow. Something had been inserted, packed tight, and the "plug" of wood had been replaced, and so perfectly done that no trace remained. That plug was now bulging, being, of course, thinner than the rest of the bat and being more susceptible to the water than any other section.

At length Lee prized out the plug, and now the secret cavity was obvious. It was packed tight with wedges of wood, and Lee was at some pains to release these wedges. In the centre there was something else—a hard, metallic object wrapped in thick brown paper.

"Well, this beats me, sir," said Clive breathlessly. "I can't imagine what possessed my father to do this. Why didn't he tell me? I mean, it's so strange. Why should he give me this bat and tell me to take particular care of it?"

"Did your father tell you to take particular care of it?"

"Well, he said it was a specially good bat, and he hoped that I would make some centuries with it," replied Clive. "It was I who said that I would take particular care of it."

The object wrapped in brown paper came free at last, and Lee, placing the bat aside, unwrapped the paper. Clive and Nipper

watched with eager interest. And soon the wrapping being removed a heavy metal disc was revealed.

It was a quaint-looking object. Of dull gold, it was exquisitely engraved. It was almost a quarter of an inch thick and of considerable weight. Clive, at the first glance, turned pale with amazement and consternation.

"But—but that's the Great Seal of Oom!" he ejaculated hoarsely.

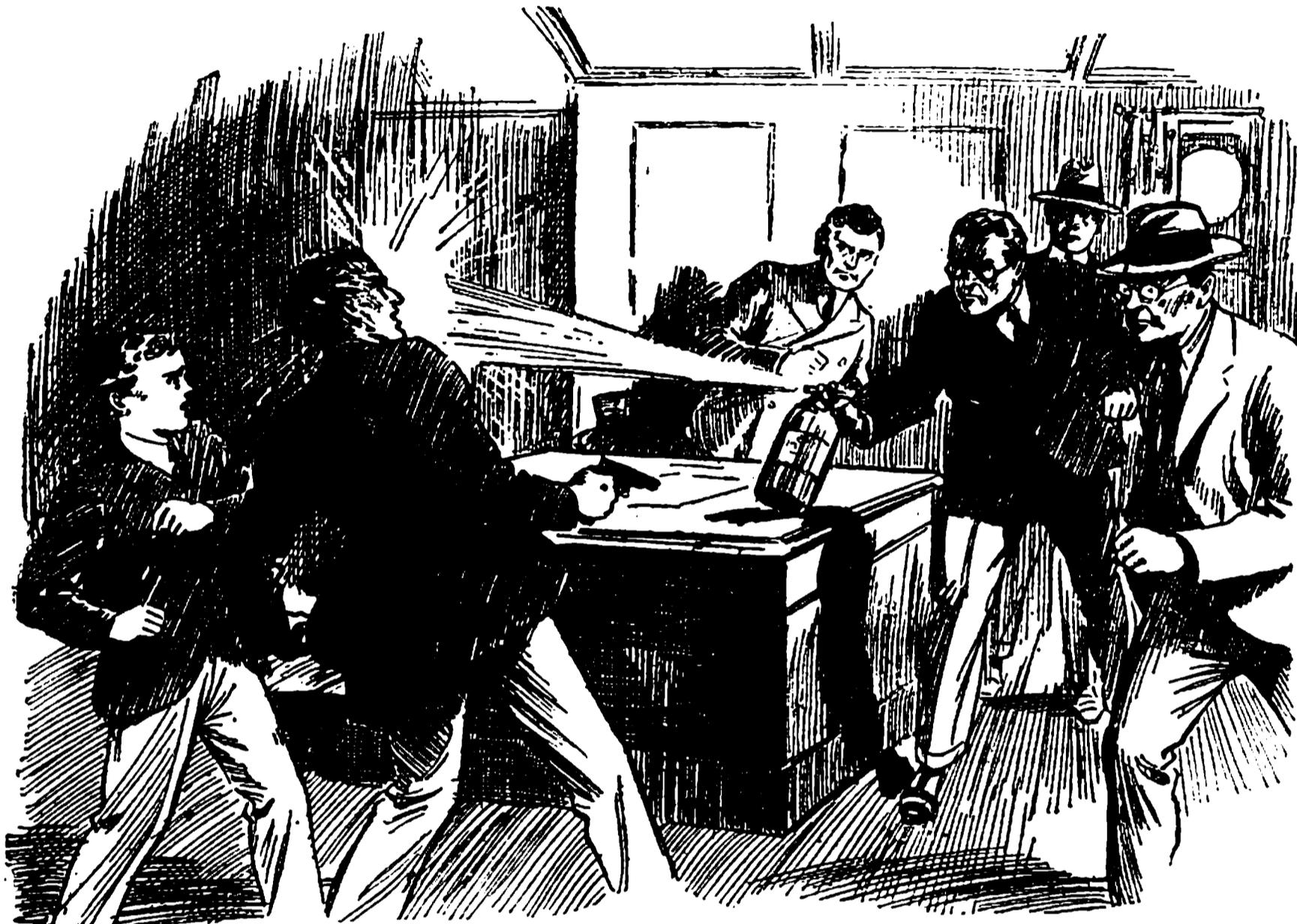
"So I see," nodded Lee, turning the seal over in his hand. "I have never actually

because the possession of that seal, the guarding of it, is a sacred trust of the Governors."

"No; your father did not do this," agreed Lee. "I'm quite certain now that your father knew nothing about the secret of the cricket-bat. But Mr. Abel Protheroe did know. That's why he dived in the sea."

Lee became silent. He was very thoughtful. Those other two men, Digby and Holland, of State-room No. 27, knew about the Seal of Oom, too.

They had been looking for the seal from



Quick as lightning the crook lunged forward, his hand falling on the lever of the soda-water siphon. Next moment a jet of water hissed across the cabin full in the face of Nelson Lee!

seen the seal before, but I have often seen photographs of it, for this seal is one of the most historic in all India. It is famous."

"It is my father's seal of office!" panted Clive. "It is always used by the Governor of Oom on ceremonial occasions. It's thousands and thousands of years old, and its historic associations are so wonderful that books have been written about it. The native princes of Oom almost worship that seal, sir."

"There'll be some trouble if its loss is discovered, I imagine," commented Lee grimly.

"Trouble!" echoed Clive. "Why, it might lead to a revolution. You know how superstitious the natives are, sir. My father didn't put that seal in the bat, that I'll swear. He wouldn't have done a thing like that for all the money in the world—

the first, but they had not known that it was hidden in this innocent-looking cricket-bat. So there were four crooks aboard this liner, all of them interested in the seal.

Interested? But what could their interest be? It was a queer puzzle.

The intrinsic value of the seal was insignificant; anything between fifty and a hundred pounds perhaps. Its market value was absolutely nil, for it was such a famous historic curio that no crook would attempt to sell it; no dealer would dare to buy it.

"Yet this seal must be of tremendous value in some other way," commented Nelson Lee. "It was a very brilliant piece of work, Clive, for the crooks to hide the seal in that cricket bat."

"How do you mean, sir—brilliant?"

"Why, if the loss had been prematurely discovered and if a search had been made

what would have been the result?" asked Lee. "Supposing that seal had been found in your bat by Government authorities? Don't you see that your father would have been accused of stealing the seal and smuggling it out of India?"

"Oh!" ejaculated Clive, horrified.

"He gave you that bat, and you knew nothing of the seal," continued Lee. "My boy, this matter needs some very careful attention, and it needs it at once. For unless I am greatly mistaken, the enemy will now make a rapid move."

And there the great detective was right on the mark.

CHAPTER 13.

Four of a Kind!

MR. KENDRICK HOLLAND, hoarse with excitement, had just finished pouring the story into the ears of Mr. Walter Digby.

"I'm telling you, Snake, that we've been a couple of boneheads!" he panted. "That blamed seal was hidden in the kid's baseball bat all the time."

"Cricket bat, you mean," said Digby.

"Aw, shucks! What's the difference!" said Holland. "Here's Protheroe on deck, and the kid fooling around with that bat. Some fiery old guy grabs the bat and heaves it overboard. And Protheroe falls over the rail! Say, we'd best get busy, Snake! The seal's in that bat, and that's why Protheroe and Denney were so comfortable. They figured that we wouldn't locate the hiding-place—and I guess they were right. It's this unexpected development which has given us the tip."

"Well, it ought to be easy after this," said Snake.

"Easy!" almost shouted the other. "Say, did that kid paralyse your brain when he soaked you in the eye?"

"Now, see here, Butch——"

"Aw, listen!" snapped Butch. "I saw the whole thing—and you didn't! Protheroe comes aboard, the kid takes the bat from him—and Lee goes straight to his cabin. And Lee spots that there's something phoney about that bat. Don't you get it? Lee's on! At this very minute he's opening up that bat as wide as Broadway at Times Square, and he's taking out the seal!"

"Gee! You may be right at that!" said Snake in sudden alarm.

"You bet I'm right!" snapped the other. "We'd best get straight to Protheroe and give him the low-down! He'll let us in on the racket now, and agree to split fifty-fifty."

Without any loss of time the two crooks left their state-room, and soon they entered another. They did not trouble to knock. Within, they found Mr. Abel Protheroe and Denney, his valet. Protheroe had evidently just come out of a bath, for he was wrapped in a big robe. He stared with quick sus-

picion, and Denney clapped a hand to his hip pocket.

"We haven't come here for any gunplay!" said Holland sharply.

"You fool!" snapped Protheroe, glaring at Denney. "Why didn't you lock that door?"

"I thought I had done," said Denney. "Say, you birds, if you come here to start something——"

"Listen, boys," said Snake earnestly. "Back in India you refused to let us in on this racket——"

"And we still refuse," interrupted Protheroe.

"Maybe you'll change your mind in a minute," went on Snake. "I guess it's time for a show-down. Butch and I know that the seal is hidden in that kid's cricket bat. I guess you were sure smart, brother, to do that diving stunt."

"Curse that old fool for throwing the bat overboard," said Protheroe harshly. "You'd never have know anything but for that."

"Maybe not—but we know now," went on Snake. "And I'm telling you, boys, that you'd best let us in. We'll need to work fast—or none of us will get a cent. Ever heard of an English detective guy named Nelson Leo?"

The other two men, who were not master and valet as they pretended—and who had now cast aside their veneer—looked alarmed.

"Lee has been butting in," continued Snake. "He's got that cricket bat, and you can bet your last dollar he's found the seal by this time. It's up to us to get busy—and it's no good doing things by halves. We'll have to go all out, boys."

CLEVER as the two Chicago gunmen were, Protheroe and Denney were cleverer. They were international crooks; American-born, but their world-wide experience was such that they now had no real nationality.

First and last, they were confidence tricksters; they were wanted by the police of many countries; for years they had toured the world, bringing off coup after coup. They had dozens of aliases, and they never appeared in the capitals of the world under the same names, or in the same personalities.

In India they had travelled in the guise of harmless American tourists, and it was while in Oom that they had so completely imposed upon General Maynard that the hospitable governor had entertained them as his guests.

And while there they had learned of the great historic value of the Seal; they had abused their host's hospitality by stealing the seal, and it had been a comparatively easy matter to hide it. Finding that Clive was about to go to England to school, they had annexed the boy's favourite cricket bat, and had secreted the Great Seal.

Thus, in case of discovery, they themselves were safe. Yet they knew that they would be travelling to England on the same liner, and they would be able to keep their eyes

on Clive. It would be easy enough to obtain that bat at the end of the voyage.

If there was a hue and cry, meanwhile, the seal would not be found upon them, or in their baggage.

Then a complication had arisen by the intervention of Digby and Holland. The two pairs of crooks had run across one another accidentally, and Denney, after drinking more than was good for him, had let out one or two hints. Digby and Holland had fathomed the game, and they had demanded to be let in on this new "racket." But Protheroe had refused them.

So the Chicago gunmen had taken passage on the same liner, intending to double-cross their fellow crooks and obtain the seal for themselves.

That was the position in a nutshell.

"SEE here, Protheroe, Butch and I will help you!" said Snake earnestly. "And, believe me, you guys need help right now! Lee has got that seal, and I guess the only way for us to beat him at this game is to get busy with our guns."

"You're crazy!" said Denney uneasily. "If we do anything like that, Lee will complain to the captain, and we'll be locked up in the brig."

"Sure!" said Holland. "Gunning is no good aboard a ship, Snake, you sap!"

"Well, how else can we do it?" demanded Snake harshly. "We can't wait until to-night. Lee will take that seal to the purser—and then it'll be locked up in the ship's safe."

"He's right, boys," said Protheroe, who, during the past few minutes, had been rapidly dressing. "I guess we'll go for the gunplay. We've got a hold on Lee and that kid. We can go right in, grab that seal, and Lee won't be able to do a thing!"

"Say, I don't get it!" exclaimed Denney.

"Leave this to me, boys," replied Protheroe. "Snake's right. We mustn't let Lee hand that seal over to the purser. Get your rods ready! We're going into action!"

CHAPTER 14.

Rough Stuff!

NELSON LEE, having placed the Seal of Oom in his pocket, looked at Clive Maynard steadily.

"Well, young 'un, the mystery is explained so far," he said. "But there are one or two little points I would like to clear up. It is quite certain that your father did not hide the seal in the cricket bat. Now, can you tell me if any outsider could have gained access to the seal?"

"Quite impossible, sir," replied Clive. "The seal is always kept locked away, with a sort of state regalia, in the governor's residence. There's a special section of my father's safe for the purpose."

"I take it that the seal, and the regalia, as you call it, are not disturbed usually?"

asked Lee. "I mean, your father would have no occasion to look at the seal until the next state ceremonial?"

"That's right, sir."

"Then it might be some months before the loss of the seal is discovered?"

"Yes, sir."

"A very clever criminal—a safe-breaker—could open your father's safe fairly easily, I imagine," went on Lee thoughtfully. "It wouldn't be a particularly modern safe. It could be opened, the seal removed, and the safe closed again, without any trace being left. Did your father have any guests at about the time you were preparing to come on your voyage?"

"Why, yes! Yes, indeed!" said Clive suddenly. "There were two American tourists—rich merchants, touring India for the purpose of opening up new markets."

"Protheroe and Denney!" nodded Lee grimly.

This time Clive Maynard jumped.

"That man, Protheroe!" he gasped. "I told Nipper, only this afternoon, that his voice seemed a bit familiar. Now I know! It reminded me of one of those American tourists! It wasn't the same name, but—"

"Protheroe, I believe, is a very clever actor—and, incidentally, a brilliant international crook," said Nelson Lee. "It was he who opened your father's safe and took the seal. These other two men—"

"What other two men?" broke in Nipper quickly.

"There are two other—Holland and Digby," replied Lee. "You might as well know now, boys. I've had my eye on them quite a lot. I believe they are all four in the game."

And the detective briefly told the two eager boys of his dealings with the men in State-room No. 27.

"As I was saying, I believe that Holland and Digby got wind of the theft of the seal, but they didn't know where it had been hidden. These men have been rivals, but it's likely, in the present circumstances, that they will join forces. And I don't think there's much doubt that they will take quick action."

"But what can they do, gov'nor?" asked Nipper, staring. "They wouldn't dare to—"

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"There is no telling what they would dare," interrupted Lee. "Holland and Digby attempted to murder me, didn't they? In some way they plan to make big money out of the Seal of Oom. I'll confess that I'm baffled there."

"What are you going to do with the seal, Mr. Lee?" asked Clive. "It's dangerous to keep it, isn't it? With these awful men fighting against us—"

"There is only one thing to be done," broke in Nelson Lee. "I shall place the seal in the purser's care, and he will lock it up in the ship's strong-room. I shall not tell him what it is—and it isn't necessary that he should know. Just a private package, bearing my name, to be held until the end of the voyage."

"And then, sir?" asked Clive anxiously.

"Then I shall immediately hand it over to the India Office," replied Lee. "I shall give a full account of how it came into my possession, and you can make yourself comfortable, my boy, that your father will be in no way blamed for the theft. If possible, the Seal of Oom must be returned to India, and replaced, in the utmost secrecy. If any whisper of its theft gets about it might lead to considerable trouble."

Clive felt very relieved. There was something decisive, something reliant, about Nelson Lee. He had taken full command of the situation.

Going to a desk, Lee sat down, took out

a stout envelope and some sheets of paper. He was busy for some moments, wrapping, and again wrapping. Finally he sealed the envelope down, fastened it round several times with stout tape, and, to make assurance doubly sure, he applied sealing wax to the tape knots.

On the face of the envelope he wrote his own name and address, and then he rose to his feet.

"Before I do anything else, boys, I'm going to see this package placed in the strong-room," he said, making for the door. "When that is done there will be no fear—"

He suddenly broke off, for at that moment the door of the cabin burst open, and four respectable-looking men walked deliberately in. And even as the last man got over the threshold, he slammed the door—and four automatic pistols were produced as though by magic.

"Hands up, Lee!" said Protheroe, in a low, vibrant voice. "You kids, too! Up with 'em! One squeak out of either of you, and we'll fire!"

Like lightning, Lee had slipped the sealed package into his jacket pocket. Now, chagrined and annoyed, he raised his hands. It would have been absolute madness to resist, for he could see that these American gunmen were in deadly earnest. Their weapons were all fitted with patent silencers.



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They could shoot with impunity—and nobody else in the ship would know.

And Lee saw no reason why he should commit suicide. If he and the boys were butchered there would be a great sensation—but there wasn't a chance in a hundred that the crooks would be identified. They were far too clever.

The detective was inwardly startled.

He had expected quick action from these men; but he had scarcely believed that they would be as daring as this. To come into this state room, and to hold their victims up at the point of the gun, was more than startling.

"You'd better obey, boys," said Nelson Lee quietly. "Don't make any outcry. Put your hands up. These men are not bluffing."

"You said a mouthful, brother!" nodded Butch Holland. "We've got you covered, and we're going to get what we came for!"

CHAPTER 15.

Chicago Fashion!

ABEL PROTHEROE—he had plenty of other names, but the one he was using at present will serve—took a step nearer to Nelson Lee.

"Leave the talking to me, boys," he said calmly. "Now, Lee, we'll get this thing straight. Very clever of you to find out the secret of that cricket bat."

"There you are wrong," said Lee, equally as cool. "It wasn't clever at all, Protheroe. It was you, yourself, who gave me the clue. By 'accidentally' falling overboard you told me in the plainest language that the cricket bat was of vital importance. Naturally, I gave it a very close examination, and I found the Seal of Oom."

"And you've now got it in your jacket pocket," said Protheroe. "All nicely wrapped up and ready for the purser, huh? Boys, we didn't come a minute too soon!"

"Make him hand it over!" said Snake Digby curtly.

"No, Mr. Lee—don't!" panted Clive. "If these crooks get hold of it, it will mean ruin for my father—disgrace!"

"Aw, keep your trap shut!" snarled Butch.

He was nervous. This hold-up was in true Chicago fashion, but Butch had been so long out of practice that he wasn't confident of himself. Moreover, the fact that he was on a liner, with hundreds of miles of open sea all round, frightened him.

At other times, in similar circumstances, he had had a fast automobile waiting—ready for him to make a quick get-away. But there could be no getting away from the Orient! It was a factor which robbed the notorious killer of ninety per cent of his aggressiveness.

"There's no reason for anybody to get hot under the collar," said Protheroe calmly. "You're butting in, Lee—and I don't like it. Let's have this thing straight. You know as well as I do that you daren't report this affair to the captain——"

"Oh?" interrupted Lee. "And why do you suppose that I dare not?"

"Because if you make any report at all, you'll be required to go into details," replied Protheroe. "And that will mean revealing the whole works. You'll have to tell the captain about the Seal of Oom. The wireless will be quite busy, and the news will be flashed back to India that the sacred Seal of Oom has been stolen. General Maynard will be suspended—and I'm quite sure that you don't want to get him into a nasty scrape like that. Far better for us to keep this thing strictly under our hats."

Clive, pale and troubled, looked appealingly at Nelson Lee. It seemed to the boy that Protheroe's words were only too true.

"Go on!" said Lee mockingly.

"Sure!" nodded Protheroe. "You hand over that seal and we'll say nothing more about it. And we can complete this little trip peacefully and comfortably."

"You appear to be an optimist, Mr. Protheroe," returned Lee dryly.

"You can leave out the wisecracks!" said Protheroe. "Perhaps I'd better remind you that the seal was found in a cricket bat belonging to General Maynard's son—a present from the general himself. That'll need some explaining, won't it?"

"Do you really think that you can bluff me into handing you the seal—by holding out these ridiculous threats?" asked Nelson Lee. "What do you think will happen if I obey you? The loss of the seal will be discovered sooner or later—and General Maynard will be in exactly the same plight. Oh, no, my friends. These guns of yours are very impressive, and I will admit that you have the upper hand for the moment. But I am not at all frightened——"

He broke off, for Holland and Digby, at least, had come to the end of their patience. With a sudden serpent-like movement, Snake flung himself to the floor, slithering over the carpet with amazing agility. He caught Nelson Lee by the ankles, and the next second the detective went over backwards with a crash. Nipper and Clive leapt at the same moment, but neither of them stood an earthly chance.

Crash!

A backhander sent Clive reeling back, more or less stunned. He collapsed over a chair, and was out of the fight. Nipper managed to get home two hard punches, but then Butch Holland brutally kicked him in the stomach, and Nipper doubled up, helpless with agony.

While this was going on, Protheroe and Denney gave their full attention to Nelson Lee. Protheroe's hand dived into Lee's



“Better make up your mind quickly and write that note!” snarled the crook. He held the poisoned needle close to Nipper’s face. One little touch, and—

pocket, and the man breathed hard with triumph as he took out the sealed package.

“Thought so!” he said tensely. “All ready to hand over to the purser! Come on, boys—we’ve got what we came after, and there’s no sense in staying. Lee daren’t make any complaint about this. And if he does, where’s his proof?”

The men hastened to the door, and a moment later they were all outside in the corridor. Strolling leisurely along, their guns now hidden, they occasioned no comment. They were just harmless passengers—gentlemen all, by their appearance.

The audacity of the raid was amazing.

“Guv’nor!” groaned Nipper, as he struggled to his feet in the state-room. “They got it, didn’t they?”

“It’s rather a pity,” said Leo ruefully, “after all the trouble I had wrapping that package up and sealing it down. Do you know, boys, I half expected that those rascals would pay us a visit. However, it doesn’t matter much.”

“Doesn’t matter, sir!” exclaimed Clive, in agony. “But they’ve got the seal! And you know it would be dangerous to report to the captain—”

“Did I say that our late visitors had secured the seal?” broke in Lee gently. “They certainly took that package—but the seal is here.”

And, with a smile, Nelson Lee took the Seal of Oom from his tobacco jar on the desk.

“Guv’nor!” yelled Nipper. “Oh, you boulder! You tricked them, then?”



“Stop!” cried Nelson Lee hoarsely. “I’ll do what you want. I’ll write!” Bound helplessly to the chair, he knew he was beaten. The crooks held the whip hand!

“I thought it would be a good idea to be on the safe side,” explained Lee. “But it won’t be long before they discover the truth—and by then, Nipper, this seal must really and truly be in the ship’s strong-room. Give me some of that paper—and an envelope. I’m going to make a similar package, and give it to the purser with my own hands.”

Clive Maynard was overwhelmingly relieved.

Nelson Lee, it seemed, had unobtrusively slipped the seal in amongst his tobacco, and then, half expecting a visit from the crooks, he had ostentatiously made up a false package.

He required these few minutes of breathing space—and, owing to his own ingenuity, he had them.

CHAPTER 16.

Sauce for the Gander!

“GOSH! I didn’t figure on it being so easy!” said Butch Holland, as he and the other men went into Protheroe’s state-room. “That bonehead English detective is a bigger sap than I believed!”

“Best get those ideas out of your system, brother!” said Protheroe curtly. “Nelson Lee is no fool. You needn’t think that he’s going to stand still, either. We’ve got to think—and think fast. Leo will be making another move soon.”

“Aw, gee! What can he do?” asked Snake.

Protheroe was unwrapping the little package. He already had a hiding-place in mind.

He had no suspicion that anything was wrong—he wasn't undoing the little parcel to make sure. But he was going to place the seal in the cavity of a false shoe sole. It would only take a few minutes, and then, if Lee ordered a search—

"By thunder!" snarled Protheroe abruptly.

The other men, startled by the exclamation, stared.

"Say, what's wrong?" asked Snake.

"Look at this—a silver dollar!" panted Protheroe, who had come to the end of the wrappings. "That infernal Lee tricked us! This isn't the Seal of Oom!"

"What!"

They gathered round, cursing volubly. The object in Protheroe's hand was not a silver dollar, but a five-shilling piece. Not that it made any difference. The crooks knew—now—that Nelson Lee had won the trick.

"We'll get him for this!" snarled Butch wildly. "Come on! There may yet be time—"

"Don't be a fool!" interrupted Protheroe. "Don't forget what you're supposed to be on this ship! Do you think we can go gunning a man like that? Lee has played the ace, and it's no good squawking."

"But there might yet be time," urged Snake Digby.

"Not a chance," replied Protheroe. "By now Lee has taken another package containing the real seal to the purser. It's locked up—it's in the strong-room. Can't you see? Lee was only playing for time—and he's got it. While we've been fooling around in here with this blamed silver dollar, or whatever it is, Lee has put the seal out of our reach."

"That means we're sunk!" muttered Denney. "Our racket is gone phoney."

Protheroe sat down, grim but calm.

"Take it on the chin, boys," he said. "There's no sense in moaning. If that 'dick' hadn't been aboard this ship we should have been sitting pretty. I've learned, during the course of many years, that when a bad break comes to take it smiling. Gee! I sure admire that guy Lee!"

PROTHEROE was right. Even at that moment Nelson Lee had handed a little sealed package to the purser, and had personally seen the package placed in the ship's strong-room.

Clive Maynard was immeasurably relieved—so relieved, in fact, that he looked quite shaky.

"It's all right, young 'un," said Lee kindly, as he patted Clive on the shoulder. "As things have turned out, your suggestion of having some knockabout cricket this afternoon was an inspiration. Everything has developed out of that. Take my advice, Clive, and go along to your cabin, and take things quietly for half an hour—until tea-time. The seal is quite safe now."

"Thank you, sir," said Clive gratefully. "I am feeling a bit shaky, I'll admit. That brute gave me a pretty hard hit."

He went off at once; and then Nelson Lee, with a grim light in his eyes, turned to Nipper.

"Come, young 'un," he said crisply. "There's some work for us to do."

"I wondered why you sent Clive off," said Nipper, his eyes sparkling. "What does it mean, gov'nor?"

"There is an old saying to the effect that sauce for the goose may equally be sauce for the gander," replied Nelson Lee. "Our crook friends worked some Chicago stuff on us, Nipper—and I have a mind to return the compliment."

"But what for, sir?" asked Nipper. "You've got the seal now—"

"But I don't know what Protheroe's game was—and I intend to find out," said Lee. "I have a fancy that there is somebody else in this—a bigger man altogether."

Without going into any further explanations, Lee walked straight to Protheroe's state-room. Nipper, as he went with him, could scarcely believe that all these exciting adventures were happening aboard a modern liner—and in the heat of the sunny afternoon. It was strange to realise that all the hundreds of other passengers had not the faintest idea of what had been going on in such close proximity to them.

Not that Nipper had much chance of thinking; Lee was talking to him rapidly, giving him precise instructions.

Reaching the door of Protheroe's state-room, Lee paused outside, listening. He could hear a murmur of voices from within. The crooks were here—and Lee could guess the subject of their discussion. Gently, noiselessly, he tried the door. As he had expected, it was locked.

"Now, Nipper—be ready!" he said softly.

With a quick movement, he took out his own automatic. Then, taking a step back, he gathered his strength. He charged with great force, and his shoulder, striking the door, splintered the lock in the first attack.

He went hurtling through the doorway, and Nipper was at his heels. In a flash, Nipper had slammed the door, and the four men in the state-room, starting round in absolute consternation, looked into the wicked barrel of Lee's automatic.

"Hands up—every man of you!" snapped Nelson Lee sharply. "Quickly, now! Up with 'em!"

The men, completely taken by surprise, raised their hands.

"They say that imitation, gentlemen, is the sincerest form of flattery," went on Nelson Lee. "You raided my cabin—so I am now raiding yours. And bear this in mind—if any man makes a false move, I shall fire. Remember that! I'm not bluffing. I'll fire—and somebody will lose some blood. Nipper, get their guns."

"You bet!" said Nipper crisply.

He was an expert at this sort of thing. With nimble fingers he found Protheroe's automatic, and he quickly took possession of it. Then he went from man to man, and it was all done so quickly that the crooks had no time to even think of resisting. And there was something about Nelson Lee's own weapon—something about the detective's manner—which held them in check.

"That's satisfactory so far," said Lee. "I really think, gentlemen, that it is inadvisable for you to carry these lethal weapons any longer. Nipper, there is a window quite close to you—and the deck, outside, appears to be deserted. I think you can throw those guns over the side, can't you?"

To the startled fury of the discomfited gunmen, Nipper took casual aim, and automatic after automatic went whistling through the air, and down into the sea. Those weapons were costly—but it was better that they should be on the sea bed than in the pockets of these rogues.

"Now we can talk far more comfortably," went on Lee, in a conversational tone. "For your information, Mr. Protheroe, let me say that the Seal of Oom is now safely locked away in the ship's strong-room. It is wrapped up rather more neatly than the five-shilling piece——"

"I'm not squealing, Lee," interrupted Protheroe. "You win. But what the heck is the idea of coming here and holding us up? You've got the seal, haven't you? What else do you want?"

"I am afraid that one of my besetting vices is an incurable curiosity," replied Nelson Lee. "Now, Protheroe, that seal could have been of no value to you in any ordinary way. You could not want it for its intrinsic value—which is trifling. What was your game—or, in your own language, your racket?"

"Nothing doing," said Protheroe shortly. "I'm dumb."

"Perhaps I can restore your speech," suggested Lee. "I'm giving you a chance, Protheroe—you and these other rats. Tell me what the game is, and I'll allow you to complete this voyage in comfort. Remain dumb, and I'll give full information to Captain Holroyd, and you'll be put in irons. Take your choice."

Protheroe looked dangerous. The other men, scarcely taking their gaze off Lee's steadily held gun, were badly scared. When it came to a show-down such as this, they revealed, all too plainly, their true metal.

"You can't bluff me with that line of talk——" began Protheroe.

"It's no bluff!" interrupted Lee. "I'm in earnest—and you can take my word for it!"

Protheroe shrugged.

"It's O.K. with me, big boy," he said. "You might as well know, anyway. The game was this. We were going to take that seal to England, and once there the plan was to write to General Maynard, tell him that we had the seal, and demand a big sum of money for its secret return. We should point out that this would be the only way in which he could save himself from disgrace."

Nelson Lee nodded.

"And what sum were you proposing to demand?" he asked.

"Fifty thousand dollars."

"Roughly, ten thousand pounds," nodded Lee. "Thin, Protheroe—very thin, indeed."

"What the blazes do you mean?" demanded Protheroe harshly.

"I mean that you can't fool me with that story," replied Lee, in a hard voice. "In the first place, you wouldn't be content with a prize of ten thousand pounds; and in the second place you know perfectly well that General Maynard is not a rich man. He is a soldier; and even the military governor of an Indian province is not able to lay his hands on ten thousand pounds so very easily. General Maynard has no money beyond his official pay. Try again, Protheroe. I'm quite a patient man."

"See here, you make me tired!" snarled Protheroe, with sudden fury. "I've told you the truth——"

"You've told me an absurd lie!" broke in Lee. "You stole that seal, and you had no intention of returning it—to General Maynard. If you don't tell me——"

Quick as a flash, Protheroe suddenly lowered one of his hands; it fell upon the lever of a soda-water syphon, and at the same instant he tipped the syphon back.

Swish!

A jet of aerated water hissed across the cabin, and so accurate was Protheroe's aim that the stream caught Nelson Lee fairly and squarely in the face, momentarily blinding him. It was a clever enough trick.

And then, before Lee could recover himself, the four crooks were on him. At least, three were. Butch Holland gave his full attention to Nipper. And Butch was not at all particular. With his clenched fist he delivered a blow on the side of Nipper's head which knocked the unfortunate lad unconscious. Nipper crashed over to the floor, turning almost a complete somersault before slumping into a limp heap.

Nelson Lee was disarmed, and, with commendable promptitude, a strap from a traveling trunk was placed round the detective's body, and drawn cruelly tight. Then he was pushed down into a chair and held there.

"Gee! We've got him!" muttered Snake Digby. "That was a hot one of yours, Protheroe!"

"You bet it was!" said Protheroe, in a dangerous voice. "Now, Mr. Nelson Lee, you're going to get what's coming to you!"

CHAPTER 17.

The Poison Needle!

THE tables were completely turned; and, much as Nelson Lee regretted the situation, he could not blame himself for what had happened. And he remained perfectly calm.

"Rather clever, Protheroe," he commented. "But what do you expect to gain by this? I have already told you that the Seal of Oom is in the ship's strong-room."

"There may be a way of getting it," said Protheroe, a gleam of new excitement in his eyes. "This game isn't through yet, Lee! I guess I was wrong when I said that you had won. You haven't—not by a jugful!"

Nipper, by this time, was sitting up, dazed but with plenty of fight left in him.

"What do you take my gov'nor for?" he asked breathlessly. "If we're not out of this cabin within ten minutes the ship's officers will come—and then you'll all be arrested."

"That's O.K. with me," replied Protheroe promptly.

"What!"

"It won't take me ten minutes to work the game that's in my mind," replied the leader of the crooks. "Lee hasn't any real evidence against us. There's only his word. And I'm going to take a chance."

"You interest me very much," said Lee coolly.

"You came here, you fool, and now you're going to pay for your nerve!" went on Protheroe. "It may be bluff what the kid just said—about the ship's officers coming to this cabin. But, bluff or not, I don't care. I'm going to get that seal back."

"I shall be greatly interested to know how," said Nelson Lee.

"Get hold of that kid!" said Protheroe. "Here, bring him to this chair."

Nipper struggled, but he was no match for the enemy. He was forced into a high-backed chair, and a piece of cord was tied round his throat and round the chair back. Straps were placed round his body and arms in a similar fashion. Soon he was trussed helplessly to the chair.

"This is all very impressive to watch, but it doesn't affect me a great deal," said Lee. "You daren't do any real harm to us, Protheroe—at least, not in full daylight. If it were night-time, I might, perhaps, be uneasy. For you wouldn't be above dropping us overboard. But you can't do that just now."

"But I can do something else," said Protheroe. "In fact, my dear Lee, you have placed yourself in my hands so completely that I'm going to win this game. I'm quite a rapid thinker—and during these last few minutes I've been thinking hard."

He turned to Snake and Butch.

"Let's have those little needles!" he said briefly.

Snake Digby started.

"Gosh!" he muttered. "You mean——"

"Sure!" laughed Protheroe. "It's cream in the can, boy!"

And now Nelson Lee suddenly lost some of his composure. He watched almost fascinatedly as Snake took out the tiny metal box. Protheroe, who had never looked more dangerous than now, selected one of those deadly needles. Holding it firmly in the jaws of a pair of pliers, he moved nearer to Nipper.

"Wait!" said Lee hoarsely. "You fool! What are you going to do with that?"

"So I've put a scare into you already, eh?" jeered Protheroe. "You know what this needle is, don't you?"

"Well?"

"You're going to sit down, and you're going to write a nice little letter to the purser, instructing him to hand over that

sealed package to the bearer," replied Protheroe coolly. "Do you get that? The shorter the letter, the better."

"And—if I refuse?"

"If you refuse, I'm going to scratch this young gentleman's neck with the needle," said Protheroe. "Only a little scratch, Lee. You know what will happen, don't you?"

"You daren't do it, and you know it!" said Lee, striving to keep his voice steady. "If that boy is found dead there will be an inquiry and my evidence will be enough——"

"Forget it!" broke in Protheroe, with sudden fury. "Whether I'm bluffing or not, you daren't take the chance. You know it, Lee. This kid means something to you, doesn't he? Well, you'd better make up your mind quickly. Are you going to write that note or not?"

Nipper was pale, but he did not flinch. The needle came nearer and nearer to his neck, and Protheroe was in such a state of rage and excitement that his hand was far from steady. One little touch and—Nelson Lee knew that the situation was desperate.

"Stop!" he said hoarsely. "I'll write it."

Protheroe withdrew the needle, and he backed away from Nipper.

"I've always understood, Lee, that you were a man of your word," he said deliberately. "Your word, in fact, is your bond. You'll write that note to the purser?"

"Yes," said the detective quietly.

"If we release your arms you swear that you won't make any attempt to escape? You also swear that you won't make any outcry?"

"Yes," said Nelson Lee, his gaze fixed upon that deadly needle.

"I'm taking your word," returned Protheroe. "Boys, set him free."

"Gosh, it's a risk!" muttered Butch. "You can't take the word of a blamed 'busy.' It's taking an awful chance, Protheroe."

Protheroe did not reply; he merely waved his hand. And Nelson Lee a minute later was freed.

"You're making this bargain, Protheroe, not I," said the detective. "But for that poisoned needle——"

"I know," interrupted Protheroe. "But you've given me your word. Now get busy. Write."

Nelson Lee took up a sheet of the ship's paper and briefly he instructed the purser to hand over the sealed package to the bearer of the letter. He signed it with his usual signature, folded it up, and enclosed it in an envelope. Protheroe read the note through, nodded, and sealed it down.

"Gov'nor," said Nipper. "If you're doing this for my sake——"

"Your life is worth a thousand seals of Oom," said Lee curtly.

"That's O.K. so far," said Protheroe. "You'll take this note, Holland. Better go with it straight away."

"Suits me," said Butch, grinning.

He departed, and Protheroe turned to Nelson Lee again.

"That's the half of it," he said. "Now, Lee, you're going to give me your word that when Holland comes back with the seal you won't make any complaint to the captain. You're going to swear to me that you won't give any information whatsoever regarding what has happened."

"No," said Lee angrily. "You can't force me to make such a promise."

"Can't I?" retorted Protheroe. "Now we'll see."

Once again he approached Nipper with the deadly needle.

"I've got you, Lee—I've got you where I want you!" said Protheroe tensely. "You'll take that oath or this boy will die in front of your eyes. I'm a great guy at seizing my opportunities. Yes, sir. And this is the time when I win."

"Take that needle away!" panted Lee. "All right—we'll talk."

"You'll give me your word—"

"If Holland comes back to this cabin with the Seal of Oom I'll give you my solemn word of honour that I will not lay one word of information before the captain of this ship," said Lee steadily. "Further than that, I will promise to drop the case com-

pletely, taking no further part in it whatever."

"That suits me," said Protheroe triumphantly. "Lee, you are sure a great guy. You know when you're beaten!"

THE purser was very pleasant. He read Nelson Lee's note, glanced at Butch, and nodded.

"Why, certainly, Mr. Holland," he said. "Anything wrong with Mr. Lee that he couldn't come himself?"

"No; but he's busy right now," replied the other easily. "He asked me to come along and get the package, whatever it is. I wanted to see you about some money of my own, so I said I'd act as messenger."

"I see," said the purser. "All right, Mr. Holland. I'll get the package from the strong-room."

He disappeared, but rather to Holland's surprise he returned three minutes later, accompanied by Mr. Walters, the second officer, and two hefty-looking sailors.

"You brought this note, sir?" asked the second officer.

"Yes," said Butch.

"Then I must ask you to consider yourself under arrest," said Mr. Walters.

Butch Holland felt suddenly limp.

"Say, what the heck!" he blustered. "You can't pull that—I—I mean, what on earth are you talking about? Under arrest. What for?"



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"That note, purporting to come from Mr. Nelson Lee, is a forgery," said Mr. Walters sternly.

"You're a liar!" roared Butch. "Lee wrote it himself—I saw him!"

He attempted to make a breakaway, but the two sailors closed in on him, and in a moment handcuffs were snapped over his wrists. He was led away cursing.

Mr. Walters turned to a frightened-looking steward.

"You say that Holland came out of State-room No. 42, Robbins?" he said. "All right. We'll go along there straight away."

Captain Holroyd himself, very grave of face, was informed. He and Mr. Walters, accompanied by quite a strong guard of sailors, went to State-room No. 42.

They entered abruptly, the captain leading.

And that worthy man was very startled indeed when he saw Nipper tied securely to that chair.

In one moment Lee leapt at Protheroe, for the man was still holding that deadly needle. At Lee's first blow the needle was knocked out of his hand and it fell to the floor.

"Now we can talk in comfort," said Lee coolly. "I'm glad you've come personally, captain. I want to give these three men in charge."

"You double-crossing rat!" snarled Protheroe. "You gave me your word of honour——"

"Oh, no!" snapped Lee. "I told you that if Holland came back with the package I would give you my word of honour to keep silent. But Holland has not come back. At this very moment he is under arrest."

"I say, gov'nor, you do spring surprises," said Nipper breathlessly. —

"There's really nothing in it," said Nelson Lee. "I left very strict instructions with the purser that if anybody brought a letter purporting to come from me it would be a forgery. I told the purser that under no circumstances would I write such a letter; I would claim that package personally. You see, young 'un, I thought that these crooks might forge a letter. I did not imagine that they would 'force' me to write a genuine note. Knowing what would happen to the messenger I wrote it quite freely."

"Gee! So that's why you knuckled under?" said Protheroe in disgust.

"And he and his fellow crooks, handcuffed, were led away to the vessel's 'brig.' And from that minute onwards they ceased to figure in the passenger list. They were destined to remain prisoners for the remainder of the voyage. Nelson Lee's charges against them were serious.

And Lee himself, going through Protheroe's belongings, made some interesting discoveries.

CHAPTER 18.

No Sale!

THE liner Orient had docked at Southampton on a certain hot summer's day.

And in the palatial Mayfair Hotel, London, Mr. Randolph Kress, the famous American multi-millionaire collector, was waiting with ill-concealed impatience. Mr. Kress had had a long telegram from the Orient that day, and he had an important appointment.

Mr. Kress was a tall, bony, wizened man, with deeply-sunken eyes—eyes that gleamed craftily. Indeed, in many respects, Mr. Kress was an eccentric. He was known to curio dealers in every capital of the world. His passion for collecting odd and out-of-the-way objects d'art was famous.

In his great mansion in America he boasted of having the most wonderful collection of priceless antiques in the whole world. And there was some truth in this boast. Mr. Randolph Kress had literally spent millions on his hobby.

The telephone sounded and the gaunt old man hurried to it. He had already dismissed his servant; he was alone in his suite.

"Yes?" he said into the telephone. "What is it?"

"A gentleman named Mr. Abel Protheroe has called, sir," came a voice.

"Good! Send Mr. Protheroe up at once," replied the millionaire.

He rubbed his bony hands together with gleeful satisfaction. At last! A dream of years was about to come true!

A tap sounded on the door, and Mr. Kress hurried across the soft carpet and flung the door open, to find Protheroe there.

"Dead on time, Mr. Kress!" said the visitor genially.

"Come in—come in!" said the millionaire. "I am extraordinarily pleased to see you, Protheroe."

Little did he realise it, but he was not seeing Mr. Abel Protheroe at all. The man whom he ushered into his suite was Nelson Lee! The great detective was very cleverly disguised; the impersonation was perfect. Not that it need have been, for Randolph Kress was notoriously short-sighted.

"I came straight up from Southampton, Mr. Kress, and I drove straight to this hotel," said Lee. "After seeing you in New York, some months ago, I went to India, as you know——"

"Yes, yes," interrupted the old man. "That doesn't matter. Have you the seal? That's the important thing!"

"It is here," replied Lee.

And he took the Seal of Oom from his pocket, and placed it in the millionaire's hand. Mr. Kress quivered from head to foot; his excitement was almost painful to watch. He gloated over that seal as a miser might have gloated over his golden hoard.

"At last—at last!" he breathed. "The

(Continued on page 44.)

White Boy King Leads His Black Warriors Into Battle!



THE CITY OF GOLD!

Tom Cook, a young white boy, who has travelled to the City of Gold, in the heart of Africa, in his wonder craft, The Flying Fish, has been crowned king by the natives of this unknown city. Gobo, the High Priest, in mad jealousy, sets a horde of hairy dwarfs on the new king and his followers. But Tom Cook, aided by his two white companions and Zulu servant, are prepared to meet this new menace!

The Battle of the Plain!

LULU, the Zulu servant of Tom Cook, who was leading the native cavalry, showed excellent generalship, sending wedge after wedge of his heavy cavalry driving into the masses of the little horrors, then wheeling them round again to charge back so as not to give them a chance of retaliating. As one platoon swept through, another would whirl in from the other side, so bewildering the little men that they hardly had time to draw their little bows and discharge their tiny but deadly arrows.

But even though the cavalry were doing wonders and leaving behind them a red lane of what looked like wounded monkeys, the enormous numbers of the dwarfs was beginning to tell its tale. At times the air was thick with the little arrows, and if horse or rider was wounded by the horrible little darts, they would proceed for a few yards as if nothing had happened, then crash to the ground, to be instantly dispatched by the human insects that swarmed out of the forest.

Then the bowmen on foot emerged from the canyon and immediately launched a shower of arrows into the thick of the screaming dwarfs. But as the tiny men fell their places were instantly filled by others. To give them their due, they seemed to fight with an utter disregard of death, and more and more of the hairy-looking little objects piled out of the forest and climbed over their own slain to take part in the battle with bloodthirsty enthusiasm. So great was their number that it seemed impossible that they could ever all be slain, and nothing less seemed likely to deter them.

"Here, hang it, I've got to take a hand in this!" cried Tom, as he leaned over the side of the Flying Fish and saw an entire regiment of the Golden City bowmen surrounded and drop. "Take me and Ben to that first flat kopje, then drop the men in couples on the others. Make it snappy, Al!"

"Yuh betcher! Ready, Ben? Got everything?"

"Barrin' a small tooth comb an' me mouth orgin!" was the cheerful response. "If I don't come back, give my love to all at

home an' tell 'em he died like a Nero! Luvvus, but thisyer plain looks like a sojer's blanket arter six weeks in th' trenches. I reckon a tin o' Keatin's 'ud be th' best thing to do thisyer li'l lot in with! Givvus hold o' thet gun, young baas, an' lemme hold this koppie, or whatever yer calls it, on me own. Yuh'll do better on yer lonesome, too, with yer magazine rifle, see?"

"Good! You're right, old feller. Away you go!" agreed Tom, and Ben swung over the side to the rope, sliding down a couple of feet, then hanging on like a monkey with his legs alone, then sliding down the remaining fifty feet with his beloved Lewis gun clasped in his arms like a baby.

He landed on top of the small kopje, waved them a cheery farewell, immediately set up the little gun and started peppering the swarming dwarfs as fast as he could turn the handle.

"That's got it, begosh!" cried Tom, as he leant over and observed the effect. "Of course, they've never experienced gunfire. We'll give 'em toko!"

He was dropped at the nearest kopje, and thereafter the Fish described a zigzag course, dropping a couple of the bowmen at a time with their defensive shields, which they had strict injunctions to crouch under in case the dwarfs hit upon the idea of firing clouds of arrows into the air.

With a couple of magazine rifles and several boxes of cartridges Tom did deadly work amongst the swarming hordes, so that at length he had mown a wide swathe around his kopje, as had Ben, so that the dwarfs gave them a wide berth. But still the slaughter amongst the Golden City army was terrific, and now one section of the abominable dwarfs seemed to have found a leader with some idea of strategy and formation, for they were advancing to the attack of an isolated body of the Golden City bowmen in a solid wedge, so that only those in front ran so much risk of being shot down, whilst those behind had time to shoot off their deadly little arrows before being slain themselves.

Then Tom did some sharpshooting and rapid firing that brought a yelp of admiration from Ben's kopje. He took up one rifle after another and jerked in relays of cartridges, whilst he picked off the wedge of dwarfs from their rear as coolly as if he was at a rabbit shoot.

"Some shootin', I'll tell th' cock-eyed world!" yelled the little American engineer, as he twisted his Lewis around and sprayed a crowd of dwarfs farther away. "If I c'ud git a bit nearer I'd— Hallo, what's up? Hully wild-cats, it's ol' Blacky-topper! If he ain't in one mess call me a chocolate coon!"

Al's Masterstroke!

LULU'S troop of horsemen was woefully diminished in number, though the Zulu himself seemed to lead a charmed life.

At the time Ben caught sight of him at

anything like close quarters he was riding like one demented through the hordes of swarming dwarfs. Perhaps it was that the gold armour which made him such a conspicuous figure also afforded him a certain amount of protection, for up to now Lulu had got through scathless.

He had disdained to use his rifle at all, but instead had chosen for himself the largest and heaviest spear to be found in the palace armoury. He had been using this as a flail, knocking down the little men as if they were cockshies, whilst the huge white stallion trampled them underfoot.

But now he had become separated from his troop by reason of them being shot down in divisions by those deadly little arrows.

"Chee, Nugget, but yuh air sure a well-plucked 'un!" sighed Ben, as he wiped the sweat out of his eyes and watched his big Zulu pal ploughing his way through the hordes, "but what yer wants is strategy, my sonny boy. It's all right to go at it hot-headed in a manner o' speakin'; but see what yer've done—been cut off from yer main body—an' thet ain't— Sufferin' crows—he's done!"

Lulu looked like a madman as he charged through, his eyes staring out of his head with the lust of slaughter, his mouth opening and shutting in a chant which he kept up, singing his own praises as "the Elephant," "the Slaughterer, whose breath spells death," in the time-honoured manner of Zulu warriors.

Then, just after Ben had made his exclamation, disaster came upon the great fighter. He was within thirty yards of the kopje on which Ben was lying. It must have been impossible for him to have heard the yell that the American let out, but it seemed as if he must have done.

His horse had reared up on its hind legs, its broad chest pierced by a score of the tiny, deadly arrows. But the magnificent creature had so much stamina and vitality that perhaps the poison did not work as swiftly as usual.

If Lulu had not been such a magnificent horseman he would have been unseated, but his great muscled legs clung to the animal's sides as it made great plunging leaps through the mob, and he managed to stay on its back with a mighty effort; but he dropped the point of his great spear as he did so, and it was immediately seized by a dozen of the hairy little creatures. They tried to wrench it away from him, but he swung them round on its shaft and threw them off into the air.

Then, with a mighty effort, he swung his dying charger's head round so that its forehoofs struck against the kopje, and like a giant lizard clawed his way up the arching neck and clutched a knob of rock as it sank to the ground with a last snort of defiance.

Ben could not help him except by spraying bullets from the Lewis as hard as he could pump them, which kept off the swarm of dwarfs whose great ambition was to get

hold of this gigantic leader who had done them so much damage, as a prisoner.

That ambition undoubtedly saved Lulu's life, for although arrows rattled against his armour, and some even stuck in his legs, they were not the poison-tipped ones. Meanwhile Ben's rapid fire cleared a ring and sent the little men running back out of that danger zone, whilst the giant Zulu clawed his way upwards and at last was hauled to comparative safety on the flat top.

He lay for a while gasping for breath and then turned to Ben with a rueful grin.

"They're too many for us, little man!" he gasped. "Nought but a miracle could save us now. They are like specks of dust, and the flow of them cannot be checked. They come out of the forest like locusts. My arm is tired slaying them."

But meantime Al Vandeck, high above the battle in the Flying Fish, had grasped the situation and had to come to the same conclusion. He had whirled the bus around so as to lend his protection to the squadrons of Golden City troops who were defending the entrance to the canyon, for if the dwarfs once got through that it would mean good-bye to their Golden City and the horrible little creatures would overrun their land.

Now and again he would dart out and circle the battle-ground, using that deadly, silent gun of his with disastrous effect; but even though he demoralised certain sections, the dwarfs still seemed to swarm out of the forest in undiminished numbers like the ants they had been compared to.

"Sufferin' crows, the little demons don't seem to care whether they get killed or not. If I could only stop that flow o' reinforcements I guess Tom and his troops 'ud be able to account for th' remainder. Hully fly—why, what a gapin' gaby I am! I can stop 'em, an', by hokey, I'll do it if I wreck th' ship!"

He zoomed up to a thousand feet and then set the safety apparatus which enabled the flying-boat to fly on an even keel with no one at the helm, then dived below into the cockpit full of his great idea.

He plunged into the steel locker where they kept the "pills" of his father's invention; the petrol substitute which turned water into a highly inflammable mixture.

The sides of the Fish were lined with water-tanks, which had been filled ere they left the palace, and into these he threw the pellets. Then he affixed long hose-pipes to the stop-cocks and trailed them over the sides of the Fish.

"That'll be mixed up enough for firin' purposes," he muttered as he fixed up the last hose-pipe. "I'll just give her another run around and then test it. Chee, why didn't I think of it before?"

He took a swift circuit of the battle-field, firing his gun almost at haphazard, and then zooming towards the forest at half-speed. He ran for the outer edge and set the stop-cocks working, following the line of the outer edge of trees until they were all

thoroughly well sprayed. Then once more he dived below and came up with a box of the fireworks they had used over the city before.

He dropped a "golden rain" down into the depths and saw with satisfaction that the trees he had saturated immediately ignited. The land had been without rain for months, and the forest trees were dry as tinder. With the westerly wind that was blowing, the flames, once started, would take a lot of stopping, and as he rushed for the other end of the line of forest he dropped more flaming fireworks over. The effect was almost magical, for a great roaring furnace sprang into being, and the reinforcements of dwarfs were effectually prevented from joining their fellows.

Then he swirled back over the forest until he reached that great clearing where the curious little huts were situated. Again he turned the hoses on and drenched the tiny dwellings and set them alight.

"I hate to do it, it's too much like wholesale slaughter; but anyway, it's only like blotting out a wasps' nest, and they'd be a menace to the Golden City so long as they're in existence!"

He steeled his heart and regarded the swarming dwarfs as a terrible colony of venomous insects that it was any man's duty to slay. So far as he had seen, the Golden citizens were a kindly and clean-living people, once away from the influence of Gobo and the race of priests of his kidney.

But he had heard terrible tales of the tortures to which the helpless prisoners who had fallen into the dwarfs' hands had been put to, tales which made his blood run cold to remember the long-drawn-out agonies of victims of these horrible and unnatural little objects, which could hardly be classed as men!

When he got back to the edge of the forest he had to take the flying-boat high to avoid the great clouds of sparks and smoke, for now the Fish seemed doubly valuable. Then he dipped her nose and roared down like a meteor from the sky.

He sat well back at the stern and steered with one hand, whilst he worked the gun with the other. There was no need to take aim at all hardly, for he merely had to fire into the "brown" of the hordes who were attacking the Golden citizens and "step on the gas" as he termed it.

Waugh-haugh-haugh-augh-aw!

He kept the siren shrieking to add to the terror, and it was as if a great dragon was shrieking in triumph, as the flying-boat rushed hither and thither up and down the line, vomiting sudden death on the dwarfs, and this time with no reinforcements to take their places.

Al went fairly "berserk," and rushing up and down at full speed, gave them no quarter. The dwarfs could not retreat to the flaming forest, and with the now heartened Golden City army attacking them with redoubled vigour, with Tom's rifles and

Ben's Lewis gun, they had but a poor chance, and within ten minutes they either gave themselves up as prisoners or rushed back into the burning forest to meet death in the roaring flames!

It was a glorious victory!

Lulu the Great!

FOR the next few days life flowed very smoothly for the inhabitants of the Golden City, and for the visitors in particular. There was now no doubt in the minds of the counsellors and the citizens that Tom was indeed the Tomkuk that had come to save the country and bring it prosperity, for had he not led the troops to victory, wiped out the imminent menace of the dwarfs of the forest, and at the very moment when defeat seemed certain, had not his "Great Bird" breathed out fire and utterly destroyed the menacing forest where the little horrors lurked?

But there seemed to be some doubt in the minds of most of the inhabitants as to whom Lulu really was.

A rumour had gone round that he was in reality Lesardu, the soldier of the guard who had been Gobo's right-hand man. It was a curious coincidence that the man whom Lulu had killed and whose golden armour he wore had borne a most remarkable resemblance to the Zulu.

Lulu, who had a sense of humour all his own, did nothing to dispel this impression, in fact, he rather fostered it and would respond to the name as if it were his own.

He had been elected general in place of the defunct Lousla of honoured memory by general acclamation, and already the most skilful sculptors of the city were at work on a gigantic statue of him in black marble, seated on the white stallion carved in white marble, which was to adorn the market-place.

"That will suit me," he confided to Ben as the pair sat at a sumptuous repast in the palace, and he was lazily choosing his next course from the assortment of choice viands with which the table was loaded. "Never have I had my picture done in marble, though I had a photo done on hossback in Durban once. It—"

"Yuh w'ud!" responded the disgusted Ben, who held that Lulu was becoming swell-headed. "Chee, I'd like to see a picter o' yuh in th' Rogues Gallery; thet'd be nearer th' mark, yer big stiff!"

"Do not be jealous, little one," said Lulu, complacently stroking his tightly curled head. "There is no need, I am still your friend. It is true I am the big noise here, and am better looking—"

"Aw, hellup!" roared Ben, shouting with laughter. "Do yuh ever see yer dial in a glass? A mirror, I mean, not t'roo th' bottom o' one o' them quart mugs yer've allus got yer nose in? Why, yet thet homely thet th' hosses shy at yer in th' streets—an' if thar wuz any clocks hyar yuh'd sure stop 'em!"

It was just at this moment that one of the white-clad damsels that had been detailed to wait upon the two tripped in to bring some more dishes of fruit. She was a pretty wench of a lightish brown, and Ben himself had remarked favourably upon her features, dainty figure and taking ways. As she tripped round the table he smiled at her, but she took no notice of the white man. Instead, she placed the dish of fruit before Lulu, and casting him a languishing glance, took the glorious passion flower from her hair and threw it at him with a smile, then skipped out, throwing him an arch look over her shoulder.

"You see?" chuckled the triumphant Zulu. "Who would look at the shadow when the sun is shining? Who would glance at you when Lesardu the Brave is here? But do not mind, little man. I will do what I can for you, and though your face leaves much to be desired. Mayhap if I say—"

"Mebbe yer own face 'ud look better if 'twas a different colour!" howled the infuriated Ben, and snatching up a very over-ripe custard apple which was on the dish, he hurled it into Lulu's face, where the soft fruit squashed to a squelchy mass which filled his capacious mouth, his spreading nostrils, and temporarily blinded him.

He sprang up with a howl of wrath, wiping his face on the first thing which came handy, which happened to be Ben's discarded coat, then vaulted over the table at which they were sitting on the veranda with intent to take vengeance on the American.

But Ben Bold was no slouch on his feet, and he was up and over the edge of the veranda like a bullet from a gun. He pelted down the tiled courtyard with yells of derision, the huge Zulu thundering after him yelling blood-curdling threats.

Perhaps the golden armour he always wore, or the enormous meal he had been putting away hampered the Zulu, or Ben Bold's turn of speed was more than one would have anticipated in such a shrimp. At any rate, Ben kept out of arm's reach, though he was rapidly being caught up by the Zulu, who had been a noted runner amongst that very swift-footed race.

"Wait—only wait, until I get my hands upon you! I will flay you alive and throw your carcass to the crocodiles!" raved Lulu, making sounds like an infuriated camel. "You shall serve as a feast for the alligators and your bones be picked clean. Wait, insect, wait till I lay my hands on you—coward, runaway!"

But to this version of "dilly, dilly, come and be killed!" Ben did not respond. Just as Lulu stretched out his ham-like fist to grasp him, the lithe little American ducked, dodged and pelted off in another direction.

(If Tom Cook & Co. imagine they have finished with the treacherous High Priest, Gobo, they are booked for a first-class surprise. Gobo is out to regain his lost power in the City of Gold. See next week's chapters of the great story.)

Our Page, Chums! Gather Round!



Letters for the Editor should be addressed to **NELSON LEE LIBRARY, Fleetway House, Farringdon St., London, E.C.4.**

MY DEAR CHUMS,—How are you getting on with your coupon collecting? This is the second week of our Grand 10,000 Gift Plan, so I expect you have made a start. Two coupons worth 75 points were given away last week, and two coupons worth 75 points will be found in this week's issue. Of course, you've snipped them out and put them aside in a safe place. That's right. If you want to add to your collection, apart from the coupons that will appear in the NELSON LEE each week, you may do so by buying any of the following companion papers, which are also giving away coupons — The "Ranger," "Gem," and "Magnet."

Now a word about

NEXT WEEK'S STORY

I am always grateful to hear the opinions of my chums on the stories that appear in the Old Paper, whether they are adverse or favourable opinions. So far, I am pleased to say, the new type of Detective-Thriller which I have been giving you has met with universal approval. That's great! Well, it'll mean that I shall plug home hard on these lines and give you the finest selection of detective-thrillers ever published.

Next week's long complete story is quite up to standard. It's a thrill-packed yarn of Nelson Lee's and Nipper's adventures in London and in far-off Finland. The title is, "Looters of the Far North!" and, believe me, for sensation, strange scenes and gripping adventure, this story is a hundred per cent winner.

Now for a few jokes sent in by readers who have won

[HANDSOME WALLETS AND PENKNIVES

"Nature," explained the lecturer, "always tries to make compensation. For instance, if a man loses an eye, the sight of the other becomes stronger, and if one grows deaf in one ear, the hearing of the other becomes acute, and so on."

"Faith," said Pat to his neighbour. "And Oi believe he's right, for Oi've noticed that when

a man has a leg shorter than the other, the other is longer."

(A. Carpenter, 21, West Street, Leamore, Walsall, Staffs—a penknife.)

Morchant: "Look here, that safe you sold me last month you said was a burglar proof safe, and I found it cracked this morning and rifled of its contents."

Agent: "Well, isn't that proof that you've had a burglar?"

(A. Jesson, 8, Ethronvi Road, Bexley Heath, Kent—a pocket wallet.)

An old villager had been offered a pound note if he would let an artist paint him. He hesitated for a while.

"It's easy money," prompted the artist.

"Oi know that, zur," was the reply, "Oi were just thinking how Oi should get the paint off afterwards."

(G. A. E. Pilbeam, Mount Pleasant, Rushlake Green, Warbleton, Nr. Heathfields, Sussex—a penknife.)

In a club they were telling fishing stories. "The fish was so big," the first fisherman was saying, "that the others would not let me haul it into the boat for fear it would swamp un."

"The same thing happened to me once," broke in a quiet little man in the corner, "on a liner!"

(W. Lambert, 239, Old Cleveland Road, Coorparoo, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia—a grand prize.)

Stage-manager of pantomime: "Come along with that elephant! What's the delay?"

Stage-hand; "It's the hind legs, sir. He's found out that the front legs gets thruppence a day more than he does, and he's gone on strike."

(A. Snow, 37, Fore Street, Ipswich, Suffolk—a pocket wallet.)

Yours sincerely,

THE EDITOR.

THE DANGER SHIP!

(Continued from page 38.)

sacred Seal of Oom! Well done, Protheroe! This is thousands of years old—one of the most amazing antiques known in history! To possess this—"

"I suppose you realise, Mr. Kress, that I could only obtain the Seal of Oom by stealing it?" interrupted Lee.

"I'm not interested in how you obtained the seal!" he snapped. "I told you that from the first. I'm not making any inquiries. I don't want to know. You have this seal for sale and I am ready to buy! That's all. I agreed to pay two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and you shall have the money."

Nelson Lee had a grim look on his face as he deliberately discarded his make-up. Amongst Protheroe's papers he had found letters from Randolph Kress—and then he had known the secret. The American multimillionaire, in his passion for securing forbidden antiques, had virtually commissioned Protheroe to obtain the Seal of Oom. But he quietened his conscience by saying that he did not wish to make any inquiries.

"Come in, Lennard!" said Lee briskly.

The door opened and Chief Detective-inspector Lennard, of Scotland Yard, strode in. There were no other officers.

"You heard?" asked Lee quietly.

"Yes," said the inspector.

Randolph Kress stared from one to the other in bewilderment; and, indeed, he was sorely shaken.

"Mr. Kress, it is my duty to tell you that

you are regarded in this country as an undesirable alien," said Lennard carefully. "This gentleman is Mr. Nelson Lee—not Protheroe, as you supposed. Protheroe is under arrest."

While speaking Lennard took the precious seal from the millionaire's shaking hand.

"But—but I don't understand!" faltered Mr. Kress. "I've done nothing wrong! What is this—a trap?"

"You can call it a trap if you like, sir," replied the chief inspector. "You are a millionaire, and it is well known to Scotland Yard that you make a practice of tempting criminals to obtain forbidden antiques. You then pay them very heavy sums—and you add those antiques secretly to your collection. That's all very well, but it is a direct incitement to crime."

"I—I am aghast!" said Randolph Kress. "I had no intention of breaking the law—"

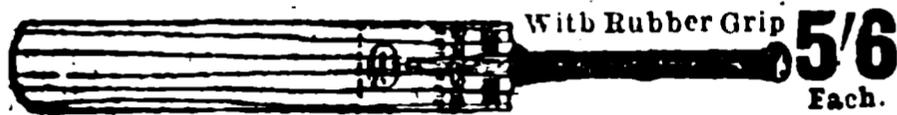
"We could, if necessary, prefer a charge of receiving stolen property against you," continued Lennard formally. "But I am instructed, Mr. Kress, to request you to leave this country within twenty-four hours. Do that and no action will be taken. It is also my duty to tell you that your passport will be cancelled, and will not be renewed."

And Nelson Lee and Lennard went out without another word to the man who had been the cause of so much danger to Nelson Lee.

THE END.

(There will be another Long Complete DETECTIVE-THRILLER in next week's issue, entitled "Looters of the Far North!" Don't miss it!)

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