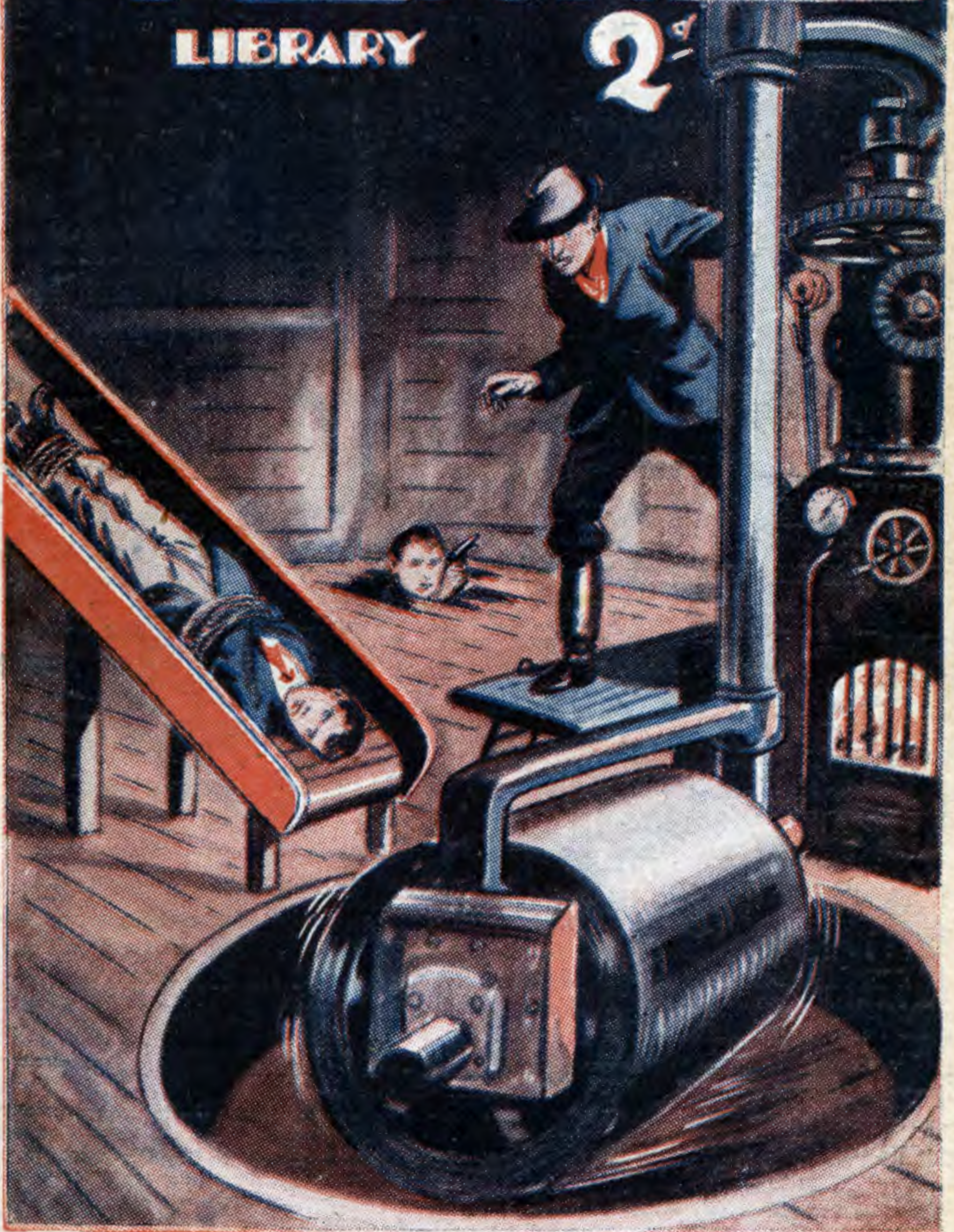


DETECTIVE-THRILLER AND NEW SCHOOL STORY INSIDE!

THE NELSON LEE

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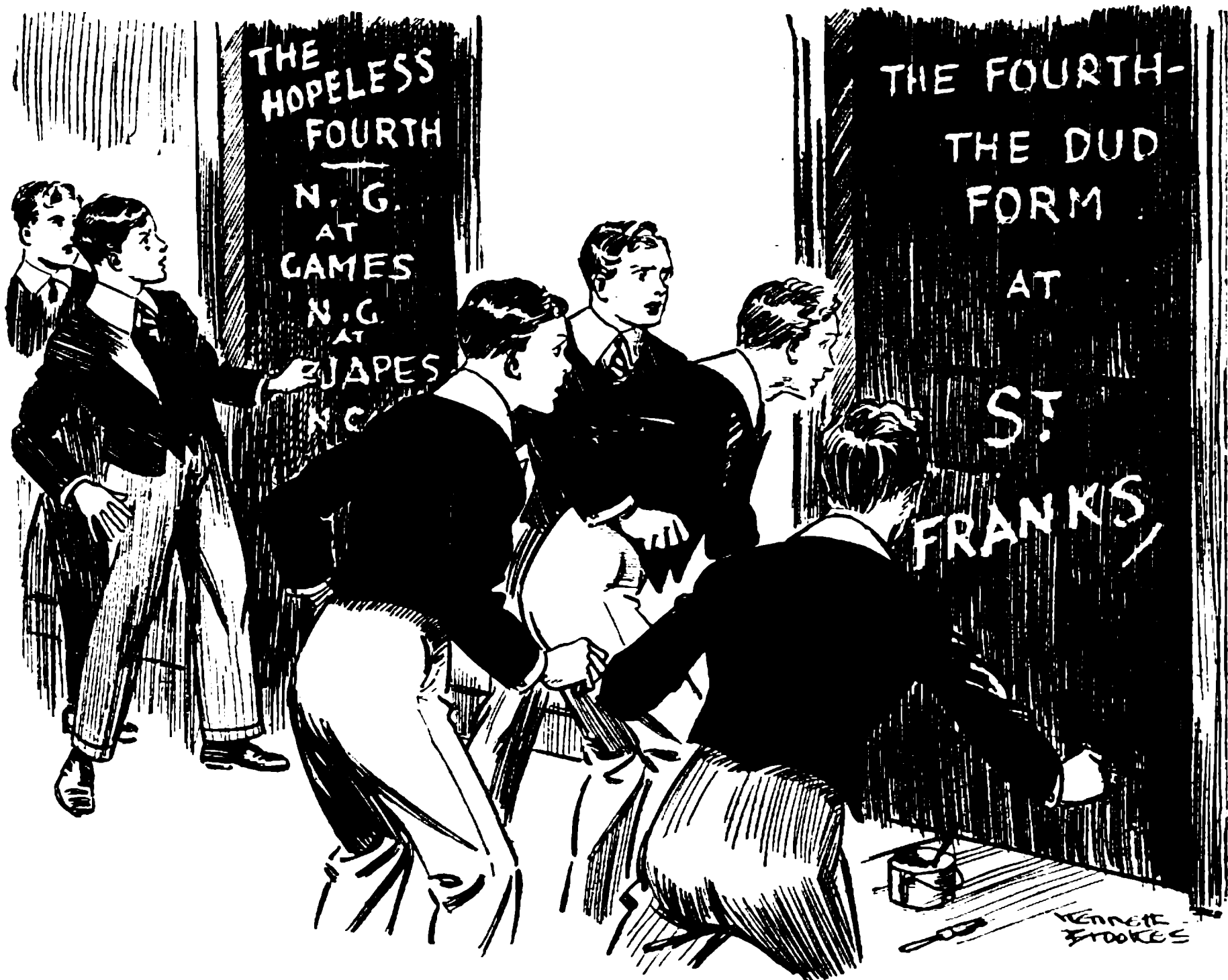
New Series No. 130.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

July 16th, 1932.

Our Fine New School Story of Sensational Surprises!

The DUD FORM at St. FRANK'S!



Fighting James Kingswood, Amateur Boxing Champion, is appointed headmaster of St. Frank's, following a disturbance on the cricket field which is witnessed by the Governors. A strong disciplinarian, and a man of unusual ideas, Fighting Kingswood takes up his post with the fixed intention of commencing a startling and sensational campaign of reform at the school. And the reform starts with a **BANG!**

The New Head Learns a Thing or Two!

"JUST a minute, dear old fellows!" Vivian Travers paused in the dormitory passage of the Ancient House, and Sir Jimmy Potts and "Skeets" Bellton, his chums of Study H, halted. It was only just six a.m., and the summer's morning was sunny and

bright. All three juniors were carrying towels and bathing costumes.

"Not going to wait for Handforth, are you?" asked Potts. "He'll only start arguing. I don't believe he's awake, anyhow. Isn't that Handy's snore I can hear?"

A dormitory opened, and Handforth strode

out, fully dressed, with Church and McClure in his rear.

"We'll have the river to ourselves, my sons," Handforth was saying. "Nobody else is up yet—Hullo! Well I'm jiggered! We're not the first, after all!"

"Is that very surprising?" asked Sheets. "Didn't a whole crowd of us agree to be up early, for a swim?"

"Well, come on—let's be going," said Potts.

"I was really thinking about Archie," murmured Travers. "He shuddered last night when we suggested an early swim. Don't you think we ought to lug him out, as a matter of duty, and rush him to the river?"

"Good idea," said Handforth briskly. "Archie's getting lazier than ever."

They piled unceremoniously into Archie's bedroom; and there lay the noble scion of the Glenthorne's, flat on his back, with his mouth wide open, snoring energetically.

With one energetic movement Handforth yanked the bedclothes clean back, and Archibald Winston Derek Glenthorne lay fully exposed in all the glory of his orange striped silk pyjamas.

"Ye gods!" ejaculated Potts. "I wonder Phipps allows him to wear these dizzy things!"

Archie sat up, blinking, and feebly beating his hands.

"Absolutely not, Phipps, you dashed blighter!" he said desperately. "I mean to say, I bought these bally pyjamas, and I'm dashed well going to wear them!"

"Wake up, Archie!" bawled Handforth. "You're not speaking to your giddy valet!"

"Eh? Good gad!" gasped Archie, gazing round in mingled relief and wonder. "Some of the cheery old lads, what? I must say I'm frightfully relieved. Phipps made a poisonous fuss over these pyjamas last night, and I was obliged to put my foot down with a certain amount of firmness."

"Well, you can put it down again—on the floor!" said Travers. "In other words, dear old fellow—show a leg! It's time to get up."

"Morning, and all that sort of thing, what?" said Archie, looking at the window. "Odds wonders and mysteries! The good old sun appears to be somewhat low in the heavenly void!"

"Yes; it's just gone six," said Handforth.

"Six?" yelped Archie, with a jump. "Good gad! You don't mean to say that you're getting me out of bed at this blighting hour?" An expression of horror came into his eyes. "I say, is this a new dashed rule? Something that our new headmaster has instituted? I mean to say, six o'clock. Getting near the bone, isn't it? What a perfectly poisonous person!"

"We haven't had time to judge Mr. Kingswood yet—but if he goes on as well as he's started, he'll be all right. You will remember that, although he heard that we had kicked up a shindy on the cricket field yesterday—he said he was not going to refer to it any more," said Travers, grinning. "Still, you needn't worry, Archie. This early rising stunt is quite voluntary."

Archie Glenthorne looked relieved.

"Speak for yourself, you dashed disturber of the peace!" he said coldly. "I absolutely refuse to voluntarily leap from the good old feathers in the small hours! Nothing doing, old things!"

And, reaching for the bedclothes, he luxuriously pulled over himself, and stretched full length again.

Travers looked at the others.

"I rather think Phipps is right about those pyjamas," he said. "A dose of river water wouldn't do them much good, would it? Grab him?"

Once again the bedclothes were yanked back, and Archie was grabbed and hurled to the floor.

"Here, I say! Help! I mean, stop it, you frightful frights!" he shrieked.

"My dear chap, we're doing this for your own good," explained Jimmy Potts.

"I don't want to be done good. I mean—Hi! Phipps! Help!" wailed Archie. "The young master is beset by miscreants!"

"There are your slippers—and there's your dressing-gown," said Handforth briskly. "Are you going to get into 'em, or shall we cart you off to the river in those bilious-looking pyjamas?"

"Good gad! You don't absolutely mean—"

"We'll give you ten seconds!" said Handforth. "One—two—three—four—five—"

Archie fairly leapt into his dressing-gown and slippers, and, surrounded by the grinning Removites, he was whirled downstairs, and into the open.

"I say, you know, you can't do this!" he panted desperately. "I mean to say, somebody might see—"

His protests were ignored. Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West joined them, to say nothing of Gresham and Duncan and Fullwood. More Removites, led by Reggie Pitt, were appearing from the West House. But at this early hour none of the masters were in evidence; and the unhappy Archie was whirled away to the river at top speed.

"Now!" panted Handforth, as they came to a halt on the grassy bank. "Take off that dressing-gown, Archie, and dive in."

"Positively not!" said Archie stoutly. "I mean to say, never! Let me change into a bathing costume, and I'll disport myself somewhat in the wetness. But I absolutely refuse to bathe in pyjamas!"

"Come on, you chaps—lend a hand!" sang out Handforth. "The silly ass will keep us here until breakfast-time! Let's chuck him in as he is."

There were many willing hands. Archie, protesting to the last, was swung once, twice, three times. Then, with arms and legs waving wildly, he shot through the air, and struck the water with a terrific splash.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But even as the laugh rang out, it was smothered. For Archie Glenthorne, coming to the surface, spluttering and gurgling, found somebody else in the water. The juniors on the

bank saw that somebody—and stared in horrified fascination. For they instantly recognised the rugged, square-jawed features of Mr. James Kingswood, the new Head!

“Dear old fellows, this has distinctly done it!” murmured Travers tragically. “We’re sunk!”

“Oh, crumbs!” breathed Handforth. “How the dickens were we to guess that the Head would be taking a bathe as early as this?”

Now that it was too late, the juniors realised that they had hurled Archie into the river under the very eyes of Fighting Kingswood!

“Gug-gug-gurrrrrh!” spluttered Archie, floundering wildly. “Good gad! You—you poisonous bounders! My pyjamas! My dressing-gown! Absolutely ruined——” His voice trailed away as he suddenly beheld the head which was visible in the water near by. “Odds images and frights! Am I seeing things? Gug-gug-good morning, sir!”

“Good morning, young ‘un!” said Mr. Kingswood smilingly. “Water’s first class, eh?”

“Oh, rather, sir!” replied Archie hastily. “Absolutely ripping, I mean! Just practising a new sort of stunt, sir,” he went on chattily. “The jolly old dressing-gown stroke, if you know what I mean! I thought the lads would be slightly amused.”

He struck out boldly, and swam like a duck in spite of the handicap of the clinging dressing-gown. The japers on the bank understood, and they appreciated Archie Glenthorpe’s sportsmanship.

Mr. Kingswood evidently understood, too, for he offered no comment on Archie’s peculiar attire, and with a cheery “good morning” to the other Removites, he continued his swim.

The Form That Didn’t Count!

“THE new man’s all right,” said Reggie Pitt genially. “He proved it last night when he first arrived—and he proved it again this morning.”

“Yes, rather,” said Tommy Watson. “He actually saw us chuck Archie into the river—and he didn’t say a giddy word!”

The juniors were clustered round the dressing huts, after their swim. The river, in the early morning sunlight, looked placid and charming, with the fair expanse of meadowland stretching beyond. In the distance lay Bellton Wood, and peeping over the trees, in the other direction, were the ivy-covered, picturesque school buildings.

“I wonder why the Head didn’t jump on us?” said Handforth thoughtfully.

“There’s only one reason,” replied Reggie Pitt. “He knew that we were up before the rising bell, and he knew that we had no suspicion that a master was on the scene. So he said nothing. If he had uttered one word about Archie’s pyjamas and dressing-gown, he would have been forced to continue the inquiry. So, like a true sportsman, he remained conveniently blind to the whole business.”

“Archie helped, too,” grinned Church. “He passed it off very neatly.”

“Easy, dear old fellows—easy!” murmured Travers suddenly. “I wonder if we have been congratulating ourselves too soon?”

They glanced round—and understood. Mr. James Kingswood was bearing down upon them—a tall, massive, imposing figure. He came with long, swinging strides, and the juniors watched him with a mingled sense of wonder and incredulity. For this big man, so young looking, with the aggressive jaw, and with his hat perched on the back of his head, and with a pipe clenched between his teeth, looked less like the headmaster of a great public school than any man could look.

“Had your swim?” he asked, his face breaking into a good-natured smile, as the Removites doffed their caps. “I like St. Frank’s, you fellows. Fine old place. This river is pretty good, too.”

“We think St. Frank’s is all right, sir,” said Reggie Pitt.

“Best school in the country—bar none,” declared Mr. Kingswood stoutly.

“Better than Rydehouse, sir?” asked Handforth, with a grin.

“Heaps better,” replied the Head. “But I will say this for Rydehouse—the school is alive, virile. There are three houses at Rydehouse, and the rivalry between them is as keen as mustard. There’s not a pin to choose between either one of them.”

“I’m not sure that you can say the same about St. Frank’s, sir,” said Handforth, shaking his head. “There’s only one House here, really—the Ancient House.”

“To which, no doubt, you belong?” asked Mr. Kingswood, grinning.

“Rather, sir.”

“I shouldn’t advise you to take any notice of Handforth, sir,” said Reggie Pitt, with a sniff. “You’ll soon find that the West House is the only really decent house at St. Frank’s. The Ancient House is more or less of a barn——”

“Why, you silly ass—— I—I mean—— Sorry, sir,” stammered Handforth. “But when this chump says things like that——”

“That’s all right,” said the Head cheerfully. “House rivalry is good for the school. I like the boys of each house to think that their own house is the best under the sun.”

He took the opportunity to become acquainted with all the Removites there.

“So you’re Pitt, the Remove captain?” he went on, looking at Reggie. “Well, Pitt, we’re going to be great friends, I hope. You are in charge of the Junior sports, I think? I’m rather keen on sports myself. How are you off for boxers? Anybody specially good?”

“We’ve a fellow at St. Frank’s, sir, who is an absolute genius in the ring,” replied Reggie promptly. “He’s a boxing miracle! Lawrence, of the Fourth.”

Although the new Head was interested, he frowned slightly.

“The Fourth?” he repeated. “You’ll have



With arms and legs waving wildly, Archie shot through the air and struck the water with a terrific splash—a few yards from the figure of the new headmaster of St. Frank's.

to forgive me, I'm still very much of a stranger, you know. All you boys belong to the Remove, don't you?"

"Yes, sir," they chorused.

"And it was you, the Remove boys, who were involved in that unfortunate little scrap of yesterday, with those River House fellows?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then where does the Fourth come in?"

"As a matter of fact, sir, the Fourth seldom comes in anywhere," said Pitt, shaking his head. "It's funny about the Fourth. The Form is practically as big as the Remove, and there are some first class chaps in it. But the Fourth never does anything. It's stagnant. It's a proper washout."

"Oh!" said Mr. Kingswood slowly. "So

the Fourth is a washout? Naturally, I make allowances for your prejudiced point of view—"

"No, sir—really," put in Handforth. "Pitt's right about the Fourth. There are one or two outstanding fellows—such as Lawrence, but all the rest are as dead as mutton."

"H'm! I'm sorry to hear this," said the Head, stroking his jutting chin. "How does the Fourth do at cricket? You have Form matches, don't you?"

"We always lick them, sir," replied Reggie Pitt. "Our Junior Form matches are pretty slow. We can lick the Fourth without even trying."

"How did you get on in the football season?"

"Just the same, sir. The Fourth didn't win a match against us."

"Why waste time in talking about the Fourth, anyhow?" put in Handforth impatiently. "The Fourth doesn't count at St. Frank's. All the best swimmers, and the best runners, and the best cricketers in the Junior School are in the Remove. You'll find out, sir."

"I seem to be finding out quite rapidly," nodded the new Head. "Don't you boys ever do anything to wake up this comatose Form?"

"We have a shot now and again, sir, but it's a pretty hopeless proposition," said Pitt. "Even if we jape the bounders, they take it lying down. Never think of japing us back, so there's not much fun in it."

"I see," said Mr. Kingswood thoughtfully.

"Mind you, sir, I don't want to run the Fourth down too much," went on Reggie, suddenly becoming earnest. "Christine and Yorke and Boots and Corcoran and those chaps are all right—they're friends of ours, and they're true blue. A few of them are included in the Junior Eleven, too. But, generally speaking, the Fourth isn't in the picture."

"Well, things are like that sometimes," said the Head smiling. "It's a pity, of course."

He went off abruptly; and there was something aggressive and purposeful in his very stride.

"I don't quite like the way he left us," said Reggie Pitt, troubled. "I hope he doesn't think we were just gassing. About the Fourth, I mean."

"Dash it, we only told him the truth," protested Handforth. "He'll jolly soon find out that the Fourth is no good."

But even so, they were still somewhat uneasy at breakfast. They just couldn't understand their new Head's sudden interest in the Fourth Form.

The Head Makes Some Inquiries!

THERE were no sensations during the morning—as the Junior School had half-hoped. Merely because Mr. Kingswood possessed the reputation of a fighter, some of the more imaginative spirits seemed to think that the new Head would go about the school whacking people in the eye.

Handforth, for one, was not only disappointed but disgusted.

Prayers came, and then morning lessons, and St. Frank's was proceeding on the even tenor of its way. Certainly, Mr. Kingswood left his mark wherever he went; Housemasters, Form-masters, and prefects, face to face with that dynamic giant, experienced a sudden and overwhelming sense of insignificance. No matter how self-satisfied they had been earlier, they felt dwarfed, both bodily and mentally, in the presence of this remarkable young man.

The boys saw little during that morning; but, actually, Fighting Jim Kingswood made a tour of the school, and what he saw brought him to the conclusion that half the school, at least, needed waking up.

At Rydehouse he had been an under-master at first, and then a Housemaster. Within six months of his promotion, Kingswood's House had leapt ahead of its rivals. Seniors and juniors alike, infected with their Housemaster's spirit, had won the cream of the sports honours; studious fellows had secured the most coveted scholarships. Kingswood's House, in every department, had worked like one vital, humming machine.

Naturally, the other Houses of Rydehouse College had sat up and taken notice; and they, too, had soon entered into a fine, healthy rivalry with the House which had once been the laugh of the school.

Mr. Kingswood found an almost parallel case here at St. Frank's. But his position was different. He was not a Housemaster, privileged to urge his own boys on to do greater things than the other boys. He was the Head, and it was his duty to maintain a strict impartiality. But he saw no reason why he should not get immediately to work. In fact, he couldn't help himself.

In the Ancient House he found things very satisfactory. Mr. Alington Wilkes was a prime favourite with his boys; he understood them, and they understood him. The very atmosphere of the place was alive. Mr. Kingswood came to the conclusion that there was very little for him to do in the Ancient House. Where he did find cases that needed his special treatment he made a careful note.

"I am glad I came to this school," murmured Fighting Kingswood, as he sat in his own study that evening. "Somehow, I don't think I shall proceed quite as the Governors planned; but if I don't wake up St. Frank's until its hair stands on end, I'll chuck schooling and become a prizefighter!"

And in the headmaster's eye there was a grim gleam—not to say a mischievous gleam as there was born the beginning of an idea which was destined to have some remarkable results at St. Frank's.

John Busterfield Boots, the red-headed leader of the Modern House section of the Fourth Form, looked down at his dormitory mates with indescribable disgust.

"Lazy blighters!" he said fiercely. "What the dickens is the matter with you? When I went to the bathroom, five minutes ago, you said you'd both get up!"

Percy Bray and Walter Denny, who also shared Study No. 6 with Boots, grunted and rolled over in their beds.

"Rats!" mumbled Bray. "It's not seven yet. Why get up? The rising bell won't be ringing until——"

"Blow the rising bell!" roared Boots. "What about Handforth and Pitt, and those other Remove chaps? They're getting up early every morning these days, and going for a swim. Why shouldn't we do the same?"

Boots was one of the really energetic stalwarts of the Fourth. But even he had given up his Form fellows as a bad job. There was Bob Christine, of course—Christine of Study No. 1,

with Roddy Yorke and Charlie Talmadge. They were stout enough chaps.

In fact, they came along now, fully dressed, and cheery-looking.

"Let 'em sleep!" said Christine, as he beheld Boots' study mates.

And there, in those three words, Bob exemplified the general spirit of the Fourth.

The four Fourth-Formers went downstairs, debating the doubtful question whether any of the East House fellows would be out. Lionel Corcoran, the leader of the East House section, was a kindred spirit of Boots', and it was almost certain that he would have turned out. But the rest were doubtful starters.

Even in this matter of leadership, the Fourth was uncertain. The East House fellows declared that Corcoran was the Captain of the Fourth. The Modern House fellows were equally convinced that Boots was the Captain of the Fourth. This was all wrong. But, like everything else on this side of the school, the question was allowed to drift, without being definitely settled.

"Armstrong swore blue that he'd get up this morning," said Boots, as they reached the bottom of the stairs, and were about to cross the lobby. "Not that I take much notice. He said the same yesterday——"

"Beggin' your pardon, Master Boots," interrupted a voice.

The Fourth Formers looked round, and found Spratt, the Modern House page-boy, grinning from ear to ear.

"What's your trouble, infant?" asked Boots kindly.

"'Taint mine, sir—it's yours, I think," replied Spratt. "You ought to see what somebody's done to your study door. In fact, all the study doors! Seems like some o' them Remove young gents have been over 'ere. I found the little window, at the end of the passage, open and the catch broke——"

The Fourth Formers did not wait for him to go into any further details. They dashed into the Fourth Form passage, and just as abruptly back-pedalled and skidded to a standstill.

"Jumping gingernuts!" ejaculated Boots, aghast.

They were staring at the door of Study No. 1—Bob Christine's study. Daubed upon it in great white letters, hurriedly and roughly executed, and stretching from the top of the door to the bottom, were the following words:

"THE FOURTH—THE DUD FORM OF ST. FRANK'S!"

That legend was very much like a red flag to a bull. The Fourth-Formers could hear such remarks yelled derisively at them many times a day—but to see the painted words gave them a jolt which was very much like the kick of a mule.

"Ye gods and little fishes!" breathed Bob Christine. "Our study, you chaps! Paint, too!"

He touched one of the sprawling letters.

"Dry as a giddy bone!" he said breathlessly;

"The rotters must have used quick-drying enamel; but, even so, the job must have been done hours and hours ago."

"Never mind when it was done," said Yorks, with a gulp. "Look at Lawrence's door!"

On the door of Study No. 2 was this piece of bright information:

"THE HOPELESS FOURTH. N.G. AT GAMES, N.G. AT JAPES, N.G. AT EVERYTHING."

"The awful rotters!" gulped Boots, hot with wrath.

They went down the passage with burning faces, uttering vows of vengeance. And on the various doors they read more of those insulting inscriptions:

"POOR OLD FOURTH—WHAT A WASH-OUT!"

And another:

"WHO ARE TOP DOGS AT ST. FRANK'S?—THE REMOVE!"

And still another:

"WHY NOT DIE AND GET IT OVER? YOU'RE HALF-DEAD ALREADY!"

These, and similar atrocities, were to be found up and down the length of the Fourth Form passage. Without any question whatever, the whole thing was the work of some Remove japers.

"Come on!" roared Boots. "By thump! This'll wake the chaps up!"

It did. Rushing from dormitory to dormitory, and yelling the tidings, Boots and his companions succeeded in getting the Fourth out within thirty seconds. Fellows scrambled frantically into their clothes and hoofed it downstairs as though the House were in danger of tumbling about their ears.

In the midst of it all, Corcoran came tearing up from the East House. He brought the alarming tidings that every Fourth Form study door, in the East House, had been treated in exactly the same way.

"We're not going to stand it!" shouted Corcoran. "Dash it, there's a limit! Are we going to let those fatheaded Removites break into our Houses and insult us like this?"

"Not likely!" went up an infuriated roar.

Naturally, all this noise brought prefects and masters out in a very short time. And they were nearly as angry as the juniors. They were all the angrier because they knew perfectly well that the Fourth was slack, and deserving of censure. Still, they felt that they had been personally affronted.

"This is more than a mere jape!" said Reynolds, the Head Prefect of the Modern House. "There's going to be trouble over this."

"So there ought to be!" growled Mills, another Sixth-Former.

"Old Goole is raving mad about it," said Swinton, of the Fifth, as he joined them. "He's roaring and ranting like a bull."

"That won't do any good," said Reynolds, with a frown. "In fact, I don't see how we can drop on the culprits."

(Continued on page 43.)

Into Snowbound Alaska. A Powerful Detective-Thriller, Starring . . .

The FORTUNE



CHAPTER 1.

In the Scottish Express!

“LONDON train! London train! Next stop, Crewe!”

The mighty engine with its string of carriages was waiting for the signal that would send it out again into the murk of the night on its long rush down through England. There were a few passengers on the platform, most of them having emerged from

the train itself to stretch their limbs. A man with a travelling rug and a small suit-case was led to a first-class compartment by a porter, and a corner seat was found for him.

“Take your seats, please!”

The man in the corner settled himself, then the door of the compartment was flung open and another passenger entered. He was bare-headed, obviously the owner of the coat and rug that lay on the seat in the opposite corner. He came to a halt as he noted the stranger, and a frown crossed his heavy face.

. . . Nelson Lee, the Famous Detective, and his Assistant, Nipper!

TRAIL!

THRILLS!

THRILLS!



To journey half-way across the world and deliver a belt into the hands of an outcast Red Indian is the strange task that is set young Malcolm Ross—a task which, if completed, means a fortune to the lone adventurer. How Malcolm Ross, with true British grit and courage, faces the unknown dangers and terrible hardships of the long trail to Alaska, you will discover when you read this powerful complete story!

The guard chanced to be passing, and he turned towards him.

"Someone has got into this compartment," he said, in a loud voice. "And I understood that you were reserving it for me."

The guard leaned forward and glanced at the quiet-looking stranger. Now and again a passenger by a judicious tip may contrive to get a compartment to himself, but he has no legal right to demand one unless he books a certain number of seats. The guard rubbed his chin doubtfully.

"I'm sorry, sir," he said.

There was no earthly reason why the man should grumble. He had a whole seat to himself if he wanted it,

"Find another carriage for this man!" the bullying voice went on.

Into the steel-blue eyes of the quiet individual in the corner there came a swift gleam. He leaned forward slightly.

"I shouldn't trouble to do that if I were you, M'Kenzie," he said, addressing the guard by his name. "I am quite comfortable where I am. Unless, of course, this gentleman wants to shift."

The guard faded away from the door, evidently deciding to let these two gentlemen settle the matter themselves. The door was closed, and the shrill whistle sounded. The heavy faced man turned and glared across the compartment,

"Infernal impertinence!" he grated. "I ought to have asked the guard to examine your ticket. This is a first-class compartment?"

"I am quite aware of that," came the quiet response. "It is also a corridor coach, and you may find better quarters if you look for them."

There was something in his very quietness that had its effect on the blusterer. That clean-shaven face with the keen eyes and grim chin was not the type of features that could be easily frightened. He dropped sulkily into his seat and hid himself behind a magazine.

Nelson Lee, the famous detective, leaned back and smiled grimly to himself. The incident was by no means a pleasant one, and the man had acted like an unmannerly cad, yet his clothes were well-cut and his voice cultured.

"There is a reason for everything," Lee thought, "and I'd like to find out just why you were so angry. You could not possibly use both seats, even if you tried. What made you lose your temper, I wonder?"

The detective had been away for a week's shoot on a friend's moors, and was just making his way back to London again. He looked tanned and fit, and had had a most pleasant time. It was rather annoying that an incident such as this should have happened to mar the memory of what had been otherwise an enjoyable trip.

The train drummed on through the night, and the steady sway of the carriage had its usual effect. Nelson Lee closed his eyes and allowed himself to sink into a half-doze, but every now and then he would rouse himself and throw a quick glance at the corner opposite. The other man had wrapped himself in his rug, and was apparently sound asleep.

It was well past midnight before the train ran into the wide station at Crewe, and Nelson Lee, who had not slept, knew that his companion had never left the compartment. The train came to a halt, and Lee alighted to take a walk along the platform to the buffet where hot coffee was waiting for those who required it. There were four or five sleepy-eyed passengers around the stall, and just as Nelson Lee received his cup someone jostled him.

"Oh, I say, I'm very sorry!" a voice said. And Lee found himself looking into a dark handsome face.

"That's all right," the detective returned, steadying the cup again. Half the contents had gone on to the platform, and the young stranger reached out his hand.

"Let me get it filled up for you again," he said. "It was beastly careless of me. But I'm afraid I was half asleep."

The cup was filled and returned to Nelson Lee, then the young passenger received his own cup.

"I don't seem to be able to get right off into a sleep," he said to Nelson Lee. "I just doze by fits and starts. I expect I'll be like a wet rag when I reach London. There are four or five in my compartment, and we are rather cramped. I might as well have travelled third, really, as I did when I came up yesterday."

"You ought to have taken a sleeping berth," said Nelson Lee, with a smile.

"That would have been a bit too extravagant," he replied, "As a matter of fact, I

have never travelled first-class before. Third is more in my line."

They finished their coffee and began to walk along the platform until they reached Lee's compartment. Lee chanced to glance inside it, and noted that the rug and coat had vanished from the other seat.

"Hallo! My travelling companion seems to have vanished," he said with a grim smile. "And, by the way, why shouldn't you come into this compartment? There is more room."

"That's a good idea!" came the swift response. "I'll go and get my case."

He stepped into the compartment and placed his case on the rack. He was wearing a coat, and he wrapped it round his feet as he took his seat. He was a much more sociable creature than the surly sneering man whose seat he had taken. Nelson Lee passed across his cigarette-case, and they lit up. The shriek of the whistle set the train on its way again, and the monotonous rumbling of the wheels on the smooth rails began afresh.

NELSON LEE was leaning back puffing at his cigarette, when he chanced to look up at the rack above his companion's head.

"I don't think much of that catch," he said. "It's a wonder that it holds!"

His companion turned and looked at the case. A startled exclamation broke from his lips, and he rose to his feet.

"What the dickens!—"

The case came down on the seat, and the catch gave way, dropping on to the floor.

"It was locked firm enough when I put it on the other rack!"

He had lifted the lid, and was turning over the contents. A cry of utter dismay broke from his lips.

"I—I've been robbed!"

"Robbed?"

A white, startled face was turned towards Lee, and the young man dropped into his seat.

"A belt!" he broke out. "I put it there when I left Ardley this morning. It—it's gone!"

His dismay over such an apparent trivial loss almost made the detective smile.

"It must be rather annoying——"

"Annoying? But you don't understand. That belt meant everything to me. It represented the biggest chance that ever will come my way. And I've lost it already!"

There was agony on the young voice, and the eyes were drawn together in a frown of utter dismay.

"You interest me," said Nelson Lee, quickly. "and, unless it is breaking a confidence, I would like to know more about this—this belt."

The young man was leaning back biting his lip, a picture of helpless dejection.

"I am much obliged," he said at last, "but I'm afraid that you could not help me."

Nelson Lee waited for a moment; then slipping his hand into his pocket, he drew out a card.

"I am not too sure that I cannot help you," he said, in a quiet voice.

The young man looked at the card, then suddenly sat up!

"Nelson Lee, the detective!"

"I'm glad you've heard of me before," said the detective. "It makes things easier. Now, let us look into the problem. You say that the case was locked when you put it on the rack?"

"Yes, Mr. Lee."

"And did you notice what it was like before you left the compartment at Crewe? I mean, when you came down to the coffee-stall?"

"I did. I thought at first of taking it with me, but it would have looked so beastly suspicious, with the other passengers there. But I did try the lock, and found it secure."

"And when you brought it to this carriage?"

"Oh, I didn't look at it then," Lee's companion confessed. "I didn't have much time. I just slipped it under my arm and rushed back here."

"Well, if it was under your arm there wasn't much chance of the belt slipping out."

"It couldn't have done that, for it was stowed away under my pyjamas. Someone must have deliberately forced open the lock and taken the belt."

Nelson Lee leaned forward.

"We will go along and have a word with the guard presently," he said. "I know him, and he knows me. If your belt is on board the train we will have a good search for it. Anyhow, we can have a word with the other travellers in your compartment. But, first of all, why is this belt so valuable?"

"It contains over twenty ounces of pure gold-dust," came the quick reply. "It was entrusted to me by my uncle, and I had to give it to—to someone." He looked at Nelson Lee for a moment. "I might as well tell you the whole story, sir," he said. "I know that I shall want someone to help me, and perhaps, after you have heard my tale you may be inclined to do so."

Nelson Lee leaned back against the cushions, and Malcolm Ross, as he said his name was, plunged into his story.

"Yes, my name is Malcolm Ross, and Sir Roderick Ross, of Castle Mor, Ardley, is my uncle. I had never actually seen him before, but I came north at his request. He has no direct heir, and the succession to the estates rests between me and a distant relation, named Stephen Morrison. Sir Roderick wanted to make up his mind between us, and has set us both a task in order to test our fitness to be his heir.

"My uncle told me what he wanted me to do. It appears that over fifty years ago, my uncle—then plain Roderick Ross—was in charge of a big trading station of the Hudson Bay Company. One night he went into the nearest town and was persuaded to enter a gambling saloon. He was something of a gambler then, and he played for high stakes, with the result that when he arose from the table he found that he had lost, not only his own money, but also about a hundred and fifty pounds of the company's cash, which he had foolishly enough carried into the town with him.

"My uncle was aware that he would have to hand over the money within the next few days, when the head agent came round, and he was at his wits' ends to know what to do. He went back to the station, and just as he arrived there an Indian trapper knocked at the door. It was a man named White Wolf, and he and my uncle had always been very good friends. White Wolf had just returned from a terrible trip on the Yukon, a practically unknown region in those days, and after my uncle had given him some food, the Indian produced a reindeer belt and showed my uncle that it was simply stuffed with gold-dust. White Wolf said that he had found the gold in the mountains, and was going to take it down to be valued. My uncle told me that he is sure now that White Wolf had actually found the present-day gold-fields at Dawson City."

Malcolm Ross came to a pause for a moment, and glanced across at Nelson Lee.

"I hope this doesn't bore you, Mr. Lee," he said, "but I have to tell you the story, for it explains my part."

"It's very interesting," said Lee. "Go on!"

"To cut a long story short, my uncle robbed White Wolf. He stole the Indian's belt and replaced it with an empty one. White Wolf went off without examining his pack again, and my uncle was able to pay the head agent when he appeared. For years my uncle expected White Wolf to return to the station, and accuse him of the theft, but the Indian never appeared, and at last, my uncle decided that he must have perished in the snow that same night.

"Three years ago a man came to Castle Mor who had known my uncle in the North-West. He was an old trapper named John Celeste, a half-caste, French Canadian. My uncle was pleased to see his old friend, and they chatted over old times, and presently John Celeste mentioned the name of White Wolf, the Indian. It appears that he is still alive, and is living in one of the wildest parts of Alaska, almost an outlaw. John Celeste told my uncle that White Wolf had never traded with a white man for years and years, and there were stories going about that he seemed to have sworn a vendetta against them.

"My uncle realised that he was the cause of that, and it came to him that he could do only one thing. He would have to return the belt and the gold to the man he had robbed. He felt that his act had driven the old Indian into exile, and the matter preyed on his mind. He is a very old man, now—close on ninety, I believe."

"I think I have heard of Sir Roderick Ross, of Castle Mor," said Nelson Lee.

"That is my uncle," Malcolm Ross returned.

"And he wants you to find White Wolf and give him the belt and the gold, and ask his forgiveness?"

"Yes. The doctors have warned him that he may not live another six months, that was nearly three months ago," the young man went on. "And he wants his account with White Wolf settled before that time."

"You have three months in which to do the task, then?"

Malcolm Ross made a gesture of despair.

"I will never be able to carry it out," he returned. "I have lost the belt." He leaned forward. "My uncle told me that it was to be a trial of wit and strength between myself and my distant relative, Stephen Morrison. He is my cousin, in a distant way, and represents the other branch of my uncle's family. I fancy he thought that he was the only possible heir to the Ross estates, but now I have turned up and he hates me for it. I met him at Castle Mor, and, to be frank, I didn't quite hit it off with him. He was hostile from the start, and threatened me more than once."

"And this Stephen Morrison knows that you are going to be entrusted with this mission?"

"Yes. My uncle had two belts made, after the exact pattern of the one he stole, and each of them contains the same amount of gold. I understand that my cousin has already received his belt. He is much better off than I am, I think. He lives in chambers in London, and belongs to a lot of clubs. My uncle seems to hint that at one time Stephen Morrison regarded himself as the heir to Castle Mor. But there are two of us now, and the one who gets back first to my uncle with a message of forgiveness from White Wolf will be acknowledged the next-of-kin and heir."

He looked across at Nelson Lee.

"You mustn't think that it is because of the money alone that I am so anxious to win," he went on. "I've got a mother and a sister dependant upon me, and I'd like to win for their sakes, of course. But apart from that, I want to prove to my uncle that—that the last of his race has the right stuff in him. I want him to know that, although I'm only a Londoner born, I am capable of doing what he has asked me to do."

Nelson Lee tossed his cigarette on to the floor and stamped on it.

"And you have lost the belt!"

Malcolm Ross nodded.

"I will never forgive myself for that," he muttered. "But I did not dream that I would be robbed in the train, almost under my very nose."

Nelson Lee was silent for a moment, then he rose to his feet.

"We'll go along and have a talk with M'Kenzie," he said, "although I'm afraid that your property is no longer on board the train."

"How do you make that out?"

"Because the man who stole your belt would not be so foolish as to take the risk of having it found in his possession," came the quiet reply. "Had it been an ordinary robbery he might have gone on in the train. But there's far too much attached to the fate of that belt to allow anyone to take risks."

CHAPTER 2.

The Missing Belt!

THEY went along the swaying corridors and finally reached the guard's van, when Nelson Lee told M'Kenzie of what had happened. But although they made a thorough search of the train, and questioned many people, nothing could be discovered concerning the missing article.

When they were back in their own compartment the guard pointed to Ross' seat.

"Who is occupying that place?" he asked.

"I am," said Malcolm Ross.

The guard turned to Nelson Lee.

"Did you notice when the other gentleman left?"

"At Crewe, didn't he?" replied Lee.

M'Kenzie scratched his head.

"It's like this, Mr. Lee," he said. "I thought that you and that man wouldn't get on verra weel together, and so when we stopped at Crewe I came along to tell him that there was another empty compartment at the back of the train. He picked up his things and left your carriage. I happened to stop and glance back, and saw him going into the verra compartment that this young gent's case was in.

"I was at the other end of the train by then, but I turned back to tell him he'd made a mistake. But when I reached the carriage he had vanished, probably by way of the corridor. I went on up beside the train, but I couldn't see him, and at last I thought I wouldn't trouble any more about him. He was a cantankerous kind o' eendividual, and I was fair fed up wi' him."

Nelson Lee turned towards Ross.

"Could you describe your cousin, Stephen Morrison, to us?" he asked slowly.

Malcolm twisted his brows into a thoughtful frown.

"Well, I should describe him as rather heavily built, with a small black moustache and a prominent chin."

"And a—tweed suit?" asked the guard.

"He was wearing a light tweed suit when I last saw him," said Malcolm.

"Then he's on board this train," the guard put in. "And he travelled as far as Crewe with Mr. Lee here."

"I certainly believe that Stephen Morrison travelled from Carlisle to Crewe with me," retorted Lee, "but I'll be very much surprised if he is on this train now, M'Kenzie. However, you can soon settle that. Go and have a look for him."

The guard was absent for about twenty minutes, and when he reappeared again he shook his head.

"There's not a sign of the man," he reported.

"He must have missed the train."

Nelson Lee's keen eyes lit up in a grim way.

"He missed it because he had no desire to catch it," he said.

M'Kenzie saw that there was some sort of understanding between the detective and his companion, and presently the old guard retired. Malcolm Ross leaned forward and put his hand on Lee's arm.

"I am sure that you're right," he broke out. "It is my cousin who has stolen the belt. He must have been watching me all the time, and took the only opportunity that I gave him."

"Your case is of the usual type," said Nelson Lee. "The lock would scarcely offer any real difficulty. He had a chance at Castle Mor to study it and get a key to fit it. Of course, he could not have known that the belt was actually in the case, but he took the chance of it being there and made a lucky find. Had he failed, he would probably have gone and found the other

compartment. As it was, he did the wisest thing, and left the train."

"His aim is, I suppose," said Malcolm, "to prevent me completing the task my uncle has set me."

"That is obvious," returned Nelson Lee. "But I want you to promise me just one thing. Do not tell another living soul about your loss."

"But how on earth shall I get it back?"

The detective leaned forward.

"Leave that to me," he said. "Your story has interested me, much more than you may imagine. I am out to help you, and will see you through."

The dark face opposite him suddenly glowed and the brown hand was outstretched.

"You mean that, sir?" Malcolm Ross cried, scarcely able to believe his own ears.

"I do," said the famous detective. "You appear to be on the threshold of a very grim experience, and I always make it my business to help the honest against the rogue. You will have to give me your address. You have mine already on that card. And remember, Ross, I want you to keep your loss a secret. Do not tell anyone, friend or stranger, that you have lost the belt. Do you understand that?"

"Yes."

"And if anyone should come to you and demand to see the belt, come and see me before you make any statement."

Malcolm was looking at the keen, intelligent face.

"I don't know what you're driving at, sir," he said; "but I'm ready to obey."

CHAPTER 3.

Ross in a Fix!

ABOUT ten o'clock on the morning of the following day Nipper was eyeing the brass plate at the entrance to some residential chambers in a quiet street off Pall Mall.

"Flat No. 4. S. Morrison. Out," read Nipper.

When a man is in a certain position in life and has his name in the telephone directory, it is child's play to find him in London. Nipper, given that task by his master, had succeeded in locating his man within half an hour. That is to say, he had located a certain S. Morrison, but was he the man Nelson Lee desired to find?

Nipper crossed to the lift and touched the bell. A porter, in his shirt sleeves, appeared from one of the ground floor flats.

"Has Mr. Morrison returned from Scotland yet?" asked the young detective.

"No, not yet. We expected him this morning, but he didn't turn up. Did you want to see him?"

"It was only about an account," said Nipper, knowing that most clubmen owe bills to someone. "I'll call later on."

"I shouldn't advise you to rush Mr. Morrison," said the porter, with a grin. "He's a hefty sort of gent, and hasn't got the best of tempers."

Thus, in two minutes, Nipper had completed the needed details. The man he was seeking

was a rather burly man, and did have a bad temper. The incident of the first-class compartment testified to that.

"I think I've found him," the youngster thought, as he turned away.

A short, thick-set man was entering the wide doorway and nearly ran into the young detective.

"Sorry, mister!" the man said gruffly, as he passed.

Nipper hesitated, then halted on the step. The porter's voice came to him.

"You here again, Dan? Mr. Morrison hasn't come back yet."

"Blow 'im! What did he send me a telegram for, then?"

"Better ask him when he comes, old son."

"Oh, I don't care. I charges him for my time, whether he takes a lesson or not. And I ain't goin' to wait, either. Just tell him I was here sharp to time, and he wasn't. So long!"

Nipper went out on to the pavement, and the thick-set figure came out behind him. One glance from the keen young eyes was quite enough to identify that battle-scarred face.

"Why, it's Dan Murphy!" Nipper cried, holding out his hand.

The man who had once been middle-weight champion of the world looked at the lad, then grinned from ear to ear, as he shot out a huge paw.

"Was it you as I nearly barged into just now, my son?"

"It was."

"I was in a hurry. Apologies, and all that!"

The old pugilist laughed and tucked his arm through Nipper's.

"And 'ow's the detective trade goin', old sport?" he asked. "And 'ow's the gov'nor? I ain't seen him for such a long time. Now, he's what I call a sad case, he is."

"Sad case?"

Dan shook his head mournfully.

"Terrible," he returned. "Don't I know him? Ain't I told him often enough that he spoiled a champion boxer when he took up this detective work? What a left he has! What an eye, too!" A sudden idea came to him. He jerked his thumb over his shoulder. "One o' my pupils lives in that place," he said. "Gent by the name o' Morrison. Ever heard of him?"

"It isn't an uncomomn name," said the cautious Nipper.

"Well, he fancies himself—not half! I admit he's strong and tough enough; but he ain't got a scrap of science and never will have. He reckons he's IT, and I can't drum it into him that he's got a lot to learn—a powerful lot to learn."

He heaved a sigh.

"I'm getting a bit too old to give him a real hiding, or I feel I'd like to do it," he added. "Sometimes he loses his temper and goes for me like a bull, and the best of us has to take a punch or two when a big man starts rushing, my son. He pays me top price, so I suppose I shouldn't complain, but there are times when I do wish that he'd someone else facing him as was a little younger and a little quicker than me."

"Were you going to give him a lesson just now, Dan?"

"Yes. He has a room fitted up as a small ring. It's quite a decent little crib."

If Stephen Morrison had a special boxing-room in his suite it was evident that he did fancy himself at the gentle art.

"I expect he'll get on the 'phone to me this afternoon," Dan went on. "He's been away in Scotland for three or four days, and he told me that he wanted a lesson this morning. He's bound to have one to-night."

Into Nipper's alert brain a sudden inspiration came. He was not quite sure how it would pan out, but he went to work to prepare the ground cautiously.

"Do you ever send another man along instead of yourself?"

"I did once," said the old pug. "I've got a couple of assistants—young hands at the game. But the gent gave my lads such a doing that none of them would ever tackle him again. So I've got to take him on myself."

Nipper drew out a pencil and notebook.

"Give me your 'phone number, Dan," he said. "Maybe the gov'nor would like to have a word with you."

A prophecy that was soon fulfilled, for an hour later Dan, in his little boxing school in Kensington, was rung up by Nelson Lee. They spoke together for ten minutes, and the pug's face was a mask of grim delight when he replaced the receiver.

"If only it comes off!" he muttered, rubbing his stout palms together.

He went back into the boxing saloon and continued his lessons. Dan was always well patronised and never lacked pupils. A couple of hours passed and then the 'phone whirred again. This time it was the porter of the residential chambers.

"That you, Dan?"

"Yes, me son."

"Well, Mr. Morrison has just turned up, and he wants you to come along at nine o'clock sharp to-night. And he told me to tell you to bring your towels with you!"

The old pug grinned to himself.

"Righto!" said Dan. Then, to himself: "By James, but I wish I could be there!"

As the porter left the telephone box in the chambers he met the broad shouldered figure of Stephen Morrison outside. The man had changed into another suit, and he was carrying a small brown paper parcel. The porter noted that the parcel was tied up with thick cord, and was sealed at the knot and corners.

"Was that all right about Dan Murphy?" Stephen asked, in his harsh voice.

"Quite all right, sir."

"Good!"

Stephen Morrison went out into the street and hailed a taxi at the corner. He was driven to a bank in Piccadilly, and when he emerged again the parcel was no longer in his hand. He gave an address in the City, and entered the vehicle. He seemed to be in a particularly satisfied mood at that moment. There was a smile on his lips as he leaned back in the taxi.

It was at the offices of a famous shipping company that he alighted next, and this time

his business took him some time, and when he reappeared it was to give the driver a third address.

"Number thirty-four, Huckelston Street," he said.

It proved to be an old-fashioned building, and Morrison entered the offices on the ground floor. A brass plate indicated that they were occupied by Messrs. Radley, Platt and West, solicitors. There was another long wait, and he appeared again.

"National Boxing Club," was the address he gave this time, and the taxi turned westward once more.

About ten minutes after he had left the lawyer's office, a little gentleman in grey frock coat and top hat, emerged from the office and made his way to the Tube station. He travelled out to Balham, then, after making inquiries, turned into a quiet side street and knocked at the door of a small house. Marion Ross answered the knock, and her fine, black eyes glanced inquiringly at the sprucely dressed little gentleman.

"My name is West," the solicitor said, "and I represent Sir Roderick Ross. I would like to see Mr. Malcolm Ross for a few moments."

He was led into a tiny sitting-room, and the slender girl vanished for a moment. Mr. West glanced round the room mentally valuing the contents. The door opened behind him and Malcolm Ross entered. The solicitor had no difficulty in tracing the likeness between his wealthy client and this slender, supple young man.

"I am your uncle's lawyer," said West, after the formal introductions. "And I know why he sent for you. It is quite a romantic story, and I suppose you have agreed to take up the task?"

"Yes, sir," replied Malcolm.

"I have just received a communication from Sir Roderick," the lawyer went on. "He wants you to start for Canada to-morrow. He is paying all expenses, and I am authorised to give you a draft on the Bank of Montreal for three hundred pounds. It will be ready to-morrow, and I want you to call at my office by ten a.m. I have already arranged that a berth will be booked for you on the 'Dominia,' and the boat train leaves at two p.m. Do you think you can be ready by then?"

MALCOLM was standing in the half light and the solicitor did not see the quick shadow that crossed the young face.

"Y-yes. I will be ready by then," he returned.

"Good!"

Mr. West rose to his feet.

"There is only one other thing that I want you to do," he said. "Your uncle gave you a certain belt. Will you let me see it now, please?"

With an effort Malcolm controlled his dismay. "It is only a pure formality," the little gentleman in grey said, with a smile. "I know you have to value the belt very greatly indeed. But I have a reason for asking you to show it to me."

The young man drew a swift breath. The detective's warning came to him, and Malcolm Ross, relying on the promise which Nelson Lee had given him, fought for time.

"I will bring the belt down to your office at ten to-morrow, Mr. West," he said. "Will that satisfy you?"

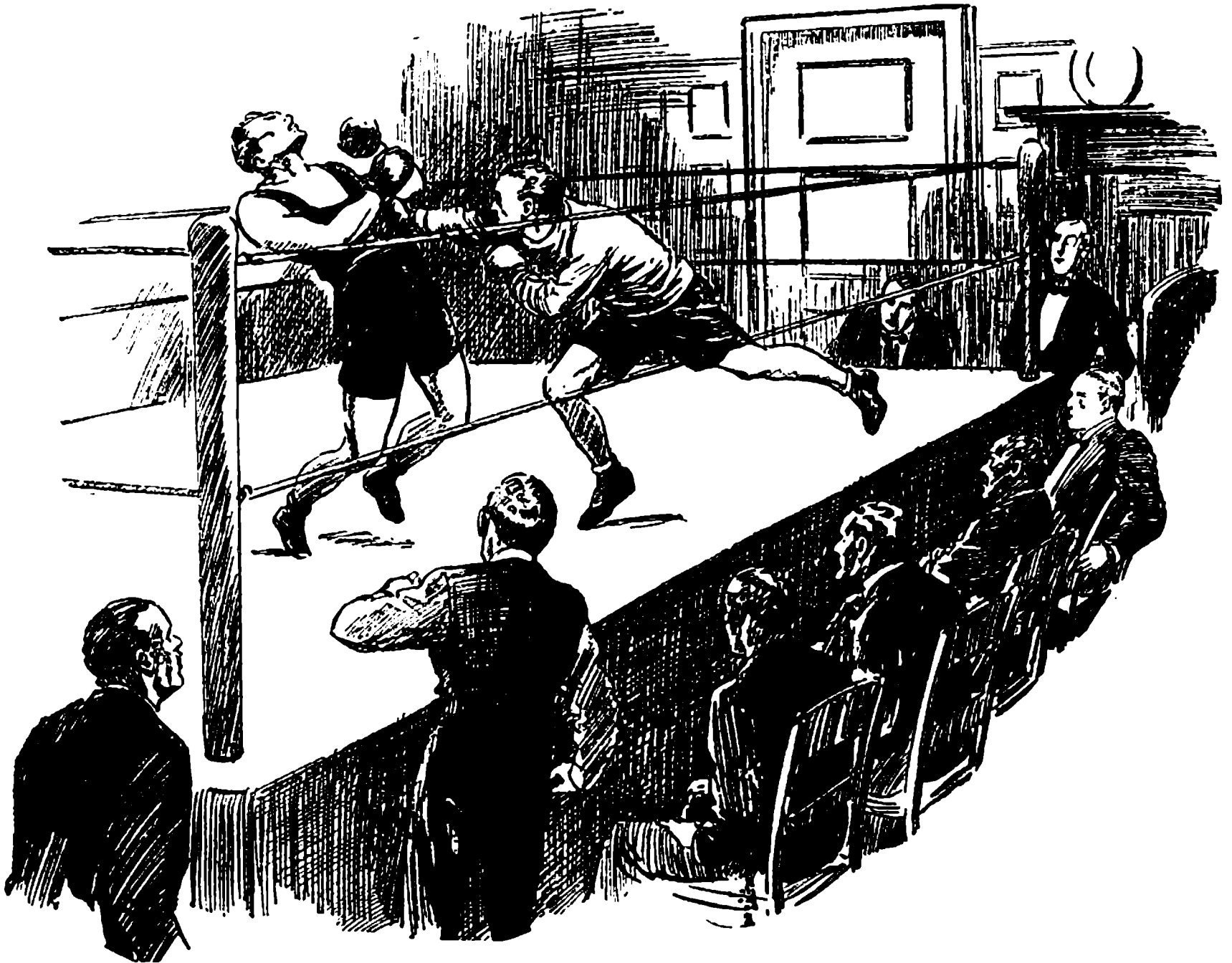
To his utter relief the little lawyer bowed.

"That will be quite all right," he said, and Malcolm heaved a sigh.

to his disappointment Nelson Lee was not in; only the housekeeper was there, and she could not offer him any news at all.

"That cunning brute, Morrison, has won!" Malcolm Ross thought desperately. "But, by gosh, I feel that I'd like to meet him face to face again!"

That thought gradually outweighed every other desire, and for a long hour Malcolm trudged the streets of London, brooding over



Morrison saw Nelson Lee leap at him and he made a desperate effort to meet the attack, but too late! A pile-driving punch went straight to the mark and sent him crashing helpless across the ring.

They chatted for a few moments about Castle Mor and its old owner. Then Mr. West rose to go.

"If there is any kit that you have to buy, you can let me know to-morrow," the solicitor said. "My orders are to see that you lack for nothing."

Malcolm shook hands with him and saw him leave the house. When he had gone, the young Londoner leaned against the wall of the hall and smothered a groan.

"I'm beaten!" he thought. "If I don't turn up with that belt by to-morrow morning he will know what has happened, and—and my uncle will learn that I was not to be trusted. By James, I've got to do something!"

He went out into the street, turned towards the main thoroughfare and boarded a tram. He had decided to look up Nelson Lee and tell him what had happened. It was about six o'clock when he reached Gray's Inn Road, and

his rival. He felt sure it was the sallow-faced cousin who had robbed him. There was no one else in the world who knew anything about the belt.

"If I could only find him!" Malcolm thought—a savage desire surging into his veins.

He hung about for some hours and then returned to Gray's Inn Road. The landlady shook her head as she recognised her visitor.

"Not back yet, sir," she said. "But Mr. Nipper is in, and if you'd like to see him——"

"I don't know him," said Malcolm, "but you could give him my name—Malcolm Ross."

The old lady was absent for a moment or so, then she reappeared, and Ross was led into the study, where Nipper met him. A few words served to introduce the young detective, and he and Malcolm shook hands.

"I don't know if Mr. Lee told you anything about my affairs?" began Malcolm,

"The gov'nor sent me off this morning to do something that was in your interests," said Nipper. "I found out where a certain Mr. Morrison lives."

Malcolm leaned forward eagerly.

"And is Mr. Lee——"

Nipper glanced at the clock on the wall.

"I expect the gov'nor back somewhere between ten and eleven," he said drily. "And when he comes back you'll hear all about it. But I can tell you this much—he's out in your interest."

Malcolm Ross heaved a sigh of relief.

"And that is all I want to hear," he returned, "for, by gosh, I certainly need someone to help me now!"

CHAPTER 4.

Lee's Strange Task!

NELSON LEE stood in front of Dan, at the boxing school in Kensington, looking amazingly different from the man Malcolm Ross had met in the Scotch express. He was wearing a very loud suit of clothes, a hard hat was pulled down over his brow and a cheap, massive ring flashed on one finger. Then, again, he had used a stain that had dyed his face a rich tan, and a visit to the barber's had seen his smooth hair treated to what was something like a prison crop.

Finally, his wonderful command over his mobile features had allowed him to alter the whole expression of his face. There was a quick, alert look about the face now, and the aggressive thrust of the jaw hinted that its owner was of the type that looked for trouble at all times.

Dan gave him the bag containing the boxing gloves and towels.

"I'd give a fiver to be able to come with you, sir," he said.

There was certainly an element of romance about this particular move of Nelson Lee's. Nipper's account of his meeting with Dan had given Nelson Lee the idea of gaining an entry into Morrison's flat by taking Dan's place for that particular evening. In the detective's mind there was no doubt as to the identity of the man who had stolen Malcolm Ross' belt. Stephen Morrison was the only one, apart from Sir Roderick, who knew anything about the belt, and it was to his advantage to take it away from Malcolm.

"I'll be able to have a good look round," Lee thought, "and I'll also be able to find out what sort of man Morrison is."

He reached the residential chambers and entered the wide doorway. The porter came forward, and Nelson Lee nodded to him. The detective, when he spoke, used the slow, easy drawl of the American, as though to the manner born.

"I wanta see Mr. Morrison."

The porter guessed the profession of the visitor at once.

"Are you from Dan Murphy's place?"

"Yep. Dan's hurt his thumb some, and sent me along to give the young gen'leman a few lessons, kid."

The porter grinned.

"Well, it's your funeral," he returned, heading for the lift. "But I might tell you that Mr. Morrison expected Dan, and he's got a bad temper."

Nelson Lee was swung to the second floor and was ushered into the flat.

"That you, Dan?" the harsh voice of Morrison called out.

There was a lighted room at the end of the passage and Nelson Lee walked along it. He found himself in a small study, and the figure of Stephen Morrison was lounging in a chair. The broad-shouldered man stared at the newcomer.

"Who the dickens are you?" he asked.

Nelson Lee took off his hat, revealing his close-cropped head.

"My name's Nat Lawson," he returned "and I'm one of Dan's friends. He's stubbed his thumb, and can't do any sparrin' for the next day or so, and he's sent me along to see you."

Stephen Morrison folded his arms and looked at the loudly dressed figure. Nelson Lee was always very deceptive in his outward appearance. He was at least four inches shorter than the man opposite him, and looked almost slender compared with the burly frame.

A hoarse guffaw broke from Stephen Morrison's lips.

"Going to give me a lesson, are you?" he answered. "Well, that is your business. If Dan sent you along he must have thought you good enough, or it's a sad look-out on your side."

The quiet eyes in the dark face did not alter their easy, smiling expression.

"I kin only do my best, mister," he said in his quiet drawl.

Stephen moved towards the door and Nelson Lee followed him across the passage into the larger room. It was fitted up as a small gym., and Lee noted that a ring had been erected in the centre. It was about fourteen feet square—a very cramped place to manoeuvre in.

"Brought your kit with you, I suppose?" said Stephen.

Lee removed his coat, revealing the fact that he was wearing a white jersey underneath. He slipped out of his trousers and appeared in the short boxing-pants. From the bag he drew out a pair of rubber-soled shoes, and seated himself to remove his boots. The quiet way in which he set about his preparations was not without its effect on the hulking watcher.

Morrison was in a dressing-gown, and it slipped aside, revealing the fact that he also was in boxing kit, with a big sweater drawn over his shoulders.

"I guess I'm ready now, mister," said Lee, as he straightened up.

Stephen Morrison eyed his new instructor. The white sweater seemed to fit very tightly over the arms, but even so there was a great disparity between the two men. Morrison was at least a couple of stone heavier than Lee.

"You'll have to wait a moment," he grunted. "I have some friends coming in at nine o'clock. I don't want a lesson. There'll be more fun in a little mill, unless you don't feel inclined to tackle that?"

The sneer in his voice was put there with a deliberate purpose. He wanted a fight, and this was the way of getting one—but always with a rival very much lighter than himself, of course!

Nelson Lee pretended to hesitate. His eyes were fixed on the white sweater worn by his opponent. And suddenly Stephen Morrison gave a little hitch to his waist. Quite plainly, Lee saw the outlines of a thick belt in the folds of the sweater.

Morrison was taking no chances of losing his property. He was wearing the precious belt round his waist.

"I don't mind a scrap, mister," Lee returned. "But I expect to git somethin' extra out of it. I'm Nat Lawson, champion of Seattle, and here's my belt to prove it."

He dipped into his bag and produced a polished leather belt with a beautiful gold buckle.

"Middle-weight championship, won by N. L., Esq.," was the inscription on the embossed front. Morrison was not to know that these initials stood for a very different name. He only gave a casual glance at the belt, then returned it with a smile.

"I don't mind putting up something for you if you win," he said. "I'll make fifty pounds against your belt."

Nelson Lee heard a footfall in the passage. Stephen Morrison was standing in the doorway, and he did not notice the two figures in evening dress that appeared behind him.

"Right, sir, we'll fight for the belt," said Nelson Lee, in a voice loud enough for the newcomers to hear.

"Hallo, Morrison!"

The broad-shouldered man wheeled to welcome the first of his friends. Close behind them came another trio, and in a few minutes there were seven or eight sporty-looking men gathered round the little ring.

"Who's the professor?" a drawling voice asked, and an insipid-looking youth pointed to Lee, who was standing quietly beside the ring.

"His name is Lawson," said Morrison, "and he hails from Seattle. He and I are going to 'seattle' things in six rounds of two minutes, with one-minute intervals. Tony, you will be timekeeper and referee. Will one of you fellows do a little seconding for Lawson?"

One of them detached himself and came across to Lee. He was rather dissipated-looking, but his face was a handsome one, and he smiled at Leo in a very friendly way.

"You'll find Morrison something of a handful, Lawson," he said. "In fact, I don't think you've got much chance. But as you're game, apparently, I'll do my best for you."

He slipped out of his immaculate dress coat, and rolled up his shirt sleeves, vanishing for a moment, to return presently with water and sponge. By this time Lee and his huge adversary had slipped into their boxing gloves, and were facing each other across the narrow ring.

Again, so far as the ring was concerned, it favoured the bigger man. A narrow ring is always a danger to a light-weight boxer, for he cannot make use of his superior speed, and footwork becomes almost impossible.

"You've got it all your own way," thought Lee grimly, "and that means that I'll just have to face you and fight it out in your style."

CHAPTER 5.

The Fight!

THE man appointed as timekeeper, drew his chair towards the ring and glanced at his watch.

"Seconds out!"

Time!

Stephen Morrison started into the centre of the ring, a grin on his heavy face. He was tanned and brown, and looked a picture of muscular strength. Against him the lithe figure of Lee seemed a preposterous match. They shook hands, and Lee dropped back into his guard. He had barely time to raise his arms when Stephen Morrison lunged at him, swinging at his head.

It was a favourite trick this of his, and in nine cases out of ten was very successful. A full-armed punch delivered in the beginning of a fight before an opponent can get properly settled down, usually had a lasting effect on its recipient. The blow was heavy enough to have knocked Lee off his feet had it landed. But the man who, according to Dan Murphy, had the quickest eye in all England, was not to be caught napping. Just as Morrison's fist touched the close-cropped head, the head seemed to melt away, and the blow swung harmlessly over Lee's shoulder.

A pace to the side saw him clear of Morrison, and he danced away to distance, while the heavy-built man came round to face him again. The whole effort was so beautifully timed and carried out that a murmur of delight went round the little group.

"Steve didn't fetch off his favourite little trick that time," someone murmured.

The remark seemed to nettle Morrison, for he closed his gloves and went for the figure in front of him hammer and tongs. He was relying solely on his superior reach and weight—not at all bad things to rely on. But a punch, to be successful, must land on its target, and a rush has to reach the opponent before weight can tell.

Gradually an intense silence fell on the little knot of men in evening dress. They were watching a display of defensive tactics such as it had seldom been their lot to witness. Round and round that narrow ring, which seemed scarcely big enough to swing a cat in, lumbered the huge figure of Morrison, and in front of him, always cool and erect, keeping just that safe foot away, moved the lithe figure in the sweater.

A dozen times in as many seconds, did Stephen Morrison swing his fists, and always they were evaded, parried, slipped under, until his efforts seemed like the clumsy attempts of a bear to reach a swift greyhound. Nelson Lee was fighting for a definite object. He had to wear down this beefy bully, sap the strength of those massive limbs, so that when the time came

for him to attack and set his fists to work, the enfeebled frame would not be so capable of withstanding the sting of the blows.

That extra two stone weight had to be changed from a handicap to an advantage. In other words, Stephen Morrison would have to fight on until his heavy body became a burden to his tired legs. And for that task one needed patience, and there was no man more patient in the world than the stern-jawed detective. His very profession had taught him that, and with it he was doubly armed.

Once, and once only, did Stephen manage to work his man into a corner, and then the young clubman who was seconding Nelson Lee saw something happen that made him open his eyes. Lee, instead of ducking to slip beneath the long arms of his adversary, changed his tactics like lightning, and where Morrison expected a duck and a side-step, he received instead a lunge and a smashing hit with a glove.

So powerful was that unexpected punch that it sent the thick head back with a jerk, and brought Morrison up as though he had been shot. It was easy then for Lee to whisk out into the centre of the ring again, and his adversary turned and followed him at once.

That punch had been delivered while Morrison was standing between Lee and the rest of the spectators, and only the young clubman saw it. And when the warning call of "Time!" sent both men to their corners again, Lee's second looked down into the steel-blue eyes with a curious expression on his face.

"You come from America, don't you, Lawson?"

"That's so," drawled Leo, as his second swung the towel to and fro.

The clubman grinned.

"Well, I want to know where it was that you picked up that English straight left," he said grimly, "for they don't teach that sort of smash in your schools!"

Nelson Lee shrugged his shoulders. He knew that the youngster had begun to smell a rat, but that did not make any difference to his plans now.

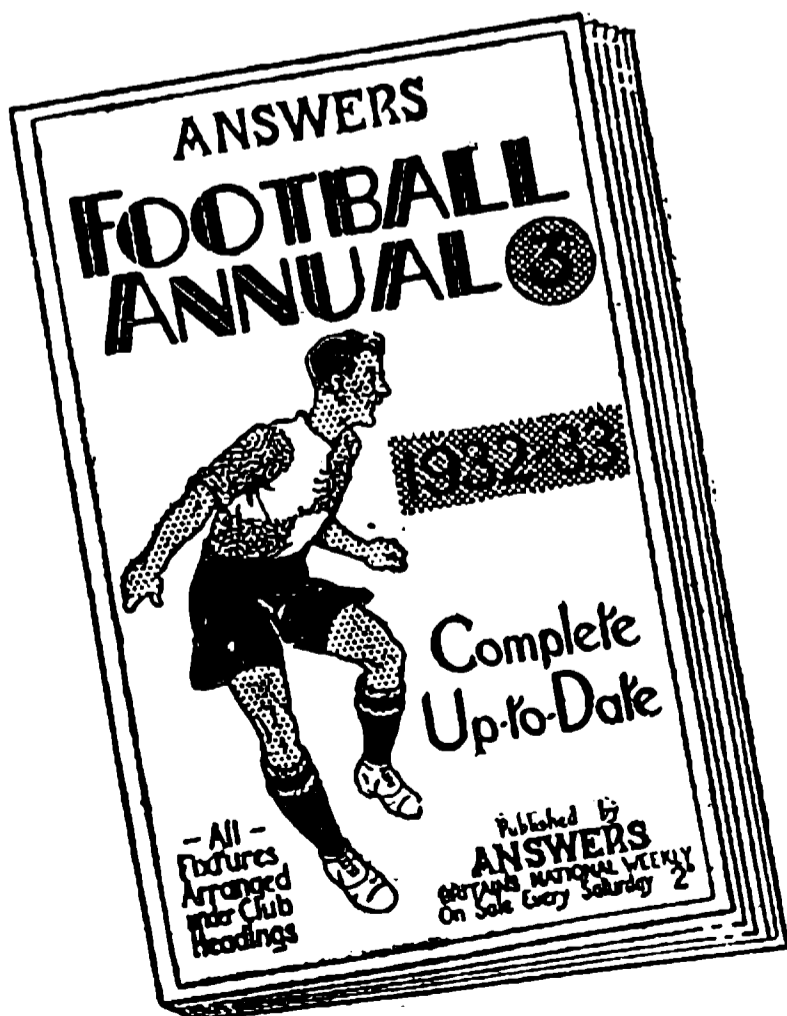
"Oh, we Amurricans kin use the left when we like, mister," he returned.

And with that the clubman had to be content; but there was delight in his eyes as he set to work to massage Leo's smooth, supple limbs.

For two rounds Lee allowed Morrison to wear himself out, yet the commencement of the third round found the big man still full of confidence. Right through the third round he forced the pace. His thick breathing and the quick scrape of the feet on the bare boards were the only sounds that broke the silence. By the end of the round Morrison was in a welter of sweat, and as he sank into his chair he signalled to his second to remove the sweater that he was still wearing.

Nelson Lee's eyes followed the movement, and a quick gleam came into them as they caught sight of the thin belt that was clasped round the thick waist.

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"What about your sweater, Nat?" the young clubman asked.

Nelson Lee shook his head. "I ain't hot enough yet," he replied, a fact which was evident enough from his quiet, steady breathing. There were reason why he dared not remove that sweater. The brown stain he had used only covered his neck and forearms, and the removal of the sweater would have made that fact very plain.

"SECONDS out! Time!" Morrison was not quite so quick in getting into the centre of the ring now, and he seemed inclined to slacken the pace a trifle. His vast exertions in the first three rounds were telling on him, and he hoped to take it easy until he got his second wind. With another opponent that ruse might have been successful, but Lee knew that his chance was coming now.

And so the battle changed, suddenly and swiftly. For from being the attacker Stephen Morrison became the attacked. Twice, in swift succession Lee sent heavy blows into the sweating face, and his burly antagonist began to retire, covering himself as he went. But Lee jammed his opponent in a corner and sent a perfect hurricane of blows into the thick ribs and chest.

Out of that fierce mêlée Stephen Morrison broke by sheer strength of body, and the rage in his eyes told of how he took this grim proof that his adversary was able to punish as well as retire. The huge man went in with a snarl, and tried once again to smother his rival in a shower of blows. But Lee was ready, and the fate Stephen Morrison had seen looming in front of him came to the gasping, swaying figure.

Morrison had made a weak swing at Lee, and had swayed forward after his punch. His great hulking body was almost too heavy for his shaking limbs to support, and he blundered on past Lee, to turn again and try to raise his hands. As he came round he saw the white jerseyed figure leap at him, and an instinctive effort made him throw his gloved hands up to guard his face.

But it was the solar plexus that Lee was aiming for, and straight and sure his fist went home, dead on the mark. For a moment the effect of that punch was scarcely observable, a fact which the boxing world knows well enough. The knock-out on the point of the jaw is a quick, spectacular effort that is followed immediately by the collapse of the opponent; but the deadly solar plexus punch, delivered with half arm and all the shoulder behind it, is the surer attack of the two.

Nelson Lee leaped back at once, and looked into the heavy, sweating face. The lips were parted, and for a moment no breath came from between them. A hoarse sound broke from Morrison's throat, and he tried to reach his antagonist; but before his fists could land that deadly, numbing sensation that had commenced to creep up from his lower limbs—that dull, curious ache that has no pain in it, and is yet strong enough to grip at the heart—had reached his brain, and he pitched forward, his heavy body landing on Lee.

The detective slipped aside, and Stephen Morrison went down slowly as his knees gave away beneath him, first on his hands, then forward on to his face, his massive legs limp, his gloved hands helpless by his sides. The timekeeper rose to his feet, and watching his second-hand, began to beat the moments out on the rope.

"One—two—three—four——"

Occasionally a man may rise from a blow on the jaw, if it be delivered just a little out of place, before the ten seconds have passed; but no man whoever breathed arose after he had gone down to the deadly solar plexus punch.

"Seven—eight—nine—Nat Lawson, the winner!"

They gave him a cheer, and his second, leaping into the ring, gripped at the gloved fist of the detective.

"You're hot stuff, Lawson!" he cried. "By James, you've done what we thought was impossible."

Nelson Lee began to draw off the gloves, and when his hands were free he turned and looked across the ring. Stephen Morrison was still lying on the bare boards, and his heavy, broken breathing indicated that he was safe enough, although unconscious.

"I guess you gentlemen will admit that I won that belt fair and square?"

Nelson Lee had stepped up to the circle, and his hand indicated the fringed reindeer belt around the thick waist.

"Morrison's belt?" someone said. "Was that what you were fighting for, Lawson?"

Nelson Lee pointed to his own belt lying on the chair beside his bag.

"I put my belt against his," he said, "although I guess his was the most valuable. We were fighting for each other's belt——"

"That is quite right!" someone chimed in. "I heard them making the arrangements as we came in. Don't you remember it, Roy?"

"I did hear him mention the belt," said Roy. Nelson Lee knelt down and took the weighty circle from the thick waist and slipped it round his own.

"I hope you gents won't mind if I git along," he went on, in his drawling voice. "I've got to see another pupil by half-past ten."

A gasp went round the circle.

"Another pupil! But surely you won't feel fit to do any more work to-night?"

Nelson Lee had already slipped out of the ring and was hurrying into his clothes.

"Business is business, gents," he drawled, "and you kin explain to Mr. Morrison when he comes round that I couldn't stop."

"Well, you're about the coolest beggar I ever struck!" was Roy's remark, and the circle joined in his laugh.

CHAPTER 6.

The Voice of the Unknown!

STEPHEN MORRISON kicked up a fuss over the loss of his belt, but he got no satisfaction from Dan Murphy, and when, the following morning, he learned from Mr. West, the solicitor, that Malcolm Ross had shown him his belt, he knew that he had

been tricked, and his temper was badly frayed. In the afternoon Malcolm and his mother, and Marian, were standing on the platform beside the boat train. Malcolm's seat had been booked and he was standing at the carriage door, glancing anxiously up and down the platform. He saw Stephen Morrison arrive and enter a compartment lower down.

But it was Nipper and Nelson Lee for whom he was searching so eagerly. Lee especially, for warm gratitude was in the heart of the young adventurer. He had not forgotten that moment of utter relief that had come to him on the previous night, when the detective, fresh from his grim fight in the flat, had handed Malcolm the precious belt.

And the story of how he had won it, although only told in a few short sentences, had been grimly added to by the sight of the bruised, battered countenance of Stephen that morning at the lawyer's office.

"Why doesn't he turn up?" the young man thought.

He did not receive any reply to that question, and the train moved off with his desire unfulfilled. Apparently, Nelson Lee and Nipper had either forgotten the time of the train's departure, or else they were too busy to come.

It made Malcolm feel rather miserable, and he was glad when the long journey came to an end, and he found himself mounting the gangway on to the white decks of the great liner. He found that his cabin was on the boat deck, and he was the only occupant. It was situated well back towards the stern, and was quite a roomy little place.

Malcolm had a wash and brush up, then went on deck just as the great vessel moved off from the quay. The clamour of the dinner bell announced the readiness of the first meal on board, and the young traveller went down to the saloon and took stock of the passengers. There were about fifty in the saloon, and Malcolm noted that Stephen Morrison was already friendly with one individual—a wrinkled, dusky individual, across whose face lay the jagged trace of a knife-cut, giving it a curiously sinister expression.

"My cousin has a confederate," he decided, "and that means that I have two of them to watch."

He made up his mind to play his game slowly and surely, giving no chances, watching every move. If cunning had to be met with cunning he would do his best.

An old talkative man at his elbow began to chat to him, and Malcolm found the conversation very interesting, for it appeared that the stranger was well acquainted with the very region that Malcolm had to visit. Roaring Jack Camp was one of his camping places, and Malcolm plied him with question after question, storing away all the facts he heard for future use.

The result was that they were the last to leave the saloon, and when Malcolm opened the door of his cabin and switched on the electric light he came to a halt with a cry of surprise. The place was turned upside down. All his kit was scattered about on the bunk

and the floor. Malcolm stepped back on to the deck just as one of the stewards was passing. He called to the man and indicated the state of his cabin.

"As it happens," he said. "I've lost nothing. But someone has been trying to find something worth stealing, apparently and I want it reported!"

The steward hurried away, and returned presently with the officer on duty. They helped to rearrange Malcolm's kit, and in the midst of it the captain entered.

"A thief on board, eh?" he said. "And starting his game before we are out of sight of land. Well, we will see that you're not visited again, Mr. Ross. I'll post a seaman about here for the rest of the trip."

Stephen Morrison had over-reached himself, and it was Malcolm who really scored, for that blue-clad sentry leaning outside the row of cabins would see to it that no further attempts of that kind would be made.

The "Dominia" was one of the fastest liners on that particular route, and the voyage was completed almost without incident. On the last evening, however, Malcolm Ross was subjected to another attack, and a more serious one. The young traveller had been extremely cautious, always on the look-out for trouble. He never ventured on to the deck alone at night. The old Colonial who sat by his side at meals was only too glad to have a companion, and he and Malcolm were always together.

The grim-jawed brute who watched his young rival was forced to admit that Malcolm was meeting him on more equal terms now. But at last it seemed to Stephen that an opportunity was presenting itself. It was after dinner that he noticed the old Colonial leave the saloon alone, and he heard him remark to Malcolm that he was going to be busy for the rest of the evening writing letters.

Stephen gave a quick signal to the man with the scarred face, and presently they found themselves standing together below one of the huge lifeboats. It was the place where they usually met, for it was well in the shadows, and there was no chance of their being approached by anyone. The lifeboat hung just above the rails, and the maindeck was immediately below. Stephen leaned on the rail, glancing down at the maindeck, where the second-class passengers were gathered in little groups. The "Dominia" carried three classes of passengers, and she was fairly well filled.

"I think we could risk that trick of yours to-night, Jake," Stephen said. "I must get that belt, and as it wasn't in his kit, I suppose he wears it night and day."

"Don't blame him," said Jake.

Stephen peered below the swinging boat along the white deck.

"He's bound to come along here," he went on. "And we must not miss him. I think you'd better get your little scheme ready now. I'll keep watch and give you the signal."

About twenty paces away from the two men was a roll of tarpaulin lying against the rails. Jake had to pass it as he crept forward beneath

the lifeboats, and he almost touched it with his foot. It was pitch dark on the deck, and he did not notice that the tarpaulin moved slightly as he passed. It seemed to wriggle forward, then one of the ends unfolded and there came into view a small head—a head that craned itself forward to watch the thin figure of Jake.

Presently Jake stopped, and leaping up, caught at the edge of a boat and drew himself on to the canvas top, vanishing over the edge. There was a moment's pause, then an arm reached up to the long, curved loop of the davit, and a hook was attached there. The watcher from the roll of tarpaulin waited patiently, and presently he saw a round, heavy object swing down from the boat, make a half circle over the deck and swing back to the boat again.

Twice this operation was carried out, and the observer noted that the unseen man in

JUST where the voice came from Stephen Morrison was never able to say. An oath leaped to his lips as he sprinted forward. The heavy block had been within an inch from Malcolm's head when the cry went up, and instinct made the traveller duck his head. The result was that the heavy block did not land fairly on its mark. It just grazed the top of Malcolm's head, but even then the force of it was strong enough to send the young man sprawling on his face.

The lithe body of Jake shot clean through the air from the suspended boat, and landed full on the prostrate body of the man he had tried to murder. At the same moment Morrison flung himself on his victim. His hands went round Malcolm's waist, and he felt for the belt. An oath came to his lips, for there was no sign of the heavy, gold-filled band.

Malcolm was half stunned, but he managed to kick out and send Jake staggering back.

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the boat was shortening the length of rope to which the heavy block was attached, until he had adjusted it so that the block would swing across the deck at the height of a man's head. Jake was completely out of sight, and the broad deck quite deserted. The trap was well laid, and even the caution of Malcolm Ross would hardly save him from that noiseless attack.

An hour passed, then presently Morrison, lurking in the shadow of the lifeboat at the end of the deck, heard a foot scrape on the companionway that led down to the saloon. He had a brief glimpse of Malcolm's face as the young traveller stepped out from the light.

The hulking rogue crouched lower and waited. All depended now on whether Malcolm turned to port or starboard. A swift smile of malicious satisfaction flickered across Stephen's face as he saw the young figure turn to port.

“Got you, this time, you hound!” he breathed, clenching his fists.

He leaned forward, watching Malcolm as he went off down the deck. Stephen counted the boats as they were passed, one by one. He knew that Jake was in the fifth lifeboat, and as Malcolm came opposite the fifth one Stephen coughed suddenly—a hard, rough sound. It was the signal warning Jake that his victim was at hand.

Morrison moved forward noiselessly, ready for a swift leap. He was watching the boat, and suddenly he saw the long cord swing downward.

“Look out, Malcolm !”

“Help ! Help !”

His clear voice startled the silence, and from the stern there came the sound of running feet. The sailor on guard at the row of cabins came pelting down the wide deck, just as Morrison leaped to his feet. Jake was already darting down the wide deck; and the broad-shouldered rascal followed him, leaping down the companionway on to the main deck to dart forward among the shadowy groups of passengers below. By the time the seaman had reached Ross the deck was clear, and Ross himself was sitting up holding his throbbing head.

The sailor helped him to his feet, and Malcolm thanked him.

“I'm all right, thanks to you,” he said, quietly. “That shout you gave just saved me from being brained by that swinging block !”

“But I didn't shout, sir,” he said. “First thing I knew about it was when you called out !”

It was Malcolm's turn to stare now.

“But I heard someone call out to me,” he returned.

“There's no one here, sir,” replied the sailor, glancing along the deserted deck.

Malcolm was silent for a moment, then he laughed unsteadily.

“Well, I don't care about that,” he returned. “All I know is that I heard someone call, and took the tip at once.”

“Jolly good job you did, sir,” was the sailor's response. “You—you ain't lost anything, I hope ?”

Malcolm moved off towards his cabin and the sailor swung along by his side.

"No, I did not lose anything, because I did not have anything to lose," was the quiet reply. "But that was no fault of the brute who went for me. He had his opportunity and took it, but there was nothing there."

He reached his cabin and entered it, seating himself on the edge of the bunk. It had been a very narrow shave, and his face was pale. But it was not his escape that he thought over then, but the way that it had been brought about. Who had called to him, by name?

And then an idea came into his mind—an idea so startling and unexpected that he leaped to his feet for a moment. Was it possible that—that Nelson Lee or Nipper—

He dismissed the idea from his mind, and yet it was the only possible solution to the mystery of that warning voice. The only possible, and yet a very impossible solution! For why should Nelson Lee trouble over the affairs of an unknown youth such as he? The great detective, who had handled the affairs of statesmen—ay, and even kings—would hardly trouble himself over the fate of an obscure London clerk—at least, so he thought.

The warning cry that had puzzled him also puzzled Stephen Morrison and his confederate. They met later on in the former's cabin, and Jake was plainly wrathful at the failure of his plan.

"Someone gave him a shout," he muttered, "and that's the long and the short of it. It was up to you to look after that side of the affair. You shouldn't have given the signal if the deck wasn't clear."

"I tell you it was clear," Morrison grated angrily. "Wasn't I standing beside the companion way all the time? Not a soul came up or went down while I was there except that young fool!"

"He ain't such a darned fool neither!" returned his companion. "Even if I missed my mark, you had your chance and didn't do any good with it."

"He wasn't wearing the belt," said Stephen slowly. "We made a mistake, that's all." His eyes were sullen and full of rage. "But I'll get him all right. To-morrow we land in Montreal, and he'll have to take his belt with him when he leaves the ship, Jake. It's up to you and me to collar him then, and we'll make sure of him this time." He was silent for a moment. "But I'd like to know who it was that called to him," he added. "This unknown friend of Malcolm Ross' worries me, and I want to shake him off my scent if I can. So this is what I'm going to do. I'll leave the 'Dominia' and go straight to the railway station, and take the first train for Roaring Jack. If I can get this cursed spy to follow me it'll mean that I'll leave the field clear for you. And I should think you're good enough to beat Ross single-handed."

The evil visage in front of him widened into an unwholesome grin.

"You want me to get the belt and follow you along to Roaring Jack?"

"Yes."

"And what about Ross, after I've got the belt?"

The eyes of Stephen Morrison glittered.

"Will there be any reason to trouble about

him, after you've got the belt?" he asked, meaningly.

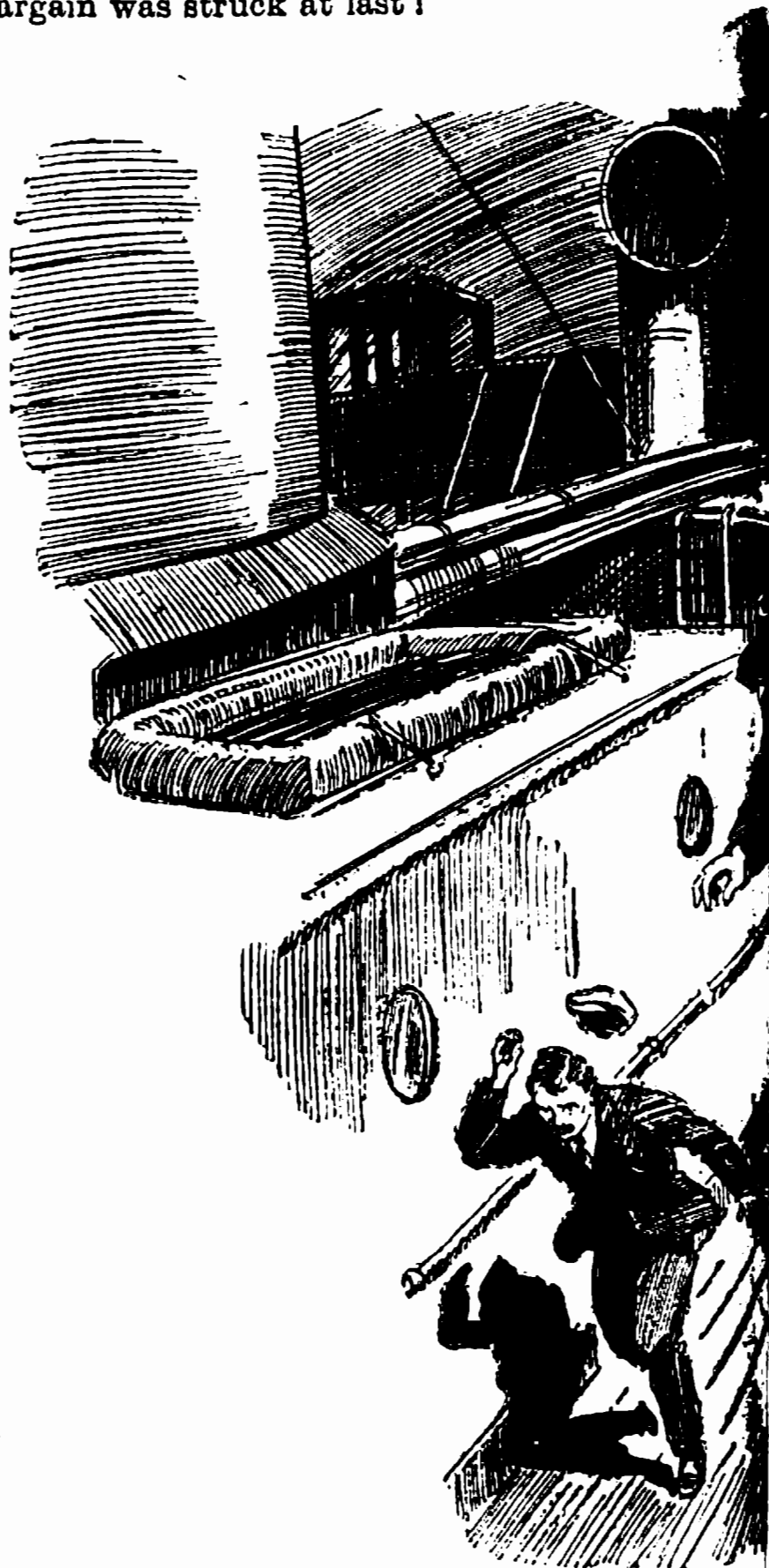
Jake nodded his head.

"Meaning that you want him settled for keeps?"

"Yes."

"And what about the cash?"

They haggled over the price of a man's life, but the bargain was struck at last!



Even as Malcolm stumbled, dazed, along the deck, he fell down through the hatch.

CHAPTER 7.

Malcolm Ross in Danger!

SHIVER me, if it isn't the little Nipper!"

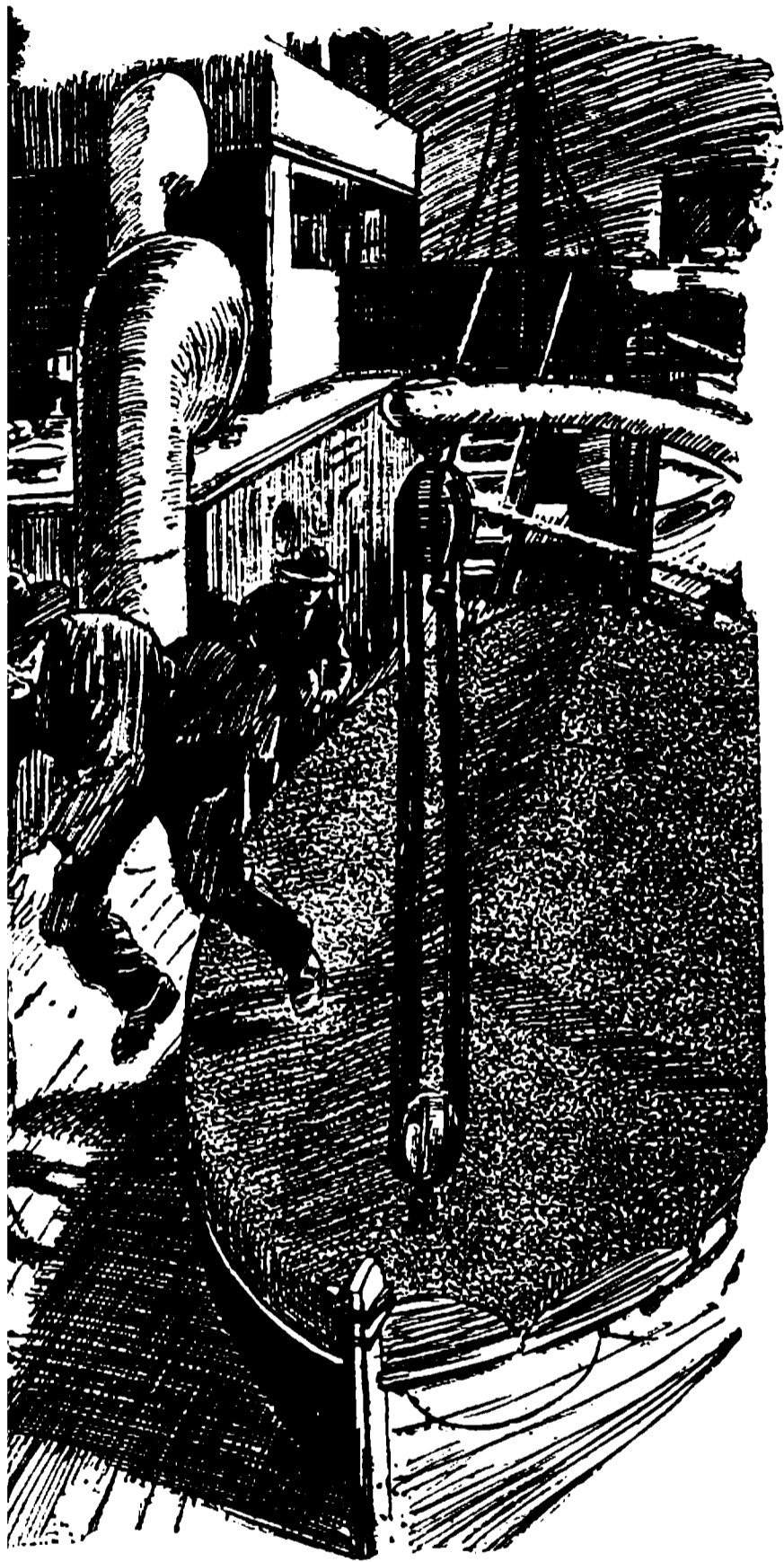
The remark came like a roar from the lips of the stout man behind the counter, and in another second he was out into the front of the shop and gripping the hand of the youngster who had just entered.

"So you haven't forgotten me, Jem Steer?"

"Forgotten ye, my boy? And am I ever likely to do that? What about the little-favour

we did for me some time back, when I was broke, and that gang had me?"

The deep voice had taken a lower note and the eyes of the stout man were full of gratitude. Nelson Lee and Nipper had befriended this man in a long-forgotten case, and had saved him from death and danger, and Jem would never forget. He had written to Nipper from Montreal at irregular intervals, and now that



back, the lithe figure of the waiting crook shot air full upon him.

Nipper found himself in a fix it was only natural that he should seek a friend.

"What has brought ye to Montreal, lad?" Steer asked, when he and Nipper found themselves in the little room behind the shop, where Jem set to work to make a cup of coffee.

"I'm in a hole, Jem," said Nipper, "and I'll tell you all about it."

His story was a very simple one. He and Nelson Lee and Wolf, the Alsatian, had travelled to Montreal on the "Dominia," but they had booked second-class, for Lee did not want Stephen Morrison to know of his presence on

board. It was Nipper who had sent the warning cry to Malcolm Ross, and on the following morning, when the "Dominia's" passengers went on shore, Lee had asked Nipper to keep in touch with Malcolm, while the great detective kept watch on Stephen Morrison.

Nipper had done his best to obey Lee's instructions. He had heard Malcolm give the address of a hotel, and had seen the young traveller's baggage taken away by one of the hotel porters. Nipper himself had had to look after Wolf and his and Lee's luggage, and not knowing what the detective intended to do, the young assistant had waited at the landing-stage, expecting Lee to turn up again.

He hung about for the best part of an hour. Then there came a messenger with a letter for him. It was from Nelson Lee, and, as Nipper said, it "put the tin hat on it."

"M. has booked for Roaring Jack, and I am travelling in same train. He is alone. I want you to get in touch with R. and keep a look-out for man with a scar. Follow on to Roaring Jack.—N.L."

Nipper collected the traps at once and set off for the hotel which Malcolm Ross had chosen. When he arrived there and booked his room he took the first opportunity of glancing at the visitor's list. Malcolm Ross' name had not been added to it, and an inquiry proved to Nipper that the young traveller had never turned up there.

Another point which caused Nipper some alarm was the fact that the booking clerk informed him that there were no hotel porters from that particular hotel at the landing-stage. Yet Nipper was positive enough that he had seen the name "Imperiale" on the peaked cap of the man who took charge of Ross' luggage.

Nipper scarcely knew what to do. It was easy to guess that Ross had stumbled into danger and trouble, and Nipper glanced about him to find someone who could help him. And his choice had alighted on Jem Steer.

Jem had opened a second-hand shop—that had been his business in the Old Country—and, according to his letters, he had made many friends among the Montreal police. A second-hand shop is a rare place for thieves to visit in the hope of getting rid of their wares, and the dealer who would keep in the good books of the police must run scrupulously straight.

Jem had evidently done so, and had helped the representatives of the law once or twice. That fact was to stand Nipper in good stead now.

"Let's get to the rights of this, me son," said Jem. "Could ye describe the porter who took your man's baggage away with him?"

Fortunately Nipper had been quite close to that individual, and his memory was a retentive one. He gave Steer a quick word-picture of the man, and the eyes of the dealer brightened.

"Did ye notice if he had anything wrong with his arms?" he asked.

"Yes," said Nipper. "I did notice that his left arm seemed shorter than the other, and it was slightly twisted, as though he had broken it at one time and the bone had set badly."

Steer brought his fist down on the table with a crash.

"By Jinks, but you've got the eyes of a camera!" he roared. "That man was Hooker Dave, and he's one of the best-known crooks in Montreal. How the police let him on to the landing-stage beats me!"

"I don't think he was on the landing-stage," said Nipper. "I saw him outside, standing beside a taxi. Ross was with him then, and the baggage was being heaped on to the taxi. I didn't go too close, for I didn't want Ross to recognise me."

Jem Steer rose to his feet.

"Business is closed for to-day," he said. "I'll put the shutters up this minute, and I'm off to hunt for Hooker Dave. Where would I be able to find ye?"

"At the Imperiale," said Nipper.

It was arranged then that Jem Steer should communicate with the young detective as soon as he got on the track of Hooker Dave, and Nipper left the shop to make his way back to the Imperiale. It was then about half-past four in the afternoon, and Nipper went up to his room for a change of clothes and a wash.

Wolf had been quarantined at the docks and Nipper went down to try and arrange for the dog's release. How he succeeded in doing that need not be mentioned here, but he was able to bring the great Alsatian back with him, and Wolf was found a dry corner in the basement of the big hotel.

"It's the best I can do for you, old man," Nipper said. "and, anyhow, it won't be for long. We'll get off to Roaring Jack Camp just as soon as we can."

He went back to his room and spent the rest of the evening waiting for Jem Steer to call him up. But the night came and there was no message. The next morning he made more inquiries, but although Malcolm Ross had called at the Bank of Montreal to cash the credit note signed by Sir Roderick Ross, shortly after he landed, he seemed to have vanished after that as if the earth had opened and swallowed him up.

Nipper went back to the Imperiale on foot, and as he turned into the street in which the hotel was situated he noted that there was a rather shabby looking motor-car drawn up a few yards away from the main entrance. The driver of the car was lounging against an electric standard, and as Nipper came up the man moved forward.

"Got a light, mister?" he asked.

Nipper searched in his pocket for his match-box. The man reached out his hand and touched Nipper on the arm.

"It's Jem," he whispered.

The greasy, frayed coat which he was wearing and the cap had made an excellent disguise. But there was no mistaking the voice.

"I'm on," cried Jem, "but it ain't safe for me to talk to you here. Meet me at the corner in ten minutes. You'd better put a thick coat on, for we're going for a trip."

He lit his pipe, returned the matchbox, touched his cap and stepped into the car again; while Nipper went on to the hotel.

It was evident from Steer's manner that he had found out something important, and the

young detective only waited to slip into a heavy coat that he had brought with him for the voyage; then, making sure that his revolver was safe in his hip-pocket, Nipper hurried out of the hotel again and went up to the corner. A few minutes later the noisy old car came up and halted. Nipper slipped into the seat beside the greasy-looking driver and the car rattled off through the busy streets.

JEM made no attempt at conversation, and Nipper waited until they were clear of the big city. Then, when they found themselves on a wide, level road, Jem Steer slackened speed a trifle.

"I think we're pretty safe now," he observed, "although you can never be sure."

"What has happened?" Nipper asked.

"Your man is held up by a river gang," said Jem, "and they've taken him to Felspe, a little place on the river about ten miles from here. Don't ask me just how I know. I've got men who'll tell me things and find out things, when I ask 'em. I heard that your man was taken in hand by Hooker Dave, and after he'd cashed his credit note and thought he was going to the Imperiale, he was stunned and taken to Felspe. So I went and had a look round out there and saw Hooker Dave skulking round by the old gravel mill, and there's a lot of huts down there that Hooker Dave's gang have used before to-day. You can bet that your man is somewhere there, and what we have to do is to locate him. I left Felspe this morning and hired this old bus on the road. Some of the gang will be bound to be watching the station, and if they know about you, you'd never get a chance to reach Felspe alive."

They swung through an avenue of tall trees and emerged presently into what was a little bay. There was a cluster of houses ahead and beyond the houses the ground shelved sharply down to the wide, grey river.

"We get out of this bus here," said Jem. "I don't think anyone will find it, and they wouldn't trouble to steal it if they did."

The car was run in among the trees, and a couple of bushes were arranged in front of it as a slight concealment. It was getting on for four o'clock by now, and a grey mist was lifting from the river, cold and wet and clinging.

"All the better for us, sonny," said Jem Steer, as he moved out of the trees, "for we've got to find your man and find him quick!"

A silence fell upon the twain and they plodded on along the road towards the little cluster of houses which marked the station of Felspe. Just before they reached the houses Steer turned sharp to his right, and took to the damp ground along beside the river. Nipper was trudging along a pace or so behind his guide through the wet mist when suddenly a muffled sound came to his ears.

Chug! Chug! Chug!

He listened and the sound was repeated.

"What is that, Jem?" he asked, in a low whisper.

Steer was straining his ears to locate the sound, and he turned at last towards his companion.

"Sounds as though the gravel-mill was at work again," he said, half to himself. "But

that ain't possible. The company that ran it went bust two years ago, and there ain't been any work done since then."

He paused for a moment, his head thrust forward into the wreathing fog.

"I think we'll have a look, old son," Jem said at last. "I've got a feeling in me bones——"

He broke off his remark suddenly and, leaping at Nipper, brought the youngster down with a thud.

"S-sh! Not a word!" he whispered. "Look!"

Looming through the fog there appeared a lean, gaunt shape. It was an armed man—a tall, ragged ruffian. He came down the path, his rifle between his hands, his eyes peering straight ahead of him. Nipper and Jem lay flat in the wet grass, watching the menacing figure. It passed on and they watched it. It came to a halt at the beginning of the path and, resting the butt of the rifle on the ground, took up position there.

"One of Dave's men," whispered Jem. "And if he's watching this path it means that there are others of the gang doing the same at all the other roads to the mill. Come on!"

He rose to his knees and crept into the gloom until he was out of sight of the sentry, then rose to his feet. The beat of the donkey engine was much louder now, and at last Nipper could see the outlines of a long, low-roofed shed ahead.

"The mill!" Jem whispered. "And this is where we've got to go careful unless you want to end your useful career with a bullet through your brain, me son!"

He dropped on his knees again, and signalled for Nipper to follow him. It seemed to the young detective that they covered at least a mile in that cramped pose, but that was only his imagination. He was led along through stacks of driftwood, skirted a heap of slag, and slipped across a little rushing torrent, then presently he found himself in darkness.

"The mill is built on short piles, and we're in among them now," came Jem's whisper.

Nipper could feel the wooden fabric shaking above him to the throbbing beat of the powerful donkey engine. He heard his companions move away, and he followed again.

"Careful now!" came the warning whisper.

There was a red glow ahead, and Nipper saw that it was coming through a portion of the floor where the boards had given way. He saw the stout shadow of his companion raise itself until the head was in the gap in the boards. A moment later Jem Steer dropped back again, and a low groan of horror came from his lips.

"Look! Look!" he whispered.

Nipper drew himself forward beneath the gap, and raised his head until it was above the level of the floor. In a flash he had taken in the whole picture, and the sight sent his blood cold in his veins. In the centre of the shed was a round, shallow pit, and in it there moved round and round the huge iron mill, grinding the fragments of granite beneath.

From the pit there went up at a steep angle a long wooden chute. The bottom of the chute was moving slowly forward on rollers, carrying with it the layer of uncrushed gravel,

which as it reached the end of the chute, fell into the pit beneath the great iron crusher.

And half-way up the chute, bound hand and foot, lay the helpless body of a man. His head was downwards, and the slow-moving rollers carried him nearer and nearer to the edge of the chute. And as Nipper stared at the figure a stray flash of flame from the donkey engine alighted on the white tense face—the face of Malcolm Ross!

CHAPTER 8.

The Wager!

NELSON LEE sat in the hut of Jean Celeste, the trapper, outside Roaring Jack Camp, having made himself known to the grizzled veteran of the wild North-West, and struck up a friendship with him. He had explained his errand, too, and they were talking of Stephen Morrison.

"I find that at night he spends his time in the gambling saloon at Wilder's corner," said Nelson Lee. "He is obviously waiting for someone, and as Malcolm Ross has not yet arrived I am afraid that Morrison's confederate has got at him. I must delay Morrison somehow to give Nipper a chance to find Ross and get into touch with me, so I think I'll go up to the saloon and test Stephen Morrison's skill at poker."

"You gamble?"

"No. But I have an object in view. I want to make him hand over his belt."

Celeste laughed and rubbed his hands together.

"I see what you mean," he broke out. "And, ma foi, it is a good idea. A gambler will stake everything when the fever is on him, and this Stephen Morrison will be no exception to that rule. It is in his blood. But you will have to be careful. They are a rough lot who frequent that place, and the revolver is as quick as the word."

Half an hour later they were out on the wind-swept road, and struggling on towards the little glimmer of lights that marked the vista of the rough boundary town. Once a man on snowshoes passed them, coming down the wind, his cloak billowing out behind him like a miniature sail. Dark though it was, Jean Celeste recognised the man.

"Good-night, Red Deer!" he called.

A grunt came back to them as the tall Indian went on noiselessly across the snows. Celeste jerked his thumb in the direction of the tall figure.

"I would not advise your young friend to have Red Deer as a guide when the time comes for him to make his choice," he said. "Especially with a belt filled with gold."

"If Malcolm Ross is wise he will leave the choice of guides to his uncle's old friend," Lee returned, and the French-Canadian smiled.

They found themselves in the straggling street. It was not much of a street as simply a double line of houses. The telegraph poles hummed beneath the fury of the gale, and Celeste indicated the little office beside the low-roofed hotel.

"Morrison has not far to go for his telegrams," he explained. "McNab who owns the hotel is also postmaster, telegraphist and banker, all rolled into one."

They went on past the hotel, and finally Celesto pointed to a row of bright lights that were shining on the left of the road.

"That is the saloon," he said. "They can afford to spend plenty of money on oil. There is always a gambler to be found with money to burn."

Celesto led the way into the small bar, where a number of men were seated round a table. The old trapper called for drinks, and one or two of the men nodded their greetings to him.

"My friend is a stranger," said Celesto to the bar-tender, "and has a mind to play poker, just to pass the time away. I do not play, so I brought him here, knowing that some of the boys would quickly oblige him."

There was a general stir at this remark, and the loungers eyed the stranger closely. A man came forward and pointed towards the green-

baized doorway that shut off the gambling saloon from the bar.

"There's an Englishman in there who knows as much as most about poker," he drawled. "He's just skinned me—sixty dollars of the best. Maybe your friend would like to give him a fling."

He led the way into the saloon, and pointed to a table where a little knot of spectators had gathered. Nelson Lee saw the burly figure of Stephen Morrison seated at the head of the table, dealing out a hand.

"That's him," said the informant, "and if you kin beat him I'll be darned glad."

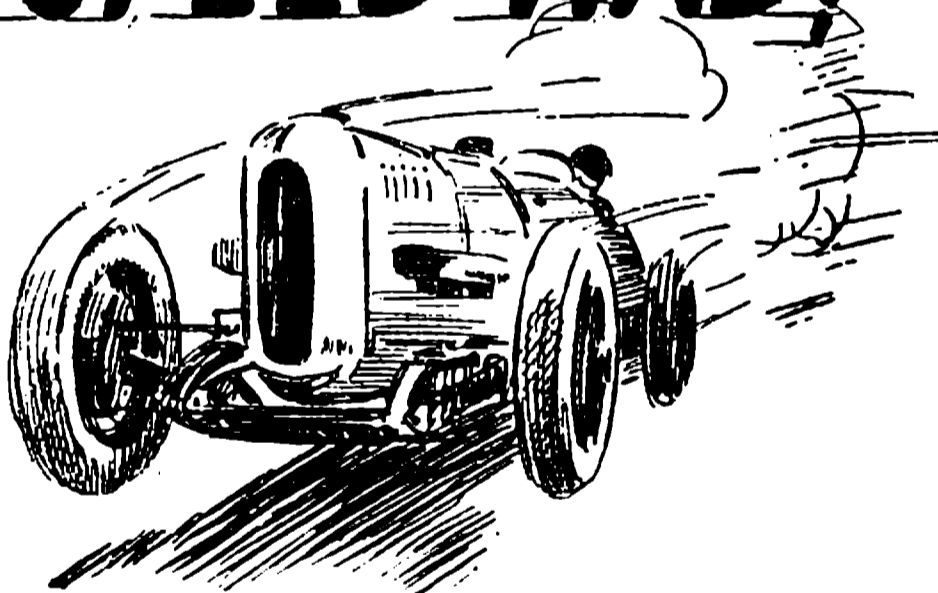
They crossed to the table and stood in the circle for a moment, Morrison was playing with a red-haired man who seemed to have been getting the worst of the bargain. Ten minutes later the man pushed his chair aside and rose to his feet.

"You've got the dickens own luck," he said, "and I've had enough. I guess I know when I'm up against a snag."

The broad-shouldered rogue leaned back in

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his chair and laughed. There was a small pile of notes and gold by the side of him. His rival vanished into the circle and Stephen looked round.

"Come along, sports!" he said. "Are you all afraid of me? Who says a deal?"

Nelson Lee stepped out of the circle and dropped into a chair.

"I'm ready," he said.

He was still in his fur coat, and the cap was pulled well down over his brow. Under ordinary circumstances it is very doubtful whether Morrison would have recognised him, and at that moment the man was gambling mad, and did not do more than cast a quick glance at this new rival. A fresh pack of cards were brought, and Morrison, who was holding the chips, gathered a handful of them.

"What's it to be?" he said. "I'm tired of playing for cent points. Are you ready for a real gamble, mister?"

"Make it anything you like," came the calm reply.

"Half-dollar points?"

"That'll do me," the detective said.

Jean Celeste was in the circle and he watched the first three hands being played. The old trapper had never cared for cards, but he knew the game well enough, and saw that Nelson Lee was a master of it. Jean turned and, leaving the circle, crossed to the wide fireplace in the corner, seating himself in one of the deep, comfortable chairs.

The saloon was very quiet. There were eight or nine tables going, but the players were much too intent on their varying fortunes to waste time in speech. Gradually old Jean sunk into a doze, lulled into sleep by the comforting heat from the blazing logs. How long he slept he did not know, but he was wakened by the crash and tinkle of a broken tumbler.

He leapt to his feet and looked round. The circle around Morrison's table had backed away swiftly, and Jean saw Lee leaning forward, arm resting on the table, revolver covering his adversary. A gasp came from the trapper's lips, and he leaped forward towards the group.

"What is it? What has happened?" he whispered, catching a man by the arm.

The man turned, revealing himself to be the tall individual who had first led Lee up to Morrison's table. There was a grin of satisfaction on the tanned face.

"I guess your friend has revenged my loss," he returned. "And you've missed the treat of a lifetime. He's absolutely skinned that skunk, and now the beggar doesn't want to pay up."

The proprietor of the saloon came bustling forward, his face twisted into a mask of anxiety.

"Now then, you fellers," he broke out. "What's this? We don't want any guns here, mister."

Nelson Lee nodded to Morrison.

"He tried to draw on me, but I got there first," he said in a level tone. "Make him hand over his weapon and I'll drop mine at once."

The proprietor reached out and felt in Morrison's pocket, and drew out the revolver it contained. Nelson Lee lowered his weapon.

"Now then," the proprietor went on, "let's get to the bottom of this!"

Lee indicated the big pile of chips in front of him.

"There's a thousand dollar's worth here," he said. "And it's up to him to pay me for them. I won them fair and square."

"I haven't got the money, curse you!" grated Morrison. "I've told him that already. If he likes to wait until to-morrow I will pay him."

Now, there is one law that never varies where gambling men meet. Whoever loses must pay, and the fact of Morrison continuing the game long after he was cleaned out of ready money was a very grave offence in the eyes of the rough men standing around the table.

"Holding a bank and bluffing, eh?" said the proprietor, in a grim tone. "Paying out chips without the money to back 'em, eh? I guess that's not the sort of stuff that we swallow in these parts, Mr. Morrison."

CHAPTER 9.

The Telegram!

MORRISON arose to his feet. His eyes were bloodshot, and the beads of sweat were standing on his low forehead.

"Right or wrong, there it is," he said, harshly. "I haven't got the money to pay."

Nelson Lee leaned forward.

"We've only got your word for that," he returned. "And I think I am in my rights to ask someone to search you. If you haven't got the money or the money's worth—well, I lose. But I'm going to take care that you are as broke as you say."

For a moment Morrison hesitated, glaring around the circle. But there were far too many there for him to attempt to break his way through them. And at last he thrust his hand into his pocket and tossed an empty wallet on the table.

"You won't find anything there," he snarled.

One by one Morrison turned his pockets inside out, proving that he had spoken the truth. He had not a coin or note of any kind in his possession. Then, the last part of the grim comedy—the part that Lee had been leading up to all the evening—was played.

The detective leaped to his feet and the revolver was levelled.

"I'm tired of this," he said, in the drawl he had assumed. "Put up your hands, quick!"

Under the menace of those deadly eyes, Morrison had to obey. Without removing his eyes from the pallid face in front of him, Lee spoke to the proprietor.

"See if he's got a belt," he said, tersely.

A moment later the heavy reindeer belt had been removed from Morrison's waist, and the proprietor, slipping aside the fastening, tilted the belt and a little stream of gold dust fell on the table.

"The belt doesn't belong to me!" cried Morrison, thickly, "and I warn you that—that it'll mean trouble to whoever takes it!"

"Bring me the scales!" shouted the proprietor.

Someone came rushing back with the delicate scales, and the proprietor began to pour the gold dust into the scoop. It was evident that he was well used to handling this sort of deal, for, after a glance at the weight, he nodded to Nelson Lee.

"You're in luck, sir," he said. "It just happens that this gold is worth as near to a thousand dollars as makes no odds."

"I warn you not to give that belt——"

Someone grabbed at Morrison as he flung himself forward. He turned and, mad with rage, lashed out at his interrupter. That was the signal for a general uproar.

"Out with him!" a voice blared. "Give him a roll in the snow for luck."

The struggling man was whisked off his feet, and in a laughing, roaring mob the saloon emptied itself into the streets. The proprietor had been refilling the belt during the fracas, and he did up the fastening now and held it out to Lee.

"That's yours, sir," he said, with a grim smile, "and I guess it would have paid Mr. Morrison better to have handed it over in the first place."

He watched Lee slip the belt round his waist and fasten it there.

"And if I might add a word to you, keep an eye on that same Morrison," he added. "He's only a stranger here, but he's no ornament to Roaring Jack."

"I guess he'll have good cause to hate you, my friend," a soft voice whispered to Lee, and the detective turned to find Jean Celeste by his side.

Nelson Lee laughed and slipped his arm beneath that of the old trapper.

"He has had cause to do that before," he replied, quietly, "and I would rather have his hate than his friendship."

They stepped out of the saloon and began to make their way back to Celeste's cabin. They passed the hotel and a man who was hiding behind the verandah peered at them, then slipped out into the street and followed.

It was Stephen Morrison, who had managed to get away from the crowd of men, although he would carry the marks of their fists for many a day. He had recognised the figure of Nelson Lee and the old trapper, and it was just as well for the twain that Stephen's revolver lay on the table in the saloon.

He managed to keep the two figures in sight until they vanished into Celeste's cabin, then he crept up to the building and circled round it until he found a gap through which he could see into the interior. Celeste had removed his coat and was making up the fire, while Nelson Lee lit the lamp. Stephen watched the figure at the table, when the lamp was turned up and Lee removed his thick fur cap the watcher studied the face for a long moment, then a swift memory came to him.

It was the man with whom he had travelled to Crewe!

A desperate idea came to Morrison, and he found his way to the door and knocked on it. He heard Celeste's voice bidding him enter, and he stepped into the lighted interior.

Nelson Lee whipped round as he entered, and the two men stared at each other for a moment.

"What d'you want?" Lee asked.

Stephen Morrison came forward.

"I want to try and come to terms with you," he said. "I admit that I owe you a thousand dollars, and I am prepared to pay you as soon as I get some money through from Montreal. That belt is very valuable to me—worth much more than two hundred pounds—and I am willing to add another fifty to that sum if you will give me back the belt."

Nelson Lee never took his eyes from the heavy face.

"I will do even better than that," he returned. "I will give you back your belt intact, and will not require the money that you owe me—but only on one condition."

"What is that?"

"I am expecting a friend of mine to arrive here at any time now," said Lee. "When he comes, and I have had a chat with him, you can have your belt."

There was something in the quiet voice that made Stephen Morrison quail.

"And—and this friends of yours?" he asked. "Who is he? What's his name?"

"His name is Malcolm Ross!" said Nelson Lee.

"Then—then it was a trick!" snarled Morrison savagely. "You knew I had that belt, and you were out to win it!"

Nelson Lee leaned forward.

"I was out to win a belt—for the second time, Mr. Stephen Morrison," he said grimly. "My first win was registered at your flat, under the name of Nat Lawson."

The hate that came into Morrison's eyes was terrible to behold. He caught at his throat for a moment as though he were about to choke.

"You—you——" he stammered.

Lee shrugged his shoulders.

"You've played a dirty game, Morrison," he said. "You were not man enough to accept the test and play the game, letting the better man win. From the very start you've tried every vile ruse you could think of to get rid of your rival, and it was only right that someone should step in and look after his interests. When Malcolm Ross arrives here, and I find that he still has his belt, then you will get your property."

A hard laugh broke from Stephen Morrison's lips, and he thrust his hand into his pocket and drew out a telegraph form.

"You will wait till Doomsday for that young fool!" he cried. "He's out of the game! You understand? Out of the game!"

He cast the telegram at Lee's feet and turned towards the door.

"And it'll be your turn next," the scowling bully went on. "I've got your measure now, and look out for yourself. You tricked me out of my belt, and, by heavens, you'll be sorry for it!"

He flung back the door and strode out into the dusk, thudding the door behind him. Lee leaned forward and picked up the telegram. It was addressed to Stephen Morrison, and ran as follows:

"Got the bird. Will cage him to-night. You can rely on me and go straight ahead."

Nelson Lee examined the date stamp and noted that it was dated the fifth, and delivered

on that day, but it had evidently been handed in on the day before that.

"There is a very big gap," he thought, "and whoever sent that telegram had ample time to get here since then. Why has he not done so? And why should Morrison be still wasting time here instead of starting off in search of White Wolf? It seems as if something unexpected is delaying his confederate. There's many a slip twist the cup and the lip, Mr. Stephen Morrison!"

CHAPTER 10.

The Pressure Gauge!

CHUG! Chug! Chug!

The throb of the donkey engine and the slow, remorseless grind of the heavy iron mill were the only sounds that broke the silence in the long, low-roofed shed. Malcolm Ross, bound hand and foot on the slow-moving chute, was being carried nearer and nearer to the end, where the revolving mill was awaiting him. A word would save him, but that word Malcolm Ross refused to speak. The man who had presented himself as porter of the Imperiale Hotel had been a crook, and there was no mistaking what his design had been.

The man with the scar had given him to understand that they were after the belt, and the belt they meant to have. They had searched his kit and himself, and Malcolm's dry smile had exasperated the ugly-looking rogue.

"Where have you put it?" the man had snarled.

"That's my business," was the plucky reply.

And so the last terrible trial was brought into play.

"You'll speak or be crushed to death," the man with the scar had hissed, as he took his stand on the little platform, and now he was leaning forward watching the face of his victim.

Chug! Chug! Chug!

The steady beat of the engine went on, and nearer to the end of the chute Malcolm Ross was carried by the rollers. The man on the platform leaned forward to watch the lips of his victim.

A faint whiplike sound seemed to leap out suddenly from the throb and rattle of the mill. Nipper, crouching in the gap in the floor, had turned and sent one fierce warning whisper to Jem. Then, drawing his revolver, the boy detective had taken careful aim.

The man with the scar was standing with one hand on the control, and in front of him was a long glass tube, at which he glanced now and again. It was a pressure gauge of some sort, and Nipper noted that it was exactly level with the man's hand.

Resting one arm on the edge of the flooring, Nipper took a long and careful aim. Then his finger curled round the trigger and he fired! He hit his mark full in the centre. The pressure gauge was smashed into a hundred fragments, and there came squirting out from it a hot, scalding jet of water and steam. It smote the evil face full between the eyes, and, with one awful shriek, the man went backward over the platform to fall on the floor and roll over and over in agony.

And as the pressure of steam vanished from

the engine its steady throbbing faltered and came to a halt. The hissing of the escaping steam sounded like music in Nipper's ears, and he reached out and grabbed at Steer's arm.

"Now, old man!" he cried. "Lend a hand."

As he spoke Nipper grabbed at the loose board and began to tug at it. Jem Steer came into the picture, and in a moment they had ripped a section of the board aside, and there was a gap in the flooring wide enough to allow Nipper to scramble through. He drew himself up through the gap and darted across to the chute. He had only stopped the engine in the very nick of time, for Malcolm's pinioned body was poised above the huge iron cylinder, and another turn of the rollers would have seen him flung head downwards under the heavy mill.

Nipper gripped at the body and tugged it out of the narrow chute, then darted across to the gap in the flooring.

"Here, Jem—quick!" he gasped.

As he lowered his burden into the gap he heard the thud of a door as it swung inwards, and a harsh voice rang out. Nipper dived into the gap and the sound of running feet on the floor warned him that he had been observed.

"We've got to get away, Jem," he breathed, "and sharp's the word."

Jem had been cutting at the ropes round Ross' arms and feet, and they were removed. Then the stout dealer signalled to Nipper.

"Follow me," he whispered, "and don't make a noise."

They crept away below the floor, through the low piles, and found themselves in the wet, clinging mists again, while Jem peered about him.

"We'll have to make for the river," the dealer whispered at last. "It's our only chance."

A shrill call went up from the shed behind them, and it was answered from right and left and rear.

"That's the signal that something's happened," Jem murmured, "and they'll be watching every track. Come on!"

He seemed to be able to feel his way through the river fog, and they followed him over the rough ground. There was no time for explanations, and Nipper and Malcolm plodded on side by side in silence. A warning hiss brought them to a halt and Jem pointed ahead. Dimly, through the whirling mist, they saw the sluggish stream and a skiff tied up to a ramshackle jetty.

Cautiously they approached it, wondering if a sentinel had been posted there. But apparently the gangsters had not suspected danger from that quarter and there was no sign of the enemy.

Hastily Jem, Nipper and Malcolm boarded the boat, cut the rope and drifted up stream with the current, towards Montreal, and the fog blotted them out, while Hooker Dave and his men were prowling over the marshes in search of their escaped victim.

That night Malcolm spent in Jem Steer's house, in comparative safety, and the explanations brought exclamations from all lips. Malcolm discovered who had warned him of

danger aboard ship, and how Nipper and Jem had trailed him out to Felspe.

"But," said Nipper. "Where is your belt, anyway?"

Malcolm laughed gaily.

"I have made many mistakes in this business," he admitted. "But I think I have done one good thing. I did it up in a parcel and sent it to Roaring Jack Camp by registered post from London. It is waiting there for me now!"

Nipper could not suppress a chuckle of amusement that such a simple trick should have fooled so astute a rogue as Stephen Morrison. He had been rather inclined to write Malcolm Ross down as a helpless idiot; but there had been reasons for his apparent carelessness, after all.

"Wait till we get to Roaring Jack," said Malcolm, his jaw tightening. "That's where the real trial begins. And if Stephen gets the better of me then—well, he'll be entitled to claim his prize."

THE next day they left Montreal for Roaring Jack, travelling across the mighty continent all that day and through the night, and on again during the following day. The express reached the little wayside station for Roaring Jack late in the afternoon, and Nipper and his companion alighted and gathered their few belongings. Wolf came in for a good deal of attention from the little group of idlers who had congregated on the platform, and the Alsatian seemed to take it as a matter of course.

"Any messages for me?" asked Nipper, giving his name to the station-master.

There was a letter from Nelson Lee.

"Waiting for you," it ran. "I am living with Jean Celeste. Anyone will point out his cabin to you at Roaring Jack."

There was no sort of conveyance to be found, but the station-master promised to send up their kits by the mail van in the morning, and suggested that the five-mile walk would stretch their legs. The road was plain enough, for the telegraph posts ran along across the snows, and there were marks of many feet up and down.

"Might as well get used to it," Malcolm suggested. "Thank goodness we thought of snow-shoes and mufflers. We can do with 'em!"

They started off, with Wolf jogging along between them, and the lights of the station vanished in the distance.

"I wonder if Morrison thought of leaving someone to watch for me?" queried Malcolm.

"That idea struck me at the station," replied Nipper. "but I didn't see anyone attempt to follow us."

They came to a halt and listened. The white slope in front of them, broken here and there by tall trees, was as silent as the grave. Wolf had halted and was standing still, with his head turned slightly to one side, a trick familiar enough to Nipper.

"Do you hear anything, old man?" he said to the dog.

Ross could have sworn that no one was near him, yet suddenly, as though out of the white-

carpeted earth, there appeared a figure by his side.

"Peace, brother!" a deep voice said, in halting English.

"Who the deuce are you?" Malcolm asked.

"Me Red Deer," he replied. "Me chief and friend of white man."

"You have a jolly startling way of introducing yourself, then," said Malcolm.

Nipper was staring steadily at the tall figure. It was lithe and lean, and the tanned-leather trunks and close-fitting coat revealed the muscular lines of the tall, straight body.

"You go Roaring Jack, huh?"

"That's right."

"Me go there, too. Guide you short cut."

Nipper touched Ross on the arm.

"Better accept his offer," he whispered. "He's out for a tip, and he may be useful."

"All right, Red Deer," said Malcolm. "You show us short cut, if you like."

The Indian was as good as his word. From the summit of the hill the little town had appeared as though it was a good three miles away, yet twenty minutes later, after stumbling through deep snow and along narrow ridges, Nipper and Malcolm found themselves on the edge of the town. The Indian had stalked on ahead during the whole journey, never even glancing back to see if his employers were following him. He came to a halt now, and waited for them to come up. It was plain that he wanted to know what part of the settlement they wanted.

"We want to go to find a friend, Jean Celeste. You know where he lives?"

It was too dark to see the Indian's face, and they did not note the queer gleam that came into the eyes.

"I take you to cabin, but you no find Celeste there?"

"How's that?"

"You come and see."

The tall figure turned and strode down the short slope into the town. Nipper and Malcolm followed him through the straggling streets and out on to the wind-swept road. Presently the unmistakable scent of burning wood and the heavy stench of a paraffin came to Nipper, growing stronger and stronger, until at last, rounding a corner, he came to a halt beside the tall man. The Redskin pointed to a heap of smouldering ash that was piled on the left of the road.

"That Celeste's cabin!"

Nipper drew a swift breath of dismay.

"When did this happen?"

"Last night. We saw heap flame. Come along, see cabin on fire. Big fire, no able put out. Burn till this morning. We search afterwards. No find Celeste or his friend."

A SICKENING sensation came to the listener. He caught on the lean, strong arm.

"His friend?" he repeated. "You—you say that his friend was—was burned as well?"

"I do not know the whole story," said Red Deer. "but they say Celeste's friend big gambler. Win money and gold belt from Paleface."

"Won a belt from an Englishman? Was his name Morrison?"

"Yes, Morrison him name. Morrison, him want revenge. Swear to have revenge. They say he came along here last night, with burning oil, and set fire to cabin when Celeste and friend asleep."

"What was Celeste's friend like?" asked Nipper, hoarsely.

The Indian laughed.

"Him a good man. No afraid of anyone. Eyes like steel."

They questioned him, and his description could not be mistaken. It was Nelson Lee right enough.

"You no need me any longer," he said. "Track back easy to find."

Nipper drew a couple of notes from his pocket and handed them to their guide. The long fingers closed over the note greedily.

"We shall require a guide later on, and a couple of sleighs and dog teams," Nipper said. "We want to find the settlement where a chief, White Wolf, lives."

"I know White Wolf. He same people as me," said the renegade swiftly.

"Well, if you come to the hotel to-morrow, there might be a job for you," Ross went on. "Ask for me—Malcolm Ross."

The Indian bowed.



Morrison levelled his revolver at the weary figure of his young rival. Crack! Even as he pulled the trigger Red Deer flung himself forward and jerked the gun-arm into the air!

"We watch here all night, till fire go down, then we make search. Find gun and traps, but no man. Fire heap big. Burn them to dust."

"I can't believe it!" Nipper broke out. "I won't believe it! I don't say that this man is lying, but I know my guv'nor too well. No man in the world ever got the better of him, and he could have beaten a dozen Morrisons!"

Ross spoke to the Redskin again.

"What has happened to Morrison?" he asked.

The long arm was waved towards the dark masses of hills far ahead.

"He go," came the slow reply. "They search for him all day, but no find. Good job for him that they no find, or he hang!"

"I am going back to town," said Nipper. "We'll put up at the hotel and get some more information. I am not satisfied by a long way."

The Red Indian bowed.

"Good! I be there to-morrow and ask for you—Malcolm Ross."

He turned, and crossing the roadway, vanished into the white silence, while Nipper and Ross headed back along the road to Roaring Jack. Neither of them spoke very much for their thoughts were enough to keep them busy. If Red Deer had spoken the truth, then Nelson Lee was dead, and they would have to fight this battle without his help.

But Nipper's instinct told him that it would take a smarter man than Stephen Morrison to finish off Nelson Lee in such a manner. And, although he did not know it at the time, he was right. Nelson Lee expected vengeance from Morrison and had been watching him. He had seen Morrison prepare to fire the hut, and when the hut burnt itself out Celeste and his friend could not be found, for the simple reason that they had not been there at all.

Nelson Lee and Celeste had cleared out before Morrison had fired the hut, and they were in hiding in a cavern up in the hills, letting Morrison believe them dead.

CHAPTER 11.

Red Deer's Debt!

"**W**HEW! Hold up, old son!"

Nipper made a sudden grab at Malcolm just as the latter's feet slid away from him, and together they fought for their balance on the edge of the high snow bank. Below them lay the white expanse of the frozen lake, the hard ice revealing itself here and there in patches where the wind, sweeping down the valley, had lifted the snow away from the hard surface. There was a sheer drop of at least fifty feet down to the lake, and the bank ran along clean and unbroken as far as the eye could reach.

They were trudging along behind the sleigh, which was now moving at a very slow pace. The dogs were sinking deep into the soft snow, and Nipper and Malcolm could hear the harsh voice of Red Deer and the crack of his whip as he urged the tired animals onward. Wolf was pacing along behind his young master, a dejected figure in the deep snow.

"I know nothing about it," Nipper said, "but it strikes me that our guide has bitten off more than he can chew. We ought to have called a halt back there at the beginning of the lake. We could have found some sort of shelter in the trees."

Malcolm nodded his head.

"I thought the same thing," he returned. "but I didn't like to interfere. After all, we're all in the same boat, and that's the only comfort we have. Even if he doesn't study us, Red Deer is likely to study himself."

Ahead of the team, a bulky shadow against the blur of the snow, stalked the other guide. Neither Nipper nor Malcolm had paid much attention to him. He was in charge of the dogs, Red Deer explained, and his duty was to go ahead and lead the way. Only one curious thing about the man struck Nipper. Once, just before reaching the lake, he had led the team round a bend, and Red Deer had called to him, making him turn to the left again. Nipper gathered from that little incident that the huge, muffled Indian was not so sure of the trail as he should have been; but the incident seemed of little importance at the time, although Nipper was to recall it again in the near future.

The dusk was gathering rapidly now, and it seemed to Nipper as though it was going to be an all-night journey, for there was neither sight nor sign of any sort of shelter. The bleak lake lay on the left, and in front of them was the unbroken valley, tireless, white and barren. The only sound that broke the silence was the crack of the whip, Red Deer's voice, and the creaking and straining of the harnessed team. Even the dogs had ceased to lift their yapping chorus—a sure sign of their exhaustion.

Nipper felt a wet muzzle touch his palm, and he looked down. Wolf came to a halt and held up one broad paw.

"Poor old chap!" the young detective cried. "No wonder you want to stop!"

The soft pads were smothered in snow, and little hard balls had formed between the broad toes. Nipper knelt down and began to remove the clogging snow.

"All right, Malcolm," he said. "You go on. I won't be a minute."

But the job took longer than he thought it would, and five minutes must have passed before he and Wolf took the trail again. The sleigh had vanished, but the tracks were quite visible, and Nipper pushed on as fast as he could go. He found himself on the top of a small ridge, and as he appeared there came to his ears a quick, muffled call.

"Nipper! Quick, old man!"

The young detective charged down the slope at full speed, stumbling over the soft snow to the edge of the lake. What he saw there brought him to a sudden halt, and a gasp of horror broke from his lips. The sleigh was turned completely over, and the dogs were mixed up in a hopeless tangle, while there was no sign of Malcolm or the two Indians.

The gasping voice sounded almost at his feet, then another couple of paces revealed the mystery. The sleigh had dipped into a deep gap, and its weight had broken the surface, with the result that Red Deer had pitched forward almost through the gap. Malcolm Ross was now lying flat on the snow, his arms thrust down into the crevasse, and Nipper saw that he was holding on to the powerful wrists of the Indian, holding on like grim death, although he was obviously very near to utter exhaustion himself.

Already his young body had been drawn forward inch by inch as the snow gave way beneath him, and it could only have been a matter of moments before he followed the Red-skin down into the deep gap. Nipper came up with a rush, and flung himself down beside Ross, reaching out and taking a firm grip of one of the lean wrists.

"All right, Malcolm!" the young detective breathed. "I've got him as well! Now, then, together! Heave!"

Malcolm's arms were stiff with the cold and strain, and he could do little more than give a convulsive tug. But Nipper drew the arm of the Redskin up until the head appeared above the level. The eyes of Red Deer were wide open, and they were looking straight into the white face of the lad who had saved his life.

"Once more! Heave!" cried Nipper.

The second pull saw the wiry shoulders level with the top, and a quick grab saw Nipper slide his arm beneath the shoulders. There was a scramble and a roll, and Red Deer lay gasping on the snow, while Ross, sitting up, began to laugh—a half-broken, gasping sound.

It was only then that the muffled figure of the dog-leader appeared through the dusk. Red Deer went up to him, and Nipper heard his angry voice sound for a moment, but he could not hear what was said. The sleigh moved forward at last and Red Deer came to a halt, waiting until Malcolm drew level with him. Then his lean, wiry hand was thrust out.

"You brave! You risk life save me!!"

Malcolm flushed slightly.

"That—that's all right, old chap," he said. "It was nothing, really. I saw that you were going to take a header and I was lucky to reach you in time."

Through the dusk the eyes of the renegade were glimmering like stars.

"You brave!" he repeated. "Red Deer not forget. He owe you life. Pay back by and by."

He swung round, cracked his whip, and went on ahead to the side of the sleigh.

"I wish to goodness he'd find the blinking camp, and I'd call it quits," said Malcolm, with a shake of his head.

"How did it happen?"

"Don't quite know," the handsome youngster returned. "I was dawdling along, waiting for you to come up. But it seems to me that our silent leader must have made another mistake and took the dogs too far to the right. I heard Red Deer shout, and he ran forward; but he was too late. It's a wonder that the sleigh didn't go headlong into the beastly place; but the dogs leaped forward and just saved it. I saw the snow give way under Red Deer, and I made a bee-line for him. I just managed to grab at his wrists as he went down, and that's all I can tell you."

Nipper smiled to himself.

"You did a mighty plucky thing, old chap," he replied. "You might have gone down with the Indian. And he knows it, too."

A long drawn cry came to their ears and the jingling of the bells on the dog harness ceased. Rounding a bend, they caught sight of a squat, black shape standing on the edge of the lake.

"Thank goodness! A roof!" breathed Malcolm, stumbling forward.

IT proved to be a little shack, used in the summer by the hunters, and they were glad to get inside and start a fire. Nipper saw that the hut was divided into two chambers, and Red Deer and his companion had placed their belongings in the smaller one. The dogs were rounded up in the space behind the hut, and Nipper listened to their snarling chorus as they were fed. Red Deer was busy making a fire for his two employers, and when their kits were produced and the blankets laid out close to the fire, Malcolm stretched himself out and drew a long breath of contentment.

"This is what I've been looking forward to all day," he admitted. "I don't think I have ever been so tired in my life."

A kettle was on the fire, and it began to splutter presently, and Nipper made the coffee. A little later Red Deer appeared with a pan full of crisp fried bacon and some fresh bread. They had taken good care to buy a plentiful supply of grub for their long journey to White Wolf's settlement, and the appetising odour fairly made Malcolm's mouth water.

"The food of the gods!" he declared, forking a great chunk of bacon out of the pan and clapping it on to a big slice of bread.

Red Deer stood looking at him for a moment.

"Going to be bad storm to-night," he said. "I bring in some grub. Keep it from getting spoiled."

He vanished and returned presently with a great load of stores—bacon, coffee, bread, biscuits, sugar, condensed milk, and a packet of matches. He carried these to where Nipper was lying on his blankets, and kneeling down, arranged the little pile behind the young detective's bed.

"Grub keep dry there," he grunted, as he straightened up.

He stalked out of the room and the heavy door closed behind him, and the two youngsters waded into their supper with the keen hunger that their long trudge had given them.

"I think I must be getting suspicious in my old age," said Nipper, after a long pause. "But why should Red Deer have gone to the trouble of opening one or two cases and giving us a few odd tins out of them? If he wanted to keep the stuff dry, why didn't he bring the cases in here?"

Malcolm laughed.

"I never thought of that, but it's not worth worrying over," he returned, sleepily. "You can ask old Red Deer in the morning, if you like. And if that's all you've got to worry about, why, chuck the beastly stuff outside and go to sleep—same as I'm going to do."

There was obviously little use talking to him any longer, and Nipper curled himself up in his blankets and closed his eyes. But had he been able to see what was going on in the other room Nipper might not have been so ready to let matters slide.

Stephen Morrison had reason to be well satisfied with the march of events. He had felt uneasy about his disguise as an Indian guide, he felt sure that neither Malcolm Ross nor Nipper actually suspected him. He had lost his own belt, but his vile deed had assured him, so he thought, that the man who had taken it from him would never make use of it.

It was the arrival of another telegram which had made the present plan possible. It had come from Jake, and the delay in its despatch was laconically suggested by the opening words.

"In hospital, nearly blinded. The cub got away and just heard he and friend left Montreal on Thursday. Look out for him. Up to you now.—Jake."

And now, in this lonely shack, Stephen Morrison was waiting for the opportunity to put his final scheme into operation. Already he was aware that Malcolm had the belt round his waist. The young Londoner had duly presented himself at the post office, and had taken delivery of the precious little parcel that was waiting for him there.

Morrison moved from his seat and crossing the room peered through a gap in the wall into the other room. The fire had died away into a faint glow, and he could see the sleeping figures of Ross and Nipper outlined in the red halo. Morrison turned away, and stepping to his kit, drew out a revolver, glancing at the chambers to make sure it was fully loaded. There was no mistaking the evil look in his deep-set eyes. He meant murder at that moment.

"Wait!"

The lean, motionless figure of the Indian suddenly grunted out the word, and Stephen turned towards him.

"It's safe enough, now," he muttered, grimly. "They're fast asleep."

RED DEER came closer to him. "I promise to help you get the belt, but no promise to help you murder."

Stephen backed away a pace and a cynical smile crossed his lips.

"That sounds good, coming from you!" he sneered. "I have heard what your reputation is, Red Deer. You have killed man——"

The sneering words came to an abrupt end, for, as a panther springs on its prey, Red Deer launched himself across the room. The revolver was jerked out of Morrison's hand, and in a moment he was flattened against the wall of the shack, with the sharp edge of a hunting knife at his throat, and two terrible eyes glaring into his.

"Red Deer never killed sleeping man!" the grim whisper came. "And if any man says otherwise, man lies!"

"I—I didn't mean to insult you," gasped Morrison. "Take away that knife."

In a moment he was free and Red Deer leaped back a pace. But his eyes were like stars in the dusk as he watched his man.

"Listen," he said. "I promise to help you get belt, and I keep that promise. But you not take life of Malcolm Ross! Understand, huh?"

The huge rogue shrugged his shoulders and scowled.

"There's nothing else to be done," he returned, with a snarl.

"You wait here. I get belt," said Red Deer.

Stephen Morrison dropped on his heap of blankets and folded his arms. He saw the lean figure glide out through the door, and a muttered oath burst from his lips. He had been cowed completely by his fierce companion, and he did not dare to move from his seat. He listened intently, straining his ears for the faintest sound from the next room, but there was none. And yet suddenly the tall figure appeared by his elbow, and the heavy belt was held out to him.

"Belt," said Red Deer.

Morrison's fingers closed over the soft leather with a grab, and, standing up he slipped the belt round his waist and fastened it.

"I didn't hear a sound," he said.

A grunt came from his companion.

"Indian born thief. Taught steal as papoose. Not safe to make sound." He pointed to the door. "Red Deer get sleigh ready. You come when whistle."

He slid out through the door, and a whirl of snow came rushing into the chamber. Morrison began to prepare himself for his journey, collecting his blankets and wrapping himself up in his fur coat. As he glanced round the chamber, his eyes alighted on the revolver, and he stopped and picked it up. His eyes travelled to the crack in the wall, and the evil in the man's black heart whispered to him again. Outside the wind was howling,

and he knew that the smothered report would not be heard. One shot would put an end to the rivalry between him and his cousin for ever.

He crept towards the wall, the weapon tight between his fingers. Then—whow!—a low whistle came to his ears, and he started back with a curse. It was the signal from Red Deer! For a moment he hesitated; then he heard the creak of the door and leaped back from the wall, stuffing the weapon into his pocket. As he turned round, he saw the tall Indian watching him from the doorway, and the faint glow of the fire revealed the cold glare in the hard eyes.

"Come!"

Morrison slunk out past the tall man and trudged round behind the hut, with Red Deer at his heels.

Silently the dogs moved off through the whirling snow, and it was only when Morrison got near to them that he noted that each of the gaunt creatures had been muzzled by a thick piece of cloth, tied round their jaws.

They struck the trail, and for a moment Morrison found it almost impossible to move against the fierce wind. Then at last he regained his balance and went on, his great body bent forward against the pressure of the icy wind.

CHAPTER 12.

Lost in the Wild!

"GREAT Scott!"

The words broke from Nipper's lips, and he dropped back a pace from the open door. Piled up on the threshold was a solid five feet of snow, blocking the opening. Beyond it, he could see the cold blue of the morning sky, cloudless and still.

"What's up, Nipper?"

Malcolm Ross' voice sounded, and the young adventurer propped himself up and glanced towards the door.

"We're snowed up, my son," Nipper returned, "and you'd better get a move on!"

Ross was out of his blankets at a bound, and came towards the doorway. The sight of the solid block of frozen snow brought a low whistle of astonishment from his lips.

"How the dickens are we going to get out?" he asked.

Nipper had picked up his fur coat, and he slipped into it.

"I'll show you," he returned. "One, two, three—go!"

He shot forward and took a header through the gap between the top of the door and the pile of snow. The snow gave way beneath him, and he struggled for a moment before recovering his balance. Then his red, smiling face appeared on the other side of the barrier. He found that the fall of snow had added over a foot to the white covering, and progress was rather difficult. But he struggled on, and finally reached the corner of the hut, reaching the place where the dogs and sleigh had been sheltered.

The young detective came to a halt, and a quick stab of dismay ran through his veins.

"Gone!"

Like a flash the truth came to him. He turned and hurried round to the other door of the hut, thrusting it open with a kick of his feet. The chamber was empty, and all signs of the Indian and his companion had vanished. He crossed to the fire and placed his hand on the heap of cinders. They were ice-cold, a sure proof that the fire had gone out hours ago. It was only then that he thought of glancing at his watch. He was amazed to find that it was after eleven o'clock.

"Nipper! Nipper!"

The voice of Malcolm Ross came to him with a note of wild dismay in it. Nipper backed out of the empty chamber and scrambled through the snow into the outer doorway. Malcolm Ross was standing in the room, his jacket unfastened, a look of helpless gloom on his face.

"What's up?"

Ross flung up his arms.

"My belt! It's gone!" he broke out.

They made a hurried search through his blankets, but there was no sign of the belt, and the suspicion that was growing in Nipper's mind became a certainty, then.

"Your belt is not the only thing that has vanished," he said at last, breaking the grim news. "The dogs and sleigh and our two guides have followed it!"

Ross stared at him for a moment.

"But it — it's treachery!" he broke out. "He has stolen my belt, and I wish I had let him go yesterday, the thieving brute! This is a nice sort of return for what I did for him!"

Nipper had been looking out at the snow, and suddenly a great cry came to his lips.

"By James, I've been a fool—a blind, carcless fool!" he said, wheeling round to stare at Malcolm. "Don't you see what it means? Can't you guess? That other Indian, who never came close enough to us to let us see his face! Isn't there another big man who — who —"

Into Malcolm's face a swift light leaped.

"Stephen Morrison!" he cried, clenching his fists.

"We've been tricked, old man!" the young detective went on. "It was all part of a plot, and Red Deer was in it."

"I saved the beggar's life yesterday," added Malcolm bitterly, "and this is my reward! I have always heard that you could not trust an Indian, and, by James, I'll always believe it now!"

Nipper was silent for a moment.

"I shouldn't be so quick to make a decision yet," he said at last. "I've been thinking things over, and rather fancy that although Red Deer was hand-in-hand with Morrison, he was not quite so black a rogue as he appears. He left behind these provisions, and, knowing Morrison, I feel sure that he did that without Morrison's knowledge."

He stepped up to the little heap of stores and began to examine them. Ross heard him murmur, and presently he stepped into the light again with a little piece of bark in his hand.

"This settles it," Nipper said. "I am sure, now, that Red Deer did his best for us. Look!"

He pointed to the piece of white bark, and Ross saw that it was a rude map. The position

of the hut was plainly marked, and the line of route back to Roaring Jack. Red Deer had even indicated the position of the sun, so that they might be able to shape their course by it. In its way, it was a kindly inspiration, for it meant that the Indian had done his best to give these two stranded youngsters a means of escape. The food he had left behind was quite enough to feed them for a week, and, after all, it was only one long day's tramp back to Roaring Jack.

"What do you think, Malcolm?" Nipper asked at last.

"I am going on," said Malcolm fiercely. "That scheming brute has got the better of me, but he will not get away scot-free! I am going to hunt for him and find him, if it takes me a life-time! They have gone on to find White Wolf, and I will follow them. I wouldn't turn back now, even if it meant my going to my death!"

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There was a steady note in his voice that indicated a new, inflexible determination. Nipper realised at once that it would be useless to attempt to shake his companion; and, apart from that, the young detective himself was also feeling sore and enraged.

"Then we go on together, old man," he said. "I've got a bone to pick with Morrison, just as much as you have!"

Malcolm leaped forward and held out his hand.

"I know that you're one of the best, Nipper," he said. "Only I hate to think that you're going to sacrifice yourself for my sake."

"We won't talk about sacrifice until the time comes," came the quiet reply. "And now let's get busy and have something to eat. That is always the first duty of man, old son!"

He tackled the fire and soon had a blaze. Then they prepared a big meal. They knew that it might be the last one for many a long hour, and Nipper saw to it that it was a good substantial one. He prepared a great heap of soaked biscuits and tinned beef for Wolf, and he shook his head at the dog.

"I'm rather ashamed of you, though," he said. "Fancy letting someone come in here and steal from us! Still, you must have been as exhausted as we were, and some of these Indians can pick their way through lines of wide awake sentries and never be heard!"

"We were all to blame," said Malcolm, grimly. "We trusted, and we ought to have watched instead. But we will never trust again."

After the meal was completed they prepared for their journey. The food was arranged in a couple of packs, and Malcolm shouldered one while Nipper took the other. The young detective tore up long strips of blankets and wrapped the strips round Wolf's paws.

"Snowshoes for you," he said. "And don't you try to take them off, either. You'll find them jolly useful."

They started off along the high bank, but at the end of half an hour Nipper came to halt, panting and breathless. The trail was impossible. The soft snow allowed them to sink knee deep, and he knew that they would never be able to continue. Two hours of that struggled would see them dead beat.

"It can't be done!" he gasped, looking at Malcolm. "We might have managed if we had snowshoes. But we're only wearing ourselves out and poor old Wolf is dead beat already. I vote we try the lake. There is just the chance of finding solid footing down below."

They had to slide down the high bank, lying flat on their backs, like so many human toboggans, but they landed on the ice safely enough, Wolf scrambling down and whimpering down the slope behind them. Nipper's bright idea was rewarded. The surface of the lake, although broken here and there by huge mounds of drift snow, was hard and crisp, and there were great stretches of it that was pure, black ice.

They began to move off along the bank, and although often they had to make a wide detour to avoid some gigantic hummock of snow, they made steady progress. Malcolm trudged

along beside his companion, head down and silent. Wolf, thanks to the strips of blanket, was able to trot on without discomfort. The sun swung across its narrow arc, and presently began to tilt towards the west like a ball of cold gold.

CHAPTER 13.

A Gallant Act!

THE two tired figures swung round a small headland that jutted out into the lake, and Nipper glanced into the little bay that it formed. One or two stunted trees were standing there with their naked branches above the snow, and he pointed towards them.

"We'll have to find a camp somewhere," he said, "and that is as likely a spot as any."

A black object sticking up out of the snow caught Nipper's eye, and he approached it. It was an upturned canoe, a roomy affair of thick ribs and tarred canvas.

"I don't know who left it here, but it'll come in mighty useful as a shelter," the young assistant muttered as he began to clear away the snow from the canoe. By propping it up at one end and blocking up the gaps with a wall of solid snow it made quite a roomy shelter. Nipper built a high wall of snow between the trees, and when it was dark lit a fire behind it. He knew that the flames would be hidden behind the rampart of snow, and the darkness would hide any trace of smoke.

Malcolm Ross seemed very quiet and subdued. He helped his companion to prepare a meal, gathered brushwood for the fire and stamped it out after the meal was over. He and Nipper crept into their shelter, and Wolf lay down between the two tired adventurers. Nipper tried to talk to his companion, but Malcolm only replied in monosyllables, and at last the young detective dropped off to sleep.

But in the morning, when Nipper woke, Malcolm had vanished! He thought at first that Malcolm had only gone off in search of wood to feed the fire, but when his shouts were not answered he made a search through the trees. He found himself at the edge of the copse with the white valley sweeping away in front of him. There were no signs of Malcolm, but suddenly Wolf who had been nosing about in the snow came running back to Nipper with a piece of strap between his jaws. It was a buckle from a dog harness, and there were a few hairs from the animal still adhering to the strap.

"I'll look into this presently, old man," Nipper said to the dog. "But we've got to find out what has happened to Ross first."

He went back to the upturned canoe and noted then that a blanket had vanished, and the tin of biscuits had been visited. The true meaning of it dawned on Nipper then, and he drew a deep breath.

"Didn't want me to risk anything. But if he thinks that I'm going to turn back now he's very much mistaken. And there's a thick ear waiting for him when we meet again. He's left me all the grub, too—the fathead!"

He set to work and made up his bundle, slinging it across his shoulder. Then, making his way through the trees he went to the spot where Wolf had found the buckled strap, and began to examine it. He hit on the tracks of a sleigh fifteen yards away from where the buckled strap had been dropped, and a quick glint of delight came into his eyes.

"Malcolm has probably stuck to the lake, and I'll take this trail," was Nipper's decision. "And, by James, I might get on these rogues first."

The trail seemed to lead up the slope away from the lake, but he did not pay much attention to this at first. At the end of a couple of hours, however, when he halted for a moment and looked about him, he saw that he was moving along in a hollow between the hills, and the lake was nowhere in sight. The sleigh marks were still quite clear, and he decided to follow them. They were bound to lead to some camp sooner or later. It was impossible for him to guess that these marks had been made weeks ago, and by a strange sleigh.

Yet late in the evening he was conscious of his error, and that truth was forced on him by a discovery that he made. He had reached a slight rise, and he looked up at the mountain on his right. A black line running along half-way up the slope caught his eye, and he followed it—a line of short poles with wires on them—telegraph poles!

"It's the pass road I've struck," he thought. "And goodness only knows what part of it this is!"

He was dead beat now for that last pull up the slope had taken all his strength. He began to move along the road slowly, Wolf trudging along by his side. The darkness came down on him, and he knew that the moon would not appear for another hour, or so, yet he dared not call a halt. So long as he moved forward he could keep warm, but to stop in that bleak place would mean disaster.

Then, on turning a bend he caught sight of the black outlines of a little hut, and his spirits rose. He staggered up and opened the door. He struck a match and glanced at the dim interior. It was empty. And with a sigh of relief the lad dropped his bundle on the floor. He was too tired even to light a fire, contenting himself with a drink of water and a few biscuits. He coiled himself in his blanket, called Wolf to his side, and pillowing his head on his haversack, he was fast asleep in a few moments.

He was awakened by a low, deep growl from the big dog at his feet, and he sat up and listened. He heard a voice calling, and with a bound Nipper was on his feet and had darted to the door of the shack. The moon was up now, and he peered down the trail. A dog sleigh was coming towards the hut—a dog sleigh with two men striding along beside it! Were they Morrison and Red Deer?

Nipper did not stop to think out how it came about that the rogues had reached the upper road. There was no time to waste, and with a warning word to Wolf the young detective slid out of the hut. He found a hummock of snow and knelt behind it, listening intently. He heard the sleigh halt and the yapping chorus of the dogs broke out, drowning all other sounds.

His hand was on Wolf's collar, and he felt the big dog strain to get away.

"Lie down, you old fool!" Nipper whispered.

WOLF lay flat on the snow, and the youngster released his grip, and crept forward a pace or so. As he did so, he saw a shadow rise out of the ground, almost at his feet. Without a word Nipper flung himself at the man, and locked in each other's arms they went down on the soft snow. Nipper had managed to put his hand over the man's mouth, checking the cry that came to the lips.

"Oh, no, you don't, my friend," Nipper muttered fiercely. "One at a time is quite enough for me to tackle."

His swift rush had caught his victim napping, and Nipper, kneeling over the prostrate figure, pinned him down into the deep snow. The man's arms were round the young detective and he was trying to get out of the hold that Nipper had put on him. Suddenly, a dark shape went rushing past Nipper, and the youngster caught a glimpse of it as it passed.

"Wolf! Wolf!" he whispered. But the dog seemed deaf to his voice, and he sped off across the snow towards the hut. Nipper realised that the dog would certainly betray him, and he would have to get away at once. He made a fierce effort and broke the hold of the restraining arms. Then, with a bound, he was on his feet, while his assailant lay back in the snow, panting heavily. Nipper turned to dart off, and as he did so there came a shout from the hut.

"Wolf, by Jove!"

The young detective came to a halt, and a breath of amazement broke from his lips.

"Guv'nor!"

Whipping round, Nipper went pelting across the snow towards the fur-clad figure that came round the corner of the hut.

"Nipper, by all that's wonderful!"

For a moment they stood together, then, from behind them a voice sounded.

"A friend—eh? Then why did he jump on me like a—wild cat?"

Old Jean Celeste had risen slowly to his feet and was brushing the snow from his fur coat. Nipper and Nelson Lee turned and hurried to the old fellow's side.

"I—I thought you were someone else," said Nipper. "I—I'm sorry."

The old fellow chuckled.

"Say no more about it," he returned. "It was my fault for not being more careful. I forgot that I was an old man, and not able to tackle everyone."

They had reached the hut by then, and Nelson Lee began to ply Nipper with questions. The youngster gave Lee a full account of their adventures, winding up with the going of Malcolm that morning.

"I lost the trail," he said, "but I feel sure now that Malcolm's plan was right. It was stupid of me to leave the lake; and goodness only knows what has happened to him now!"

It was Lee's turn to explain, after that.

"We left the hut and allowed Morrison to think we had perished in the fire," he said. "That was before you arrived at Roaring Jack."

My plan was to get into touch with you, and watch every move of Morrison. Thinking I was dead he would not be looking out for me. But we had to get a dog outfit secretly, and it took time. When we returned to Roaring Jack it was to find that you and Malcolm had come and had set out at once to find White Wolf. What was worse, Red Deer and an unknown man, whom we guessed to be Morrison, were guiding you. We knew they had taken you by the dangerous lower trail, so we tried to follow, but the storm on that first night wiped out your tracks. We failed to find you, so we took to the safer, higher road. I intended hastening on to White Wolf's territory hoping to get there first. And now, I suggest that we take a short cut which Celeste knows, and get ahead of Red Deer and Morrison. And in that way we're more than likely to get news of Malcolm Ross as well."

They rested, but only for an hour, as time was now precious. The sleigh moved onward again, Celeste going ahead, picking out the track, while Nelson Lee and Nipper swung along behind him. They kept up the steady pace until the dawn was breaking, and reached the huge post that marked the forked trail just as the sun was rising. Celeste and Lee went down the lake trail for a mile, but could find no sign of the sleigh or of the other party. When they came back to the shack beside the forked trail they found that Nipper had lit a fire and there was a pot of coffee awaiting them.

"According to the track," said Nelson Lee. "Red Deer had not reached here yet, and he must pass here to get to White Wolf. So we are ahead of them, after all."

When the meal was over they laid their plan of campaign. It was arranged that Jean Celeste should wait at the shack with the sleigh, while Lee and Nipper went off down the lake trail to try and locate Red Deer.

CHAPTER 14.

Red Deer Pays His Debt!

"**N**O good! Dogs tired!" Red Deer stood leaning against a tree, while Stephen Morrison, whip in hand, was lashing at the tired animals.

"I say no good," the Indian grunted again. "Dogs know when done enough. You cut them to pieces if you like, they no move now."

With an oath Stephen Morrison cast the whip aside and turned to the speaker.

"How far is it to the fork?" he asked.

The Indian held up two hands.

"Nine-ten miles," he returned laconically.

"Have to wait till to-morrow."

They had halted at the edge of a clearing close to the lake.

"We get blankets make camp," Red Deer went on. "It would have been better had we stopped when I wanted, at shack. But you say no, and now we sleep out. You better get water!"

Morrison turned and went down the slope out on to the ice in search of a suitable spot, and, kneeling down, he began to chip at the hard

surface. He managed to cut a good-sized wedge in the ice, and presently a great sheet of it smashed, revealing the dark water beneath.

Morrison filled the kettle and returned to the bank, placing it on the fire. Red Deer was searching about in the trees for brushwood, and to avoid that task Morrison went down to the lake again, and crossed to the wide gap he had made in the ice, kneeling there to watch the slow-moving water and to ponder on the possibility of a fish diet, when suddenly he caught sight of something moving on the frozen lake. It had come out from behind a high mound of snow, and was moving slowly towards him.

Morrison stared for a long moment, then an oath broke from his lips as he recognised the slender figure. It was his cousin! He had followed them!

A look of fiendish rage leaped into Morrison's eyes, and he cast a quick glance towards the trees. There was no sign of Red Deer.

Morrison made a quick rush across the lake and reached the bank, then, stooping low, he began to run along the snow. He was aiming for the huge mound, and he knew that the weary figure, staggering forward had not noticed him. His plan was to reach the mound of snow and wait until Malcolm was passing it. Then a bullet would do the rest.

"You've had plenty of chances!" the ruffian muttered. "Far too many, in fact. This time you will not escape me!"

He made no sound as he ran on, and at last he was close to the mound. He had to slip down the bank and rush across a little stretch of ice to reach his objective, but he did so without being observed. Then, leaping on to the snow, the broad-shouldered rogue began to work his way up to the top of it. He was flat on his face, moving slowly forward an inch at a time. The snow was soft and gave way slightly beneath him, but that was all the better for his purpose, for it hid him from view.

Foot by foot he worked his way forward, until at last he was over the top of the mound. He lay still for a moment, then, inch by inch, he raised his head and peered down on to the lake. Malcolm had not yet reached the spot, and with a grim smile his cousin drew his revolver from his pocket and coiled his finger round the trigger.

Stephen waited, slowly thrust his revolver forward, and waited. There was no hurry, and he wanted to make sure of his aim. The young figure seemed almost at the end of its strength as it dragged its tired limbs along. One shot would easily settle all their rivalry.

The ruffian dropped his head, and his eye ran along the shining barrel to fix itself on the figure beneath.

"Huh!"

From behind Morrison there came a grunt, and a lean shape flung itself forward just as he pulled the trigger. Red Deer's body fell headlong across the hidden man, and the revolver, gripped in a sinewy hand, was jerked upwards as it exploded. With a curse of rage Stephen Morrison drew himself clear from the Indian. He heard a shout below, and Malcolm

(Continued on page 40.)

Gather round for a chin-wag with the Editor!

MY DEAR CHUMS,
—We've got a very special detective-thriller on the board for next week's issue. It is entitled "The Shadow." The man of 100 Disguises!

Who is the Shadow? He is a mystery man, a ruthless master-crook whom the police have failed for years to identify. One day he may be a forger, and the next a well-known scientist absolutely above suspicion. Then, again, a gunman or burglar. But, whoever he is, he certainly gives the men-hunters of Scotland Yard a large size in headaches.

His exploits are as amazing and daring as his hidden identity, and he moves from London to the Midlands, to the South Coast, and to the Continent like an elusive will-o'-the-wisp.

But at last there comes along a man who is a match to his amazing genius—that man is Nelson Lee, the famous detective.

It is proof of the wonderful capabilities of Nelson Lee that he has so far never "lost his man." He has been up against the most baffling riddles of the year; he has fought against odds that might well turn a braver man away, but, like the intrepid fighter he is, he has never called a halt until the end of the trail is reached.

Such a man is a fitting rival to The Shadow, and in next week's long complete detective-thriller we find master-detective matched against master-crook in a thrilling bout for law and order.

Nipper and Wolf, too, are not far behind their beloved master in this epoch-making battle. Nelson Lee is certainly lucky to have such wonderful partners as these, who, on more than one occasion, have had a big hand in turning the tide of battle in the detective's favour.

You will thoroughly enjoy reading "The Shadow"—every word of it.

Besides this complete story in next week's issue, there will also be our Grand School Tale of the Chums of St. Frank's. This is just another brilliant pen-effort on the part of E. S. Brooks who certainly knows how to write thrilling school yarns.

As more than one reader has said, "as we read the stories of the St. Frank's boys we feel as though we ourselves are living amongst them," which, of course, is as it should be.

Next week's chapters of "Waking Up St. Frank's," continues with the sensational regime of Fighting Kingswood, St. Frank's new headmaster, and tells how he shapes his campaign of reform against the slackers of the school.

Just one last word before we come to another batch of Readers' Prize Jokes—there is bound to be a rush on the NELSON LEE next week, so order to-day,



Letters to the Editor
should be addressed
to **NELSON LEE LIBRARY**, Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Mrs. Smith: "Why were you so long on the staircase?"

Mr. Smith: "Our neighbour had lost a pound, and I was helping to look for it."

Mrs. Smith: "With success?"

Mr. Smith: "No, he found it himself."

(P. Glassman, c/o
11, Peter Street,
Bethnal Green, E.2—a pocket wallet.)

An ancient car chugged painfully to the gates of the cricket ground. The gate-keeper, demanding the usual admission fee, called, "Half a crown for the car."

The owner looked up with a pathetic sigh of relief.

"Sold!" he said.

(L. Fineberg, 12, Alfred Street, Kew, Victoria, Australia—a grand prize.)

Jones (looking over garden wall): "Do you realise, Brown, that you've been digging a hole in the back of my coal cellar?"

Brown: "Good gracious, no! And all these years I've been telling myself how lucky I am to have a coal mine in my garden."

(F. Kendall, 4, Talbot Road, Penwortham, Preston, Lancs—a pocket wallet.)

Salesman: "A pair of socks, sir? Yes, here is just the thing for you. Worth double the money, latest pattern, hole-proof, will not shrink, and it's a very good yarn, sir."

Customer (politely): "Yes, and very well told."

(C. Luck, 12, Dollis Cottages, Barney Lane, Barnet, Herts—a penknife.)

Old Lady (to bank clerk): "Look here, young man, I have heard that there is a new moon to-night."

Bank Clerk (puzzled and annoyed at being interrupted with big job): "Well, madam."

"Old Lady: "Well, would you be so kind as to turn my money over?"

(J. Thorpe, 4, Bolton Road, Wednesfield, Staffs—a pocket wallet.)

Kind old gent, noticing a small boy crying and gazing longingly into a pool, went up to him and asked what was the matter.

"Me mate's in the water!" he shrieked.

The man at once dived into the water, and after swimming around for a few minutes, came again to the sobbing boy.

"Are you sure your mate fell in?" he asked.

"Yes," replied the boy, "it slipped off me bread."

J. E. Taylor, 42, Two Gate Lane, Cradley, Staffs—a pocket wallet.)

THE FORTUNE TRAIL !

(Continued from page 38.)

Ross wheeled and looked up towards the mound.

Morrison made a cat-like spring that saw him half-way down the heap of snow, and the next moment he was down in the ice, sprinting across it as hard as he could pelt.

"Follow him, Malcolm Ross! He meant kill you!"

The deep voice came from the snow, and Malcolm, hardly knowing what it meant, whipped round and pelted after the burly figure. He had recognised his cousin in that brief moment, when they had stared at each other, and the sound of the shot told him that an attempt had been made on his life.

The weariness slid away from him, and he clenched his fists. He saw that Morrison was unarmed now, and a grim joy came to him.

They were to meet on even terms at last!

STEPHEN turned again, and saw now that he was close to the black gap in the ice which he had made. The short hafted axe was still lying on the ice, and coming to a halt, Morrison stooped and picked it up. He swung round to face his pursuer, who was now within twenty yards of him. Malcolm was pelting along empty-handed, but the look of grim determination on his young face made the craven heart of the big man shrivel. Without a word of warning Morrison raised the axe and sent it whizzing at Ross' head.

The youngster caught a glimpse of the bright steel head as it rushed towards him and ducked swiftly. The axe flew harmlessly over his head and another leap saw him on his foe. Stephen made a vicious swing at the youngster as they closed, and the blow landed full on Malcolm's face. But the lad's blood was up, and he hardly felt the heavy punch. His arms went out, and he collared Morrison round the waist.

There was a wild swerve, and Malcolm was almost driven on to his knees. Morrison flung himself forward on the youngster, and they went down on the ice together, Malcolm underneath. A laugh of triumph broke from the lips of the ruffian.

"This is where I get you!" he snarled, as he bent over the slender figure.

He raised his fist and sent it crashing into the tense, white face beneath him, but before the blow could fall Malcolm put out all his strength in one tremendous effort. His arms were lifted, and every ounce of strength went into the swift throw. The heavy body of Stephen Morrison shot forward, and then suddenly there came to the ears of the panting youngster a splash, followed by a terrible cry.

Swinging round, Malcolm rose to his knees and stared at the ice in front of him. His cousin had vanished! For a moment the astounded youngster could not understand what had happened, then his eyes picked out the black gap in the frozen surface. It was only about five feet from where he knelt, and even as he looked at it there came up from the icy depth a pair of clawing hands.

A breath of horror broke from Malcolm's lips, and he staggered to his feet to rush forward.

But before he could reach the gap the hands had slid away from the treacherous hold and went down into the river.

"Gone!"

Ross waited—waited—but there was never again sight or sound from the black-hearted rogue, and presently Malcolm rose to his feet and drew his hands across his eyes.

"That—that has settled him," he thought solemnly, "and—his death was none of my seeking!"

He glanced around him and noted the bivouac and the fire, then the memory of the voice that had warned him came to him. It had sounded from the mound of snow and Malcolm started off towards the great heap.

"Red Deer!" he called.

For a moment there was no reply, then a faint voice answered.

"Here, Malcolm Ross."

It came from the top of the mound, and Malcolm climbed to it. He found Red Deer lying in the hollow where he had fallen, and the dark stain on the snow by his side told the youngster only too plainly what had happened.

"You—have—killed—the other?" faltered Red Deer weakly.

"He is dead," said Ross.

A grunt of satisfaction came from the thin lips.

"Huh! That is good!"

"But you are hurt? Can I do anything for you?"

"No use. I go—soon."

A spasm of coughing took him, and Malcolm noted the red stains on the lips.

"But I am all right. You save my life, I save yours. That count before the Great Spirit—huh?"

The tears were hot in the lad's eyes, as he nodded his head. He could hardly speak for the moment. That this man, this thief and renegade, could have made the greatest of all sacrifices—that he could lay down his life for a friend—touched Malcolm to the heart.

It was only when Red Deer spoke again that he controlled himself.

"He meant to kill you in shack," the Red Indian said. "But I no let him do that. He pay me to help steal belt, and I promise to do that, and keep promise. But you save my life, and I not a dog. How I let him kill you then—huh?"

"He has gone, now," said Malcolm. "He went through the ice into the river. He is dead."

"But he wear belt round waist—never take off. If he gone—belt gone—huh?"

"It can't be helped," the youngster returned, "and you needn't worry about it."

He felt so helpless kneeling there beside the dying man. They were miles away from civilisation, and he could do nothing.

"Let me try and get you back to camp," he said.

Red Deer smiled and seemed amused at the anxiety in the young face. Malcolm tore up a strip of cloth and made a rough dressing for the wound; then he managed to get Red Deer down to the level ice, and, lifting him in his arms, the young adventurer carried the stricken man across to the bivouac, where he laid him

beneath the blankets. It was only the wonderful vitality of his race that was keeping Red Deer alive now, for he had lost a lot of blood, and it was still ebbing away through the thick bandages.

His eyes closed and Malcolm thought that he was dropping off to sleep. The dusk was gathering and the young adventurer drew the blankets up over the lean form, then seated himself beside the fire. The long hours passed, and the moon came up to cast its cold, white beams over the hushed world. The dog team had ceased their snarling, and Malcolm, wrapping himself in his blanket, stretched out beside the bivouac and dropped into a deep sleep.

He was awakened by a curious sound, and for the moment he did not know from whence it came. Then, at last, as the sleep left his eyes, he caught sight of a figure kneeling in front of the dying fire.

"Red Deer!" he whispered, starting up into a sitting position.

The swaying figure did not hear him. With his long sinewy arms stretched out in front of him Red Deer was murmuring some soft, monotonous words.

"Hearken, brothers! Dim are my eyes, weary my limbs! Soon must I fall! Far, oh far, are the tepees—the home of my people! Let the Great Spirit hear me! I gave life for life——"

The voice dropped, lower and lower, the arms dropped to the sides, and, with a long, deep sigh, Red Deer fell forward on his face.

Malcolm was on his feet and rushed through the darkness towards the prostrate figure. As he knelt to lift the tufted head he knew that all was over!

And thus, Red Deer paid his debt!

CHAPTER 15.

The End of the Trail!

MALCOLM found a place between the trees and he began to clear the snow away, just as dawn came. It was hard work to dig in the frozen earth, but the youngster stuck to his task. He would not leave the man who had made such a sacrifice to be torn by the wolves. And so, after a couple of hours of steady toil, the grave was made, and the body, wrapped in the coloured blanket, was lowered into it, and a heap of stones placed on the top.

Malcolm commenced to load the sledge with a heavy heart. It seemed to him that he had, after all, been a failure, and the best thing he could do would be to head back for Roaring Jack. He hoped that by pressing on he would be able to overtake Nipper who, he felt sure, would be on the return trail now.

Then, as he toiled, he heard a shout.

"Hallo, there!"

Faint voices from the hills,

"Hallo!"

They seemed to be coming from in front, where the road lifted steeply, but they sounded far off.

Malcolm lifted his revolver and fired into the air.

Crack! Crack!

The blue smoke curled out of the short muzzle into the motionless air. There was a long pause, then——

Crack!

From the hills, but a little closer this time, came an answering shot.

"I don't care who they are," the youngster thought. "Friend or foe, I'll be glad to see them."

Ten minutes passed; then a voice sounded again.

"Where are you?"

And this time Malcolm recognised it. Standing up on the sleigh he slipped out of his huge coat and with one bound was down on the snow.

"Nipper!" he called, as he made a rush forward.

A moment later Malcolm Ross was shaking hands with Nelson Lee and Nipper, aglow with excitement.

"You, Nipper, and—and Mr. Lee, too!" the delighted youth broke out. "I—I seem to be in a dream. How—when——"

"Steady on, Malcolm," Nipper said with a laugh. "One at a time, please."

He saw that his companion was overstrained, and he slipped his arm beneath the other's.

"Just take it easy and let us know what has happened to you."

They began to walk down towards the clump of trees, and Malcolm, steadied now, told the listeners of the drama that had happened on the frozen lake.

Nipper drew a deep breath when Malcolm came to the end.

"Well done, Red Deer!" the young assistant said in a grave voice.

"Amen to that!" Lee added, touched by the story he had heard.

Malcolm Ross turned to the detective and was silent for a moment.

"I am sorry for all the trouble I have caused you, Mr. Lee," he said eventually. "And, after all, it has been a wild-goose chase. I shall never deliver the belt to White Wolf, for it is somewhere under the ice, and——"

Nipper laughed.

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"Have you forgotten the yarn we heard, my son?" he broke in. "Didn't Red Deer say that Jean Celeste's friend was a gambler, and had won a belt of gold from Stephen Morrison? Well, that was the other belt, and the gov'nor has it with him still."

Nelson Lee slipped his hands to his waist and the leather belt with its precious contents was handed across to the young Londoner.

"I meant to delay Morrison at least," explained Nelson Lee. "I thought that you had had an accident, or that Morrison's hired roughs had kidnapped you. The least I could do was to get Morrison's belt and refuse to restore it until I knew that you were safe. It prevented him going off up country to find White Wolf while you, maybe, were under lock and key in Montreal. Still, as he took your belt at the shack, you are quite entitled to take his."

For a moment Malcolm stared at the belt, then with a bound he was in front of Nelson Lee, and had caught at the detective's hands.

"I—I shall never be able to thank you, sir," he stammered. "I didn't stand a ghost of a chance—never did, until you—you came to my aid. At the eleventh hour you—you have given me another chance, and—and——"

"You have to take it," Nelson Lee put in. "Don't forget that we have yet to find White Wolf, and it is a far cry back to Castle Mor. There is a time limit to this job, and you have barely five weeks in which to accomplish your task and return to your uncle with the pipe of peace from White Wolf. It is the best foot forward now, Malcolm Ross."

"And the first job is to get these dogs into their braces," said Nipper, wheeling towards the team.

Lambs could not have stood more quietly than did those powerful animals, although it was amateur hands that fastened the buckle and strap.

Nipper took the whip and acted as guide, and as the sleigh started off up the trail, heading for the fork, Malcolm came to a halt and took off his fur cap, looking in the direction of the little mound of stone.

"Good-bye, Red Deer!" he said quietly.

The chorus of the dogs broke out, and the sleigh went rocking and swaying up the track. It vanished over the top, and the yelping chorus died away, until once again the silence of the wild crept over the scene.

A white and sinewy shape crawled out from a mound high up the hill-side and halted for a moment with nose pointed and bristles twitching—then the clear bark of the dog-fox came down the frozen lake, to echo amidst the tall trees, where the mound of stones stood marking the resting place of another creature, just as wild and lawless as the white furred animal above. But a creature that had made great amends, and earned for itself, surely, a place in the happy hunting ground!

* * * * *

MALCOLM ROSS, Nelson Lee, and Nipper stood in the banqueting hall at Castle Mor. The great table had been laid in readiness for dinner, and Sir Roderick Ross stepped up to it and took his stand at the head of the table. Then his eyes sought Malcolm's.

"Where is it?" he asked. "The pipe?"

Malcolm slipped his hand into his breast and drew out the long big-bowled pipe.

Sir Roderick's thin fingers trembled for a moment as he took it, then he lifted the bowl and peered at it for a long moment.

Cut in the wood were a number of blackened signs—meaningless to the eyes of most men, but not to that of the old trapper.

"White Wolf's totem!" he said, in a trembling voice. "Yes, it is White Wolf's totem, and White Wolf's pipe of peace!"

Malcolm took a pace forward.

"There is still tobacco in it, Sir Roderick," he said. "White Wolf smoked it, and handed it to me just as it is now."

The baronet turned towards the fire and picked up a blazing ember with the tongs, and dropped it into the bowl. Then he drew a long breath, and a thin cloud of smoke came from his lips.

The peace was completed, and an old crime redeemed!

The pipe fell from the old man's fingers, and he dropped into a chair, covering his face with his hands, and for a long moment there was silence.

Suddenly he started to his feet.

"Sandy, where are you, man?" he cried. "Would ye shame us before our guests? Fetch the wine—quick!"

Sandy, the butler, went round with the great decanter, and Nelson Lee and Nipper were introduced by Malcolm.

"Without these two I would have failed," he said. "All that I have done was by their wonderful aid."

The glasses were lifted and Sir Roderick bowed to his guests.

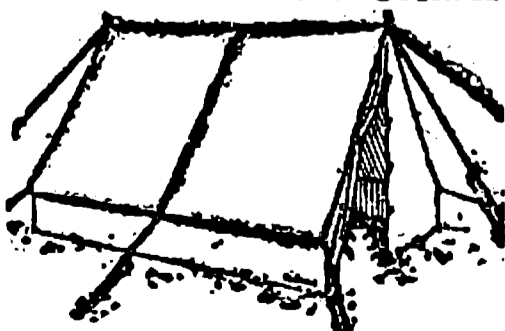
"Then here is to you, gentlemen," he said, bowing to Nelson Lee and Nipper, "for all you did for my nephew—and me!"

And the toasts were drunk by Malcolm and his uncle, draining their glasses to the last drop.

THE END.

(The most dangerous master-crook who has ever challenged law and order—"THE SHADOW!" Read the sensational exploits of this mystery-man in next week's non-stop detective-thriller. And don't forget—there's a rush on the "Nelson Lee," so order your copy to-day!)

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The DUD FORM at ST. FRANK'S!

(Continued from page 7.)

"Don't see how?" repeated Mills, staring. "Those Remove kids did it."

"Of course! But how can we prove it?"

"Does it need any proof? It's as obvious as daylight."

And while both affected Houses seethed with this early morning excitement, Mr. Barnaby Goole legged into the headmaster's study. A mild, harmless sort of man, he was subject to violent excitement if anything touched him on the raw.

"Looking for me?" sang out a large voice.

Mr. Goole, who was running hard, his gown waving, his mortar-board in his hand, pulled up short. He beheld a square-jawed face, with a pipe sticking out of it, viewing him from over the top of the hedge which divided Inner Court from the Head's garden.

"Sir!" panted Mr. Goole. "I have something terrible to report! I beg of you to come at once to the East House."

"What's the matter?" asked Mr. Kingswood, removing his pipe and regarding Mr. Goole with the utmost calmness. "Is the place on fire?"

"Good heavens, no!"

"Smallpox broken out?"

"Really, Mr. Kingswood!" snapped the Housemaster, with some asperity. "All the doors in the Junior passage of my House are daubed with white paint! There's no question at all as to who the culprits are. Those confounded Remove boys have done this! White paint!"

Mr. Goole seemed far more concerned about the white paint than about the legends themselves. He went into details—somewhat incoherent details, but the Head, curiously enough, grasped the truth almost before Mr. Goole had told his story.

"It wouldn't have mattered so much if the wretched boys had used chalk," went on Mr. Goole hotly. "Insulting epithets have been chalked on the doors of my House before to-day. But paint!"

"If the paint is still wet it can be wiped away—"

"My dear sir, it is bone dry!"

"It seems rather a good idea to me," said Mr. Kingswood coolly.

"A—a goo-good idea!" stammered the Housemaster, his jaw dropping.

"It proves that the culprit, or culprits, had foresight," explained the Head. "Chalk marks might have been rubbed out by an early riser—and then the work would have gone for nothing."

"For nothing!" almost shrieked Mr. Goole.

"I'll come straight along, Mr. Goole," interrupted the Head, replacing his pipe in his mouth. "And don't be too sure that the Remove is guilty. After all, you haven't a shred of proof, have you?"

And in the headmaster's eyes there was a twinkle of joy. From afar he could hear the tumult of the outraged Fourth as it held an

impromptu massed meeting in the Triangle—and as yet the rising bell had not sounded!

Mr. Goole did not even hear Fighting Kingswood's contented chuckle. Still less did Mr. Goole dream of the Head's thoughts.

"It seems to have worked famously," murmured the big young man happily. "It's rather a ticklish business, pepping up a 'dead' Form, but with a little diplomacy it ought to be fairly easy!"

Ructions!

"WHO did it?"

"Who's the unknown genius?" Everybody in the Remove was asking questions of that nature. The rising bell had not long sounded, but on this fair summer's morning every Removite was already down and full of the joyous story.

"Well, it's about time somebody told those Fourth-Formers the truth about themselves," said Handforth, as he stood in the Ancient House lobby with Church, McClure, Tommy Watson, Tregellis-West, and a crowd of other Removites. "It's only by chance that I didn't work the stunt myself. I thought of the wheeze some days ago—"

"Did you raid those Fourth-Formers during the night with a pot of paint, Handy?" broke in Russell.

"Not likely!" said Church, with a sniff. "Handy didn't think of the wheeze, either. But you know what his imagination is like!"

"Look here——" began Handforth wrathfully.

"Don't start an argument, for goodness' sake," said McClure. "We want to find out who played this jape on the Fourth."

Vivian Travers came along just then, cool, cheerful and happy.

"Any news of the hero yet, dear old fellows?" he inquired.

"Begad! I'm wonderin' if you did it, Travers—I am, really!" said Sir Montie Tregellis-West, adjusting his pince-nez, and eyeing Travers closely. "Don't you think you'd better own up, dear boy?"

"Well, well! This is most charming of you—most complimentary," said Travers graciously. "I'm sure I appreciate——"

"Don't ret!" interrupted Handforth. "Did you do it, Travers, or didn't you?"

"I'm very much afraid I didn't."

"Honest Injun?"

"Honest Injun," said Travers. "Quite apart from the fact that my brain isn't bulky enough to think of such a wheeze, I hate the smell of wet paint."

"Do you know who did it, then?"

"I haven't the faintest idea," replied Travers, shaking his head. "It's rather rummy, too. Somebody in the Remove is responsible, of course, and there's really no reason why he should hide his light under a bushel."

"I'll bet it's one of those West House fellows," said Jimmy Potts regretfully. "That's rather a pity."

"Still, we have the consolation of knowing that he belongs to the Remove," said Travers. "In fact, only a Removite could have thought out such a stunt."

Inquiries in the West House, however, proved barren. Reggie Pitt swore that he knew nothing about it, and none of the other West House Removites claimed the honour. Pitt & Co. in fact, had taken it for granted that the Ancient House boys were responsible.

The matter remained a complete mystery.

But the Fourth-Formers were not taking it lying down. In a large body, breathing fire, they surged across the Triangle, and recklessly invaded the Ancient House.

In the lobby they came face to face with Handforth, Travers, Watson, Pitt, and a whole gang of other Removites.

"What have we here, children?" asked Reggie Pitt, in wonder. "Can it be possible that the Fourth has awakened from its long, long sleep?"

"Poor old Fourth!" said Handforth, quoting one of the famous legends. "The dud form of St. Frank's!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"N.G. at games, N.G. at japes, N.G. at everything!" went on Handforth. "And can you be surprised? Look at 'em! They're even N.G. in the matter of good looks!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you cackling hyænas!" bellowed Boots, his red hair fairly standing on end. "We want to know what you mean by breaking into our quarters and daubing paint——"

"Just a minute, O impetuous youth!" interrupted Pitt. "Why this thushness? How come this rash accusation? What makes you think that we know anything about it?"

"Don't deny it!" shouted Lionel Corcoran. "You Remove chaps played that jape!"

"We're not denying that one of us might have done it—but we're just as much in the dark as you are," said Handforth. "Anyhow, the chap certainly knew his stuff!"

"Rather!"

"Blessed if I can understand why you fellows are so hot under the collars!" continued Handforth, in astonishment. "Isn't it known all over St. Frank's that the Fourth is a wash-out?"

"And to prove it, my sons, we will now proceed to chuck these specimens out on their backs!" said Reggie Pitt briskly. "Buck up, Remove! Grab the fatheads! We'll teach them to come over on this side of the Triangle!"

"Hear, hear!"

"On the ball, Remove!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

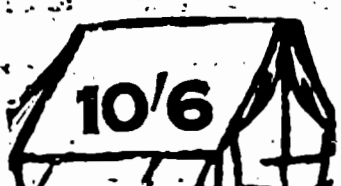
And, with tremendous enthusiasm, Handforth, Travers, Pitt and the rest fell upon the dismayed Fourth. Buster Boots and his supporters were grabbed, they were bumped, and they were duly hurled forth on their necks.

And thus insult had been added to injury—and the Fourth boiled and seethed like an erupting volcano.

The unknown japer had certainly wakened the Fourth.

(Don't miss the Thrills and sensations in next week's chapters of this Great School Story by E. S. Brooks. Tell your pals about it—they will enjoy reading it as well as you!)

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