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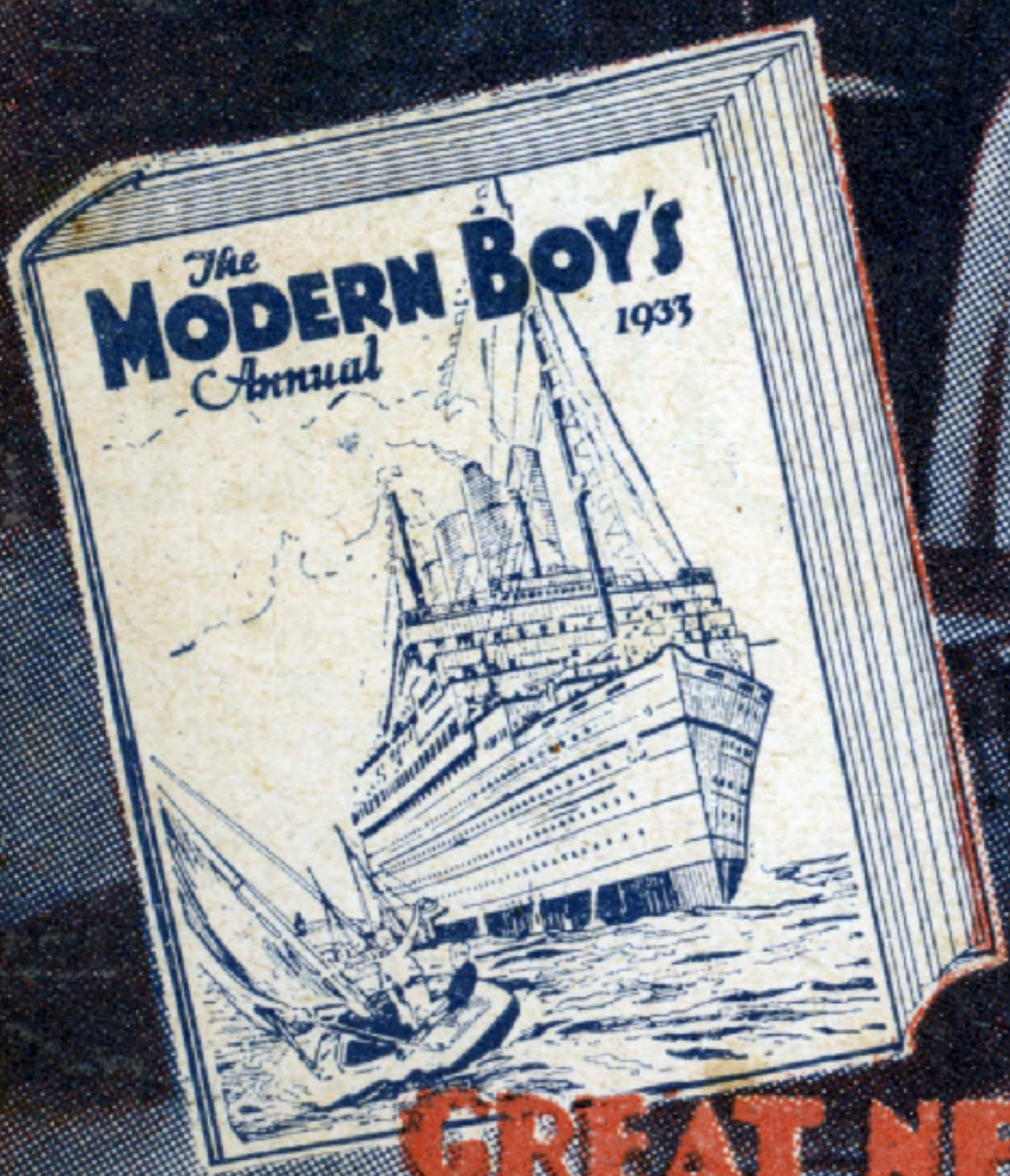
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CHAPTER 1.

The Man from Durban!

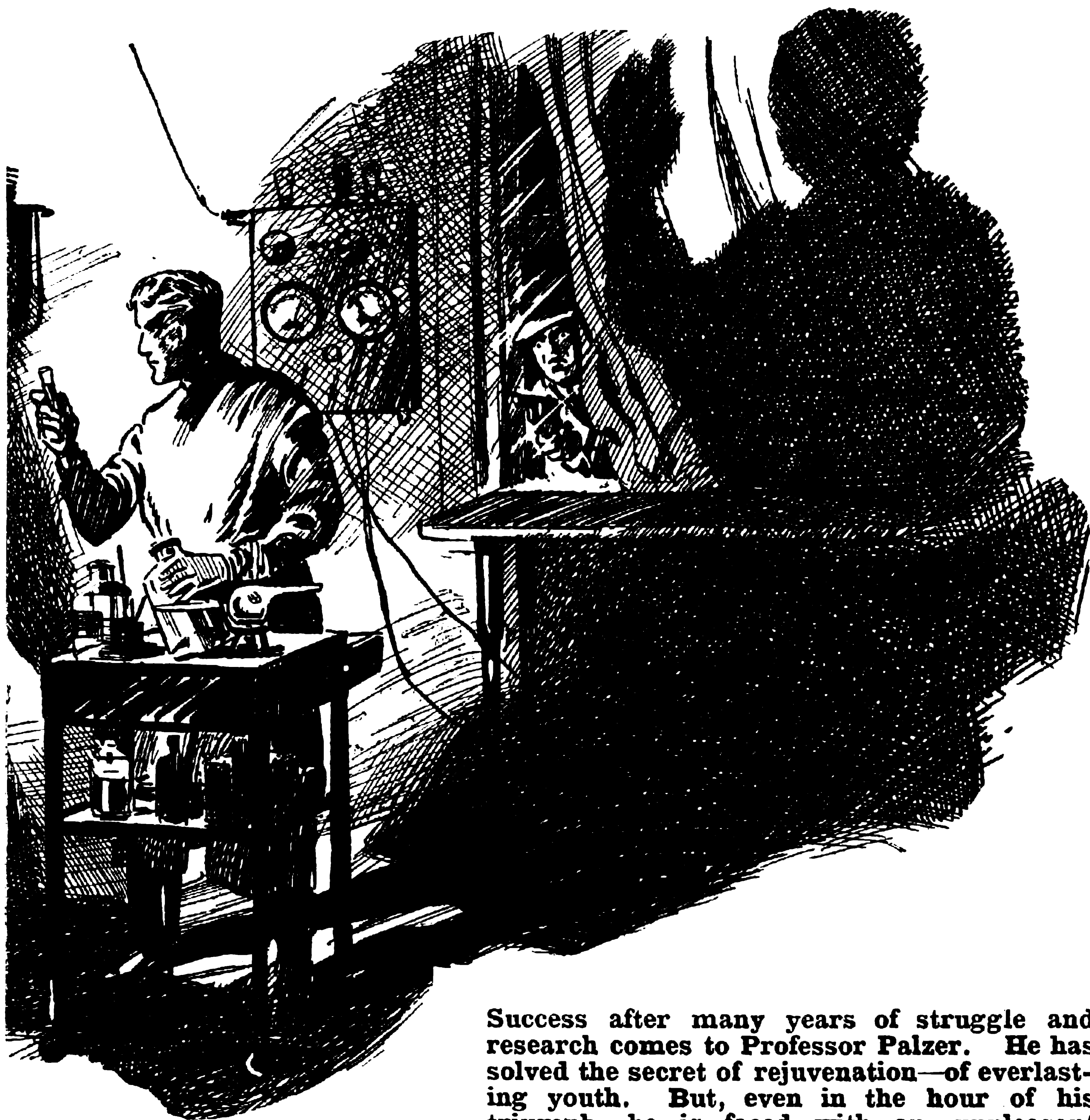
THE little lecture-room of the Grantham Institute was crowded, and a stranger entering the room might well have wondered what it was that kept the rows of figures seated in the chairs so intensely interested.

On the raised platform at the end of the room a tall figure stood at a small desk, his hands behind his back, peering at his audience through a pair of tortoise-shell spectacles. The face of the lecturer was long,

almost cadaverous, and there was a growth of straggly grey beard on his chin. He was Professor Armadale Palzer, the famous biologist.

On the desk in front of the lanky professor stood a phial filled with a thick, colourless fluid. It was a very harmless, innocuous-looking mixture, and yet it was on the contents of that phial that the whole of Palzer's lecture rested. He declared that he had discovered the way of restoring youth to the aged, and that, after a certain treatment, and with the injection of his secret toxin, a person of sixty could be

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changed, physically and mentally, in looks and physique, to a person of thirty.

During the course of the lecture Palzer had noted one face amongst the hundreds that stared up at him intently, and the reason for that was because it was a striking one. A tall man, seated in the front row of chairs, had his pallid, lined countenance turned upwards, and right through the long hour-and-a-half lecture had never once moved his eyes from the professor's face.

A steady scrutiny of this kind from unwavering, intent orbs is bound to attract the attention of even the most absorbed individual, and Palzer found himself now and

again turning direct to this interested listener, and even giving him a slight nod of his shaggy head, as though to drive a point home.

"Yes," the professor was saying, "I have no doubt that there will be found some man capable of going through the necessary rather stringent preparation, and allowing himself to be experimented upon. He might be considered as a pioneer, for, as I have already stated, the risks are considerable, and the pain unavoidable."

It was five o'clock when the lecture ended and the stir of chairs sounded, then the crowded hall began to empty, the people passing up steadily through the centre of

the room and going on into the wide corridors, where they broke into little groups here and there to discuss the lecture.

Professor Armadale Palzer had emptied a tumbler of water and was about to leave the platform when he noticed that his most intent listener was still in his seat. As the lecturer reached out his hand to pick up the phial from the desk, the stranger arose and took a couple of paces forward. He was a fine figure of a man, and although his face was lined and seamed and pale, his hair was thick and abundant, and there were only a few traces of grey at the temples.

His shoulders were broad and he was rather heavily built, and bordering on middle age. His eyes were a deep blue, and were wonderfully clear and intent as they turned to the professor.

"I should like to see you in private, sir, if I may," the man said. "I have come six thousand miles to attend this lecture of yours, and now, at the end of it, I feel that I have been rewarded. I was in Durban when I read about your lecture, and I found that by travelling to the Cape I would just be in time to catch the mail steamer. I landed in London last Tuesday; that is to say, on the very day you started this series of lectures. I may tell you, sir, that I did not reach London until one o'clock, and I came straight on here from the train."

"It is a great compliment," Palzer said, bowing gravely, "and I accept it. I hope that my poor lectures have been a sufficient reward for such extraordinary effort."

"It has been more than a reward," the man said. "It has brought me—hope."

He was about to say more, but checked himself, then, slipping his hand into his pocket, he drew out a card.

"I'm living at the Burdale Hotel," he said. "It is not out of curiosity I want to meet you, sir. It is a matter of—of life and death to me. If you will be good enough to spare me an hour this evening, or any time convenient, I shall be glad if you will drop me a line."

Palzer looked at the card, then nodded his head.

"You mean, you might be willing to allow me to experiment on you?" he queried.

"I have that in mind, sir."

"Very well, Mr. Warlock. I will arrange an interview," said the professor.

The man from Durban turned and went out of the lecture hall, threading his way through the groups of people in the foyer, and emerging at last in the quiet square in which the Grantham Institute was situated.

He halted on the edge of the pavement and drew a deep breath, squaring his shoulders with the air of a man who has cast something away from him. Then, turning along the pavement, he presently reached a wider thoroughfare and hailed a passing taxi and was driven to the Burdale Hotel.

He went up to his room on the third floor, and as soon as he closed the door behind him a change seemed to come to his manner.

A look of fierce exultation came into his face, and he clenched his brown-tanned fists and raised them above his head.

"A chance—a chance!" he told himself.

He had switched on the electric light, and as he stood in the centre of the room his likeness was revealed in the long mirror of the wardrobe close by the bed. With the air of a man studying a problem, James Warlock crossed to the long mirror and eyed himself searchingly, steadily. He marked the haggard lines on his face, the wrinkles round the eyes and mouth, and the tell-tale grey at his temples. Something of the enthusiasm died away from his eyes then, and he shook his head.

"No, impossible," he told himself. "I don't believe that Palzer can bring about what I desire. A man cannot thrust aside twenty-five years. It is inconceivable. I was a fool even to hope."

He went across to a luggage rack on which a battered suitcase stood, and, opening it, he drew out a writing-case, from whence he extracted a photograph. It was that of a happy-go-lucky youngster. Carrying it across to the electric light, James Warlock stared at it long and steadily, till a mist gathered in front of his eyes and a half-groan broke from his lips.

The youngster in the photograph was not unlike the man studying it. There was the same length of limb and breadth of shoulder, but the face looking out was youth incarnate and splendid—strong, firm chin, cloudless brows, and keen, burning vitality.

"I am a fool—a dreaming fool!" Warlock told himself. "The experiment could never succeed."

And yet, as though urged by some instinct stronger than his own decision, he slipped the photograph into his pocket, then, seating himself on a chair, he searched the writing-case and produced two or three envelopes. He opened them, took the letters out; and the stained condition indicated that they had been read and re-read over and over again.

The man went through them once more, slowly, and at one particular sheet he halted and studied it intently, as though to memorise something it contained. Finally the letters were replaced in the case, and he returned it to the suitcase, turning the key in the lock.

He began to dress for dinner then, and had almost completed that task when a knock sounded on the door and one of the hotel valets appeared.

"You are wanted on the 'phone in the next room, sir," he said.

Warlock hastened to the instrument to find it was Professor Palzer at the other end of the wire.

"Are you still inclined to tackle the experiment I spoke about this afternoon?" asked Palzer.

A look of eager joy seemed to come to the eyes of the man at the 'phone.

"Yes, yes!"

"Very well; I shall be glad if you will come to my place this evening, and we can discuss matters. There are one or two points I wish to indicate to you, and you must decide whether you will go on with the experiment after you have heard them."

"What is your address?"

"No. 43, Willby Drive, Hampstead Heath. It is just on the edge of the heath, and you can reach me quite easily from your address. If you are doing nothing better, you might as well come and have dinner with me. I shall be dining inside half an hour."

"All right, sir; I will be there. Thanks very much."

James Warlock replaced the receiver, then, hurrying back to his bed-room, he slipped into a long, light coat and turned to the valet who was still waiting.

"I'm not dining in this evening," he said to the attendant. "I've made arrangements to meet a friend, but I expect I'll be back later on."

He went to Palzer's house and dined there, but not until the meal was over was the subject of the experiment broached. The professor did not venture to ask Mr. Warlock what his true motives were, but he made no attempt to minimise the risk. He made his visitor understand that he could not definitely guarantee success; that there was a deal of risk attached to the experiment and a certain amount of pain. He thoroughly examined Warlock, and maintained his physique was such as could come through the ordeal with every chance of recovery and success.

"But there will be suffering," he said. "I am going to try to inject into you new life and youth; and youth and new life, running through veins that have carried blood for forty years, must naturally cause a certain amount of agony. If you remember those moments when you have had what is commonly known as pins and needles, following the use of a numbed limb, you will, perhaps, appreciate the fact that I am convinced will follow the first use of my serum."

He put his hand on his visitor's shoulder.

"But I think you are capable of bearing that pain," he said, "for, after all, at the end of it you will feel new life and new vigour running through your veins. Unfortunately for me, I am an old man. I shall be seventy-five next birthday, and my bones are beginning to ossify, while my veins are much too dead to stand the strain that would be placed upon them. But were I in your shoes, Warlock, I should require no subject to experiment on."

His lanky figure straightened up.

"I should experiment on myself," he said.

They shook hands then, and Warlock left the house, walking down the leafy avenue and on to the slope of the hill that carried him to the station. His hands were behind his back, and he walked as a man might walk in a dream. But his face had again taken on an expression of keen and intent

eagerness. That interview with Palzer had settled one point in James Warlock's life, and he was ready to face the consequences.

CHAPTER 2.

The Burglary!

IT was after eleven o'clock when Warlock entered the Burdale Hotel, and he stopped to chat for a few moments with the night porter, then was taken up in the lift to his room. A few moments later the valet on night duty was summoned to the room, to find Warlock in bed. The attendant was requested to fetch a tumbler of hot water, and on returning with it, Warlock showed him a powder, which he told the attendant was a sleeping draught.

"I can't sleep very well this last week or two," he said with a smile; "but this will alter all that."

He took the powder, washing it down with the tumbler of hot water, and the valet left the room. A quarter of an hour later the attendant and "boots" came down the corridors to collect the footgear of the guests. They saw that Mr. Warlock's boots were not outside his door, and, after knocking twice and receiving no reply, the valet stepped into the room, switching on the lights.

The guest was lying on his back, and his steady breathing told the man he was sound asleep. After a glance at the guest, the valet picked up the soiled boots and left the apartment.

"I'll bet he doesn't make a move until nine or ten o'clock to-morrow morning," the attendant said with a grin as he closed the door softly.

But in that statement he was much mistaken. For ten minutes later Mr. James Warlock, who had opened his eyes as soon as the attendant had vanished, swung round off the bed and tiptoed across the chamber to the door to listen. Presently he heard the footfalls of the valet and the boots returning with their load, and when the sounds had died away, Warlock turned, switched on the light, and commenced to dress.

He opened the old suitcase, taking from it a light linen suit. It was obviously the type of suit worn in the Colonies, and after he had donned the garments Mr. Warlock slipped on a pair of light deck shoes; then he took another garment from the suitcase, a coat of thin material.

He did not trouble to put on a collar or tie, but with the coat collar turned up and buttoned that fact was not revealed. Finally, James Warlock reached into the suitcase and took something else from it—a long, thin bundle that gave a metallic clink as its owner stowed them into his pocket.

The last thing that came from the suitcase was the letter-case; then the suitcase was locked, and he carefully replaced the bunch of keys in the pocket of his dress

clothes, which he had worn when visiting Palzer.

Having completed these preliminaries, James Warlock switched off the light, stepped to the door, and, after listening quietly, opened it and emerged into the corridor. He did not turn towards the main staircase, but swinging to the right, went on down the wide, carpeted passage, and presently found himself walking along a narrow corridor which was really part of a connecting gallery between the two blocks of buildings that formed the Burdale Hotel.

In the annexe Mr. Warlock reached a small luggage lift. It was one of those types of lifts that are operated by pressing a button from any floor, and although the shaft of the lift was in darkness, after touching the required button fixed in the wall, Mr. Warlock heard the souging of the hydraulic lift as it began to ascend to his floor.

It came to a halt with that faint clattering noise which indicates the electric connection operating, then Warlock drew aside the iron gate, stepped into the lift, closed the door again, and, feeling for the row of buttons inside the lift, he pressed the "basement" one. The lift went down again and came to a halt in the darkness.

James Warlock opened the door, stepped out, and, slipping his hand into his pocket, drew out a little electric torch. The small shaft of light served to reveal the long basement, with its porter's barrows, and, here and there, a trunk, strapped ready for departure. It was obvious that Warlock knew his way about the place, for he strode off in an assured manner across the basement and turned up a narrow flight of stone stairs, opened the door and emerged into the courtyard behind the hotel.

Keeping well into the shadows of the high building, Warlock reached the arched gateway of the hotel, pausing there for a moment. On the left was a line of garages which the guests of the hotel used for garaging their cars. There was no one moving, and, satisfied that he was unobserved, the man from Durban stepped boldly out from the shadow of the archway and turned along the dark street.

A few minutes later he was out in the wider thoroughfare, pacing briskly down the pavement. It was then about one o'clock in the morning, and Mr. Warlock headed Cityward. London is never quite deserted, and even at that hour of the morning there were occasional taxis and now and again a group of men pacing along the streets.

James Warlock found himself hurrying on with four or five figures that had emerged from one of the narrow alleys—belated journalists returning home after their work at the night news. He continued on up Ludgate Hill, then finally turned into Cheapside, and presently found himself walking quietly up a side street running off that famous thoroughfare; and now his pace slackened.

He came opposite a rather pretentious building that had a name across the front in gold letters. James Warlock crossed towards the building, found his way down a paved alley on the left, and entered a dim courtyard flanked by two rows of houses. The back of the big building in the main street rested against one of these small houses, and Warlock, after another quiet, searching glance to right and left, drew a couple of keys from his pocket, and, stepping to the door of one of the houses, he opened it and entered.

Again the pocket torch came into use, and James Warlock climbed to the second floor, turning and halting at a door on which a card was pinned. On the card a name appeared:

"R. J. Durban, General Agent."

A second key was now used, and James Warlock found himself in a little suite of offices. The fact of the matter was that the man from South Africa had rented these offices the previous day, having paid a deposit for one month on the place, and the card on the door was one that he himself had sketched out.

He had taken the offices furnished, and he smiled grimly as he looked around him. Then he passed through the outer room and entered the inner one, going across to the window and opening it. Every movement that he made was characteristic of the type of man he was—deliberate and assured. He stepped through the open window, then closed it behind him, balancing himself on the ledge.

He was within two or three feet from the back of the great building, and it had been that fact which had made Warlock take these offices. Where the angle of the small house met the big wall of the high building a thick drainpipe ran, and after another brief pause Mr. Warlock reached out, caught at the drainpipe, and began to climb it with the easy, swift action of a man whose muscles were in perfect control.

He climbed as a sailor climbs, using hands and feet, saving every ounce of strength, and the rate at which he shinned up that pipe was amazing. In less time than it takes to tell he had reached the third floor of the building, and was level with a small iron balcony fixed in the wall around one of the windows. It was about five feet away from the drainpipe, and it represented a problem that many men might have hesitated at attempting.

But James Warlock seemed to have nerves of steel, as well as muscles of the same stuff, for, after giving one casual glance to judge the distance, he shot out from the drainpipe, and his outstretched hand neatly and accurately hit the top rail of the balcony, and in another moment he was over it, standing on the solid ledge.

He knelt there and began to examine the window. He found that the catch was

home; but slipping his hand into his pocket, Mr. Warlock withdrew that long bundle in chamois leather, and, unfastening it, he selected a slender, tough piece of steel. A steady, upward thrust served to insert that piece of steel in between the two halves of the window; then a firm pressure saw the catch swung back with a click, and the lower sash of the window was opened.

Gathering his tools into the bundle again, Warlock slipped through the gap of the window and felt a thick carpet under his feet. He had had to push aside a blind in order to gain an entry, and now he paused for a moment to make sure that the blind was down, and that no ray of light could escape. Satisfied on that point, his electric torch came into commission again, and he flashed it round the room.

There are certain offices that indicate the type of proprietor, and this one, with its solid mahogany furniture, electro-plated ink-stands, thick carpet and massive, carved arm-chairs with morocco leather seats, hinted at wealth—wealth, or, at least, a desire on the part of the occupants to impress a caller. The face of the stranger holding the electric torch went grim.

“Just the sort of place I would have expected,” he said, half to himself. “All show and swank, just to impress people. It’s the real stuff, this, and in itself tells me what manner of men they are who operated the trick.”

There was a glass-panelled door in one side, and Mr. Warlock could see that “Private” was painted on the frosted glass outside. It was obvious that he had managed to enter the sanctum of the head of the firm, whoever that might be.

In another corner of the room there stood a small safe, and it was towards this that Warlock turned. It was a very small affair set in the wall, and was obviously of the type that is used more for private documents than for safeguarding more bulky valuables.

It was solid enough in its way, but there was no elaboration of lock or mechanism, and again that little chamois-leather bundle came into play. From it James Warlock drew out a coil of electric cable, and, crossing to the desk, he detached the bulb from the electric standard there and slipped his own connection into place. Then, going back to the safe, he attached to the other end of the connection a small, bulbous machine, from which a tiny funnel thrust out.

KNEELING in front of the safe, the man from South Africa attached a switch and laid the mouth of the funnel against the portion where the lock was placed in the door. A thin humming sound commenced, just like the drone of a large-sized bee. Now and again a bluish flicker would filter out from under the edge of the funnel, but that was only when, by accident, Mr. Warlock moved it slightly.

The man was so intent on his job that he did not see the shadow of someone pass by

the door. As it happened, it was only a belated clerk from other offices in the building leaving. The shadow passed without an interruption.

Five minutes later, when the man turned the switch off and put aside the machine, the whole surface of the lock portion was melted, and a tug saw the door of the safe open. Until then he had moved in a very cold, calculating way, but now, as he stepped forward to peer into the safe, his manner changed, and his hands were trembling as he started to search through the interior.

It took him a long time to find what he sought. It consisted of three little bundles of documents that were tucked away in a private file. But when he had found them and slipped them into his coat pocket, James Warlock began to take file after file out of the safe and scatter the contents all over the floor in front of him.

Now and again he even stopped to tear some of the documents in two, and once he placed his foot on one of the files and crushed it. Finally, in a small drawer, he discovered a little wad of banknotes. There were not many there, and they were only for small amounts—probably three or four hundred pounds in all—but he slipped the notes into his pocket with a quiet nod.

Then the man from South Africa stood up and started to prepare for his departure. It did not take him long to gather together his kit. The electric connection was duly removed from the standard on the desk and the bulb replaced; then, reaching the window, James Warlock halted and directed the light from his electric torch on the scene in front of him.

There was quite a litter in front of the safe, and the man nodded his head in approval.

“That will do, I think,” he told himself.

CHAPTER 3.

Called In!

QUITE a flutter had been caused at Scotland Yard over a miserable petty burglary in the private office of Mr. Henry Brontiell, of the Zangwang Diamond Proprietary Company, with offices in Palmer Street, near Cheapside. It was not so much the amount that was stolen, but the litter in which the thief had left the place.

Mr. Brontiell was in a furious temper, and would not rest himself, nor let anyone else rest, until the thief had been caught and punished. Unfortunately, Scotland Yard’s best men could not throw any light on the identity of the criminal. Whereupon Mr. Brontiell made use of his wealth and position to lodge complaints in high quarters, and the police chiefs were duly rapped over their knuckles because of their failure to produce the burglar from up their sleeves in five minutes.

Inspector Barkley had, therefore, called on Nelson Lee, after a sly hint from his superiors, and despite the famous detective's dislike of such people as Mr. Henry Brontzell, and such dubious companies as the Zangwang Diamond concern, he had agreed to go to the offices and to do what he could. And, of course, Nipper went with him and Inspector Barkley.

The highly-polished furniture and massive counters were sure evidences to Nelson Lee of the kind of people he had to meet, and so, when he was ushered into the private room, and there arose from a table a beefy, broad-shouldered, heavy-jowled man, Lee knew at once he was standing in the presence of Mr. Henry Brontzell.

The head of the syndicate held out his hand to Lee, and a smile crossed his face.

"Very pleased you've come along, Mr. Lee," said Mr. Brontzell, in a rumbling tone. "I don't say anything against the police of this country, but they're not quite up to the quick moves that we Colonials expect."

"You are a Colonial, then, are you?"

"Yes, born in Jo'burg. But I've been in London long enough to lose the Transvaal drawl."

Beyond the desk the carpet was covered with a thick litter of papers, in amongst which were one or two crushed, broken files. Brontzell turned and thrust a podgy finger out.

"That's what the skunks left behind them!" he said. "Sheer spite, that's what it was. I suppose they were not satisfied with what they found in my safe, and so, to vent their spleen, they set to work and ruined its contents."

He stooped and picked up one or two papers that had been torn, indicating the fragments.

"I haven't even troubled to try and check this lot of stuff yet," he said. "It's an awful mess, and will cost me much more than a few hundred pounds that I lost—and, by gosh, I mean to collar the ruffians who are responsible and get them a stretch of imprisonment for their dirty trick."

His voice rose to a growling menace, and from behind the desk the inspector shot a quick, knowing wink at Nipper. It was perfectly obvious that Mr. Brontzell was much more concerned about the way in which his paper had been left than the loss of his money.

"When was the loss discovered?" Lee asked.

"The caretaker came down here about seven o'clock yesterday morning and found the room just as it is now," said the head of the syndicate. "He didn't touch a thing, but went off at once and informed the police. I usually get here about nine-thirty in the morning, and I did so yesterday and found the police in possession."

Nelson Lee turned to Barkley.

"I suppose you found out how they got in here?" he said.

The inspector nodded.

"You'll see marks of a chisel in between the sashes of the window here," he said, indicating the window on the right. "And in my opinion they must have got out of the window on the floor above this and were lowered down to the balcony here by a rope. If you'll come upstairs afterwards you'll see what I mean. The office above this is vacant, and I made inquiries of the caretaker and discovered that the doors upstairs have been left open just lately because the place has recently been redecorated, painted and papered, and so on, and the doors were left open in order to let the paint and distemper dry."

Nelson Lee crossed the room and examined the woodwork of the window, then he slipped the catch and lifted the lower sash, studying the outer sash, and nodded his head.

"Yes, that's pretty evident," he said. "And the man who opened this catch was an expert at the game, for he didn't leave a single unnecessary mark."

"Oh, I'm not saying they weren't expert thieves," Mr. Brontzell observed. "The way they handled the safe tells that. But what I can't understand is why they should have tackled my safe when there is a big one in the office, and it always contains more money. In fact, the cashier tells me there was nearly four thousand pounds in it, not to mention three or four collections of uncut diamonds."

"Yes, I forgot to mention that," Inspector Barkley put in.

Nelson Lee was leaning on the edge of the open window-sill, and his eyes were fixed on the balcony outside. He seemed only to give a casual glance, and he did not make any remark when he turned back again and crossed the room to examine the safe.

"A very pretty job," he said at last, as he straightened up; "and although I have seen something similar, I don't think I have ever examined a neater sample of the use of electrical heat."

Barkley turned and nodded to the head of the syndicate.

"I told you it wasn't an ordinary Bunsen," he said. "You see, there are no signs of any smoke or deposit on the edges of the melted portion, and even the cleanest Bunsen is bound to throw a slight deposit out."

"Oh, it was electricity that was used, all right," said Lee; "and in all probability the man got his current from the standard lamp on the desk there."

"By Jove, I— Wait a minute!"

Barkley crossed the room to the standard lamp, and, keeping his fingers on the brass portion of it, slipped it out of its socket and held it up to the light.

"There, what d'you think of that, Lee?"

The bulb was covered with a thin coating of dust, and quite clearly on the greyish deposit were the marks of fingers!

"That's a score for you, Mr. Lee," said Barkley. "It's the first sign of fingerprints we have been able to find. I've



The midnight visitor seemed to have nerves of steel. Giving only a glance at the space that separated him from the pipe to the balcony, he let go his hold and leaped through the air.

searched the safe and everywhere I could think of, but the fellows left no traces behind them. Yet here is the sign all right."

The bulb was a rather large one, and the traces left by the fingers and thumb could be seen quite easily.

"You had better look after that," Lee said with a quiet smile. "I have no doubt when you get up to the Yard you will be able to trace out the impressions left by the thumb-prints. You can see them quite clearly now against the glass."

"I'll have photographs taken of them as soon as I get back to the Yard," Inspector Barkley put in.

Nelson Lee was already continuing his investigations.

"How was the window?" he asked. "Did the caretaker find it locked again?"

"No; the window was closed, but the catch was unfastened."

Nelson Lee crossed the room once more and halted at the door, close to the glass-panelled ones that led to the outer office. This second door was held by a Yale, which was of the ordinary pattern, that is to say, it had a knob by which the bolt could be drawn back. On drawing back the bolt, Lee opened the door and found himself looking into the wide corridor.

"If a man had been hidden on the floor above," he said, "there was no earthly reason why he shouldn't have left this office by the door instead of climbing out through the window again and beating a retreat that way."

"How do you know he went out of the window again?" Mr. Brontiell put in. "My opinion is that he left by the door."

Nelson Lee closed the door, then crossed the room, and, leaning forward, indicated a mark on the window-sill. It was the half-arc impression of a heel in the dirt on the sill.

"No man climbing into a window would do so heels first," the detective pointed out with a quiet smile. "Yet, as you see, this heel-mark is on the very edge of the outer window-sill, indicating that the man must have passed through from the inside, and he evidently rested his foot there to balance himself as he climbed through."

"Very simple, when you reason it out," Barkley said, with a nod of his head. "Yes, there's not much doubt about it, the fellow must have come in by way of the window, and also went out by the same way."

CHAPTER 4.

R. J. Durban, General Agent!

NELSON LEE swung through the window and stepped out on to the balcony. It was only about a yard wide, and he leaned against the outer rim and looked up at the floor above. Then his eye travelled very slowly down the wall and halted when it came level with the open window again.

"I'm afraid I'm going to differ from you, Barkley," said Lee. "I don't think there has been a rope let down from the window up there. In any case, there is no sign of a man having climbed down there, and a rope hanging close to the wall would make it absolutely imperative for anyone to leave some scrape or scratch on this grimy stuff, London fog and London smoke leaving a casing on the average brickwork that is almost as good as the graphite you use for taking thumbprints. Come here, old chap, and I'll show you what I mean."

Barkley slipped out on to the balcony, and Lee, reaching up, stepped on to the window-sill; then he raised his hand and brought it up against the brickwork above the window. Even the slight scrape of his hand was enough to leave an impression on the grime, and he turned to the inspector.

"Now," he said, nodding down to Barkley, "can you conceive a man struggling up or down a rope hand over hand, with the rope close against the wall, and yet leaving no trace behind him on this?"

Barkley shook his head.

"I should think it was impossible, Lee," he replied. "But if he didn't come down that way, then how the dickens did he come?"

As the inspector spoke his eye travelled to the left, and as Lee dropped down to the balcony again, Barkley reached out and caught him by the arm.

"I've got it," he said. "Look!"

A drainpipe, a solid six-inch, square affair, ran down the wall some four or five feet away from the balcony, and as Nelson Lee

and his companion leaned over the edge of the balcony and followed the run of the drainpipe, they could see, quite clearly on the grimed brickwork, ample evidence of a recent climber.

"That's how the beggar got in here," Inspector Barkley said. "Look! This runs right down to that house. He probably came up the drainpipe from there."

Nelson Lee looked down into the well-like opening below and nodded his head.

"That's about it, Barkley," he said. "But doesn't it strike you that the man who carried out that climb in the dark must have had more than ordinary courage? I should think there are not many people who would risk such a climb as that at night."

Barkley smiled.

"It's certainly more than I'd like to try for five times the amount that beggar got away with," he returned. "He must have been more like a monkey than a man."

Nelson Lee and the inspector returned to the private room again, and Brontzell, who was still seated at his desk, nodded to the detective.

"I heard what you said, Mr. Lee," he remarked, "and perhaps you are right. In any case, what I want to do is to get hold of the fellow who got in here and see that he is punished to the full extent of the law."

Nelson Lee pointed to the litter of papers.

"It occurs to me, Mr. Brontzell, that it might be worth your while to clear this up now and check the papers over," he said. "I suppose they are of some value?"

"Only to my firm," the head of the syndicate returned. "But, as a matter of fact, I intended to have them sorted out after you leave. I will start the clerks on them at once." He looked at Lee again. "What are your theories concerning the affair?" he asked.

Nelson Lee shook his head.

"I am afraid I can't commit myself to any definite statement just now," the detective returned. "But there is one thing I feel pretty certain about, and that is it was not a professional thief or housebreaker who did the job, although I admit, frankly, that when I first saw the method by which he had entered the window I was inclined to think it was the work of an old lag."

He smiled quietly.

"But no lag in the world would have left these offices without tackling that other safe," he added, "and it is that point which makes me believe that it is someone who did not follow the criminal line as a regular vocation."

Nipper was watching Inspector Barkley, and he saw the official countenance express open dissent to this suggestion. Barkley was still guarding the electric bulb very carefully, and it was obvious that the inspector was absolutely itching to get back to Scotland Yard and set to work to try and use the fingerprint clue. In fact, he said as much, and as there was little more to be discovered

in that office, Nelson Lee agreed that he should go.

They left the officers and parted in the street, the inspector hailing a taxi to take him to Scotland Yard, while Nelson Lee and Nipper went round to the courtyard to continue their investigations at the other end of the drainpipe.

"You see, the drainpipe comes to an end just level with the second-floor window of this line of small houses, young 'un," said Lee. "Now, not even an expert thief can fly, so it is obvious that the man must either have got on to the drainpipe from the roof or from that window."

He looked at the window. There were no blinds in front of it, and it had a rather begrimed appearance.

"I shouldn't be surprised to find that those offices are vacant," Nelson Lee went on. "Anyhow, we'll soon find out."

He crossed the courtyard and entered the narrow doorway, halting to glance at the names painted on the board in the entrance. A firm of solicitors occupied the ground floor, and it was on the second that Lee found the little slip of paper pasted in a space that had obviously been vacant for some time—"R. J. Durban, General Agent."

"This looks like a newcomer, at any rate," said Nelson Lee, as he turned and walked down the passage.

He found the caretaker and made out he was looking out for offices to rent. The caretaker said there might be a small suite vacant there in a week or so, if he cared to look at them now, and they were taken to the second floor, where the caretaker knocked at a door. There was no reply, and the caretaker, taking a bunch of keys from his pocket, opened the door and allowed his visitors to enter.

"There are two rooms here, sir," he said, "and they are to be let furnished."

Nelson Lee crossed the room to the window, and, as he halted beside it, he glanced out and saw the high wall of the big building rising sheer to the left.

"This is about the place, Nipper," he said. "Anyhow, it would make a very good starting-off stage."

Under the pretext of studying the office, Lee made a very careful search of the rooms, and he soon decided that the mysterious Mr. Durban, whoever he was, had not carried on much business there. Inquiries from the caretaker elicited the fact that Mr. Durban had only taken the offices over a few days before, and, so far as the porter was aware, only spent a few hours there in the morning.

"He hasn't been up here this morning yet, sir," the old fellow declared. "I think he must be just starting business, for he hasn't had any correspondence or anything as I've seen."

Nelson turned again to the window, and presently he stooped and picked up a fragment of stuff which he held up to the light. It was a piece of cardboard with a green covering over it, and as Nipper looked at

the stuff the youngster remembered the letter files in the office of the Zangwang Diamond Diamond Company had been made of green-covered cardboard. The fragment was only a small piece such as might have been torn off the edge of a letter case.

"This might be interesting, young 'un," Lee said. "We'll have a look round and see if there are any letter files in this place."

They searched round, but found no letter cases at all in the offices, and the edges of the pasteboard indicated that the fragment had only recently been torn off. It was a very slender clue, and yet was by no means an unimportant one. Lee took the name of the agents who let the offices; then he left the place and went back into the bigger building and entered the suite occupied by the syndicate.

Mr. Brontzell had gone out, but there were a couple of clerks hard at work collecting the litter of papers together and sorting them out. On one side they had piled the letter files. They recognised Nelson Lee as soon as he entered, and the detective, turning to the cases, began to examine them carefully, until at last, half-way down the pile, he found the one for which he was searching.

The fragment of broken, green-covered cardboard which he had found in the smaller building fitted exactly into one corner of the letter case he was holding in his hand.

"That settles it," Nelson Lee said.

Then, turning to the clerk, he went on:

"I will take this file with me; it might prove a very valuable link. You had better make a note of it."

He turned the case over, and on the back of it was a piece of white paper on which was written: "Correspondence. Makapu Concession. RJW."

"That's all right, sir," the clerk said. "I'll tell Mr. Brontzell."

They found a piece of brown paper, and, wrapped up the case, then Lee and Nipper left the offices and, passing down the busy thoroughfare, they found the agents' offices, where Lee made inquiries concerning Mr. R. J. Durban. The office agent gave Lee as many particulars as he could.

Mr. Durban had paid cash in advance, and had given the address of his bank, together with one other reference—a Mr. Warlock, of Hanley Manor, Stetley, Cumberland. The reference had been quite satisfactory, and, as far as the agents were concerned, the fact of his having paid the rent in advance assured them from any loss, so that they had not troubled to make as many inquiries about their client as they might otherwise have done.

CHAPTER 5.

The Green File Clue!

NELSON LEE was not the sort of man to let the grass grow under his feet, and when he left the agents' offices his next visit was to the bank; but here he did not receive very much informa-

tion. All the bank could tell him was that Mr. Durban had opened an account three days before, paying in some seventy pounds as part of a deposit which he had with another bank in Cape Town, a branch of the London bank.

"It was merely a transfer account, Mr. Lee," the manager of the bank informed him, "and, of course, under those circumstances, we did not require any guarantees. But we could easily cable out to Cape Town and find out more about Mr. Durban if necessary."

"You need not trouble to do that," said Lee; "not at present, at any rate. Later on it may be worth while. I suppose Mr. Durban gave you an address?"

"Oh, yes!" the bank manager returned. "He told us to write to him care of a Mr. Warlock, who appears to be a friend of his and is staying at the Burdale Hotel. Durban said he was taking offices in the City, and intended to settle down, but he hadn't any definite address at the moment."

Nelson Lee did not trouble the bank manager with any further questions, and when he left the premises he hailed a taxi, and he and his assistant entered the vehicle.

"Where to, now, gov'nor?" Nipper asked.

"Oh, we might as well run round to the Burdale and have a word with this Mr. Warlock, whoever he may be," said Lee.

At the hotel he sought out the manager and made himself known and his errand.

"Is there anything wrong?" asked the manager.

"No, not that I am aware of," replied the detective. "I simply want to try and find the whereabouts of a friend of Mr. Warlock's."

"A friend? But Mr. Warlock is practically a stranger in London; at least, so I understand. He only came from South Africa a few days ago."

Nipper and Lee exchanged glances.

"From South Africa, eh? But I understood that Mr. Warlock was from Stetley, Cumberland?"

"Oh, no, sir! He came direct to us from Southampton. I have taken over his luggage, and you will see the steamship labels on it now, proving that he only landed in Southampton four days ago."

It was only a small matter, yet it was interesting in its way, for it seemed rather strange that Mr. Warlock, as well as Mr. Durban, should have arrived in England from South Africa much about the same time.

"I was wondering if anything had gone wrong," the manager went on; "because, to tell you the truth, Mr. Warlock's affair is rather curious. The valet informs me that the night before last he left Warlock sound asleep in his bed-room. It appears that Mr. Warlock took a sleeping draught; and yet at six o'clock yesterday morning, when the boots went into his bed-room with his shoes, he found that Mr. Warlock was not there. Later on in the morning I got a message from him from Waterloo. It was brought

by a district messenger, and contained sufficient money for his bill. He also asked me to look after his clothes for him, as he was going away for two or three weeks."

The manager rubbed his chin for a moment.

"I didn't pay much attention to the affair at the time," he admitted, "for, of course, a guest is allowed to do as he pleases. But it struck me as curious that a man should take a sleeping draught, then, four or five hours afterwards, have vanished from his room."

"Have you got his clothes?"

"No. As a matter of fact, we didn't trouble to pack the clothes yesterday, as the rooms, of course, were paid for until this morning. But I have sent orders to have the goods packed and shifted to the baggage-room."

Nelson Lee rose to his feet.

"I think I would like to have a look at the room, if you don't mind?" he said.

The manager pushed back his chair and arose.

"Only too pleased, Mr. Lee," he said.

A few moments later Nelson Lee, Nipper and the manager were standing in the bedroom that had been occupied by James Warlock. The valet was just in the act of emptying the wardrobe when Lee appeared, but at a word from the manager the servant ceased his task.

"I think you were on duty when Mr. Warlock went to bed the night before last, Fraser?" said the manager.

"Yes, sir," replied the valet. "That's right."

Nelson Lee turned to the servant.

"You say that Mr. Warlock took a sleeping draught?"

"Yes, sir. He told me he hadn't been sleeping very well lately, and he rang the bell and asked me to fetch him a tumblerful of hot water, which I did, and he took the sleeping powder while I was in the room. About a quarter of an hour later, when the boots and I came round to collect the shoes, I came into the room, and I found Mr. Warlock lying on his back, snoring. It looked to me as though he was good for at least twelve hours, and I would hardly believe boots when he came along next morning and told me that Mr. Warlock wasn't in his room. In fact, I came up here myself to make sure."

"What time was that?"

"Just about six o'clock, sir. Boots came in here about half-past five. It was just breaking dawn."

"And what was the room like?"

The valet turned and nodded towards the wardrobe.

"Just about as it is now, sir," he said. "From what I can remember, Mr. Warlock must have had his blue serge suit on when he went out."

Nelson Lee began to move round the room, and presently he reached the suitcase and tried it. It was locked, and he hesitated for a moment, glancing at the manager.

"I'd like to have a look what's inside this," he said.

"All right, sir. As far as we are concerned there's no objection."

Nelson Lee turned to Nipper, and the youngster, drawing a bunch of keys from his pocket, tackled the suitcase. It did not take him long to master that lock, and presently the shabby suitcase was opened, and Nelson Lee ran through the contents. He found the light drill suit, and also the deck shoes. He was standing close to the window, and Nipper saw the detective lift one of the shoes, examine it closely, then hold it up nearer to the light.

Over Lee's shoulder Nipper glanced at the shoe, and a quick smile crossed the youngster's face. For the soft rubber toes had been very badly scratched, and in between the canvas and the rubber soles were a few fragments of red, brittle dust—fragments of brick. The state of the toes was sufficient to indicate that at a very recent date the wearer of them had been climbing some high barrier, and Nipper remembered that high building up which the drainpipe ran.

"What d'you think of it, guv'nor?"

Nelson Lee's eyes were very keen.

"I think we've probably solved the little mystery so far as Mr. Durban is concerned," he said. "It's a case of dual identity."

The manager had only heard a portion of the whispered words, but he leaned forward.

"Did I hear you mention the name of Durban, sir?" he asked.

"Yes."

"That's rather strange. Mr. Warlock said that he might receive a communication or two addressed to a gentleman of that name, care of himself, at the hotel here. We haven't received anything, so far, however."

The roughened toes of the deck shoes had given Nelson Lee the link he desired, and he set to work now to examine the room with more than usual care. No man, be he ever so skilful and careful, can avoid leaving traces behind of his actions. The untrained eye, of course, misses a thousand and one things that are clearly indicated to the keen observer.

CHAPTER 6.

Dorrimore Looks In!

ON the carpet, close to the bed, Nelson Lee discovered a little heap of red brickdust such as might have fallen from the toes of the shoes; then another interesting discovery claimed his attention. On the glass top of the dressing-table was the imprint of a man's hand, where it had rested while the owner of the hand had reached out, probably to the window. The hand had evidently been grimed and dirty, for the imprint was a very clear one.

Nelson Lee turned to the valet.

"Let me see your right hand," he said, and the attendant held it out, a wondering expression on his face.

The valet's hand was rather small and well-shaped—quite different from the imprint that was on the glass-topped table.

"I want to take an impression of this," Lee said, turning to the manager and indicating the print. "I shall be obliged if you will keep everyone out of the room until it is done. I'll telephone down to Scotland Yard at once."

"That's quite all right, Mr. Lee," the hotel manager said.

The detective continued his search, and presently he found, rolled up in a tight ball, a light overcoat, stowed away in one corner of the wardrobe. He shook the garment out, and here again traces that might well have been unobserved by an untrained individual came to his notice. The sleeves of the garment were much roughened, and there were traces on them of brick dust, and also black grime such as might well have been picked up by the wearer of the coat when negotiating the climb up the drainpipe.

Nipper, who was, perhaps, almost as keen an observer as Nelson Lee, noted these small points as quickly as Lee did.

"It's a pound to a penny that Mr. Warlock is the man we are after, guv'nor—or, at least, if it isn't Warlock, it was someone who wore his clothes."

"Yes, that is another side to it, Nipper," Lee admitted. "Allowing that Mr. Warlock and Mr. Durban are not one and the same person, there is a possibility that the man Durban may have borrowed this coat and these shoes. We have got to regard every side of this matter, and that is a point we might as well note."

The final discovery, however, was, perhaps, the most important, and it came about when Nipper, rummaging in the suitcase, drew out the trousers belonging to the drill suit and shook them. The trousers had been made with permanent turn-ups, and as the lad shook the garment, something fell from one of the folds of the leg. It was a scrap of green-covered cardboard, not much more than a quarter of an inch in size. The youngster pounced on it and held it out to Lee.

"There you are, guv'nor," he said; "and that's quite enough in the circumstantial evidence line to get Warlock a darned long stretch."

There was no doubt about what the scrap was. Lee withdrew the other piece of green-covered cardboard that he had found in Durban's offices, and the two fragments were compared. They were identical in colour and thickness.

"Am I to understand that Mr. Warlock is—or will be—accused of a crime?" the manager put in, turning to Lee.

"I won't go as far as to say that yet," the detective returned. "But he will certainly have to explain his movements on the night before last."

The detective paused, then continued:

"A burglary was committed in the City the night before last. A safe was broken open and money stolen. I have been able to trace out the method by which the crime was committed, and the thief, or thieves, started from an office that was rented to a man named Durban, who, according to Mr. Warlock's statement, is an acquaintance of his."

"But that's the same night as Mr. Warlock left us—or, at least, he left early the next morning."

"Quite so," said Lee. "So far as we know, the robbery was committed at night."

The manager looked at Lee and shook his head.

"Well, sir, all I can say is that Mr. Warlock has a darned good alibi. I know he came back to the hotel in his evening clothes the night before last. It was about eleven o'clock. He went straight up to his room. The valet will tell you that he took a sleeping draught before midnight, and you will find that Mr. Warlock didn't leave the hotel again until a quarter past five, for the night porter let him out. He was wearing a blue serge suit then. As a matter of fact, I didn't find out when Mr. Warlock left until after I had received the message from him. Then I made a few inquiries, and when the night porter came on duty last night he told me that he had let Warlock out shortly after five that morning."

It was certainly a rather important point, much more important than the manager realised. For Nelson Lee and Nipper had made up their minds that the thief had been wearing the canvas shoes and light duck suit and overcoat when the robbery was committed.

"Are you quite sure of this?"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Lee. The valet himself will tell you that Mr. Warlock went out that evening to dine with someone Hampstead way, I believe it was, and he was in evening-dress then."

The valet was called and corroborated this statement.

"I'll take my oath on that, sir," said Fraser. "In fact, the dress suit was on Mr. Warlock's bed when I went in next morning."

He nodded to Nelson Lee.

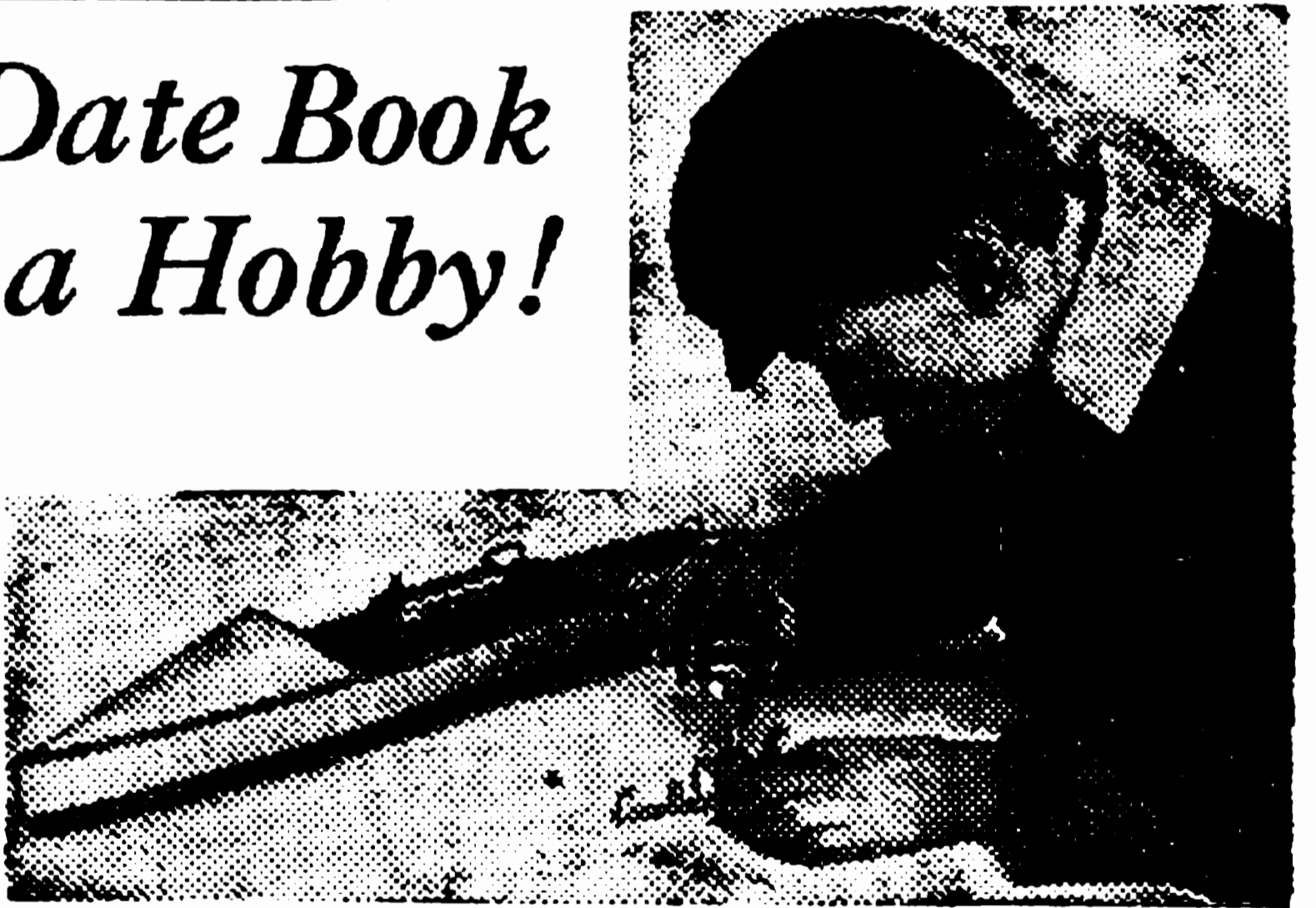
"I saw you examining those shoes, sir," he said, "but I don't think Mr. Warlock wore them. He told me he used to wear 'em on board ship, and also that suit of ducks. But they're not the sort of kit one would knock about London in, are they, sir? They would make a man look too conspicuous."

He was rather a shrewd fellow, this valet, and Nelson Lee gave him an appreciative nod.

"That is quite true," he agreed, and then made his departure from the room. They reached the lift and were carried down to the ground floor; then Nelson Lee went to the

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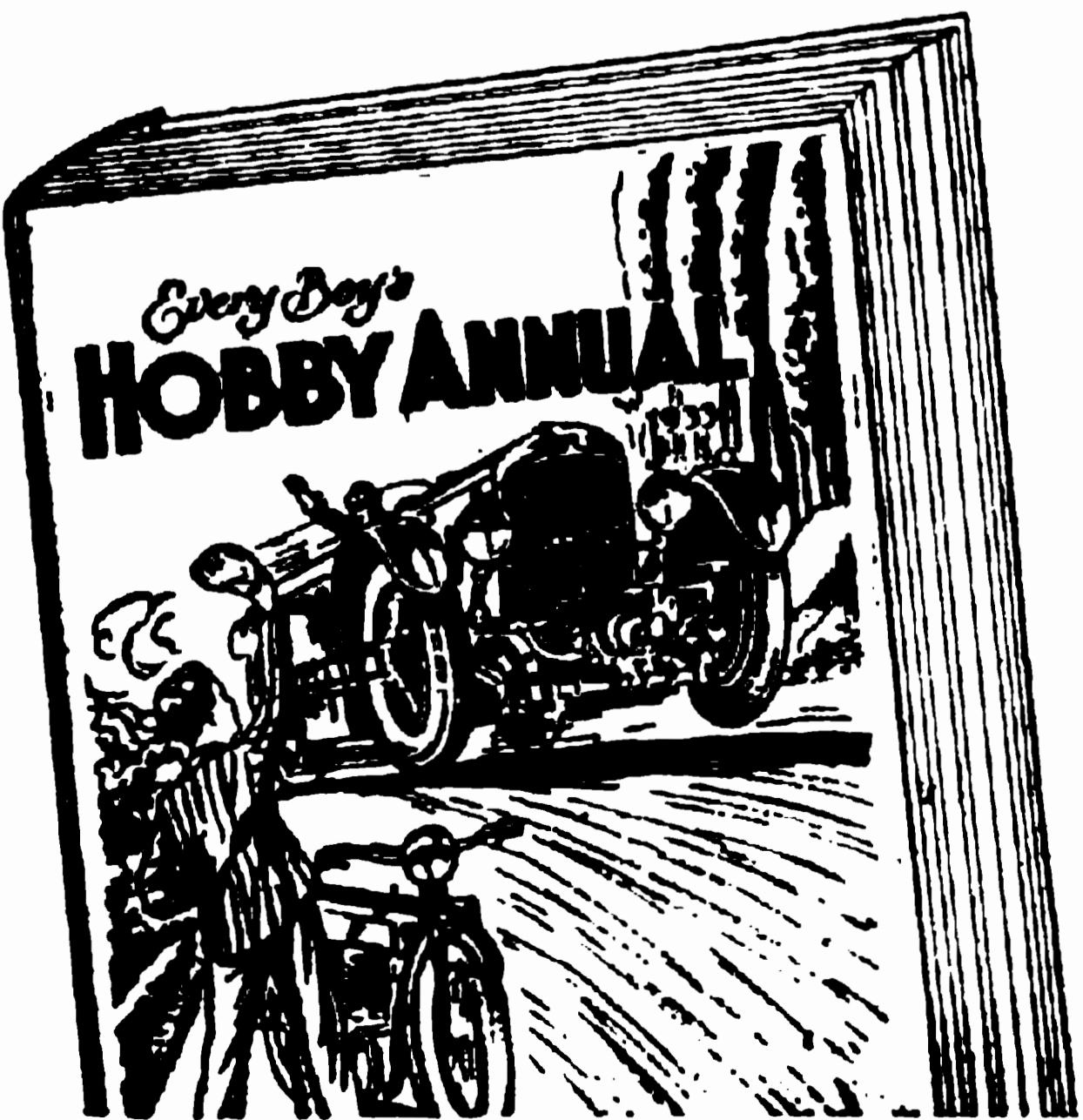


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telephone and got on to Scotland Yard, where Barkley answered him.

"I want you to come along to the Burdale Hotel, and go up to Room 43 on the third floor. You will find an impression on the glass top of the dressing-table in that room which may or may not be identical with the impression we found on the electric bulb. By the way, I suppose you have compared it by now?"

"Yes," said Barkley. "But there are no prints in our records here anything like it; so that's a score to you, Lee."

The detective smiled.

"I rather thought you would find that was the case, Barkley," he said. "Anyhow, the mark in the dressing-table here may be worth comparing."

"Right you are! I'll come straight along now," Inspector Barkley returned.

Before he left the hotel Nelson Lee had a word with the night porter, who had been sent for by the manager. The porter was very clear and concise in his statement and bore out all the manager had said.

Nelson Lee and Nipper went back home deep in thought. When they reached the Grays Inn Road they found a tall, broad-shouldered man lounging in the chair in the library. He arose as the two detectives entered and held out his hand to Lee.

"Hallo, Dorrimore!" Nelson Lee said. "Where have you come from?"

"Oh, just back from the Continent," Lord Dorrimore commented. "I've been knocking around with the mater, but I got absolutely fed up with Monte Carlo and the battles of flowers, and all that sort of rot. I'm back in town now kicking my heels with nothing to do. I've been waiting here for the best part of a couple of hours. Are you fellows on anything worth while?"

Lord Dorrimore, a man with whom Nelson Lee had had many associations, was a keen follower of the great detective. Dorrimore did not lay claim to any great pretensions of cleverness, but Lee had often found his strong arm and grim personality a rare asset in his various battles with criminals.

"We are on a small job, old chap," Lee said. "but I don't think it's one that will develop into the type of thing you like. There will be no skulls to crack or wild men to handle."

"I don't care what it is," Dorrimore broke out. "I'm absolutely fed up doing nothing, and I shall be no end grateful if you give me the chance to shove my oar into something."

"Well, we'll see what we can do," said Lee.

Somewhere about seven o'clock in the evening, Inspector Barkley rang up, and his news was certainly worth while.

"I've taken a tracing of the mark on the dressing-table," he said. "I've got it here in my office now, and we have had it compared by our expert. They are absolutely identical, and although I don't know how the dickens you managed to trace it, I'm assured that you are on the right track. How did you find it?"

"It's rather a long story to tell over the 'phone, Barkley," Lee said, "but if you like to call round here during the evening I'll explain to you."

CHAPTER 7.

Professor Palzer is Uneasy!

THERE is a stretch of pinewoods that extend in a broad, level belt from the outskirts of Beaconsfield until they end in a great park which looks out over one of the prettiest villages in England. This village is named after a very famous personage, and a part of it forms the name of one of the largest estates in America. But for obvious reasons it is just as well to leave the exact locality and name obscure.

Where the road took a sudden sharp lift to the left, having passed a small duck-pond, there stands, well back in among the trees, a quiet bungalow with a deep veranda round it. Most of the people in the district know that this place is a nursing-home, run by a clever, capable woman. It is a rather exclusive home, and only those cases which require very special and skilful treatment are received there.

It was late in the afternoon when the gaunt, unkempt figure of Professor Palzer crossed the veranda of the bungalow and entered one of the rooms through the wide french windows. The ward he entered was spotlessly clean, with white distempered walls and a beautifully polished floor. In the centre of the ward there stood a cot, and on it, flat on his back, lay James Warlock.

Five days had passed since Warlock had presented himself at the nursing-home, and as the professor bent over the figure in the cot and began to examine it, the man's eyes opened and met those peering down at him and a smile was exchanged.

"How do you feel?" the professor asked.

"Very weak," Warlock replied faintly.

There was no doubt that the man had been undergoing some very searching experiment. His body that had once been robust enough, if a trifle stiff, was now plainly outlined under the light linen sheet, and it seemed as though it were a mere skeleton. The cheeks and hands were thin, and one could almost count the veins under the white skin. All traces of sunburn and the robust strength of middle age had vanished.

Indeed, a casual observer, glancing at that limp, inert figure, might well have imagined that it was in the last stage of disease, but the eyes were bright and clear and very steady, and there was no trace of fever or mental distress in them.

"You're doing splendidly," Palzer said, and there was a touch of genuine admiration in his voice. "I must confess to you that, when you came and asked me to undertake this thing, I was not at all convinced that

you would have the necessary will-power or even physical endurance to undergo it."

The man on the bed twisted his lips into a smile.

"I—don't suppose—I would have—gone through it—under ordinary circumstances, professor," he said, in a weak and hesitating voice. "But—well, you see, I have a—driving force—something behind me—that has held me—to my purpose."

The sheet was lifted and Palzer made a careful examination of the emaciated frame. His keen eyes and trained powers were able to detect what others might have missed, and that was that, although the frame was thin and the flesh seemed to have vanished from the bones, and there was an abundant tide of health and vitality coursing through the figure.

"I am amazed at you," the professor said, as he stepped back from the cot. "I think I can safely commence the second course of treatment to-morrow."

"That's good!" Warlock returned. "I am anxious for you to start, for I want above all things to have you succeed."

Palzer had arranged to stay at the nursing-home that night and somewhere about nine o'clock, when Warlock was sound asleep in the ward, the gaunt professor slipped a loose coat, drew a soft cap over his head, and started off for a walk. There are no lanes more leafy and lovely than the Buckinghamshire lanes, and Palzer, who never had much idea where he was going to, presently found himself on the high road within a few yards of the beautiful village green.

As he passed a tiny church on the right a car came round the corner, and its glaring headlamps smote a shaft of light through the darkness, picking out the unkempt figure of the professor. Palzer stepped aside into the ditch to allow the car to pass, but instead of doing so it slowed down, wheeled in, and came to a halt with the headlamps full on his face.

"Excuse me, sir, but I think I am addressing Professor Palzer?"

The voice was a cultured one, and Palzer, peering through the light, saw a tall figure leaning forward from the near side. The professor moved into the friendly darkness beyond the glare of the lamp, and came to the side of the car. He saw now that it was a four-seater, and there were two figures in the front seat, while a third one, a slim, youthful one, reclined in the deep seats in the rear.

"You are perfectly correct, sir," Palzer returned. "That is my name."

He was peering at the speaker from under his bushy eyebrows, but failed to recognise the clear-cut, handsome face.

"I don't suppose you know me," the speaker went on. "My name is Dorrimore—Lord Dorrimore. I have come specially from London with my friends in order to find you. We were told you could probably be found at the Sandies Nursing Home."

"Oh, indeed! Who told you that?"

PALZER'S voice was rather doubtful and there was a note of annoyance in it. When he had left his place at Hampstead he had given particular instructions to his servants that they were not to reveal to anyone his destination. The experiment which was to start on the following morning was a very intricate one, and Palzer did not want to be disturbed.

"Well, sir, nobody exactly told us where you were," Dorrimore returned. "But we made a few inquiries at the college and put two and two together. We understood that you had gone into the country, and mention was made of this nursing home, so we thought we would look you up here first."

Palzer nodded his head.

"I see. And now that you have found me, what do you want?"

It seemed to him as though this question was one to which the trio in the car did not find a speedy answer. The tall man who had introduced himself as Lord Dorrimore turned and gave a glance to the individual at the steering-wheel.

"It's rather a long story, professor," said the man at the wheel. "We are really trying to trace a certain individual whom we believe called on you about six days ago. He had dinner with you that night, and he was staying, at the time, at the Burdale Hotel."

"You are anxious to trace someone who had dinner with me six days ago," said Palzer, in a non-committal tone. "Well, what has he done that you should try to trace him?"

He was eyeing the figure more keenly now, and he had to admit to himself that there was nothing very suspicious-looking about them. The voices of the men were obviously cultured, and Palzer was able to tell a gentleman when he saw one as well as the next man.

"The matter is very important," said Nelson Lee—for it was he who was seated at the steering-wheel. "The only point is that the man has vanished after his return from your place at Hampstead, and we have not been able to find any trace of him since."

A man of Professor Palzer's type is perfectly able to keep his features under control, and there was no sign of any emotion on his bearded face as he looked at the speaker.

"What is the name of the individual you are seeking?"

"So far as we are aware, his name is Warlock—James Warlock."

"Can you describe him?"

"Yes."

Nelson Lee gave the professor a description of Warlock as supplied to him by the manager of the Burdale Hotel. In its way, the description was perfectly accurate, and was quite clear enough for Palzer to recognise that the man lying in the nursing home was the same person for whom these three were searching. His brain worked swiftly. His

experiment came first with him, and he refused to have it ruined now.

"I am afraid I cannot help you, gentlemen," he said. "It is quite true that Mr. Warlock did have dinner with me on the night you mention, but he left my house fairly early in the evening, and, as you say yourself, he was seen afterwards at his hotel."

"Then you do not know where he is to be found now?"

"I am afraid I can give you no further information regarding Mr. Warlock's movements than I have done," the professor returned quietly. "What is the reason you want to get into touch with him?"

To Nelson Lee the manner of this gaunt old gentleman suggested a hostile feeling, and it occurred to the detective that perhaps the scientist was keeping back some information.

"I have been instructed by a certain gentleman to get into touch with Mr. Warlock," was all that Lee would permit himself to explain. "It has connection with a crime, and we shall be very much obliged to you, Professor Palzer, if you can help us to trace the man at any time."

Nelson Lee slipped his hand into his pocket and drew out a visiting card, which he held out to the man standing on the road. Then, as Palzer drew back, giving one of his short nods, the car turned round, then moved off along the road; and the professor watched it, with his hands behind his back, as it tilted down the slope and proceeded up the opposite rise, heading for London.

But the last words that Lee had uttered rather perplexed the old fellow, and presently, when he resumed his walk and found himself close to the lighted doorway of the comfortable village inn, Professor Palzer bethought himself of that card and drew it from his coat pocket.

He adjusted his spectacles over his eyes and examined it. "Nelson Lee, Detective, Grays Inn Road, London."

"A detective," he thought. "I was half afraid that might be the case. I wonder if Warlock has done anything wrong? Jove, it never occurred to me before, but this process of mine might well be an excellent thing for dishonest men, as well as honest!"

PONDERING this problem, Palzer saw quite clearly that if Warlock was a rogue and had committed some felony, the next four or five days under his treatment would alter the patient to such an extent that no witness would be able to identify him as the wanted man.

"Dear me! Dear me!"

The old fellow was very much perturbed over this new aspect of the case, and he lifted his spectacles on to his brow and paced up and down the village green once or twice, a grotesque, ungainly figure in the dusk. He was a law-abiding citizen and a gentle soul, really. He wanted to be on the side of law

and order, hating dishonesty and crime with all his heart.

But this experiment of his, if it succeeded, would be the culminating point of a lifetime of study and effort. He hated the idea of having his experiment stopped. Besides, it might mean the death of James Warlock to delay matters now. Yet he wanted to do the right thing.

"Ah, well!" he decided. "I'll let things go on as they are for the present. But should that detective return, then I will make a clean breast of it all."

It took him some considerable time in deep thought to arrive at that conclusion that satisfied not only the demands of science, but also of his conscience; then, in the darkness, he slowly retraced his steps to the nursing home.

But Nelson Lee had not been at all satisfied. Above all, Nipper suspected the professor, having, from his seat in the rear of the car, a better and clearer view of the old gentleman's face.

Nelson Lee had traced the fact that James Warlock had dined with the professor, and he had gone to the professor's house to find out if the scientist knew anything of the missing man, only to find that the professor was unofficially missing, too. After some trouble the fact that Palzer was at the nursing home was obtained from one of the servants.

More than that, a deal of scientific papers dealing with Palzer's lectures at the Grantham Institute had been found in Warlock's suitcase, so that the connection was there, and seemed strong enough to make the detective leave Nipper behind to keep an eye on the professor for a while.

Nelson Lee wanted to return to London. He felt that the case was developing into something more than a hunt for a common burglar. Brontzell had at last admitted that papers were missing from the rifled safe, and although he assured Nelson Lee the loss was of no account, the detective felt sure that was far from the truth.

But that night, when Professor Palzer returned to the nursing home, he caught sight of a dim figure crouching under the hedge, and he became wary at once, for again his beloved science was in danger!

CHAPTER 8.

Attacked!

YES, I am quite sure that it is the youth I saw in the car. What does he want, hiding there behind the hedge?"

Professor Palzer, standing motionless on the fringe of the trees, watched the shadowy figure ahead of him.

Nipper had dropped into the patch beside the hedge, and was now moving along it quietly towards the end of the garden.

Beyond the hedge was the nursing home, and the lights, shining dimly through the veranda, threw a faint yellow halo across the smooth, well-kept turf in the front.

Professor Palzer was distinctly annoyed at this unexpected turn of events. He had thought that his interview with Nelson Lee and his companions had been a final one, and that he had got rid of them, at least, for the time being, and yet here was a very substantial proof, right before his eyes, that they were still keeping in touch with him.

The old fellow scratched his chin thoughtfully for a moment.

"What does one do when there is an entirely superfluous individual thrust into one's plans?" he thought.

The truth of the matter was that Nipper, quite unknown to himself, had interfered, or would interfere, between himself and this extraordinary experiment on which the old scientist had set his heart.

Only the man who has some absorbing hobby can realise just what Palzer felt at that moment.

"You are a spy and an interfering young ruffian. I will have to do something with you!"

And so it came about that Palzer entered into quite another and distinct sphere of activity. He began to follow Nipper, and it was amazing the silence and stealth with which the old fellow moved.

Nipper had now gained the right of the hedge, and Professor Palzer, keeping his body in a half-stooping pose, slipped out of the trees, gained the hedge, and, turning along to the right, found the small gateway through which he entered his garden.

Perhaps it was sheer luck that brought it about that Palzer should find himself facing that portion of the nursing home which was the laboratory.

It stood in the right wing of the bungalow, a small, detached chamber, with a doorway leading along the veranda. There was a light burning in the laboratory, and its beams, shining through the windows, caught Palzer's eyes.

He stopped, hesitated for a moment; then, feeling in the capacious pocket of his coat, his long fingers touched a bunch of keys. A dozen strides saw Palzer on the veranda, and as he passed the window his eye caught a glimmer of the lines of bottles in the dispensary.

A few minutes later Palzer had opened the door, and without the slightest hesitation he walked across to the rows of bottles, and his long, lean hands reached up and took one of them, a bottle that contained a brown, rather thick fluid.

Holding the bottle carefully corked, Palzer crossed to a bench and took some cotton-wool out of a drawer; then, keeping wool and bottle at arm's length, he allowed a few drops of the brown fluid to fall on to the cotton-wool, where it was quickly absorbed.

The fluid had dropped into the centre of

the cotton-wool, and Palzer carefully folded the four corners into it, covering the fluid up and rolling the cotton-wool into a round, soft wad, which he slipped into his pocket.

Presently he was out of the dispensary again, and, crossing the veranda, he headed for a line of bushes, then began to move on down them, keeping well out of the range of light.

He was heading for the other side of the garden, for he knew that Nipper had vanished round the hedge on that side, and the professor was taking a short cut to reach his quarry. He reached the opposite hedge, and now he was in the shadows and could move with more freedom. He carefully stepped across the path and commenced to follow it.

He paused now and again to listen. For a man of his age he had wonderfully acute hearing, and so Nipper's slight rustling in the hedge came to his ears. Lee's young assistant was by no means a fool, and had he been aware that he was being followed he might have moved with less noise. But Nipper was not to be blamed for imagining that his visit to the nursing home was quite unknown to any of its inmates.

He had been moving by the hedge on his hands and knees, trying to find a gap in it. He found the gap and went through it. Then, just as he commenced to rise to his feet, there shot out from the clump of barberry a gaunt, loose-knit figure that barged full into him, sending the youngster sprawling headlong into a soft flower-bed.

Professor Palzer had chosen the moment for his leap with a certain amount of cleverness. Nipper was taken completely by surprise, and he went down in that soft mound with a thud, with the scientist across his prostrate body.

With a swift, deft movement Palzer drew that wad of cotton-wool from his pocket and clapped it over Nipper's mouth and nostrils. The mere contact of the soft wool was quite enough to warn Nipper of what was going to happen. It was not, by any means, the first time that the youngster had been attacked and drugged, and he did his best to foil this effort.

He tried to twist his head away, holding his breath, but he had fallen into the mound of earth, and his head had made a cup-like depression in which it lay. Palzer's long, lean hand had fallen full over Nipper's cheeks and jaw, and the lean, wiry arm of the professor was strong enough to hold the lad's head down.

The youngster managed to free one arm, and with clenched fists he struck out for the lean shoulders of the professor, and for the first time in fifty years Palzer knew the weight of a bunched fist against his face. Nipper's knuckles landed full on Palzer's eye, and it spoke volumes for the old professor that he did not even feel the blow at the moment, although there danced in front of him, for a second, a load of stars.

The truth of it was that Palzer had worked himself up to that state of nervous excite-

ment which the elderly sometimes get, and in which no ordinary bodily pain or fatigue is felt.

Palzer kept the wad on Nipper's mouth and lips until he felt the last convulsive struggle; then the old professor withdrew the wad, and, moving slightly to the right, he drew himself up into a kneeling position and remained thus for a few seconds, gasping for breath, while he stared down at the shadowy figure of his antagonist.

The distinct smell of the drug came to him, and with a quick snatch he drew his hand down, slipping the wad into his pocket. He turned his head now, glancing in the direction of the bungalow, half afraid that sounds of the struggle might have come to the ears of the matron and her two assistants.

But there was no sign on the veranda or in the garden that his grim battle had been observed, and, satisfied, the professor rose to his feet rather shakily.

"Well, I have got you, all right. But the question now is what am I going to do with you?"

CHAPTER 9.

Warlock is Traced!

HE felt like a man who had committed a murder and was troubled about what to do with the body. It was obvious that he could not leave Nipper there on the flower-bed; the drug, a potent one, was quite capable of keeping the victim in a senseless condition for nine or ten hours. But after that he would awaken, and it was the awakening that Palzer did not know how to tackle.

So at last, not finding any better way out of the difficulty, Palzer decided to take Nipper into his own room in the nursing home. That room communicated with the ward in which James Warlock lay. The matron of the home, knowing the professor's peculiarities, never allowed anyone to enter the room set apart for Palzer unless on a distinct order from himself.

Nipper, although a youngster, was a fairly hefty lad, and, suffering now from the reaction, Professor Palzer found it all he could do to lift that limp young body and stagger off with it across the garden.

Fortunately for the professor, his room was situated on the other side of the hospital, and after a moment of breathless uncertainty, he was able to reach the long, French windows of his room and slip inside them. The room was in darkness, but he didn't attempt to switch on the electric light. He made his way across the chamber, found the bed and laid Nipper on it; then, seating himself before the drugged youngster, waited for a while until he recovered his breath.

Professor Palzer rose to his feet, then, and went back to the window, closing it carefully and drawing down the blind. Then he tiptoed across the dimly lighted space, allowed

his eyes to rest for a few moments on the pale, motionless figure of Warlock in the cot; then, satisfied, the scientist closed the door again and switched on the light.

Just how long Nipper lay in that drugged sleep the youngster was never able to say, but he awakened to find himself lying on the comfortable cot, with the sun streaming in on his upturned face and the scent of flowers in his nostrils.

Lying there for a moment, he collected his thoughts together, and was able to remember that he had been drugged; but he did not feel any of that nauseating after-effect that a drug usually brings to one. Presently he was aware that there was someone standing close by the cot.

A moment later a cup was placed to his lips and two or three drops of liquid wetted his palate. Turning his head away slightly from the sun, Nipper made out the figure of a bearded individual standing over him in a long, white coat, the sort of coat that the average surgeon wears when about to operate on a patient.

Nipper eyed the face of the man for a moment, then recognised it as that of Professor Palzer, and as the scientist removed the liquid from his mouth the youngster made an effort to rise.

"No. Lie perfectly still, my friend," Palzer said. "You are much more safe if you remain quiet."

There was a moment's silence, then the professor went across to the window and drew down the blind so that only a half-light was revealed in the chamber. Nipper noted that the room was a very spacious one, and, on turning his head slightly, he saw that there was another cot within a yard or two of the one on which he lay; a cot on which was extended another figure—a figure covered with a white sheet.

Nipper had tried to move his limbs, but he felt that they were inert and lifeless, and, after one or two ineffectual efforts, he was quite content to lie still and make use of his eyes. He saw that he was in what was obviously a ward of a small hospital, for the bare walls and polished floor, and the fact that close to the other cot was one of those rubber-wheeled tables such as surgeons use, made that fact very apparent.

He heard a soft footfall, and presently the tall, ungainly figure of the professor came into view again. The scientist was moving across the room, and he passed Nipper's cot and went on to that on which the other individual was stretched. The rubber-wheeled table was drawn close to the cot; then Nipper watched a very elaborate and intricate process.

He saw the professor light a spirit lamp and slip it under a glass retort; then, presently, from the other end of the retort, there issued a thin stream of steam, into which the professor thrust the needle of a long, hypodermic syringe, sterilising it.

Right through the whole operation, the insertion of the needle into the skin and the

pressing of the piston, Nipper did not miss a single movement, and the fact that the patient lay so still—hardly stirring—gradually began to have a chilling effect upon the youngster.

It looked to him, indeed, as though the man was dead, and the appearance of the body—a thin, emaciated one—was certainly calculated to give that impression. After the operation Palzer performed a swift and painstaking massage, taking limb after limb between his long, bony fingers and working the muscles.

From neck to feet the operation was carried out, and although, of course, Nipper knew afterwards that this was only a trick of his imagination, he seemed to fancy that even as Palzer worked on the body a visible alteration took place. The skin seemed to lose something of its pallor, and a faint rosy tinge took its place. It was as though those knuckly, bony hands had the gift of imparting fresh life, fresh youth, to the dead, flabby skin.

"What the dickens is he doing?" the young detective thought.

The atmosphere, the silence, the quiet intentness of the professor would have affected the least imaginative person, and Nipper was by no means without brains.

There was something so settled, so assured, in the movements of the professor, and his whole attention seemed to be so riveted on his task that the youngster was convinced that there was something grave, something tremendous, hanging on the result of this operation.

When he had completed this work the white sheet was drawn back over the motionless figure, and the professor, pushing the table to one side, crossed the chamber, and Nipper saw him vanish through the inner door. He returned a moment or two later bearing a tray, and this time he headed for Nipper's cot.

"Now, my young friend, I have an hour to spare, and I think you and I might discuss things. Drink this."

Palzer held the graduated measure towards Nipper, half-filled with an amber fluid. It spoke volumes for the impression that the professor had made on the youngster that he set his lips to the glass at once and drained it.

It was only a small action, but it was a very satisfactory one, for if Nipper had had any doubts in his mind about the character of this man, he would never have accepted that glass nor have swallowed the contents so docilely.

It was obvious that the stuff was a very powerful nerve tonic, for in a few minutes Nipper felt the effects of it. His brain cleared and he was able to move his limbs without feeling that dread lassitude that had held them down for so long.

"You would be more comfortable if you sat up, I think," Palzer said, as he leaned forward, and, placing one hand under the youngster's shoulder, raised him to a half-

sitting position, then adjusted the pillows to support him.

Nipper leaned back, and for a long moment the youngster and the old man looked into each other's eyes. Then, suddenly, the young detective noticed just what was the matter with Palzer's face.

There was what could only be termed a most bruiser-like black eye disfiguring the bearded features, and like a flash Nipper realised just how that had been brought about. That discovery, of course, cleared up matters considerably, for Nipper knew now who it was that had attacked him behind the hedge.

It seemed as though Palzer read the thoughts that were running in the youngster's mind, for over his rather well-moulded lips there slipped a quick smile.

"You are beginning to remember me, my young friend," he said. "I suppose you recognise your handiwork?"

He raised his hand and touched the bruised flesh very gingerly.

"It is nearly fifty years since I had a black eye," said Palzer, "and even now I cannot say that I relish it. You are a somewhat difficult person to handle, and I think it was rather fortunate for me that I got in the first attack."

CHAPTER 10.

Nipper Gives a Hand!

NIPPER grinned. Despite the fact that Palzer had certainly showed a distinct vein of enmity towards him, there was something very pleasant and ingratiating in the old professor's manner.

"I'm sorry if I gave you that whack on the eye, sir," he said, "but, after all, you know, I can't be blamed for it—and I think you gave me a little more than I gave you."

Palzer nodded.

"That's quite true," he agreed. "But then, you see, you were in the wrong. You had no business to come here and spy out and—and try to interfere with my set plans."

"I wasn't spying on you, sir," Nipper said.

"Perhaps not," Palzer returned; "but in any case, your presence was a menace, and I had to attend to it. Now, what is your name, and who are you?"

There was no reason why Nipper should attempt to make any sort of false statement, so he told the truth at once.

"Nipper, eh? And you are a detective—the assistant of Nelson Lee? Dear me, that's more awkward than I thought."

Palzer wagged his grizzled head at his companion.

"I thought you were simply Mr. Lee's chauffeur, and had come back here to look round. But it seems to me that you are much more dangerous. If you are a detective, then it means that you also have powers to arrest a suspicious person; for instance, a man like—er—Warlock?"

"I don't know that I have got that power, sir, but I would certainly like to get hold of Warlock if I could."

Palzer stretched out a long, bony forefinger and pointed to the other cot.

"There is Warlock," he said. "But I am afraid you can't get him—yet."

Nipper turned and looked at the outlines of the motionless figure.

"You mean to—to say that that is—is Mr. Warlock, sir?" he broke out.

He had plenty of opportunities of studying the features and figure of the man on the cot, and certainly they did not resemble in the slightest degree the description that had been given to the detectives by the hotel manager.

Nelson Lee and his companions had been looking for a man verging on thirteen stone, broad of shoulder, tanned of face, and powerful-looking. That emaciated, pallid, almost lifeless figure on the cot could hardly be identified as the individual they were seeking.

"Yes, that is James Warlock. But I admit that he is not as he was when he first came here, nor will he be as he is now when he leaves."

Palzer was silent for a moment, stroking his beard.

"I am going to tell you something, Nipper, but meanwhile I want you to listen to me patiently. In the first place, you must know that you and I are going to be companions here for the next three or four days. When I first brought you into the nursing home I took you into my own room. But this morning I shifted the cot myself, and you in it, into this ward. All my meals will be taken by the staff of the hospital to my room, and neither the nurses nor the matron will come in here until I give them leave, so we shall be absolutely undisturbed."

"Four days!" Nipper cried. "But I don't want to stay here for four days."

"I'm afraid you will have to, my young friend," Palzer said in his quiet way. "You see, I didn't ask you to come to the nursing home, nor to creep along that hedge. You came here of your own will, and therefore you will have to take part in my experiment. I cannot allow you to go until I have completed my task. I swear that nothing shall come between me and the fulfilment of my experiment. The work of a lifetime will be made or marred by the result."

Nipper thought hard, and suddenly remembered when and where and why he had seen the name of Professor Palzer in the papers. It was in connection with a claim the professor had made of being able to restore youth to the aged, and many people scoffed at the idea.

Nipper sat upright on the cot.

"Then what is it, sir? What are you trying to do here?"

Palzer pointed to the motionless figure on the other cot.

"I am carrying out an experiment that I set my heart on attempting," he said. "It

is now halfway towards completion. Within the next few days I hope it will be finished, and as you threatened to become a barrier, I had to stop you."

He rubbed his long hands together.

"You are a much more intelligent young man than I had thought you were when I first saw you creeping along that hedge," Palzer admitted. "And I am inclined to give you a chance. If you promise that you will remain here and that you will make no effort to escape, until I give you permission, I don't mind allowing you to—to help me with my experiment."

Palzer made this offer as a king might offer a dukedom to a subject, but Nipper was extremely dubious about accepting. Noticing his hesitation, the professor rose to his feet.

"Come, and I'll show you what has happened already," he said.

Nipper slipped out of the cot, feeling rather sick and shaky. The professor had removed his coat and waistcoat when he had carried the youngster in and placed him on the cot, and Nipper was in his shirtsleeves.

Palzer crossed to the other bed and Nipper, after a few tottering steps, found his balance and came across, halting on the other side of the low bed. Palzer very carefully withdrew the white sheet and indicated the figure lying there. Again Nipper was conscious that a change had taken place even in the slight interval of time that had elapsed.

"I started this morning at five o'clock," said Palzer. "The serum is doing its work!"

Nipper, looking at the man sleeping there peacefully, was prepared to swear that in the few hours that had passed the body had increased in size. The arms were not so thin, the skin was not so deathly pale, and the face had filled out slightly.

"What are you doing to him? What does it all mean?"

Palzer, leaning over the end of the cot, drew a deep breath.

"It means that I am going to try to restore this man to his youth," he said. "I may fail—I do not know yet. The effect may be permanent, but I do believe that for a certain period—a month, six weeks, maybe longer—Warlock will, when he leaves this nursing home, be as he was twenty-five years ago, in looks and physically."

It was characteristic of Nipper that he should hit at once on what that meant, so far as his gov'nor was concerned.

"But, hang it, if you manage that, sir, we'll never be able to identify James Warlock as being the—the burglar."

Palzer shrugged his shoulders.

"That has nothing to do with me, my young friend," he pointed, "and in any case it is a question for Warlock himself to answer."

He ran his fingers through his hair.

"I'll admit to you that I was considerably troubled last night thinking over this matter. Warlock, of course, is a stranger to me. I met him in rather curious circumstances."

He explained to Nipper just what had happened, and the youngster listened with keen attention to the strange story.

"So, you see," Palzer ended. "Warlock is a stranger to me. Yet I think I am a fair judge of a man, and I can assure you that even although you seem convinced that he is a burglar and a criminal, I venture to doubt that. The man is sincere, whatever else he may be, or may not be, and I don't for one moment believe that he wanted to go through this experiment of mine simply in order to hide his identity. Now, perhaps you can tell me just exactly of what he is accused—what he has done?"

By this time Nipper had dressed himself and had slipped his feet into a pair of carpet slippers which the professor had thoughtfully provided. Inwardly, the youngster was absolutely interested, and it would have taken wild horses to have dragged him from that ward, now.

He made a brief statement concerning the case, and at the end of it the professor shook his head.

"You mean to tell me that a man would take this risk—for it undoubtedly is a risk—in order to save himself from being arrested for the sake of stealing a few paltry hundred pounds?" he said. "I don't believe it."

Then it seemed to Nipper as though a sudden memory came to the professor, for he turned to the young detective and put a further curious question.

"Is the name of the firm who lost this money the—er—Zangwagg Diamond Company?"

"Yes, sir. That's the very name."

Palzer rose sharply to his feet.

"Then I can prove to you that this man has no evil intention at all, for at the present moment there is lying in the matron's room a sealed package which Warlock asked to be posted to that firm should he not come through the experiment. We'll see what it contains."

He went and fetched it and opened it in Nipper's presence. They found the lost money intact and a letter addressed to Mr. Henry Brontiell. Palzer hesitated for some moments.

"You see," he said, "the money is there yet, not stolen, in a sense. The money alone could not have been the motive for the burglary. The motive is in this letter, but I don't think we ought to open it yet. Whatever statement it contains it is obviously private. Let us wait until Warlock himself is in a position to explain—or is no longer to be held to account for what he has written."

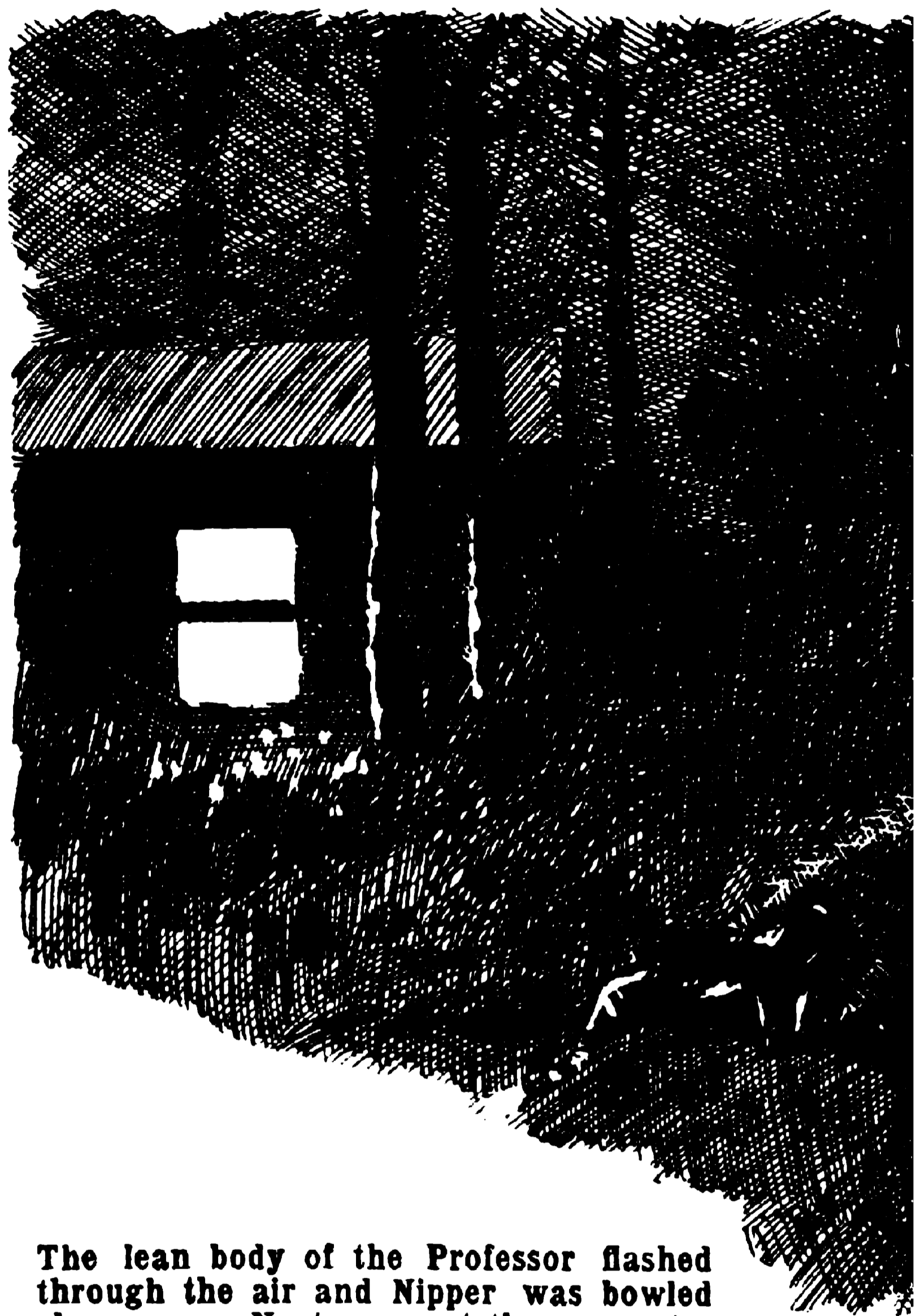
In its way it was a perfectly impartial decision, and Nipper agreed. In fact, the discovery of those notes that had been left just as the man had found them, although it settled definitely the guilt of Warlock so far as breaking into the offices was concerned, nevertheless shed a different light altogether upon the crime.

"I'll give it up," he said. "In any case, professor, this little conversation of ours clears the decks, and I am willing to give you my

word of honour that I won't make any attempt to get away from here."

A knucky hand shot out and Nipper clasped it, then the professor, bustling across the room, opened a cupboard and displayed a row of shelves on which were various white garments.

"Here you are, then, my budding assistant," he said. "If you are going to take up the part you must dress for it."



The lean body of the Professor flashed through the air and Nipper was bowled clean over. Next moment the youngster was fighting to get away from the sickly smelling pad that was pressed ruthlessly over his face.

THAT same afternoon, robed in spotless white, Nipper assisted at the next injection of the serum, and under the professor's skilled advice, the youngster carefully carried out part of the massage.

Somewhere about nine-thirty that evening Nipper went for a stroll in the garden, and he noticed that there was only a single light gleaming in the other part of the nursing-home.

Palzer had been very firm in his orders that he was not to be disturbed, and Matron Sandies had sent away the two nurses that were on her staff, and only the matron herself and the woman who cooked for them remained in the quiet bungalow hospital.

Nipper had been in the garden for nearly half an hour when he heard the tinkle of a bicycle bell, and looking over the high hedge he saw a cyclist coming down the slope, and when he came on up the slight rise he wheeled towards the hedge and dismounted.

The young detective heard the gate click as the messenger came forward, then the figure passed under the porch and there came to his ears the distant whirr of a bell.



Nipper turned quickly and hurried across the garden, stepping into the professor's private room, slipping across it and entering the ward, where he found Palzer seated beside the cot on which Warlock lay.

During the whole of that day Palzer had only left the patient for a few moments at a time, and even now, although there was nothing further to be done for Warlock that night, the engrossed scientist found it next to impossible to tear himself away from this man who had placed himself unreservedly into his hands.

"I think there's a telegraph boy come from the village, sir," Nipper said in a low voice. "Did you hear the bell?"

Palzer looked up.

"No, I can't say that I did," he returned.

A moment later a faint knock sounded from the other room and Palzer, with a nod to Nipper, hurried across the ward, closing the door behind him.

Two minutes later he came in bearing a telegram in his hand, and there was a perplexed furrow between his shaggy brows.

"I can't make out what this means," he said, turning to Nipper. "But in any case I'm not going to keep the appointment. Read it."

He held out the message, and Nipper read it. It was addressed to Palzer, Nursing Home, near Beaconsfield, and ran:

"Essential that I should see you this evening. Can you be at Beaconsfield Station eleven o'clock? Most urgent.—BENTLEY."

"Who is Bentley?" Nipper asked.

"I don't know," Palzer returned. "He may be someone of my acquaintance, but I have a very bad memory for names. Still, whoever he is, I am not going to meet him. I cannot leave here; it is most awkward. I don't know how anyone has got hold of my address."

He rubbed his chin, regarding Nipper the while.

"The idea!" he exclaimed. "Asking me to go and meet him at the railway-station, at this time of night! Under ordinary circumstances I don't suppose I would have done it, and it is quite impossible to-night. I cannot leave my patient."

Nipper could almost read what was in the old fellow's mind.

"Shall I—shall I go down to the station and meet this man for you, sir?" he said.

Palzer looked the relief he felt.

"That's just exactly what I was going to suggest," he said, "only I preferred it to come from you. You see, you will have to slip away from here without being noticed, and it won't do for you to tell this fellow I am here. If I can leave you to handle the man and make sure he doesn't get here, I shall be ever grateful to you."

He smiled.

"You see, I am trusting you, Nipper," he went on.

The young detective shook his head.

"You needn't worry about that," he said.

And so it came about that five or ten minutes later Nipper, who had changed into his ordinary clothes again, was walking along the road towards Beaconsfield. Unfortunately he was not sure of the way, and the result was that by the time he reached the village the train had already arrived and the passengers were streaming out of the station entrance.

It just happened that as Nipper came to a halt to watch the line of passengers, he caught sight of a certain face under the light. It was a face that was unmistakable, hard-jowled and coarse—the face of Henry Brentiell.

Not until that moment had Nipper given much thought to the real identity of the man who had sent the telegram.

"Brontzell," he said to himself. "Why, I don't mind betting he is the man who sent that wire!"

NEITHER Nipper nor Nelson Lee, to say nothing of Dorrimore, had been impressed by Brontzell and the sight of the fellow standing there now, under the light of the station brought a quick suspicion into the youngster's mind.

"I think I'll see what you're up to," he muttered.

Brontzell had stood aside, and every now and again he would glance up the slight rise leading from the station. The passengers had all cleared away, and Nipper, standing in the shadow of the fence, was unobserved by his quarry.

Presently the head of the syndicate turned and spoke a few words to a porter, who was hovering about. The men shook his head, and from the scowl on Brontzell's face as he turned away, it was obvious that the reply he had received was not a satisfactory one.

"I'll bet you were asking about Palzer," Nipper decided.

And he was right.

Brontzell moved out of the entrance, and Nipper, turning round, slipped back up the fence until he gained the level roadway above. Brontzell came on out of the station into the main thoroughfare, and stopped there to make a few inquiries from a belated pedestrian.

Then, to Nipper's satisfaction, the thick-set figure swung off in the direction of the road that ran to the nursing-home. The night was very warm and still, and it was pleasant enough to tramp through the dark scented lanes.

"You have evidently made up your mind to see Palzer," Nipper decided, "and I should like to know why—not only like to know, but I—I jolly well mean to find out!"

CHAPTER 11.

A Fresh Move!

HENRY BRONTZELL had been worrying Scotland Yard again about their failure to find the burglar, and Inspector Barkley called on Nelson Lee and Dorrimore, partly to find out if they had any further news, and partly to tell them that he had discovered that Brontzell's syndicate was really a shady affair, although so far had steered clear of trouble with the law.

"Besides," he said, "it strikes me there is more in this case than meets the eye. This man Brontzell, a shady character, is making more fuss over his few hundred pounds than another man would make over ten times as much."

He nodded to Nelson Lee.

"As a matter of fact, I am going along to see Brontzell now, and I wondered if you

would come with me? Even although we have been unable to trace this man Warlock we might be able to impress on Brontzell that his method of constantly worrying the Yard and the police is not helping us any."

It was obvious that the inspector had been harassed and worried by the head of the syndicate, and knowing how the official regarded this case, Lee agreed to accompany the inspector.

"We might as well 'phone first and see if he's there," was Dorrimore's suggestion. "You saw him yesterday, didn't you, Lee?"

"Yes," the detective returned. "I had a few words with him yesterday afternoon."

"What happened?" Barkley asked.

"Oh, I had nothing very much to report," Lee went on. "All I told him that we were looking for this man called Warlock."

The detective was silent for a moment.

"It rather struck me that Brontzell seemed to recognise the name, for his manner altered visibly. He asked me to repeat the name, and I thought he seemed mighty anxious to bring the interview to a close."

Lee turned to the telephone, and gave the number of the syndicate, and presently he was replied to by a clerk.

"Mr. Brontzell is not in just now, but we are expecting him back at any moment, sir," Lee was informed. "He left the offices shortly after you did yesterday, and told us he would not be back until during the afternoon. I think he wants to see you when he does come in, Mr. Lee."

The detective repeated this statement to the inspector, and Barkley rose to his feet.

"We might as well get along there," he said. "No doubt Brontzell will be there some time during the afternoon, and I want to get hold of him if I can."

They left the chambers in the Grays Inn Road, and were carried to Cheapside in a taxi. The clerk in the syndicate offices led them into an inner room and brought chairs for them.

"Mr. Brontzell hasn't returned yet, sir," he said. "But he must come back this afternoon, there is an important meeting, and there are several letters for him to sign."

"Did he say where he was going?" Lee asked.

The clerk hesitated for a moment, then looked at the Grays Inn Road man.

"Well, sir, I rather thought you know where he was going, because he told me last night that you had given him information which would help him to clear up the robbery. It had something to do with the papers which were stolen."

"The papers?" Lee repeated. "I did not mention any papers that I remember."

"Didn't you, sir? That's rather strange. They were papers in connection with a Mr. R. J. Warlock's estate."

Dorrimore shot a quick, significant glance at Nelson Lee. It was the first intimation they had received that the papers which had been stolen had anything to do with the man named Warlock.

"You mean, then, that the papers which were stolen together with the banknotes referred to Mr. Warlock?" said Lee.

"Yes, sir. They were part of private correspondence which Mr. Brontzell kept in his private safe, and were rather important."

"Do you know what they were about?"

"No, sir. It was some private matter between the syndicate and Mr. Warlock. I have only been here a few months, and the business, whatever it was, took place before I joined the staff."

"And you say that Mr. Brontzell left the office shortly after I did yesterday?"

"Yes, sir. In fact, we thought he was going to join you, and you were going to look for Professor Palzer."

Again a meaning glance was exchanged between Lee and Dorrimore.

"There was some mistake," said Lee, as he nodded to the clerk.

As soon as the fellow had left the inner office Lee turned to the two companions.

"Look here," he said. "I am beginning to see daylight in this. I did mention that the man James Warlock had dined the same evening as the robbery was committed with Professor Palzer at Hampstead, but I never mentioned the name to him again, and any move that Brontzell has undertaken is entirely off his own bat."

"I wonder where the fellow has got to?" Inspector Barkley put in. "This affair appears to me to get more and more tangled as we go on with it. Why the dickens didn't he tell us that there were some papers connected with this man Warlock missing from his safe, at the start?"

"He didn't know that," Lee pointed out. "It was only after the litter of papers had been collected and checked over that this particular batch of papers was missed."

He smiled quietly.

"And I don't suppose that Mr. Brontzell thought that they had been stolen," he added. "For, from what I gathered, he thought perhaps they had been taken away by the caretaker in the waste-paper basket by mistake."

His face was keen and alert now.

"You see how it works out?" he said, turning to Dorrimore. "Yesterday, for the first time, Mr. Brontzell discovered that the name of the man who we think robbed him was James Warlock. It was only then that it dawned on Brontzell that the papers concerning a man of that name had not been thrown away in the waste-paper basket by mistake, but they were probably part of the booty that the thief had carried away with him."

"Yes, yes; I follow you," said Dorrimore, "and I think we are really beginning to get on clearer ground now."

Inspector Barkley turned to the detective.

"You really mean then that the man who came here was much more eager to steal those papers than anything else?"

"That is exactly what I do think," said Lee. "From the very outset I was rather

at a loss to explain why a professional thief should waste his time over a small private safe and not trouble to tackle the big one where he would have been sure of a much bigger haul. Now, of course, the matter is getting clearer. Warlock, if Warlock it was who came here, might have had very good reasons for desiring to get hold of those papers, and to cover his tracks he probably took away those bundles of notes as well. Mr. Brontzell looked distinctly scared when I mentioned the name of Warlock, and it seems to me now he knows who did break into his office, that none of us will be worried so much by him about it. In fact, I rather think that Brontzell has set out to find the thief for himself."

"And he is following the Palzer trail. Is that what you mean, Lee?" asked Dorrimore.

"Exactly. But if you like we'll make sure. I'll ring up Hampstead and make a few inquiries."

There was a telephone on Brontzell's desk, and Lee crossed to it, and, after looking up the telephone directory, he gave Palzer's number.

It was the housekeeper at Hampstead who answered him, and, after a few inquiries, Lee elicited the fact that Brontzell had rung up and made inquiries concerning Professor Palzer.

The gentleman who had 'phoned had not given his name, but had said he was a friend of a Mr. Warlock, and as the housekeeper remembered that a gentleman of that name had dined with the professor a few nights before, she had given the telephone number of the college with which the professor was connected.

Nelson Lee turned to Dorrimore.

"You see, Brontzell had followed exactly the same lines as we did," he commented dryly, "and I shouldn't be at all surprised if he didn't go down to Beaconsfield last night."

"Then in that case he has probably fallen across Nipper, or, at least, the youngster will know something about him. And, by the way, Lee, I wonder why the dickens we haven't had a message from that young bounder. This is the third day he has been down there, and it's time we had some news of him."

"The best thing we can do would be to call him off," said Lee. "I'll send a prepaid wire to the Black Swan and see what happens."

They passed through the outer office, making some excuse to the clerk, then when they were in the main thoroughfare again Barkley went off to his headquarters while Lee and Dorrimore turned into a post-office, and Lee duly despatched a reply-paid telegram. It was simply a request to Nipper to reply to the message at the address in the Grays Inn Road. Lee had not troubled to fix Nipper up, and felt sure the youngster would sleep at the Black Swan inn.

"We ought to have a reply by about eight o'clock at the latest," said Lee, as he and Dorrimore emerged from the post-office again.

They parted in the West End, Dorrimore going on to his chambers while Lee returned to the Grays Inn Road. But a few minutes before eight o'clock in the evening Dorrimore received a telephone message from Nelson Lee.

"I've had a telegram from the Black Swan," he said, "and it's interesting enough for to ask you to come round and see me, old chap. Apparently Nipper hasn't put in an appearance at the inn, and the proprietor there hasn't heard of anyone of that name. Come round and we'll chat it over."

It did not take Dorrimore long to oblige, and he was soon eyeing the telegram thoughtfully.

"What are you going to do about it?" he asked.

"As a matter of fact, old chap, I'm going up to Beaconsfield," the detective said. "I have 'phoned to Brontzell at his office, but

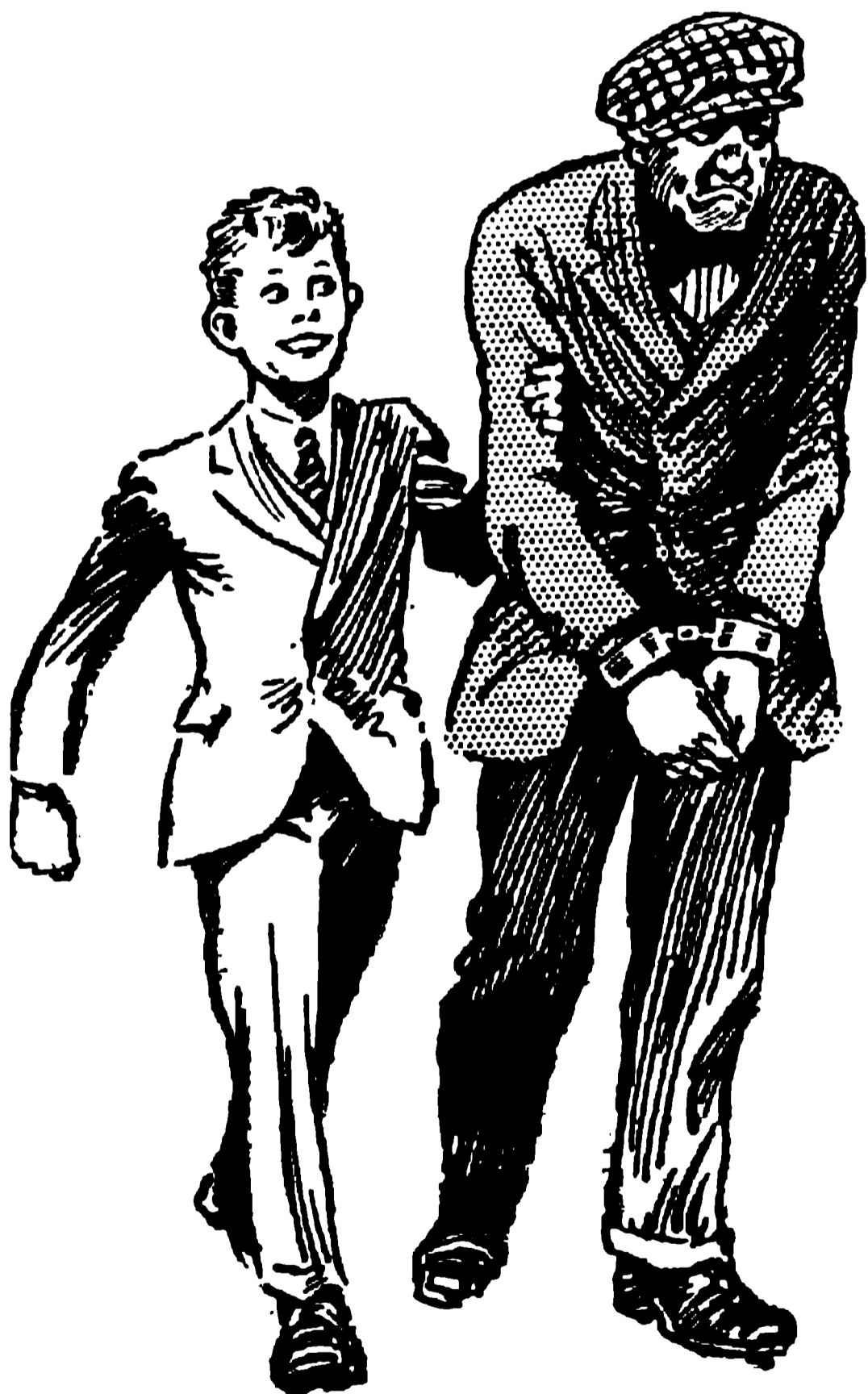
they have informed me that he has not yet turned up. One of the other partners was there, and he seemed rather disturbed about it. It appears that there was a very important meeting due to take place this evening, and the partner, who gave his name as Jedzel, assured me that Brontzell would not have missed the meeting unless something very serious had turned up to prevent him being there.

"Jedzel asked me to try and find Brontzell, because he has communicated with his rooms, and his club, and finds that he has not stayed at either place last night. I got the address of his chambers; it is in the Adelphi, and I think it might be worth our while to run round there first and just see if we can discover anything concerning him."

"That'll do me all right," Dorrimore said.

But Brontzell's housekeeper knew nothing more. All she could add to the detective's knowledge was that she had taken a telegram to the post-office for Brontzell, before he had gone. She couldn't remember the actual

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message, but she did remember it was addressed to a man named Palzer a name one would not be likely to forget very easily.

"That settles it," said Lee. "I'm going to concentrate on this nursing-home and Professor Palzer for the next few hours. First Nipper, then Brontiell, seem to have headed for that place and apparently have vanished into thin air."

"Sounds jolly well as though Professor Palzer is a man-eater," Dorrimore put in with a chuckle, "although I must say my impressions of him were that he was a very inoffensive old fossil."

By the time they arrived at the village it was close on eleven o'clock.

Nelson Lee and Dorrimore had made a few inquiries, and were able to head direct for the Sandies Nursing Home. They followed practically the same path as Palzer had done when he had returned that first evening.

CHAPTER 12.

Mysterious!

WHEN Nelson Lee and his companion emerged on to the edge of the fringe of trees, they halted and eyed the outlines of the white bungalow hospital standing within its quiet garden. There was a light on one of the verandas, and they saw the well-kept grounds and the tall hedge that guarded the building from the road.

"Peaceful-looking spot," said Dorrimore. "But you never know. What's your plan, Lee?"

"I have no definite plan," the detective admitted. "I simply want to get in touch with Palzer again, and as I don't think we would have much chance of doing that if we were to go up to the front door and ask for him, as ordinary visitors, I'm afraid we'll simply have to take a chance and sneak into the grounds unobserved."

Lee and his companion began to move through the fringe of trees, but they turned to the right when they reached the open space, and, keeping the high hedge between them and the nursing-home, moved up the slope until they found themselves again in a dense growth of trees.

The ground rose rather sharply there, and thanks to the angle at which they stood they were able to see over the high hedge and had a clear view of the bungalow in front of them. It was obviously the kitchen portion of the building they were looking at, but there were no lights visible, and Lee decided that this was the better side from which to make their entry.

Dorrimore had moved off a dozen yards or so from his companion, and presently Lee heard his voice sound.

"I say, old man, come here for a moment."

The detective stepped quietly along beside the trees and came to a halt. The tall aristo-

crat was leaning forward, listening, and he caught Nelson Lee by the arm.

"Now, what do you make of that?" he asked.

They were silent for a moment, then Lee heard a curious sound coming from somewhere in among the trees. He could not make out what it was at first—faint, thudding noises, followed by scraping sounds, then again a thud, and later, a muffled, stifled cry—rather an angry cry.

"I think we ought to find out what's happening over there," said Nelson Lee.

They passed through the trees and made their way through a clump of thick fern fronds, then found themselves on the top of the slope with a little hollow in front of them.

It was pitch dark under the trees, but as Dorrimore moved forward another pace or so, he saw there was a cleared space in the square pile—a heap of wood that had evidently been left there to season.

The sounds had ceased, but as Nelson Lee and his companion reached the edge of the hollow they started again, and this time there was no doubt about where they were coming from.

It was the wood pile, and with a quiet word to Lee, Dorrimore swung down the hollow with the detective at his heels. The big aristocrat halted beside the pile and slipped his hand into his pocket, withdrawing an electric torch.

A moment later the light from the torch flashed through the darkness, and Dorrimore ran it over the pile of wood. They were fairly good sized logs, heaped up cross-wise, and as the two companions moved right round the pile, studying every inch of it, they could find no sign of anyone.

"Now, where the dickens——" Dorrimore's voice broke out, then stopped again, for once more the sound came to him.

"Jove! It's inside the pile of wood."

The tall adventurer moved forward, and Lee saw him halt at one side of the pile where a strip of sacking was hanging over the rough hewn ends. Dorrimore tore the strip aside, doubled up his lanky figure, and Lee saw the light from the electric bulb flash into the hollow under the wood pile, and land on an indistinct shape that was lying in the hollowed space.

"By Jove! Lend a hand, old chap!"

Dorrimore reached out and caught at the limbs that were stretched out along the ground. Nelson Lee knelt down, and together they drew out from the narrow space in the heart of the wood pile a dust-covered, grim, hard-breathing man.

The torch had been placed on the ground, while Dorrimore had drawn the figure forward, but now, when the man was safely out of the hollowed place, the tall adventurer reached for the torch and flashed the light on the man's face.

Mr. Brontiell!

Around his lips was a strip of bandage and a large piece of cotton-wool formed a very

effective gag. His hands were tied in front of him, and the cord from his hand had been passed round his ankles. A litter of leaves had gathered under the wood pile, and gradually fallen into dust, with the result that the fragments were covering Brontzell from head to foot.

As he sat up with his small pig eyes flashing in the light, there was something so humorous about the whole aspect that it was all that Dorrimore could do to prevent bursting into laughter.

He reached out and removed the bandage and wad from Brontzell's lips. An angry gasp, followed by a grunt, were the first sounds that came from the head of the syndicate, then he broke out into voluble speech.

"I think I recognise your voice," he said. "It's Mr. Lee, isn't it?"

"Yes, that's right," said Lee.

"Help me to get rid of these confounded bonds, and I—I want to find the police station. I'm going to—to have the law on that ruffian. I'll make him pay for this!"

Nelson Lee had already started to cut the cords which were round Mr. Brontzell's wrists and ankles. The rather peculiar feel of the cord made Lee lift it to the light and examine it.

It was that type of cotton-wove stuff that is used for window blinds—a very tough and strong bond.

Dorrimore slipped one arm under Brontzell's burly shoulder and helped him to his feet. He had to steady the man for a moment, for Brontzell's limbs were obviously numbed, and presently Dorrimore began to walk him up and down a few paces. Brontzell groaning at every movement as the numbed blood began to circulate again through the beefy frame.

Lee had risen to his feet, and he watched the painful movements in silence, then, when Brontzell had recovered somewhat, Lee came forward.

"How did this happen?" he asked.

Brontzell was still chafing his wrists, but, under the light of the electric torch it seemed that he had taken very little hurt.

"I was brought here this evening," he said, "and dumped into that confounded place. But that's only part of my experiences. I have to charge Professor Palzer and a darned assistant of his with—with attempted murder; that's just what it was!"

He glared at Nelson Lee as though the man from the Grays Inn Road was personally responsible for the affair.

"I want to find a policeman," he said thickly. "I'll have those fellows clapped into gaol in no time."

"That's all right, Mr. Brontzell," Lee said. "The hour is rather late now and you may find it difficult to get hold of a constable at this time of night. But if you have been subjected to an assault of any kind you can rest assured that I will look into the affair. Now, perhaps, you will tell me just exactly what happened?"

They were standing close to the wood pile still, and Brontzell stepped back a pace and seated himself on the edge of one of the logs.

"I—I came to Beaconsfield last night," he began. "I decided that it—it would be worth my while to see—to see Professor Palzer, and I sent him a telegram asking him to meet me at the station."

Something of Henry Brontzell's rage had vanished now, and to Lee's keen perception it was obvious that the man was hesitating, carefully, as to how to choose his words.

As he sat on the edge of the pile of wood he had the appearance of a man who was not quite sure of his ground nor his story. Lee felt instinctively that whatsoever Mr. Brontzell would tell him would be half a lie, and this fact was also plainly visible to Dorrimore.

"And you met Professor Palzer?"

"Er—no. There was no one at the station to meet me, but I decided to come out here to the nursing home and see him. I reached the home, and—and I—I went inside the grounds."

Again he hesitated, then arose to his feet.

"I tried to get into the place, but—but just as I crossed the veranda someone attacked me. We rolled over together, and then Professor Palzer himself came out and joined in the fight."

He clenched his beefy fists.

"It was a savage assault," he said. "They made a prisoner of me—carried me inside the nursing home and left me in one of the rooms there all day. To-night, at dusk, they came to me again, and I was carted up to this wood pile. I'm not going to put up with such treatment, and it is my intention now to expose this confounded professor and his methods."

He wheeled on Nelson Lee.

"Are you aware that Palzer is actually hiding someone, or at least is helping to conceal someone in that hospital?"

"I didn't know that," Lee returned quietly. "But, after all, a hospital is usually used by patients, and no doubt the professor may have someone there under his care."

Brontzell leaned forward.

"I saw—that is to say, I just had a glimpse of—of—the—er—patient," he commented, "and I—I thought I recognised him."

"Then you must have got inside the nursing home?"

It was the dry voice of Dorrimore that sounded, and the remark seemed to disturb Brontzell, for he turned and looked at the tall adventurer for a moment.

"Well, I—I was just inside the place when I was attacked," he said.

His hesitancy, the angry note in his voice, and, above all, their knowledge of the manner of individual he was, made both Lee and Dorrimore suspect that Mr. Brontzell was keeping back a great deal of the truth.

"You've got one point to consider, Mr. Brontzell," Lee said, "and that is that no

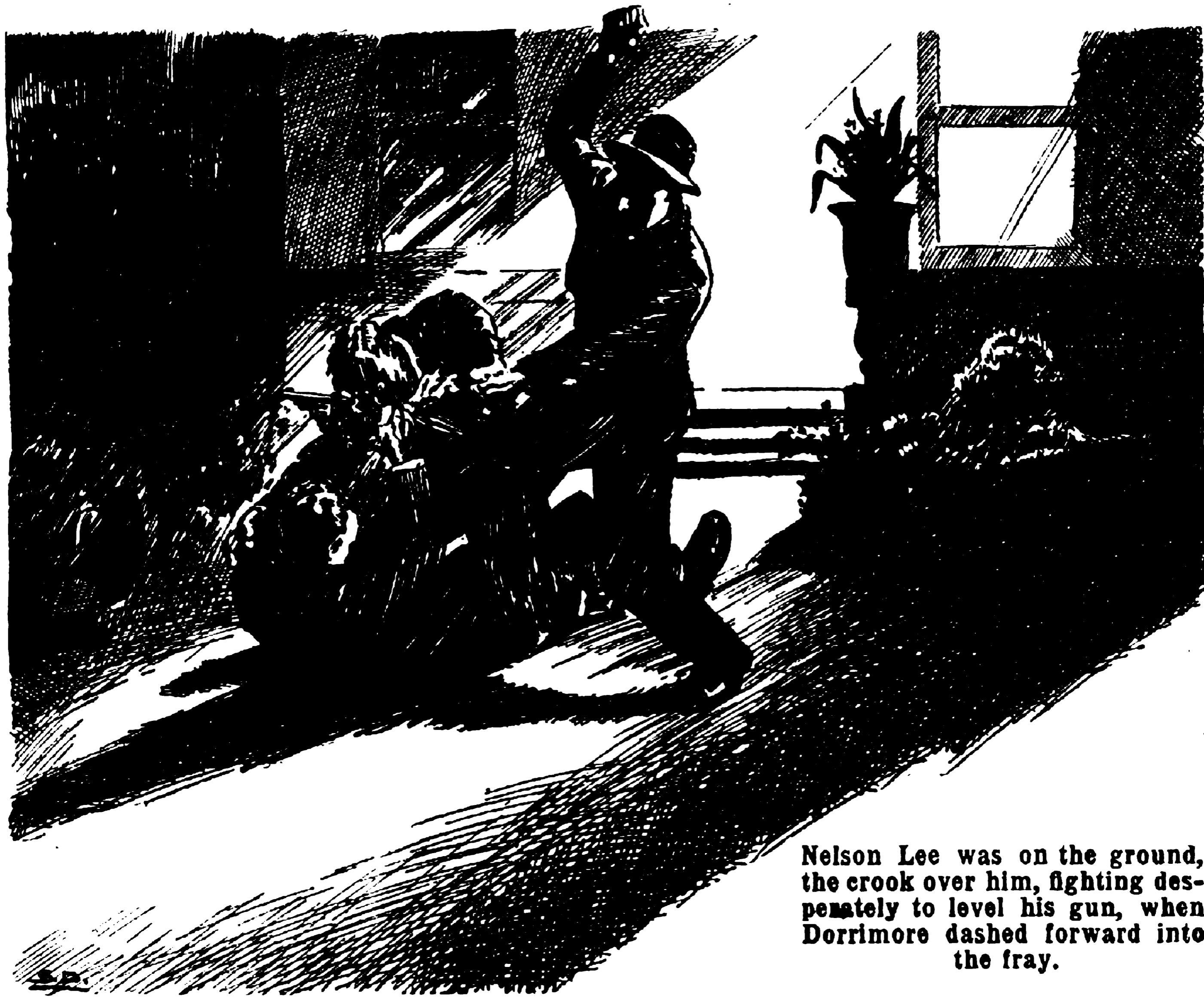
one is allowed to enter another man's house uninvited. If Professor Palzer and his assistant found you, for instance, in the ward, they were quite within their rights to take you to be a thief or a housebreaker. Have you realised that?"

"I don't care what they took me for?" Brontiell broke out thickly. "I understand that you are a detective, Mr. Lee, and you represent the law to a certain extent, I believe. Well, I insist on you now accompanying me down to the nursing home and having this matter put right with the con-

UNDER other circumstances neither Lee nor Dorrimore would have joined forces with this fellow, but they were both free to admit that they had a certain amount of curiosity to discover what it was that was going on in that quiet nursing home, and so they fell in with the man's suggestion.

They moved through the grounds and at last gained the veranda, and, stepping very quietly, passed on round the end of it on to another shorter length of veranda.

Half-way up this second space a light was



Nelson Lee was on the ground, the crook over him, fighting desperately to level his gun, when Dorrimore dashed forward into the fray.

found professor. Right or wrong, he has no reason to attack me as he did, and I intend to expose him."

He turned and began to move up out of the hollow, with Lee and Dorrimore following him. It was obvious from the direct way that Brontiell moved that he had been fully conscious when he had been carried from the nursing home to the wood pile, for he led Lee and Dorrimore directly through the fringe of trees and out into the open space in front of the hospital.

"I can tell you this much," he said, "there's no good of us going to the front door and trying to get in touch with the professor there. That place is guarded, and Palzer has some reasons of his own for keeping everyone at arm's length. But I'm going to get in, and you'll have to come with me."

shining, and Mr. Brontiell headed directly over it, coming to a halt just beside the long window. There was a blind hanging across the window, but at one end it sagged slightly, and as Nelson Lee reached Brontiell's side, the heavy-built figure dropped on one knee and craned his head forward, peering through the gap.

Nelson Lee, leaning over the kneeling figure, looked through the gap in the blind into the lighted space beyond. He saw it was a small ward, with white-painted walls and polished floor. Opposite to where he stood there was a cot, and even as he watched he saw a travelling table come slowly into the range of his vision, propelled by a slim figure in a spotless white coat.

Dorrimore was only just able to catch a glimpse into the room, for he was standing

behind Nelson Lee; but narrow though the vision was, the first glance Dorrimore gave at the slim assistant pushing the table was quite enough, and the big fellow's hand fell on Lee's shoulder with one warning squeeze.

"By Jove, it's Nipper!" the aristocrat thought, repressing the chuckle that came to his lips. "Now, what the dickens is he up to?"

It was Nipper. A very business-like and methodical Nipper. Quite unaware of the fact that there were witnesses to his movements, the youngster wheeled the table within reach of the cot, then set to work to prepare the little retort.

When the steam was issuing from the slender stem, Nipper's businesslike way of sterilising the hypodermic syringe sent another quick smile across the lips of the tall adventurer.

"If that youngster isn't the limit!" he said to himself. "I wonder what the dickens next he'll be up to? It looks as though an operation is going to take place, and he's the fellow who's preparing the deadly weapon."

THERE was a long moment's interval, then into the lighted space there came another figure, the tall, gaunt shape of Professor Palzer. There was no mistaking the straggling beard and the intent, peering eyes behind the horn-rimmed spectacles.

Neither Nelson Lee nor Dorrimore could see more than a single strip of the bed beside which the table stood, but Mr. Brontzell, kneeling at the bottom of the window, had a wider range of view. Lee saw Palzer take the hypodermic syringe and nod to Nipper. Then he moved to the side of the cot, and Lee saw the youngster commence to unfold the long, white sheet which covered something or someone on the hidden portion of the bed.

The operation of charging the syringe was gone through, then Palzer, moving up in front of Nipper, bent forward until Lee could only see the half of his body. This was always the most dangerous moment in the whole of the grim experiment, and it required a steady hand and considerable skill to carry it out. For the serum was injected into the spine, and there was always a good deal of risk attached to it.

Neither Nelson Lee nor Dorrimore knew just what it was that happened then, but an instinct made the detective move back a pace, and as he did so he saw that Mr. Brontzell had shifted his position slightly. The man's hand had been resting against the window, but it had vanished now, and Lee, following the line of the arm, saw that it was thrust into his pocket.

A moment later, in the thin stream of light that flickered through the gap in the blind, Lee saw the hand come forward, and it was holding a small revolver. Just what Henry Brontzell's intentions were neither

Lee nor Dorrimore ever discovered. It was very doubtful whether he could have had much chance of injuring anyone had he fired from that position, but in all probability his desire was to create a disturbance, and by so doing attract the attention of the professor, with results that might readily be imagined, and might be fatal to the patient.

But even as his hand came forward Nelson Lee made a sudden, swift lunge, and his powerful fingers closed round the wrist.

"Drop that!" he said. "Drop that, at once!"

Brontzell made a lunge, trying to draw his hand free, but the steel-like fingers of the detective had closed round the powerful wrist like a vice, and Brontzell's attempt to release his arm only resulted in his being thrown backwards, so that he rolled over on to the veranda, with Nelson Lee sprawling on top of him.

If there had been any doubt in the detective's mind as to what the intention of the man was, it vanished now, for the murderous fury which seemed to descend on Brontzell was unmistakable, and he broke out into a volley of wild, angry oaths, and, raising his disengaged hand, he made a vicious blow at the detective.

The blow landed on Lee's shoulder, and in another moment he and Brontzell had rolled clean over the edge of the veranda into the flower-bed beyond. The whole thing had happened with such suddenness that Dorrimore hardly knew anything about it until the first angry outbreak sounded. He turned from the window and leaped across the veranda, to drop down into the flower-bed below.

Nelson Lee and his adversary were locked in a fierce embrace, and Dorrimore could hear the heavy breathing as they fought together. Brontzell seemed to have lost entire control of himself, and fought like a wild beast.

Another vicious lunge saw the two shapes roll down the flower-bed on to the gravel path, and Dorrimore, remembering his pocket torch, slipped it out and pressed the switch. Lee was undermost now, and Brontzell, taking advantage of his heavier girth and weight, pressed all his force down on the detective's chest, wedging Lee down to the gravel.

Another wild snatch saw Brontzell's arm released, and he gave vent to a snarl of satisfaction as he bent his elbow, bringing the revolver round. But as the weapon moved Dorrimore caught the glint of the barrel. Swift as a flash the tall figure of the adventurer flung itself at the head of the syndicate, and even as the thick-set man pressed the trigger, Dorrimore had flung himself on the arm.

The cartridge exploded, and the bullet made a shower of stones fly up within a few inches of Lee's head.

"You confounded skunk! That's your game, is it?"

CHAPTER 13.

Brontzell Shows Himself!

DORRIMORE had grabbed that arm, and now flung himself to one side, drawing Brontzell bodily away from his hold. A sudden snap sounded, followed by a shriek of agony from the heavy, scowling Jo'burg man.

"My arm—my arm!"

Whether Dorrimore had intended to break that limb or not will always remain a problem, but he certainly had accomplished that, and now, groaning and moaning with pain, Brontzell gave up the struggle. He had rolled clear of the path, and he dragged himself into a half-sitting position, crouching there, white-faced and grim, nursing his broken arm and breathing in quick, agonised sobs through his set teeth.

Nelson Lee had already risen to his feet, and Dorrimore flashed the light on to the detective.

"What happened, old man?" he asked.

Despite his grim tussle, there was no trace of excitement on the face of Nelson Lee. He nodded across to where Brontzell sat, moaning and rocking to and fro, half sick with pain.

"I'm afraid our friend was out for murder," he commented dryly. "He was just going to fire through the window of the ward when I put a stop to his game."

The detective crossed the path, halting beside the huge, beefy figure.

"You brought this on yourself," he said sternly. "And it strikes me you've come off better than you might have done."

Brontzell looked up, but it was obvious that the agony he was in had numbed his brain, for although he tried to speak, it was only a half-smothered groan that came through the heavy, puffed lips.

Dorrimore had turned and was glancing at the nursing home. There was no sign that anyone had heard the fracas, nor the revolver-shot; but this, of course, was beyond belief, for the report that the revolver had made was quite a loud one.

"We'll have to do something for the fellow, Dorrimore," Lee said, as he turned to his companion. "We might as well knock them up now and see what is going on."

But even as the words left his lips a faint click sounded, then the blind of the ward shot up, and, framed in the light, was the slim figure of Nipper. The youngster stooped, opened the bolts of the long French window, and, pressing them outwards, stepped on to the dark veranda. Dorrimore swung his torch so that the light fell on the youngster's face, and a grin spread over the keen features.

"That you, guv'nor?"

Dorrimore and Lee were standing in the half-shadows thrown by the electric bulb, but Nipper had found no difficulty in picking out their figures.

"What the dickens have you been doing with yourself, young 'un?" the tall aristo-

crat asked. "You've got us into a nice heap of trouble. And it's all your fault!"

He came towards the veranda, but Nipper, after a quick glance behind him, closed the French windows, then moved to the edge of the flower-bed.

"You must not go in there yet," the young detective said. "You've really been kicking up no end of a shindy as it is, and I have been sent out to stop you."

"Stop us, by Jove!"

"Yes; you nearly spoiled a delicate operation," Nipper went on. "And I really must ask you to keep quiet."

The saucy tones of the youngster made Dorrimore chuckle; then he reached out a hand and grabbed Nipper by the sleeve and hurled him clean off the veranda down on the flower-bed below.

"Look here, young fellah-me-lad," he said. "Don't you start any of your London hospital sauce with me. What's the game? What are you up to in there?"

A moan from the darkness beyond the gravel path drew Nipper's attention towards the thick-set figure of Brontzell, seated on the edge of the turf.

"Jiminy! Is that—is that——"

Dorrimore swung the electric torch round so that its light fell on the ghastly features of the head of the syndicate.

"How on earth did he get here?" Nipper asked. "I—I stowed him away in the wood-pile, up the slope there, this evening."

"Oh, you did, did you?"

The calm, matter-of-fact way in which Nipper made his statement brought a chuckle to Dorrimore's lips; then Nelson Lee, who had been bending over Brontzell, turned and beckoned to his two companions.

"Better lend a hand here," he said. "We must do something for him."

Dorrimore saw that Nipper hesitated for a moment, then, with a shrug of the shoulders, the youngster crossed the gravel path.

"Right you are, guv'nor," he said. "Personally, I don't feel at all inclined to help you, Mr. Brontzell, but what my guv'nor says, goes."

They lifted the heavy figure and Nipper led the way down the path and on to the veranda round to the other side, where, presently, he entered a doorway and switched on the electric light, revealing a small ante-room. Mr. Brontzell was placed on a couch and the operation of setting the broken arm and bandaging it began.

"I must go back, guv'nor," said Nipper, after a while. "Professor Palzer wants me. This is really the crucial point of the experiment, and I want to see if he has succeeded or not."

"That's all very well, young 'un," Dorrimore put in, "but don't forget we've got a few questions to ask you and Professor Palzer. It looks as though you've taken sides against us, and we should like to know the why and wherefore."

"Right-ho, Dorrimore!" said Nipper. "I shan't be a minute, and when I return I shall be able to explain."

But it was much longer than a minute that elapsed. In fact, the best part of half an hour went by before Nelson Lee and Dorrimore, who had waited quietly in the ante-room, heard footfalls sound, and the door opened, and Palzer and Nipper appeared.

The old man seemed very tired, and his eyes were red-rimmed and weary as they looked at the two visitors from behind his horn-rimmed spectacles. Palzer transferred his gaze from Nelson Lee to the figure on the couch, and his sloping shoulders lifted in a slight shrug.

"So you have found this individual, eh?" he said. "That's rather awkward."

CHAPTER 14.

The Youth Giver!

HENRY BRONTIELL leaned forward. Nelson Lee had fitted his arm into a sling, and he was much more comfortable now, with the result that his manner had changed.

"Yes, professor, it will be awkward," he said, "very awkward for you. Don't forget that you and that confounded assistant of yours can be punished for what you did. You are not allowed to make a prisoner of any man in England. I'll make you pay for it, I swear I will."

Palzer was standing in the centre of the room, with his hands behind his back; his bearded face was very pleasant as it was turned towards the pallid, angry countenance of the thick-set figure on the couch.

"That's all right, Mr. Brontiehl," he said. "I am quite ready to stand any charges you might care to bring against me. But I could not allow you to interfere in my work, and as you had been inclined to do so, I had to take steps to prevent you."

He turned to Nelson Lee.

"I am afraid that all this may put me in a rather curious light as far as you are concerned, Mr. Lee," he said. "But no doubt your very able assistant here will give you an explanation. I only just came along with him to meet you, and I must get back now. When you have heard his story I shall be glad if you will accompany him to where I shall be waiting for you. I have a—a very interesting patient, and the next half-hour or so will prove either success or a great failure. You will, I am sure, excuse me now."

And with a little nod of his head the old fellow sauntered out of the room, and when the door closed on him Nipper drew a deep breath.

"Guv'nor," he said, "that man's an absolute magician. Presently I am going to show you something—or, rather, someone, and I can tell you that there's never been such a marvellous thing happen in the whole world before as has happened here."

"All right, young 'un, we are always ready to be entertained," said Dorrimore grimly. "Meanwhilc, perhaps you will kindly explain just how it comes about that you are masquerading as a medico, and what you did to Mr. Brontiehl here."

Nipper looked at the man on the couch.

"Mr. Brontiehl will tell you himself what happened," he said. "I only stopped him in the nick of time. He was in the ward where a certain man is lying, and we just managed to get hold of him in time."

He nodded across to the thick-set figure.

"I don't know what cock-and-bull story you may have told the guv'nor," Nipper went on, turning to Brontiehl, "but Professor Palzer and I are witnesses to the fact that if we hadn't appeared when we did, you would probably have murdered James Warlock."

"It's a lie—a lie!" Brontiehl broke out, half starting to his feet. "I—I was only—only looking at the man!"

Nipper turned to his guv'nor.

"I followed Brontiehl," he said. "He came from Beaconsfield Station, and I kept close to his heels all the way to the hospital. I suspected him, and I was quite right."

He went on to describe what had happened. How he had followed the head of the syndicate into the garden and across the veranda, and had watched the man peer through the window into the ward for a long moment.

Then, making his way round to the other side of the hospital, he had entered the ward from the other side, gaining an entry through a window close to the cot on which Warlock lay.

"The professor was not in the ward at the time, but he was in the room next to it," said Nipper, "and as soon as I jumped on Brontiehl, the professor heard the row and came out to help me."

He nodded towards the sullen-looking figure on the couch.

"You had your hands on the patient's throat," Nipper went on, "and I know darned well what you meant to do—your face told me that much."

"It's a lie—a confounded lie! I was simply trying to—to identify the man as being what he is—a—a—thief and a—a safe-breaker."

Brontiehl rose unsteadily to his feet and turned to Nelson Lee.

"You are a detective," he said, "and I call on you now to carry out your duty. You have a warrant for the arrest of a man who stole money from my safe, and I can tell you that that man is now an inmate of this hospital. If you do your duty you will take him into custody at once."

It could never have been said of Nelson Lee that he failed in his duty to any man, and so, despite the fact that all Lee's final instincts now were up in arms against the scowling, thick-set rascal, yet, after all, Brontiehl was Lee's real employer, and the detective turned and looked at his assistant.

"Is that correct, Nipper?" he said. "Is it Mr. Warlock who is in that ward?"

Nipper hesitated for a moment. Then Dorrimore saw a smile flash across the youngster's face.

"That's not for me to say, gov'nor," he replied. "But I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll let you see the man who is now in the ward. I think the professor will allow us to do that much, and if you can identify him as being the man whose description you now have—then neither Professor Palzer nor anyone else will stand in the way if you want to arrest him!"

It was obvious to Dorrimore that there was some grim secret hidden in Nipper's brain, some trick that he intended to enjoy. His offer, however, sounded plausible enough, and Bronttiell swung round again to face Nelson Lee.

"You will accept that offer," he said. "I swear to you that the man who robbed my safe is in that ward. You've got his description, and you ought to be able to identify him."

It seemed as though Bronttiell had almost forgotten the pain of his injury, for he moved towards the doorway, and Nipper, with a quick nod to his gov'nor, hurried across the room.

"I'll just go and tell the professor," he said. "I'll be back in a moment."

He was not given very long, but when he returned it was to lead Nelson Lee and Dorrimore and Henry Bronttiell down the carpeted corridor, then he came to a halt outside another door. Nipper knocked softly, and presently the door opened, revealing Palzer standing behind it. A look was exchanged between Palzer and Nipper, then the old fellow flung the door wide, and gave the detective and his companions a little bow.

"Come in, gentlemen," he said. "My patient is now almost ready to receive you."

They found themselves in the ward, and the cot was immediately opposite the door. But it was no longer occupied, and the white sheet lying crumpled at the door of the bed indicated that the inmate of it had recently been removed. An invalid chair stood with its back towards the door, and Lee, the vision of a head and shoulders in the chair.

Palzer crossed the room, and, placing his hands on the rail at the back of the chair, swung it round with a swift pressure of his arms.

"Let me introduce you, gentlemen, to my patient," he said.

It was a youthful face, clean-shaven and strong, that confronted them. From the opened shirt across a white, firm throat and a pair of steady unruffled blue eyes, looked across the chamber in their direction. Dorrimore, who was standing opposite Nipper, heard the youngster give a quick, indrawn breath of sheer delight. Then he turned to Nelson Lee.

"Well, gov'nor," he said, "is our patient at all like the description of Mr. Warlock, alias R. J. Durban?"

Before Nelson Lee could reply a snarling oath broke out from behind, and Henry Bronttiell, with his bandaged arm, lunged through the trio and made a rush across the room.

"So it's you, Richard Warlock," he cried. "How the deuce did you get here? We thought—we believed that you were—When did you come from the Zambesi?"

He had reached to within two or three yards of the chair, but Palzer, taking a swift stride forward, extended his thin arm and brought Bronttiell to a halt.

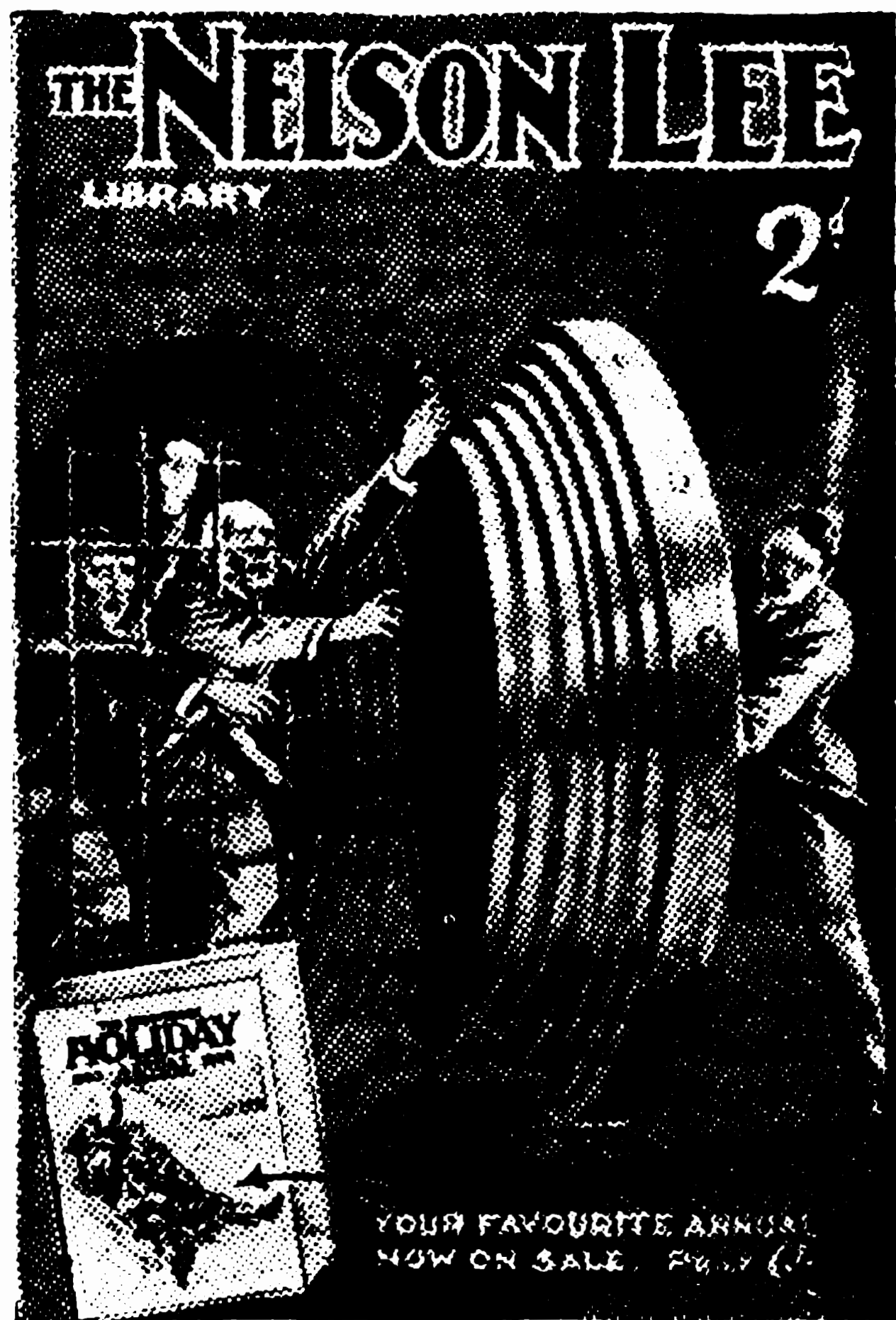
"Pardon me, sir," the professor said. "This man is still my patient, and although he is now much better than he was, he is not yet able to answer questions."

"Confound you and your patient!" Bronttiell broke out. "What do I care whether he can answer questions or not? I know him. I—I want to get the truth out of him. You hear me, Richard Warlock? What does it mean? We heard that you were—were caught. Was it only bluff, then?"

THE figure in the chair never moved a limb, but Nelson Lee and Dorrimore, watching the intent, youthful face, saw something leap into the steady blue eyes—something that made the whole countenance glow.

THE PICK OF THE BOOKSTALLS!

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"You hear me?" Brontzell went on. "I'll force you to speak. How did you get away? We knew you were in—in prison settlement at Delagoa Bay. How did you escape?"

It seemed as though the heavily-built man had forgotten that there were others in the ward. His face was intent and savage, and it was bent forward, peering into the motionless countenance in front of him as though he would force the man to speak.

"What did you do with M'Lunga and the stuff? I thought—we thought that you had been bowled over. Our agent out there swore that he had seen you taken away a prisoner. What does it mean? Answer me, confound you!"

Then, as the man in the chair still continued silent, Brontzell added:

"Of course, you feel sore about the affair. I admit I sent you to M'Lunga——"

"Ah!"

There was a sigh, a quick, relieved gasp of breath from the man in the chair, and his lax, calm pose vanished. He sat up suddenly and pointed straight at Brontzell.

"I've got you at last, you hound! Here, in the presence of four witnesses, you have admitted that you sent Richard Warlock to M'Lunga, and yet you denied that before; you and your agent denied that six months ago!"

The voice was very deep and vibrating, and seemed almost out of keeping with the youthful face. Brontzell staggered back a pace at the sound of it, and the whole aspect of his features altered.

"What the deuce does this mean?" he broke out hoarsely. "You are not—Richard Warlock! The face is the same, and the eyes are the same, but Richard Warlock never spoke in a voice like that!"

The figure in the chair had moved, and now, with a curiously doubtful air, he stepped from the chair and rose to his feet, Palzer, who had been standing quietly beside the chair, stretched out one long arm as though to support the youthful figure, but although it swayed a little it managed to retain its poise, and into the clear blue eyes there came a smile that was full of triumph.

"No, Brontzell, I am not Richard Warlock," the deep voice said. "I am James Warlock—Richard's father."

The eyes were piercing in their intensity.

"But I have got from you what I wanted—a confession of your diabolical scheme, and I shall get that same confession from the rest of your rascally syndicate before I have finished with it."

Neither Lee nor Dorrimore had any idea of what lay behind the words, but their effect on Brontzell was amazing. For, gathering himself together, the man, despite his broken arm, made a leap at the individual standing beside the chair. He had raised his left fist and would have sent a smashing blow into the face of his accuser had it not been for Palzer.

JUST how that loosely built old professor managed to do the trick none of the witnesses were able to say, but as Brontzell's fist came swinging down, Palzer's lanky body lunged out, and one of his hands struck Brontzell on the side of the neck.

It seemed a very light blow, but Nelson Lee saw that it had fallen just about the part where a ridge of flesh stood out over the spine, and the detective was sufficient of an anatomist to know that it had been a nerve centre that Palzer had struck. In any case, Brontzell's knees collapsed under him, and he went sprawling across the invalid to roll on to his face.

Palzer never even stopped to follow the results of his blow. He had swung round at once towards the patient and put his long arm round him.

"That's quite enough excitement for to-night," he said. "Come along, my friend. Despite the fact that you may feel very fit and well, you are not yet through, or over the danger line. It's back to bed with you, quick!"

Nor would he be denied, for he half-led, half-dragged the man back to the cot and tucked him away between the sheets. Then he turned and nodded to Nelson Lee and Dorrimore.

"I think we will remove this gentleman now," he said. "And if you are still interested in the matter, I can explain things. My patient has told me his story."

Brontzell was placed in the invalid chair and wheeled out of the ward into the small room beyond. Nelson Lee and Dorrimore halted for a moment at the cot and looked at the man lying there. James Warlock did not move or speak, but his eyes regarded them for a second, and over the youthful—too youthful face—there spread another of the quiet smiles. Almost despite himself, Lee gave the man a reassuring nod.

"It's all right, Mr. Warlock," he said. "I must confess that I cannot understand two-thirds of what has taken place, but I want you to realise that we are not exactly friends of Brontzell's, although we may appear in that light. You have a story to tell, and we shall be glad to hear it."

Warlock's lips parted.

"Yes, I have a story to tell," he said; "and you shall hear it."

CHAPTER 15.

The Confession!

ON the following Saturday morning there turned into Cheapside a taxi which, moving up into one of the side streets, halted in front of the big building with the gold lettering, and from it there emerged five men. They were Nelson Lee and Dorrimore, Nipper, Inspector Barkley, and the fifth, a tall, youthful-looking man in a suit of obviously new serge clothes.

He bore himself well, did this youthful figure, and he was handsome enough to make

one or two passers-by turn and glance at him again. Then the party vanished into the big entrance of the buildings and were carried up to the third floor where they went down a corridor and entered the outer room of the Zangwang Diamond Company.

Nelson Lee nodded to the head clerk as he entered, and the man came forward to the counter.

"Mr. Lipperstein and Mr. Jedzel are waiting for you, sir," he said, addressing Nelson Lee.

A quiet look was exchanged, then the detective nodded to Barkley, who turned to the man in blue serge.

"I think you and I and Mr. Lee had better go in together," he said. "We'll thrash this matter out now."

Nelson Lee was the first to enter the inner room, and he saw the two prosperous-looking men at the desk. Mr. Lipperstein and his partner were typical City men, well groomed and disporting much fine linen. But their faces bore the true heavy money-grabbing look that marked them as very suitable companions to Mr. Brontiell.

Lipperstein, who seemed the elder of the two, was the one who greeted Nelson Lee, and his smile was an oily one as he held out his fat hand.

"We received your message, Mr. Lee," he said, "and, of course, we are very interested. Unfortunately, Mr. Brontiell has not turned up yet, but he may be here at any moment."

The inspector from Scotland Yard was standing behind Nelson Lee, and the door of the inner office was ajar. Lipperstein's eyes chanced to pass over Lee's shoulder, and they alighted on the strong youthful-looking face of the third figure as it entered the room. Nelson Lee saw the heavy jaw of the speaker drop, and the hand that had been outstretched to greet Inspector Barkley fell on to the desk, while its owner collapsed into his chair.

Jedzel had also caught sight of the third figure, and a distinct oath came through his thick lips. Nelson Lee and the inspector moved to the desk, and a careful observer might have noticed that they had taken up positions so that Nelson Lee was able to look after Lipperstein while Barkley ranged himself near to where Jedzel was seated.

The man in blue serge came slowly forward and halted beside the desk. Lipperstein, gripping at the arms of the chair, thrust his pallid face forward.

"How the—the blazes did you come here?" he asked, in a thick, uncertain voice.

"This is Mr. Warlock," the detective said in a quiet tone. "And I have brought him here for you to identify, because he is the—the thief. We have proofs that it was Mr. Warlock who broke into this office."

It seemed as though both Lipperstein and his partner had lost the use of their tongues. They eyed each other for a moment in a furtive way, and a bead of sweat came out on the forehead of the elder man. Nelson Lee leaned forward.

"This man, Warlock, says that you know him, and that is why we brought him here. You identify him, I suppose?"

It seemed a difficult matter to decide.

"I—I am not sure now. He—he does look like Warlock, but—"

The inspector from Scotland Yard took a hand in the grim game.

"Come, Mr. Lipperstein," he said. "You should have no difficulty in identifying this man. Warlock himself says that he is an old employee of the firm. He has even produced certain papers which identify him."

Barkley slipped one hand into his pocket and produced a number of folded documents, the top one of which bore the inscription: "Correspondence Makapu Concession.—R. J. W."

"Here are papers which were stolen from your safe," he said, laying them on the desk. "I suppose you recognise them?"

Mr. Lipperstein, with an obvious effort, controlled his nerves, and pushing the chair back slightly he half rose to his feet.

"I—I am afraid—I cannot—I am not in a position to—to give a decision just now, gentlemen," he said. "You will have to wait—to wait for my partner, Mr. Brontiell. You see, he is the real head of the syndicate, and has the handling of this affair. Isn't that so?"

His partner seemed very eager to agree with that statement.

"Yes, yes; anything that has to be settled must be done by Brontiell. We are very sorry, gentlemen, but we—we cannot give a decision, and, in fact, I have already wasted too much time here. I—I must go."

If ever a man looked as though he was beating a retreat from a very dangerous position, it was Jedzel. But as he arose the broad hand of Inspector Barkley was thrust out and fell on his shoulder.

"I'm afraid we can't let you go just now, Mr. Jedzel," he said. "As a matter of fact, Mr. Warlock, here—Mr. James Warlock—has had a warrant taken out for your arrest on a charge of conspiracy and fraud."

Barkley turned and nodded to the man in blue serge.

"This is Mr. James Warlock," he said.

From the other side of the desk Lipperstein peered at the silent individual who was standing opposite him.

"James Warlock?" he said. "That's a lie! I know—I know this fellow all too well. His name is Richard Warlock, and by rights he ought to be in prison in Delagoa Bay now."

A spasm of pain crossed the youthful face of the man in blue serge, then something of James Warlock's control vanished, and he leaned across the desk.

"YOU are quite right, Mr. Lipperstein," he said. "Richard Warlock ought to be in prison in Delagoa Bay, and he is in prison there—serving a sentence of ten years for attempting to smuggle diamonds out of the country."

"I don't know anything about that—it had nothing to do with me—"

"It had everything to do with you," the deep voice went on, "and well you know it. You and Jedzel were in the swindle along with Brontzell, and you played your game very well. You sent my son out there to Africa, up country to M'Lunga's place, and you made him your messenger. He had to receive a parcel from M'Lunga—a parcel which he understood contained samples of quartz from a mine owned by M'Lunga. But M'Lunga was your agent in the illicit diamond buying business, and they were stones—uncut diamonds—in that parcel.

"My son got through safely down to Delagoa Bay, where your agent there, a half-caste Portuguese, Lagoda, was waiting for him—and played a vile trick on him. He took the packet of stones, and under pretence of examining it, removed half the contents. But he left behind in the packet the least valuable of the diamonds, getting the others through to you. When he left my son, he went straight to the Portuguese police and informed against him.

"Dick was arrested and accused of breaking the law. He cabled to you here so that you might tell the truth, but you cabled back to Delagoa Bay that you knew nothing about it beyond the fact that he had asked you for work, and you had sent him out to work for you on one of your properties."

The deep voice halted for a moment.

"Dick had no papers—you were too clever for that. He was brought in front of the court and was tried and found guilty. Your agent, Lagoda, was the principal witness against him, for he swore that my son had shown him the packet of diamonds and had asked him to buy them."

Lipperstein and his partner had dropped back in their chairs, and were listening to the quiet, grim voice with the air of men who were hearing their death sentences.

"You allowed my boy to be sent to that terrible prison without giving him even a chance to defend himself. You knew that someone had to be made a scapegoat, for the authorities out there had already got wind of the affair that M'Lunga had been buying diamonds for many months from the natives working in the mines. They had been keeping a sharp look out trying to find where M'Lunga disposed of his stuff, and you were afraid that your association with him might be discovered, so in order to throw dust in the eyes of the authorities you selected my boy to go out there and to do your dirty work, then get imprisonment as a reward."

The smooth unwrinkled features of the speaker twitched for a moment, and he leaned forward across the desk stretching one hand out, pointing at Lipperstein.

"You and your rascally partners sent my son out to practically what will be his grave," he went on. "No white man could serve ten years in that ghastly Portuguese prison."

His voice took on a different note.

"But he will not serve that sentence," he said, "for already I have had half the truth

from one side of this syndicate, and before I leave here I mean to get the remainder."

Lipperstein made an effort to interrupt. He turned to Lee.

"This man is an impostor," he said. "He is trying to make out that he is someone else. But I tell you he is Richard Warlock, a man who was once employed by this firm. Both Jedzel and myself are prepared to swear that this man is Richard Warlock. It is quite true that we heard he had been arrested in Delagoa Bay, but that was obviously a lie, or, at any rate, if it was not, he has escaped from prison, for that is Richard Warlock."

Jedzel grasped at that slight straw.

"Yes, yes! I identify the man as being Richard Warlock," he said. "Whatever he may have told you, I can assure you it is all bluff."

He leaned forward, pointing a shaky finger at the man in blue serge.

"What is your name?" he asked. "You know darned well that you are Richard Warlock. If you managed to—to get out of that awkward country, why didn't you—why didn't you let us know?"

Jedzel and Lipperstein exchanged glances, then the elder partner spoke, looking across at his accuser.

"What's the good of making trouble over this affair?" he said. "I'll ask Mr. Lee and this other gentleman to retire for a few moments, and we can discuss things. After all, it has nothing to do with them. If you really were the man who entered this office and took those papers from the safe—well, we can wipe that out, and, hang it, man, we'll be able to come to some arrangement."

It was obvious that Lipperstein was bluffing it. He really believed that the man in front of him was Richard Warlock, the man on whom the syndicate had played such a rascally trick.

And now, fearing what Warlock might do, Lipperstein, true to the traditions of the City sharp, was quite prepared to pay, and pay heavily, for the privilege of making this supposed victim of his close his mouth.

Nelson Lee, who had said very little so far, then intervened.

"You are quite mistaken, Mr. Lipperstein," he said. "This thing cannot be settled by bribery or intimidation. Richard Warlock is still a prisoner at Delagoa Bay, and my friend here is James Warlock, his father."

Jedzel leaned forward, staring at the figure in blue serge, and with a quick turn of his head, James Warlock faced him.

"You remember me, Jedzel?" he said. "You are the only one of the syndicate that ever met me, and that was many years ago in the north. In fact, it was to you I first sent my son when he wanted to come to London to get employment."

"I admit that I did meet a Mr. James Warlock once," said Jedzel, his eyes narrowing as he studied the figure in front of him. "But you are not the man. He was more my own age, and you've a long way to go before you get to that stage."

WARLOCK drew himself erect. "Eight days ago," he said, "I was in that stage, Jedzel, but a wizard—a wonder-man—has altered me. I don't suppose you have ever heard of Professor Palzer, but Mr. Lee, here, will prove to you that I am speaking the truth."

His blue eyes glinted.

"I went out to South Africa to try to trace my son, and I eventually found him by a sheer stroke of luck. I traced him down to Delagoa Bay, and I found the solicitor who had been acting for him. A bribe managed to get a message into the prison for me, and Dick sent back a reply telling me all that had happened.

"I knew that he never stood a chance. You fellows had worked your game all too well. But while I was in Delagoa Bay in despair, and wondering how I could save Dick, I saw a certain paragraph in one of the papers; a paragraph that brought me back across the ocean immediately to London to make the acquaintance of a man whose name will always be a valued memory to me."

He stretched out his arms and stood up, a supple, youthful figure.

"Eight days ago I submitted to a certain treatment that Professor Palzer believed in. I was forty-three years old then, and looked my years. But now, as you see, I have thrown aside more than twenty years, and as everybody had told me my boy was just exactly as I looked when I was his age, I formed my plan on that fact."

Jedzel made a groping movement with his hand and touched his partner on the arm.

"He—he is telling the truth," he said in a hoarse, cracked whisper. "It's the voice—the voice is different, but I recognise it. It's James Warlock who is standing there, and—and our game is up!"

The crushed tones of the voice indicated that Jedzel believed now; and under the influence of the admission Lipperstein himself began to waver.

He looked across at Nelson Lee.

"Where is Brontiell?" he said. "What has happened to him?"

The detective shrugged his shoulders.

"Mr. Brontiell is now in a hospital at Beaconsfield," he returned, "and we have had sufficient evidence from him to go a long way towards clearing Richard Warlock. What has happened here to-day has completed the matter. Inspector Barkley and myself are witnesses to the fact that you and your partner, Mr. Jedzel, have practically confessed to the fraud that was played on an unfortunate employee of yours."

There was a moment's silence, then Nelson Lee went on.

"Mr. Warlock has every right to demand a public inquiry into the case," he said, "but he is prepared to give you and your partners an opening. If you will make a complete statement, giving full facts of the case, and sign it so that it may be taken out to Africa and presented to the Portuguese

court there, Mr. Warlock will not proceed with the charge so far as you are concerned."

So the amazing confession was written and signed. Then with the precious document in their hands they left. Outside in the street again James Warlock turned towards Lee and his companions.

"I don't know how to thank you, Mr. Lee," he said. "You've helped me to attain the object that I set my heart on, but I must admit now that had it not been for your kindness, I never would have achieved that object. Armed with this confession, I shall have no difficulty in proving to the Portuguese authorities that my son was little more or less than a catspaw, a victim in the hands of those ruffians.

"You see, the authorities knew that a lot of illicit diamond buying had been going on, and these rogues made my son a victim."

He looked across at Barkley and smiled.

"I suppose, in the eyes of the law, I am still a law-breaker," James Warlock went on, "for I did break into that office and tackle the safe. Up in the north I was once upon a time an electrical engineer, and in my young days I was considered an expert."

"We knew you could handle tools all right, Mr. Warlock," Barkley said. "In fact, it was that point which led me astray at first and made me think it was a professional lag who had been at work on the job."

Then James Warlock told them the whole scheme that lay behind his movements.

NELSON LEE had already heard the story, but Barkley had not, and when the inspector heard the part that Palzer had played, and the great risk that this broad-shouldered man had undergone, the police-official drew a deep breath.

"That's the only point that rather troubled me," Barkley said, "for after Mr. Lee had explained to me how you had altered your appearance in such an extraordinary way, I was beginning to be afraid that Scotland Yard would find themselves having to tackle other cases of the same kind. It is hard enough for us to have to trace crooks as it is, and, by Jove, I simply sweated at the thought that those fellows might be able to throw off twenty or thirty years from their appearance and set to work again with all their old skill and with another personality altogether."

"I don't think you need bother about that, inspector, Nipper said. "I didn't start in the transformation affair at the beginning, but, believe me, what I saw of Mr. Warlock after the four or five days of his experience was enough to make anyone sure that that sort of thing would not be taken up by the crook element. They have to get dangerously near to the grave before the principal alteration starts, and there are not many men who would have the nerve to face that ordeal."

At the corner of the street they came to a halt.

(Continued on page 44.)

SURPRISING THE

Fighting James Kingswood, the new headmaster of St. Frank's, who has made so many friends in the school, has also made a dangerous enemy in Mr. Pycraft.



Hoping to discover something detrimental to the Head, Pycraft shadows him to the village. But he is seen by Handforth & Co. who stop his little game by sending him hurtling over the side of a small plank bridge into the shallow river below.



“**G**REAT Scott!” yelled Handforth, in a tone of exaggerated surprise. “The bridge must have collapsed! All right, sir! We’ll get you to the bank!”

Considering that the water at this spot was no more than four feet deep Mr. Pycraft made an unnecessary fuss. Somehow, the juniors managed to drag him to the bank, and with considerable force they hauled him up on to the grass. The bridge being broken, there was now no possibility of Mr. Pycraft getting across to the other side of the river, and continuing his spying on Mr. Kingswood. Quite apart from that, Mr. Pycraft was very anxious to get indoors to change.

“You—you dangerous young rascals!” he panted, his anger rising, pro ratio as his panic subsided. “You—you——”

“Awfully sorry, sir!” said Church earnestly.

“Sorry be hanged!” shouted Mr. Pycraft. “Look at me! I’m drenched to the skin!”

“It’s a warm afternoon, sir——” began Handforth.

“What’s that got to do with it?” shrieked Mr. Pycraft. “I’m drenched! This suit of mine is ruined! You careless young idiots! What do you mean by rushing on to the bridge like that? You might have known that it would collapse under your weight.”

“Accidents will happen, sir, even to the best bridges,” said Handforth. “I don’t see that you can blame us.”

“Oh, you don’t!” snapped the Form-master. “Well, I’m going to make a serious complaint to your House-master, and I shall see that you are fittingly punished.”

And, not trusting himself to speak further on the subject, Mr. Pycraft dashed away.

“Well, that’s that!” grinned Handforth, after Mr. Pycraft was out of earshot.

“Good idea of yours, Handy!” said Church appreciatively. “It was worth quids to see the blighter struggling for his life in four feet of water!”

“He’ll probably spin a pretty yarn to old Wilkey,” said Mac.

“Rats! Old Wilkey will be only too jolly pleased to hear that Pycraft got a ducking,” said Handforth. “Besides, it was an accident, wasn’t it? How can we help the bridge collapsing? Anyhow, the nosey rotter can’t do any more of his spying now.”

“Ahem!” coughed his chums.

“Eh? What are you making those noises for?”

“Nothing!” said Church. “It doesn’t matter. Let’s get on the run again—we shall soon be dry in this sunshine.”

They carried on, and were soon trotting leisurely. In fairness to Handforth, it must be stated that he took his training seriously, and he was now determined to go one better than Archie Glenthorne. Within a day or two there was to be an Eliminating Contest, and it was any odds that Handforth and Archie would be matched. The very thought of Archie beating him sent cold shivers down Handforth’s spine. If such a catastrophe happened he would never be able to hold up his head again!

“It was funny—Pycraft diving into the river,” said Handforth, as he and his chums trotted. “But why was Pycraft shadowing the Head? I tell you, there’s something mysterious about Mr. Kingswood. It’s a pity I have to spend so much time in training. I shan’t be able to carry on with my detective work.”

“That’s not a pity, Handy—that’s a relief!” said Church.

“And while my hands are full like this, that beast, Pycraft, will be prowling about, spying on the Head, and making discoveries!” continued Handforth, in exasperation.

“I’m all in favour of Pycraft getting that ducking,” said McClure. “But don’t you think you’re a bit hard on him? He was only taking a leaf out of your book.”

“Don’t be an ass!” said Handforth. “How can Pycraft take any leaves out of my books? He’s not even my Form-master!”

“I mean, he was only following your example,” said Mac patiently.

SCHOOL!



There was a wild scuffle in the doorway of the gym. Next instant six lags dashed out.

"My example?"

"Haven't you been following the Head about—spying on him, nosing?"

"Me?" roared Handforth, coming to a halt, and turning red with indignation. "Spying? Nosing?"

"Now, don't get excited——"

"I'm not going to have you saying those things about me——"

"You were saying them about Pycraft, weren't you?" growled the Scottish junior. "Dash it, what's the difference? When you see somebody else doing what you were doing, you seem to think that it's wicked!"

"My only sainted aunt!" ejaculated Handforth, his jaw dropping.

"Didn't you spy on Mr. Kingswood that evening, on the moor?" went on Mac relentlessly. "Didn't you go down into a gully, and find a dispatch-box buried in the sand?"

"That was different."

"How? You had no more right to stick your nose into Mr. Kingswood's affairs than Pycraft has!" said McClure. "But are we going to stand here and argue? Let's be getting a move on!"

Handforth was in a different mood by the time he got back to St. Frank's. True, he was tired after the run; but, at the same time, he had realised that his "detective work" could be given another—and a less attractive—name.

"You're right, you fellows," he said, with sudden conviction, just before they went indoors. "From now on I'm going to trust Mr. Kingswood. He is a sportsman—he is true blue. A man like that couldn't be mixed up with a gang of crooks, could he?"

Church and McClure declared that the very idea was idiotic. They all went indoors, changed, and went down to Study D.

"Of course," said Handforth, as he sat down to tea. "It's quite likely that Kingswood is being blackmailed, or something. He may be forced to act in this suspicious way. Perhaps the poor chap can't help himself. I really think I ought to keep an eye on him."

"Oh, my goodness!" groaned Church. "I thought all that was settled."

Fortunately, a tap sounded on the door, and when the caller was invited to walk in, the smiling face of Kid Williams appeared.

"If I've come at an awkward time, young gents, just say the word, and I'll shove off," said the Kid amiably.

"Not a bit of it!" said Handforth. "Come in! Stay to tea, if you like."

"That's very nice of you, Master Handforth, but I'm taking tea with my young boss," explained the genial boxer. "I see you out to-day, and I couldn't help admiring them fine limbs of yours."

Handforth unconsciously stretched his fine limbs.

"Yes, I'm pretty hefty," he admitted modestly.

"And if there are any hints you'd like, young gent, why, don't be afraid to ask," said Mr. Williams good-naturedly. "I'm an old hand at the game, and although most of my time is taking up by training my young boss—still there may be one or two tips I could give you."

"Jolly kind of you, I must say," said Handforth. "Thanks. But I think you'd better take a tip from me, old man. Devote every minute of your time to Archie. He needs you. I don't."

"Master Archie is coming on a real treat," said the Kid enthusiastically. "You wouldn't believe the difference in him already—"

"He'll need to be different, too, if he's going to be matched against me," grinned Handforth. "You might tell him, Kid, that I'll see that he's made nice and comfortable after I've knocked him out."

And with an airy wave of his hand, Handforth dismissed Mr. Williams. Church and McClure stared at him with exasperation and anger after the genial Kid had gone.

"Fathead!" said Church.

"Lunatic!" added McClure.

"Here, what the——"

"That man comes here, and offers you his help and advice—and all you can do is to turn him down!" went on Church. "Why, you conceited chump, you spoke to the Kid as though you could lick Archie with one hand tied behind you!"

"So I could!" replied Handforth promptly. "Easy!"

"What's the use?" groaned McClure, with a helpless shrug.

They gave Handforth up as a bad job. Not that it made any real difference. They had known, from the very start, that Edward Oswald stood no earthly chance. He was a

great fighter—but when it came to boxing he was dealing with an art of which he knew practically nothing.

And the funny thing was, Handforth thought he knew it all!

Justice!

HANDFORTH was taking his training in earnest. As soon as prep was over he left the study, much to his pals' delight, and made his way to the dusty Triangle. If Archie was going to run every day, Handy was going to run day and night.

But before the burly Removite had circumnavigated the Triangle—just as he was passing the gym—something amazing happened.

The six-foot, athletic figure of the Head was seen striding up the Triangle towards him. Almost as Handy saw the Head, there came a sudden wild scuffle from the gymnasium. The next moment half a dozen nimble figures came dashing out into the dusk at a truly incredible speed. Mr. Kingswood, active though he was, had no time to dodge.

Crash!

The unfortunate Head was bowled clean over, and he went sprawling. As a matter of fact, those other figures belonged to Willy Handforth, Chubby Heath, Juicy Lemon, and several other bright members of the Third Form. Willy himself had gone flying, owing to the force of the collision, and Owen minor, and Tommy Hobbs, were both more or less stunned.

Handforth, running up, was full of indignation. Subconsciously, he had heard a metallic clatter—and now, suddenly, he found a small flat metal tin, almost at his feet.

"You—you careless young monkeys!" he shouted. "Yes, Willy, my son, I'm talking to you, too! What do you mean by dashing out like that, and barging into the Head?"

"Sorry, sir!" gasped Willy, leaping to his feet. "Come on, Chubby! You too, Juicy! Don't bunk, you asses! Give Mr. Kingswood a hand!"

They were hauling at the Head when Mr. Kingswood gave an alarmed shout. Handforth, at that very moment, had picked up the flat tin—and he saw at a glance that it was a two-ounce tobacco tin, with the name of a well-known brand printed on the lid.

"Give that to me!" came a sharp command from the Head. "Quick, boy! Has the lid come open? Let me see it!"

Handforth was surprised by the Head's urgent tones, and, bewildered, he looked at the tin in his hand. He shook it—and wondered. For the tin seemed to be nearly empty; something rattled within. Certainly, it was not tobacco.

Taking the tin from Handforth's hand, the Head turned aside, and with a quick movement, he opened the lid, and glanced within. Edward Oswald heard a quick sigh of relief.

"All right!" said Mr. Kingswood, putting the tin quickly into his pocket.

"We're dreadfully sorry, sir," said Willy earnestly. "It was all our fault, for rushing out like that—"

"Try to be less precipitate in future," said the Head, not unkindly. "That's all right, kids; you didn't hurt me."

And, without another word, he walked off into the dusk.

"Well, that's what I call handsome!" said Chubby Heath, with relief. "Good old Head! I say, what a corker he is!"

Handforth stood there, ignoring the fags altogether. And Willy, who had been expecting a lecture from his major, stole away. Once again, Handforth was left in solitary state.

"This is getting rummier and rummier," he muttered. "Why did the Head get so scared? He was almost in a panic about that

tobacco tin—and gasping with relief, when he found that it hadn't sprung open. And there wasn't any tobacco in it, either—but something hard. Something which rattled. By George! Smuggled diamonds, perhaps!"

It was just as well, perhaps, that Handforth was not allowed to pursue his sensational theory. For his thoughts were interrupted by some low-voiced, cackling laughs.

Another voice was protesting feebly.

Handforth saw four dim figures in the gloom; he recognised Forrest, Gulliver and Bell, of Study A—the cads of the Remove.

For some moments he stared abstractedly. He recognised the fourth figure as Ellmore, of the Fourth.

And Ellmore was, in a way of speaking, on the spot.

"Now, feint with your right!"



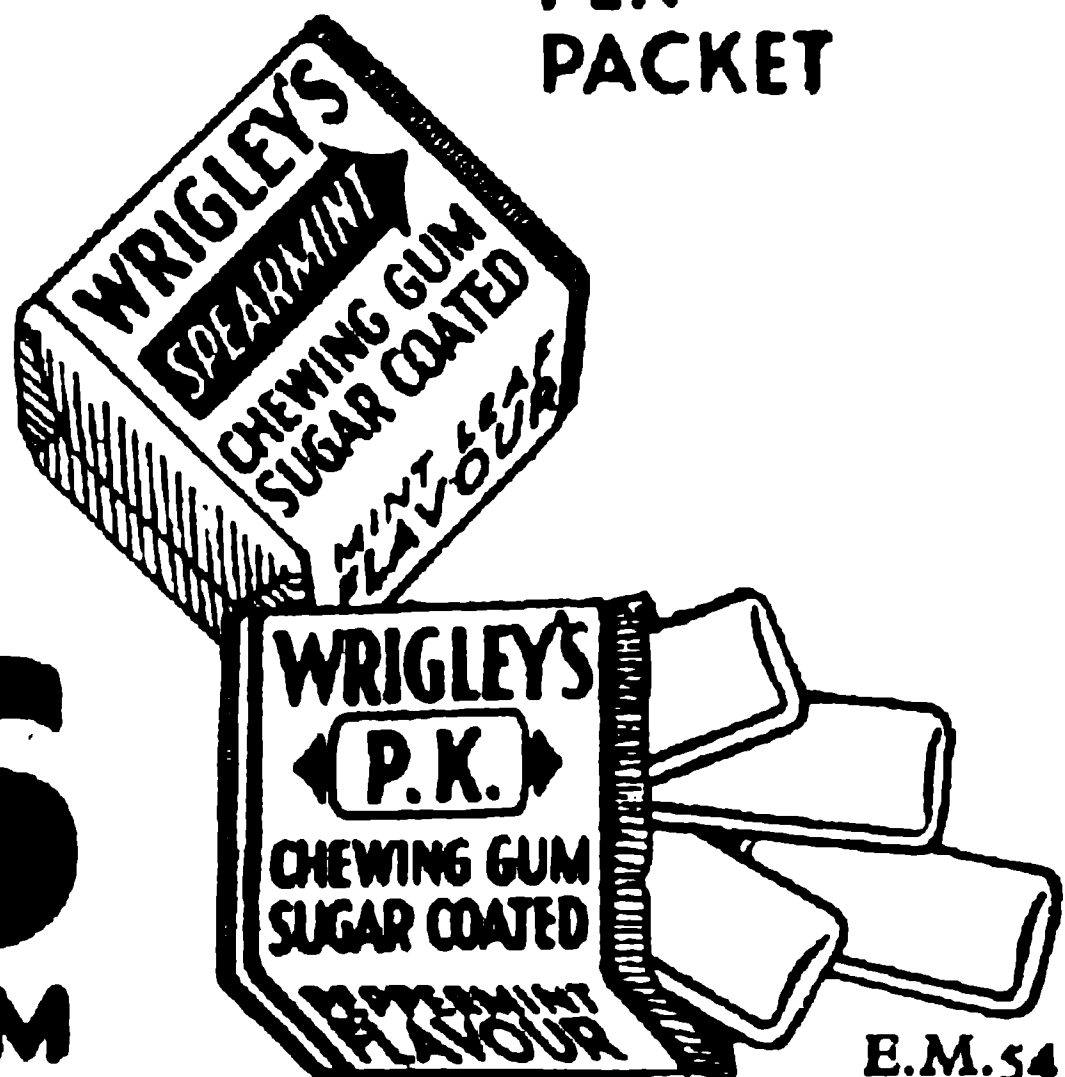
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Rough Justice!

BERNARD FOREST called a halt when the victim had been dragged beneath the deep shadow of the chestnuts.

"This'll do!" said Forrest coolly. "Hold him tightly, my sons."

"Really, my dear Forrest, this is most unwarrantable!" protested Eugene Ellmore. "I have done nothing to harm you—why should you pick on me—"

"Dry up!" snapped Forrest. "You're a Fourth Form cad, and I'm not forgetting that your Fourth-Formers smothered me with potato peelings, cabbage leaves, and other kitchen refuse when you played that jape! So you're going through the mill—as an example to your beastly pals!"

"Oh, dear!" said Ellmore feebly. "But I did absolutely nothing—nothing in that unfortunate affair. In fact, Forrest, I was quite opposed to it."

Ellmore was a studious, absent-minded, in-offensive youngster. He had strong vegetarian leanings, and he was a fellow who kept very much to himself. It was characteristic of Forrest & Co. to pick on such a harmless, defenceless victim.

"Hold him tightly, now!" said Forrest suddenly.

Handforth heard a ripping sound, he heard three or four chuckles from Gulliver and Bell—and a wail of anguish from Ellmore. And at last, the leader of Study D awoke to the fact that dirty work was afoot.

He strode up abruptly—and then emitted a roar of wrath.

For in that glance he saw exactly what Forrest & Co. were doing. Whilst Gulliver and Bell held the victim, Forrest was deliberately and maliciously slashing Ellmore's jacket to ribbons!

"Here, stop that, you cads!" shouted Handforth furiously.

"By gad!" gasped Forrest, starting back.

He and his chums were taken completely unawares. Until that second they had believed themselves to be entirely alone, and unobserved. Now, all in a flash, Handforth was amongst them, lashing out to right and to left.

Biff! Thud! Crash!

When Handforth started a scrap, he started something with a vengeance! Gulliver went down, howling. Bell staggered back, wailing with agony. Only Forrest made any attempt to retaliate.

"You miserable worms!" fumed Handforth. "I'm ashamed to acknowledge that you belong to the Remove!"

"You fool! We're only getting our own back on the Fourth!" gasped Forrest.

"Rot! Japes are all right, but I'm dashed if I'm going to see you playing a filthy trick like this!" said Handforth fiercely. "Do you think I'm going to have the Fourth chaps saying that we, in the Remove, countenance this sort of thing? Not likely! Take that!"

Crash!

"Just a moment, boys!" said a brisk, well-known voice.

The fight stopped abruptly. Mr. Kingswood was on the scene. As a matter of fact, his keen eyes had seen the whole thing—from the very first—and he was quite pleased with Handforth. Much as Fighting Jim liked to see a spirit of rivalry between the Junior Forms, he detested maliciousness.

"This won't do, you chaps," he said crisply. "If there's going to be a fight, let it be a proper fight."

"Eh? Beg pardon, sir?" asked Handforth.

"You're scrapping with this youngster, aren't you?" demanded the Head. "What's your name?" he went on, addressing the cad of Study A.

"Forrest, sir," growled Bernard.

"Well, it seems to me that you two had better go along to the gymnasium and have this out in the good old-fashioned style," said the Head. "Come along—I'll be referee."

"By George That's a jolly good idea, sir," said Handforth eagerly.

Gulliver and Bell were allowed to sneak off—and they lost no time in doing so. Forrest protested at first, but it was soon apparent that Mr. Kingswood was very much in earnest. Yet he did everything with a smile.

"Fighting out here, in the dusk, becomes suspiciously like a brawl," he said gently. "If two of you fellows have a disagreement, it is far better to get into the ring, put your gloves on, and have it out decently. I'm not going to inquire into the cause of the quarrel—that's not my affair at all. I am just going to referee the match, and see fair play. Get busy—and may the best man win."

"Don't you worry, sir," said Handforth confidently. "The best man will! I'm going to give Forrest the licking of his life!"

It is scarcely necessary to record that Gulliver and Bell, bursting into the Junior passage of the Ancient House, fully advertised the "Head's latest." Church and McClure soon got wind of it—to say nothing of such fellows as Travers and Potts and Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West and others. The news had spread like lightning to the West House, and Reggie Pitt and his crowd came bustling out.

Ellmore, spotted by Buster Boots and some other Fourth-Formers, refused to sneak, but he explained what was happening in the gym.

Thus, almost before the "boxing-match" was on the go, crowds of juniors came surging in. Removites and Fourth-Formers alike were as keen as mustard to see the scrap.

And it was remarkable how quickly the truth of the affair became known, and was whispered round. Handforth was fighting Forrest because Forrest had been playing a dirty trick on Ellmore! And, what was more, the Head himself was countenancing the whole business by refereeing the fight!

It was a very novel situation, and the boys crowded round to see the results.

(Fighting James certainly knows how to deal out the surprises. He's got more up his sleeve for St. Frank's in next week's chapters of this exciting school story.)

The Editors' Weekly Pow-Wow! Gather Round, Chums!

My dear Chums,
—I have several important things to mention this week, and not much space in which to do it, so I must be as brief as possible.



Letters to the Editor should be addressed to **NELSON LEE LIBRARY, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.**

In the first place, there is a very pleasant surprise in store for those of you who are also readers of our famous companion papers. That sounds good, doesn't it, and it is! Therefore, keep your eyes on the "Ranger," "Magnet" or "Modern Boy," for it is from their direction that the big surprise will come. That it is a treat of the most sensational variety you can rest assured, so watch these companion papers for further announcements.

At bookstalls and newsagents all over the country you will have noticed the appearance of a good many annuals. Well, when making your choice, bear in mind the following annuals, which are strongly recommended:

- "The HOLIDAY Annual," price 6/-,
- "The Popular Book of Boys' Stories," price 2/6,
- "The MODERN BOY'S Annual," price 6/-,
- "The New ZOO Annual," price 6/-,
- "The Modern Boy's Book of MOTORS, SHIPS & ENGINES," price 7/6.

There's a batch for you; books to satisfy all tastes. See that you possess one or more of them before they are sold out.

Talking of good things, here's another one in the shape of next Wednesday's issue of the NELSON LEE. And, gee, boys, what a number it is, to be sure! First of all there's the long complete detective-thriller, "The Mystery Box!" As this particular mystery box contains some sensational secrets, so does the story about which it is written contain some sensational adventures. Your two great favourites, Nelson Lee and Nipper, are well to the fore in this yarn, and what they have to go through to solve a baffling mystery will give you the thrill of the week. Then there are also further chapters of E. S. Brooks' great school story, "Waking Up St. Frank's!" included in the programme. There's little need for me to mention the fact that those chapters are packed with stirring events—you will have guessed that. Don't miss next week's grand number, boys.

PEN PALS!

William Hollings, 4, Willaston Road, Walton, **Liverpool**, wants to hear from stamp collectors.

Henry Hughes, 139, Congleton Road, Butt

Lane, T u l k e ,
S t o k e - o n -
T r e n t , **Staffs**,
wants a correspondent in Ireland.

Bryan Beirne, Somerton House, Wexford, **Ireland**, wants to correspond with butterfly and moth collectors outside the British Isles.

Donald Grogan, 38, Dresden Road,

Highgate, **London, N.**, wants correspondents interested in the films.

READERS' PRIZE JOKES.

Smith: "I say, Jones, is that new house of yours very small?"

Jones: "Small? Why, it's so small we have to live on condensed milk!"

(*R. Hamilton, 9, Seymour Road, Stockport. A penknife.*)

Newly arrived Prisoner (to warder who is locking his cell door): "By the way, warder, I always sleep with my door open!"

(*J. Chatham, "Eversley," Lindsell Rd., Altrincham. A Penknife.*)

Gruff Voice on the telephone: "Tommy cannot come to school to-day as he has got a cold."

Headmaster: "Who is that speaking?"

Gruff Voice: "My father, sir."

(*A. Schofield, 320, Ashton Rd., Oldham, Lancs. A Pocket Wallet.*)

The commercial traveller, having gained admittance to the buyers' office, lowered himself gingerly into a chair.

"I'm a little stiff from bowling," he explained.

"I don't care who you are or where you come from," snapped the other. "What is it you have to sell?"

(*J. Heather, 139, Derwent St., Island Bay, Wellington, New Zealand. A Grand Prize.*)

Magistrate: "How is it that you managed to take the man's watch from his pocket when it was secured by a patent safety chain?"

Prisoner (with dignity): "Sorry, your worship, but my fee is thirty bob for the full course of six lessons!"

(*J. Flanagan, 24, Providence Rd., Delph Lane, Leeds. A Penknife.*)

DOUBLECROSSED!*(Continued from page 37.)*

"What about Bronticell?" said James Warlock.

Barkley cast a quick glance at Nelson Lee, and the detective nodded.

"Don't you worry about Bronticell," said Inspector Barkley. "You go right ahead at setting your son free. Leave the rest to me. Bronticell made himself such a nuisance that I started looking up the records of that precious syndicate. You see, when a man in Bronticell's position makes such a song about a few paltry hundred pounds, it attracts attention; and, well, to cut a long story short, we have stumbled on to as pretty a picture of fraud as ever I've seen, and we can charge those partners with enough defalcations and faked prospectuses to send them away for long terms of imprisonment without once mentioning your son, Mr. Warlock, or Delagoa Bay. In short, they have brought their deserts on themselves."

They parted then; Barkley and Warlock entering a taxi and being driven to the Colonial Office, while Nelson Lee and his companions headed for the Grays Inn Road.

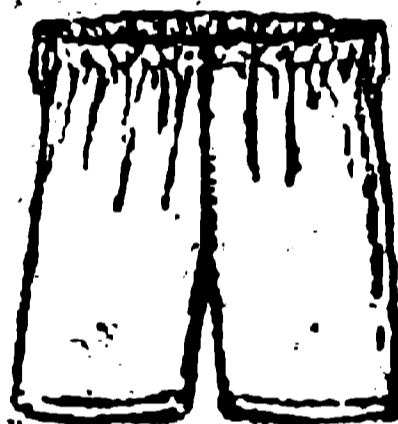
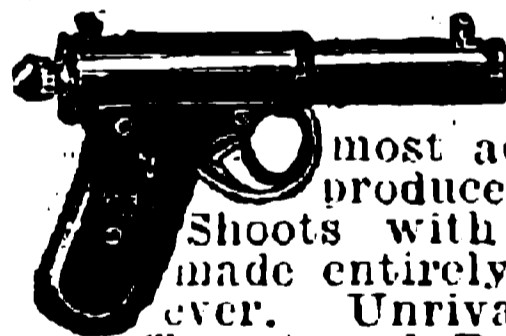
But everything that Inspector Barkley had said came true. James Warlock's son was released from the Delagoa Bay Prison with a free pardon; and Bronticell, Lipperstein and Jedzel did go to prison in England for company frauds.

Richard Warlock and his father returned to England to thank Nelson Lee, Nipper, Lord Dorrimore and Professor Palzer for all they had done. But the professor was a disappointed man. He could not find anyone else to undergo the experiment, and owing to the use to which the experiment had been put by James Warlock, the actual results of the serum could not be made known to the general public, for fear criminal use might be made of the discovery.

As for the actual burglary at the offices of the syndicate, Scotland Yard conveniently forgot all about it and turned away to more important matters and the catching of worse crooks.

THE END.

(A baffling mystery unearthed after forty years. What is the secret of "The Mystery Box"? See next week's Gripping Detective-Thriller, featuring Nelson Lee and Nipper in sensational adventure.)

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