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The NELSON LEE



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New Series No. 23.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

June 28th, 1930.

THE COWBOY KID & CO!



Adventure No. 6.

**"The Return
of
King Loopy!"**

***They led Loopy
to the slaughter
—and that's all
they did do!***

Prisoners!

IN the golden radiance of a tropical morning, a canoe with a sail, driven by a slight breeze, ran quietly and slowly into the sandy beach of a palm island and grated there. Out of it climbed Loopy Lane, the Cowboy Kid, and King of Bangaloola, his little black boy chum and interpreter, Kiki, and Sheba, Loopy's magnificent pet tiger.

Loopy flung his stock whip on the sand and put on his broad brimmed Stetson. His skin was copper tanned, and with his chequered shirt, his flowing tie, his hairy chaps, his spurred boots, and his belt with double holsters, each holding a revolver, he looked the dapper little cowboy to the life.

"This is a mighty big island we've come to, Kiki," said Loopy, as he stripped for a swim. "I suppose you don't know it, do you?"

"Yessum," answered Kiki, stretching his mouth in a terrific grin. "We comey back to Bangaloola."

"You don't say!" Loopy was surprised. "How do you figger that?"

"See big fire mountain from de sea."

"Oh, that smoking volcano. So this is Bangaloola? All right, Kiki. Then I'll be able to get my own back on that treacherous old scoundrel Wangaloola who lured us over to Potakeeta and left us to be killed and eaten there. You'd better show me the way to the big city."

For two days they followed a trail, hiding whenever they saw any natives, and then, at nightfall, they came to the big city,

climbed the protecting wall and entered its almost deserted streets.

And there Kiki, who went on ahead to do a bit of scouting, heard a most astounding story which he breathlessly repeated to Loopy.

"Massa keeng," he panted, perspiration rolling in beads down his black cheeks, "oley Poo-poo, witchey doctor, keeng of Bangaloola. Chi-Chi-Coo, lordy chamberlain, makeum Wangaloola keeng after leavum keeng Loopy, Kiki and she-cat to be keel by Potakeetans. Wangaloola keeng oney day only. Big crowd come to great city. Poo-poo burney oley Wangaloola in public square in de morning."

"Oh! That old blackguard is going to burn Wangaloola in the morning, is he, Kiki?" said Loopy Lane, as he fingered the thong of his stock whip fondly. "It seems to me we have got back just in time. Wangaloola served us a dirty trick, but I'm not going to let him be burned alive if I can help it."

"And oley Poo-poo, nasty witchey doctor?" questioned Kiki.

"I'll deal with him afterwards."

Loopy Lane crept into an empty hut with a thatched roof, and went to sleep there, with Sheba the she-cat at his feet. Kiki curled up in a corner. As soon as morning came, the black boy slipped away and reached the crowded city square where thousands of people were gathered. Armed warriors kept them in bounds. In the middle of the square a huge heap of twigs and branches, as dry as tinder, was piled eight feet high around a huge stake which had been driven deep in the ground. This the Cowboy Kid

saw by flicking his stock whip round the branch of a tree and hauling himself up, so that he could look over the heads of the swaying people.

And he had not come a minute too soon. To an accompaniment of dulled drum beats and wailing horns, Wangaloola, the unlucky ex-king of Bangaloola, was led out from the royal palace. There was a halter round his neck, and his hands were tied behind him. A huge man who looked like a gorilla, held the end of the cord, which he jerked at every other step, half-choking the helpless prisoner. The gorilla-like man carried a big-bladed sword in his right hand, and he raised this in answer to the shouts of the crowd. Kiki looked up from below at the Cowboy Kid.

"Swordy man oley Wambo, public executioner," he said in answer to Loopy's inquiry.

Loopy was so absorbed by the sight that he could not move. Marching in a double line, and keeping step with the waddling prisoner, came a detachment of the royal guards with spears pointed earthward.

Then followed a crowd of dignitaries and high officials wearing robes of state, including Chi-Chi-Coo, the lord chamberlain, in his cap of bells, and old Poo-poo, the witch-doctor, who wore a hideous mask of a head four times human size, through the eyes of which his own eyes glinted wickedly.

Amid the frenzied shouting of the crowd Wangaloola was led to the stake, forced to it and tied up securely, his great body quivering like a jelly.

Then Wambo the executioner, seizing a brand, thrust it into a burning fire which blazed in the open and, going up to the heap of dried twigs, plunged the flaming torch right into it.

In a flash flames roared up in great lapping tongues, and smoke drifted across the square. Wangaloola's scream brought the Cowboy Kid down out of the tree in a second. A moment later he was seated on Sheba's back. With a gentle touch of his spurred heel on her flank, he sent her leaping high above the heads of the crowd.

They came down clear in the open square. Then, stock whip in hand, Loopy Lane raced for the funeral pyre. Standing just a nicely calculated distance away, he began to lash at the twigs with the whip, the flying thong cutting the burning brushwood away in lumps.

Flaming debris floated across the square, and in amongst the startled crowd. Loopy kept on lashing until he had hit the last flickering tongue of flame right out; then stepping up to Wangaloola, he whipped out a pocket-knife and cut him free.

The fat old boy gave him a startled glance out of his rat ringed eyes, and then collapsed, rolling over among the dying embers of the fire.

Kiki's voice suddenly yelled in Loopy's ear. "Lookey out!"

The Cowboy Kid swung round. He was not a moment too soon for Wambo, the bow-legged and gorilla-like executioner, with his sword grasped in both hands, was striding up and swinging it, ready to strike.

With a swing of his whip Loopy caught Wambo by the ankle. Tugging the whip in, he brought him crashing to the ground. A second later strong arms seized him from behind and dragged him down. His whip was torn from his hand, his revolvers whipped from their holsters, and his lasso stolen from the hook of his belt.

Worse than that; as he struggled with his powerful guards, Loopy saw a dozen men dump a huge crate or wicker cage down over Sheba, taking her unawares from behind; he saw them shut the door securely, and knew that the beautiful tiger was trapped like himself. He looked round for Kiki, but the black boy had disappeared.

Then, as the giant warriors who held him jerked his arms behind him and tied them, Poo-poo, the witch-doctor, came up.

"Fool!" he said, in the Bangaloola tongue. (Kiki interpreted this afterwards). "I thought they had killed and eaten you and your she-cat in Potakeeta. You must have been mad to return. Wangaloola shall be burned to-morrow morning, after I have cut your head off and slain your striped cat. I, Poo-poo, King of Bangaloola, have said it!"

Then they bore Loopy away and shut him up in a filthy, evil-smelling hole underground, and posted fifty armed warriors on guard.

No Escape!

THE Cowboy Kid sat in the dark, suffering so great an agony from the cords which dug deep into his wrists that he could not sleep. Through a chink in the door of his prison he could see old Poo-poo the witch-doctor, Chi-Chi-Coo the lord chamberlain, Wambo, the executioner, and a crowd of others seated cross-legged in a ring upon the ground, and he knew that they were talking about him.

Suddenly he heard a hissing sound at his elbow, and swung round, believing it must be a poison snake. A hand touched his.

"Massa keeng," said a voice, "me' cutty bonds. She-cat shutey upey in cage. Sheba alley lightey."

It was Kiki—Kiki, who had come to help him, and to tell him that his beloved she-cat was still alive.

The black boy crept away cautiously and listened to the drone of the voices in the next room. Loopy could just catch a glimpse of Kiki's rolling eyes in the dark. He heard Wambo shouting, and soon afterwards the conference broke up.

Kiki crept back to tell Loopy that Wambo, the executioner, was going to lop his head off in the public square in the morning. Wangaloola was also to be led out and burnt as he should have been burnt that morning. Poo-poo, the witch-doctor, had ordered the executioner to go straight to the cage and

plunge his sword into the heart of the imprisoned tiger, Kiki added; but Wambo had objected, on the ground that the she-cat was a spirit, and that no harm could reach her until King Loopy's head had been cut off.

After that, Wambo declared, they would have to float the she-cat down the big river to the falls in a funeral canoe, for the only way to kill the evil spirit was to drown her. If she were to come to harm before King Loopy had been killed, famine and pestilence, fire and death, would sweep the people of Bangaloola from the face of the earth. Chi-Chi-Coo had supported Wambo's view, and so the she-cat was to live until the morning.

"That's a nice look-out for me," sighed the Cowboy Kid. "If you got into this dismal place you can get out, Kiki, and I'm going with you. Show me the way."

But the tramp of heavy footsteps, the clink of steel, and the murmuring of many voices drawing ever nearer, drove Kiki hurriedly away.

When an armed guard entered Loopy's prison to the light of many torches Kiki had vanished, and there was no hole or door to show how he had gone. The guards blinked incredulously at Loopy's freed hands, but did not tie them up again.

"A miracle," they declared, and left him after setting a bowl of boiled yams and a carafe of water on the ground beside him.

All that long night Loopy Lane sat in the dark, tormented by the never ceasing drone of guttural voices from the armed guard in the outer chamber, and the dull distant beating of tom-toms.

Would Kiki come back? Was there any possibility of his rescuing the wonderful tiger? Loopy cared far more about the fate of Sheba than of himself. Perhaps the savages had captured and killed Kiki, and if so—

The Cowboy Kid knew that he stood little chance of escape this time. Poo-poo, the witch-doctor, hated him. In the morning the guards would march with him to the market square, and Wambo would slice his head off with that double-handled sword unless a miracle happened. They had stolen his stock-whip. They had taken his lasso, his belt with the blank cartridges, his two revolvers. He was helpless!

The Execution!

MORNING came at last. They brought him no breakfast, but presently crowded into the cell and dragged him out. The Cowboy Kid found himself surrounded by a crowd of six-foot guards, armed with spears and shields, and painted hideously with daubs of white. They grunted as they looked at him curiously, hesitating before, at a command from their leader, they bound Loopy's hands behind him. They were afraid of the Kid's magic, Loopy supposed. Having done this, and finding themselves still alive, they gave grunts of

satisfaction and hurried Loopy out into the open.

There a regiment of the royal guard was waiting, armed to the teeth, sheaths of arrows dangling from their sides, bows on their backs, spears and shields in their hands, feather head-dresses on their heads.

Peeping between their ranks, Loopy saw that the approaches to the public square were black with people. He could hear the frenzied beating of the drums and the drone of many horns.

A wailing cry close at hand made him turn, and he saw six stalwart guards dragging old Wangaloola along. The ex-King of Bangaloola was being drawn by a rope, his hands were tied behind him, and he stumbled at every other step, groaning miserably, his fat body shaking as he went.

Then, at a word, the march began. As the troops turned into the great square, the people, who were packed in dense swaying masses, raised a mighty shout.

In the middle of the square a stake had been re-erected, and to this Wangaloola was led, forced to mount the huge pile of brushwood, and tied securely there. Twenty paces away from the stake a small platform had been built, and in front of this stood old Poo-poo, who again had donned the hideous head mask which he wore when he wanted to frighten the natives.

Next to the miserable old plotter was Chi-Chi-Coo, the lord chamberlain, another one of the plotting rascals who wanted to get rid of Wangaloola and the Cowboy Kid. And on the other side of the platform stood the gorilla-like executioner, leaning on his sword.

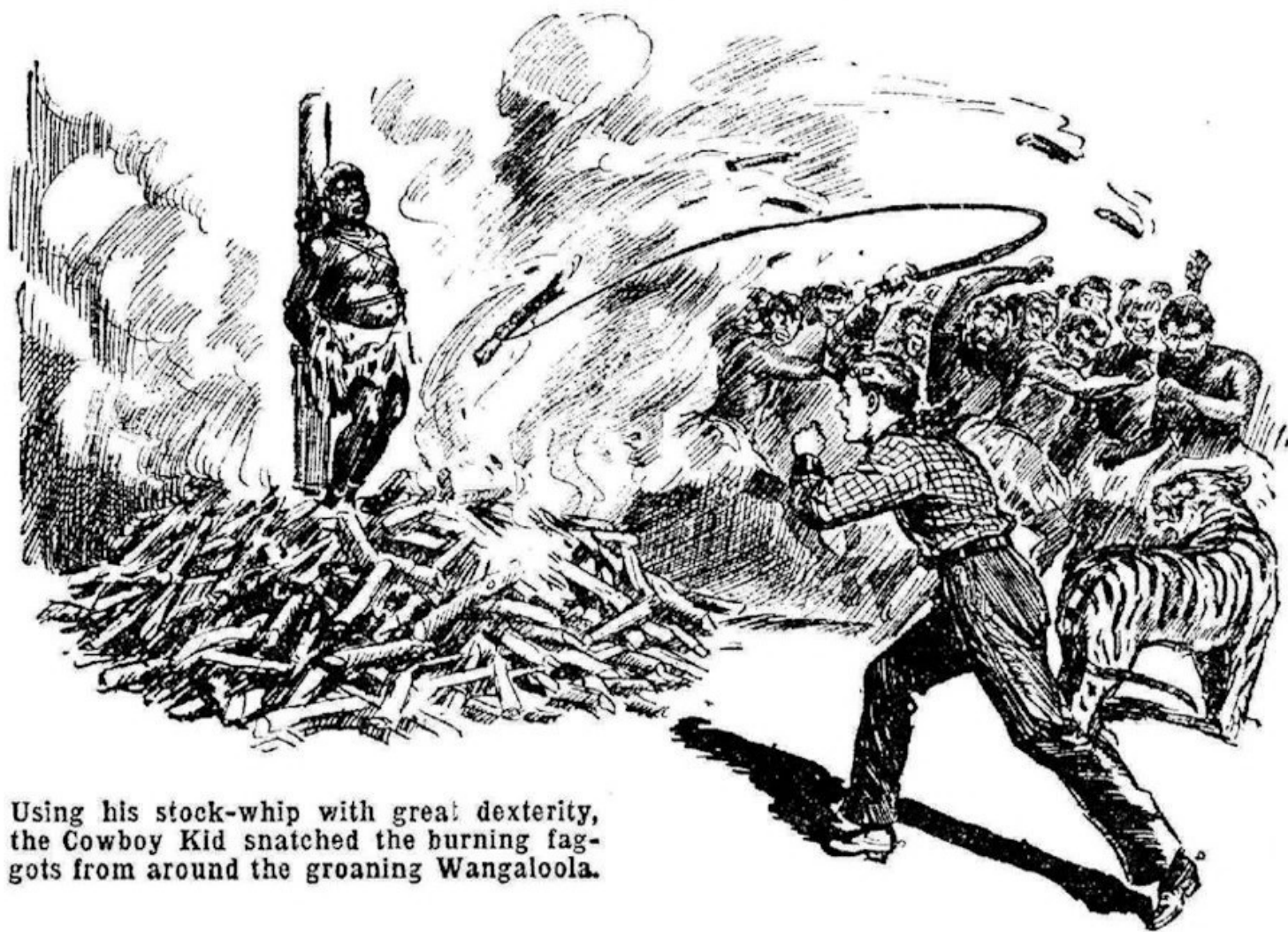
Loopy took these details in at a glance, and then, turning his head, saw a huge crate or cage standing a little distance away, guarded by a dozen giant warriors of the royal guard. Inside it was Sheba, his beloved she-cat, the tiger who was the best pal Loopy had ever had. At sight of her Loopy gave a shrill piping whistle.

Its effect was magical. Leaping to her feet, the beautiful she-cat hurled her body against the bars of cane, but strong as she was she could make no impression. The guards scattered as she leapt, scared out of their wits, for they believed the tiger was a god.

How Loopy wished he could have gone to her and stroked her! He moved to do so, but was roughly dragged back.

His eyes travelled to the execution platform again, and he noted the block of wood which stood upon it. He smiled, for there, ostentatiously laid upon it, was his stock-whip, and on the other side his lasso. Beyond the block lay his belt with the holsters carrying his two revolvers. Poo-poo had put them there to show the people that they held no real magic, Loopy supposed.

He looked around in vain for Kiki.



Using his stock-whip with great dexterity, the Cowboy Kid snatched the burning faggots from around the groaning Wangaloola.

At the raising of Poo-poo's right hand the drums ceased beating, and the horns were no longer blown. The gaping thousands ceased their shouting, and in silence Poo-poo started to address the Cowboy Kid. Loopy did not understand a single word he said, but he could tell by the other's snarling tone, and by the glint of his evil eyes through the eye-holes of his hideous mask, that Poo-poo was spitting venom at him. The Cowboy Kid grinned.

"All right, get on with it," he said. "But if I once get free——" Loopy felt a thrill pass through him. He had happened to glance down the square at Sheba's cage, and as he did so he saw Kiki, streaking out of the crowd, run to the crate and kneel beside it. Loopy saw the gleam of steel in the sunlight, and wondered, not knowing that Kiki was cutting through the strong bands of cane which held the door of the crate or cage tightly closed. The guards had turned to watch the execution, and Kiki had finished his work without their knowing it. The mad shouting of the thousands who saw was mistaken for hysterical excitement over the imminent execution of King Loopy.

Poo-poo signed to the guards. They seized the Cowboy Kid, and, in spite of his struggles, dragged him down to the platform on his knees. Loopy whistled, hoping that the well-known sound would reach his tiger. Wambo, the executioner, who did not seem to be in love with his job, shouldered the lord chamberlain aside and reluctantly swung his sword above his head.

It flashed in the sunlight, but before he could bring it crashing down, Sheba hurled herself at him in a mighty leap. One look at Wambo she gave, then bowled him over like a ninepin. He fell over backwards; the double-handled weapon hurtled from his hands, and, turning over and over as it rose and fell, crashed through old Poo-poo's hideous mask, striking him on the skull and laying him out.

Sheba leapt at the frightened guards, striking out with her paws and scattering them. Then she came to Loopy, rubbed her striped side against him lovingly, and, as he held out his hands, began to gnaw at the cords that bound him.

No sooner had the bonds fallen asunder than Loopy Lane leapt to where his whip lay, picked it up and began to lash out at old Chi-Chi-Coo and the whole group of gorgeously robed dignitaries who had treacherously betrayed him. They started at the run along the square, while the crowd bellowed in astonishment.

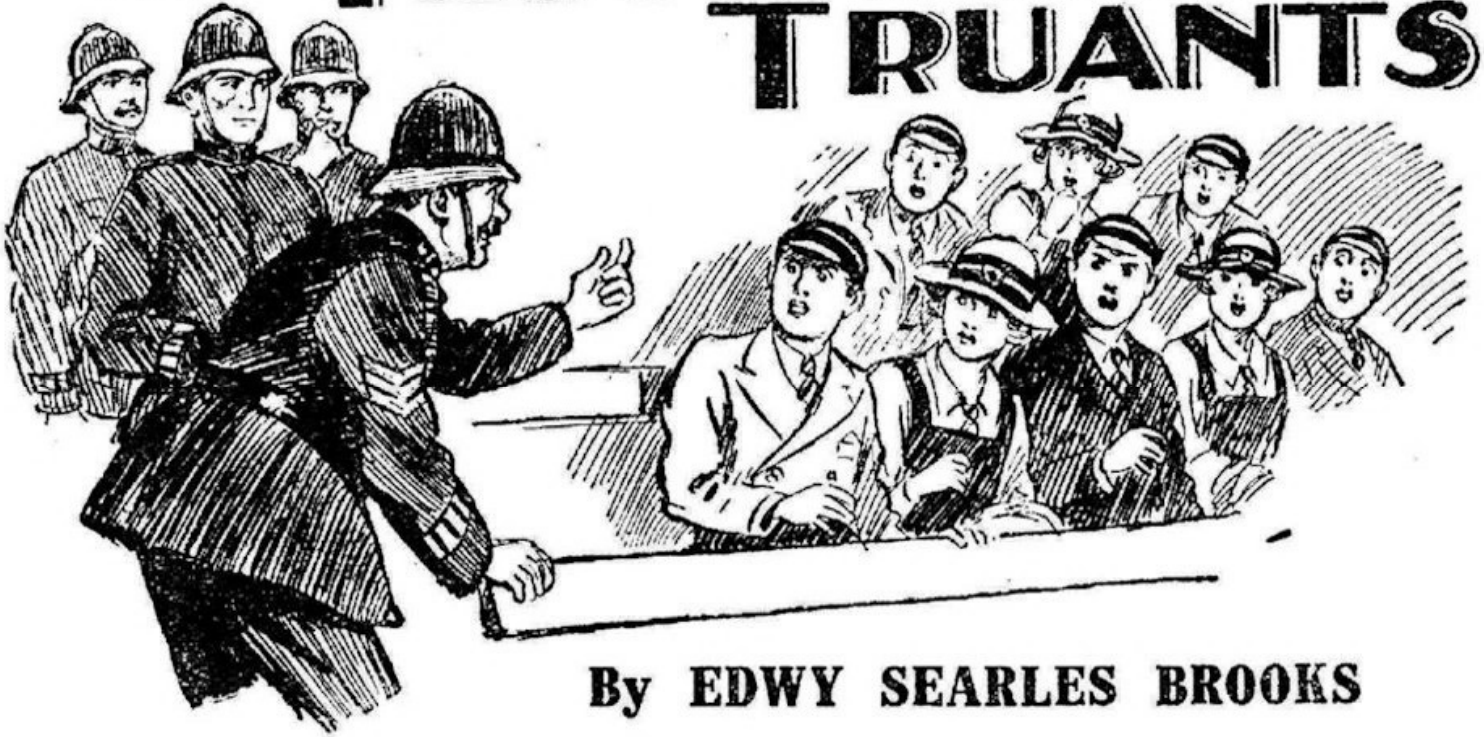
King Loopy *did* perform real magic. His she-cat was a spirit. The magic whip had power in it to rout an army.

Loopy looked at the pile on which Wangaloola stood, tied to the stake. He saw four burning brands spluttering on the ground. Straight to the pile Loopy went, master of the situation now, with Sheba strutting beside him and Kiki, all smiles, following.

He cut old Wangaloola free, and the old

(Continued on page 13.)

THE TEST MATCH TRUANTS



By **EDWY SEARLES BROOKS**

CHAPTER 1.

The Good Samaritan!

EXACTLY the same as last time—only different!" said Edward Oswald Handforth gloomily. "At the last Test-match we were stony broke, but had permission to go. At this Test-match we're rolling in tin, but we're barred!"

"Disgusting!" said McClure feelingly.

"Whichever way you look at it, the result is just the same," commented Church. "No Test-match for us. And to make matters worse, those grinning Carlton fatheads are all going!"

"Don't!" said Handforth thickly.

The famous chums of Study D at St. Frank's were wandering disconsolately along the towing-path of the River Stowe in the warm sunlight of the June evening. A few other Old-Timers were in the offing, every bit as downcast as the Study D trio.

The position was certainly exasperating.

The second great Test-match between England and Australia had already started at Lord's. And to-morrow—Saturday—being a half-holiday, a number of St. Frank's fellows were taking advantage of the special excursion trains which were running up to London.

Kirby Keeble Parkington and Clement Goffin and Harvey Deeks and all the other "Red-Hots"—late of Carlton College, and now a vital Force in the Remove at St. Frank's—were going by that excursion. Owing to a particularly daring jape of Hand-

forth's they had been dished out of seeing the first Test-match.

It was because of that jape, in fact, that the Old-Timers—or, at least, the twelve who had participated in the jape—were penalised. The headmaster had sent forth his edict that in no circumstances were those twelve boys to be granted any special facilities. They were forbidden to leave the school. They were not actually gated—they were free to do very much as they liked—but Lord's was sternly forbidden. This was the Head's idea of punishing them.

K.K. & Co. were making the most of the situation. During the whole evening they had been strolling about with bland, ex-

pansive smiles on their faces, loudly discussing the treat of the morrow. And every word they uttered in Handforth's hearing was like a jab in his ribs.

"Might as well be in prison," he said

fiercely. "It's like the Head's nerve to interfere with us!"

"We've got to look at it from his point of view, old man," said McClure. "Don't forget how we sent those Carlton chaps off to the Isolation Home, and bagged their special coach. It wasn't a thing we could keep to ourselves—the Head was bound to hear about it. Now he's brought down the chopper."

"It's a pity he can't let us play our japes without butting in," grunted Handforth. "Besides, that affair's a fortnight old, anyhow. Why rake up the past?"

"It's an old Spanish custom," sighed Church.

THE SPOOFERS

SPOOFED!

"Spanish be blowed!" retorted Handforth. "It's a pity the Head can't stick to English ideas! I believe you're right, though. Those beastly old Inquisitors couldn't have been more harsh! Think of it! We've got bags of money, there's a special excursion, half the chaps are going—and we've got to stay behind!"

"Worse than rotten!" said McClure. "But what can we do?"

Before Handforth could reply to this poser an unexpected incident occurred which provided a useful distraction. Some little distance along the towing-path an old gentleman was bending over the river bank, pottering about with his stick. He appeared to be examining the reeds and water flowers. Suddenly, losing his balance, he toppled in head first.

"Great Scott! Look at that!" yelled Church.

"Searching for watercress, I suppose!" said Handforth. "My hat! It's deep water there, too. Come on!"

They dashed up, and found the old man some little distance out from the bank, gasping and struggling and evidently in a state of complete panic.

"Help—help!" he gasped feebly. "My boys! I cannot swim! I—I——"

He went under, and Handforth ripped off his jacket and dived clean in. Reggie Pitt and Harry Gresham, running up at the same moment, dived in, too. The rescue was soon effected.

After the old fellow had been hoisted on to the bank he made a quick recovery.

"Splendid! Wonderful!" he exclaimed wheezily. "My dear boys, I don't know how to thank you. I shall never be able to repay you for this kind service. You have saved my life. Really, I am overwhelmed."

"It's all right, sir," grinned Handforth. "A wetting doesn't hurt us—and I don't think it'll hurt you on a warm evening like this. It's nothing at all, sir."

"Stuff and nonsense!" said the old man. "Nothing? Haven't I just told you that you've saved my life? It was foolish of me to bend over. These attacks of giddiness—But no matter! What can I do to repay you? Anything you desire shall be yours! Mention it!"

"We couldn't think of accepting anything, sir, if it's all the same to you," said Reggie Pitt. "We're Boy Scouts, you know, and we shall look upon this as our Good Deed for to-day."

"A fine spirit—a noble spirit," declared the old chap. "Mark you, I'm not offering you money. I wouldn't insult you. You acted bravely, and you deserve a fitting reward. Is there nothing I can do? Is there no way in which I could serve you? Perhaps you are in trouble with your masters?"

"By George!" ejaculated Handforth, with a start.

"It's awfully decent of you, sir," began Pitt. "but I'm afraid——"

"Hold on!" interrupted Handforth, his

eyes alight. "What about the Test-match? Look here, sir. You say you'd like to reward us? Well, the Head's barred us from seeing the Test-match to-morrow, and I'm wondering if you could persuade him to change his mind? No need to say that we pulled you out of the river——"

"But I shall!" interrupted the old gentleman stoutly. "Why, good gracious me, this is a splendid idea! A very fitting reward! Most decidedly I shall see your headmaster. Where is he? Where can I find him?"

He was immediately escorted to St. Frank's. He scorned the idea of getting dried first. Far better that the Head should see him wet, as he was.

The Old-Timers were rather taken off their feet; and they were a bit dubious after the old chap had trotted across Inner Court to the Head's house. They waited in the shadow of Big Arch.

"I never thought he'd freeze on to the wheeze like that," said Handforth. "I only suggested it in fun. There's not a chance that he'll succeed. The Head's as hard as iron."

"Here he comes!" said Church excitedly.

The old man, damp and dishevelled, was beaming all over his wrinkled face as he approached the group of Old-Timers. They waited, hardly daring to hope.

"Well, it's fixed!" he announced, with a hearty chuckle.

"You—you mean that we can go to Lord's, sir?" gasped Handforth.

"Your headmaster is a most charming man—a most just man," said the old stranger. "Naturally, he saw my point of view at once. I am glad, boys—intensely glad. I feel that our accounts are squared, as it were. Splendid! One good turn deserves another, eh?"

But the Old-Timers were almost too joyful to give any rational answer. They cheered excitedly and noisily. The ban was lifted! They were free to go to the Test-match, after all!

CHAPTER 2.

Revenge is Sweet!

KIRBY KEEBLE PARKINGTON
chuckled.

"It's worked, my sons," he said happily. "It's worked like a dream. Those poor, pitiful Old-Timers are spoofed up to the eyes! Listen to 'em cheering!"

"Hope they don't cheer too much," grinned Goffin. "A prefect might get inquisitive and make inquiries—and that would rather spoil our game."

The Red-Hot Trio—K.K., Deeks and Goffin, of Study C—were concealed behind the hedge which bordered the lane opposite St. Frank's. Presently the wet old gentleman trotted out of the school premises, glanced up and down the lane, and then he quickly dodged through a gap in the hedge.

"Well earned, Mr. Beales!" said K.K.

heartily as he slapped a pound note into the old chap's hand. "Good man! It worked fine, didn't it?"

"I ain't been in the show business all my life for nothing, young gent," said Mr. Beales contentedly. "Those youngsters are properly fooled."

"You fell into the river beautifully," declared Deeks. "It was an artistic piece of work, Mr. Beales. How did you get on in the Head's house?"

"Oh, that was easy!" replied the old man. "I just rang the bell, saw the butler chap, and asked him to take a message to your headmaster, saying that I'd like to see him about some books I had to sell. I knew he wouldn't see me, and I kept the butler talking for a bit, and then came out."

"And those chaps think you saw the Head and fixed it up for 'em, eh?" laughed K.K. "Now they're kidding themselves that they've got the Head's permission to go to the match to-morrow. 'Oh, what a fall was there, my countrymen!'"

"Shakespeare," said Mr. Beales sententially.

"They'll be as happy as niggers until to-morrow, and then will come the shock," grinned K.K. "Their faces will be worth quids in the morning when they're ordered to stay behind. What a shock!"

"Serve 'em right!" said Goffin. "Look at the way they spoofed us into going to that rotten isolation home a fortnight ago. We've got to get our revenge—and this is a good way of doing it. One good turn deserves another."

"You're a lot of lads," said Mr. Beales, beaming. "Still, I dare say I was just as bad when I was a young 'un."

He went off, well contented. Mr. Beales was a travelling showman with a little fit-up booth in the neighbourhood. He had only arrived that afternoon, and K.K. had been quick to spot him and make the little bargain.

"My sons, the real cream of this joke will come to-morrow," grinned K.K. "A prefect or a master is bound to be up to see us off, and Handy and those other Old-Timers will think they're free to go. They'll be dressed up to the nines—and then, at the last minute, they'll find out that they've been living in a fool's paradise. I'm not generally hard-hearted or vindictive, but I'm positively going to enjoy their faces in the morning."

"Rather!" said Deeks. "Dash it, we've got to keep our end up, haven't we? These Old-Timers have been getting in too many victories of late! It's time they were put in their places."

To which sentiment the other Red-Hots heartily agreed.

HANDFORTH was improving the shining hour—and, incidentally, he seemed to be doing his best to improve K.K.'s little jape.

For the first thing Edward Oswald did upon realising the joyous news was to dash off to the Moor View School. He found Irene Manners and Doris Berkeley and a crowd of other girls in the sunny courtyard.

"Can't stop long—nearly time for calling-over," he said breathlessly. "But the ban's off, girls!"

"Off?" asked Irene gladly.

"Rather!" grinned Handforth. "Quite by accident we fished an old chap out of the river—no danger at all, really—and he was so bucked that he buzzed to the Head and put things right."

Handforth had previously told Irene & Co. that he couldn't possibly go up to London to see the Test-match; and there was an added reason for his anxiety to let the girls know of the change—or of what he thought to be a change.

"This is ripping!" cried Irene. "Then we can all go up by the excursion train—just as we originally planned?"

"That's what I've come about," replied Edward Oswald cheerfully. "We'll meet you at the station—twelve of us—and we'll have a fine day at Lord's. We've got bags of money, and we're going to treat you girls to all the ices and lemonades you can consume. Good news, isn't it?"

"Best news I've heard this term," said Doris. "Especially that bit about the ices and lemonades. Your Head isn't such an old tyrant after all!"

"He's a brick!" declared Handforth. "Well, I've got to shoot back. All the chaps are frightfully bucked about this, and I expect they'll be singing in their sleep to-night. Cheerio! See you at the station in the morning."

Handforth hurried contentedly back to St. Frank's, and arrived just in time for calling-over. And when K.K. & Co. learned where he had been, and what he had arranged, they hugged themselves with fresh glee.

CHAPTER 3.

A Shock for the Schemers!

MR. HORACE PYCRAFT, the weedy, ill-tempered master of the Remove, stood in the lobby of the Ancient House. The morning sunshine was streaming in through the open doorway.

"Never had such favours when I was at school!" he muttered caustically. "Nowadays the boys seem to do very much as they like."

A number of juniors came clattering downstairs. They were K. K. Parkington and the other members of the Carlton Gang. All were dressed in flannels, and they were gay and lighthearted.

"Less noise—less noise!" said Mr. Pycraft tartly. "Upon my soul! One might think it was breaking-up day! How many of you here?"

"Twelve of us, sir," replied Parkington.



Handforth plunged head first to the rescue—and head first into K.K.'s jape!

"You all have special permits to go and see this cricket match at Lord's?"

"Yes, sir," chorused the Carlton Gang.

"In my opinion the whole thing is absurd," commented Mr. Pycraft sourly. "There is altogether too much fuss made of sports—cricket especially."

"But think of the pointers we can get by watching the Test-match, sir," said Baines. "Anyhow, the Head thinks it's sensible, or he wouldn't have given us the privilege."

"I did not ask you for any impertinence, Baines!" snapped Mr. Pycraft. "Well, you had better go. I have been waiting about here quite long enough."

"We didn't ask you to, sir," said K.K. "Awfully decent of you to think of us like this, and we're so pleased, sir, that you're seeing us off."

The Form-master looked at him suspiciously.

"I felt it my duty to see that you boys did not make too much noise," said Mr. Pycraft. "It occurred to me, too, that other boys without passes might attempt to go off with you."

"That's possible, of course, sir," said K.K. innocently. "I suppose you haven't seen anything of Handforth, by the way? Or Pitt, sir? Or Gresham or Glenthorne or Trotwood?"

"I have seen none of them," retorted Mr. Pycraft. "Why ask ridiculous questions? You know perfectly well that those boys are strictly prohibited from making this trip to London. The headmaster is so determined on the point that there is a

special notice on the board to that effect. I quite agree with it."

Parkington looked round, puzzled. Handforth & Co. had not been in evidence upstairs, and there was certainly no sign of them here. This was peculiar. K.K. had expected to find the Old-Timers much in evidence.

"We'd better get off," said Letts, looking at his watch. "Plenty of time for the train, but we don't want to run it too fine."

Jepson and Kersey and Fiske and the others were moving towards the open doorway. They wanted to get out of Mr. Pycraft's presence. He had a depressing effect upon them.

"Funny about Handforth," said Parkington, frowning.

"What's funny?" asked Owen minor, of the Third, who happened to be passing. "You chaps aren't looking for Handy, are you?"

"Not exactly."

"Because you'll have to look a long way," grinned Owen minor. "They've gone to see the Test-match."

"Rats! That's only a rumour," grinned Deeks.

"Rumour be blowed!" retorted Owen minor. "Handy and those other chaps got up jolly early this morning—a good hour before rising bell. They got their bikes out and started off for Bannington before you were up. I heard about it from Gore-Pearce."

K.K. was flabbergasted.

"They biked!" he gurgled. "To—to Bannington?"

"Caught the first excursion," nodded

Owen minor. "Handy said it was a better one than this—"

"Stop! That's enough!" breathed K.K. tragically. "Oh, my only sainted aunt! Our great wheeze, you chaps. It's skidded—side-slipped—gone West! Those asses have gone to the Test-match after all!"

Mr. Pycraft was red with excitement.

"What is this?" he asked sharply. "Parkington! Wait a moment! Deeks—Langley! Come back! What were you saying—"

"Sorry, sir—we'll miss our train!" gasped K.K.

They all dashed out, fearful of being questioned by the Form-master. There was more than a chance that they would be detained until the excursion had gone.

"How were we to guess?" groaned K.K., as they ran down Bellton lane. "I didn't even know there was another excursion."

IT was an unexpected development, and Kirby Keeble Parkington was not feeling so self-satisfied. His great wheeze had sprung a bad leak. His rivals, instead of being discomfited, were actually on their way to the Test-match!

Meanwhile, Mr. Horace Pycraft, finding it impossible to question the ex-Carltonians, grabbed Owen minor and made him repeat what he had already said.

"It is absurd!" protested Mr. Pycraft excitedly. "Those twelve boys were strictly forbidden to go to the match."

"Somebody said the Head had relented, sir," said the fag. "Handforth was telling everybody—"

"A trick—a brazen, impertinent trick!" fumed Mr. Pycraft. "Upon my word! This needs immediate attention!"

And Mr. Pycraft, brimming over with rage, dashed to the Head.

CHAPTER 4.

Mr. Pycraft on the Trail!

DR. MORRISON NICHOLLS regarded Mr. Pycraft with frank curiosity. The Form-master had hardly waited for Phipps, the butler, to announce him, but had fairly bounced into the Head's presence.

"Pardon this—er—hurried entry, sir, but the matter is of immediate importance!" panted Mr. Pycraft. "No less than twelve boys of my Form have had the audacity to leave the school without permission in order to go to the Test-match in London. Twelve of my boys, sir! Deliberately playing truant."

The Head's face hardened.

"Are you sure of this, Mr. Pycraft?" he asked sharply. "Which boys—"

"Handforth, sir—Handforth and Church and McClure and Gresham and Potts and Glenthorne—"

"Surely you cannot be right!" broke in the

Head. "These are the very boys whom I expressly forbade to go!"

"I know it, sir—and that makes it all the worse!"

"You are certain they have gone?"

"I have searched everywhere, sir, and I have definitely established the fact that they cycled to Bannington to catch the early excursion train," said the Form-master. "You see the cunning of it? They went early—before any masters or prefects were up. I felt it my duty to report to you at once, sir."

Dr. Nicholls' face was hard.

"You did right, Mr. Pycraft," he said. "In face of my definite ban, this is an act of gross insubordination. Those boys must be brought back at all costs—they must be heavily punished for their temerity. I feel, indeed, that I must take special measures and make an example of them. You will go at once to London, Mr. Pycraft."

"I? To London?" asked Mr. Pycraft, startled.

"You must catch the first available train," commanded the Head. "Go straight to Lord's, find these boys, and bring them straight back to the school. Bring them back, Mr. Pycraft, no matter how drastic your methods."

Mr. Pycraft recovered his composure.

"You may reply upon me, sir, to accomplish this mission satisfactorily," he said, with relish. "If I may say so, sir, I think you are acting rightly. Those boys must never have the satisfaction of seeing the game."

"If you can get there before the start of play, all the better," declared Dr. Nicholls. "I will give you a note which you can present to the proper officials at Lord's. Those boys must be found, ejected from the ground, and brought home. When they arrive, I will flog them severely."

"As they undoubtedly deserve, sir," said the Form-master vindictively.

HANDFORTH & CO., sublimely ignorant of the "crime" they had committed, arrived at Lord's in splendid time. The Moor View girls were with them, and they were all having a fine time.

Huge crowds were flocking to see the England and Australian players at battle. There were great queues at every turnstile, and thousands were pouring into the celebrated enclosure.

"We're in heaps of time," said Handforth contentedly. "Jolly brainy idea to come by that early excursion, wasn't it?"

"And it was yours, too!" said Irene Manners, in wonder.

"He gets good ideas now and again—once in a blue moon," commented McClure. "Those Carlton fatheads will be a bit green when they arrive. We shall have bagged the best position, and they might not even find seats. There'll only be standing room before long, judging by the size of the crowd."

They found excellent seats in one of the



"Handforth!" bellowed the irate Mr. Pycraft, whereat Handy, who knew from experience that the Form-master was synonymous with trouble, rapidly made himself scarce!

great stands. They were fairly conspicuous, owing to the fact that they sat in a neat group, and their distinctive caps were noticeable. The girls, too, were wearing their famous school straws.

Thus, when Kirby Keeble Parkington & Co. arrived, they had no difficulty in spotting their rivals. The newcomers easily found seats in the same section of the enclosure, although some little distance away. Handforth & Co. waved, and there were many grins.

"Of all the nerve!" said K.K. thickly. "They not only bone the best position, but they've got those girls with them, too! And we were going to have the laugh over them this morning!"

"We'll have the laugh over them before the day's over," remarked Deeks. "They're playing truant, the poor fatheads—and they don't know it! Wait until they have to face the music this evening!"

"Music?" grinned Goffin. "It'll be more like a thunderstorm!"

There was plenty to see and do. Watching the crowds, alone, was fascinating. There was an occasional groundsman, too, who wandered on to the field of play. And the refreshment bar called occasionally. Handforth & Co. whiled away some of the time by escorting the girls to the ice-cream department.

Everything was going swimmingly when Mr. Horace Pycraft arrived. Play hadn't started yet. Like a bloodhound on the trail, Mr. Pycraft pushed his way through the crowds, and his eagle eye searched the

thronged terraces. It only took him about thirty seconds to locate his victims. Handforth unconsciously helped him. He and Irene had just indulged in a couple of sundaes, and were going back to their seats. Mr. Pycraft, with a yelp of triumph, gave chase.

"Handforth!" he bellowed. "One moment, Handforth!"

"What was that?" gasped Edward Oswald, with a start. "I thought I heard old Pie-face's voice! Impossible, of course, but—Ye gods and little fishes! He's here! Quick, Renie!"

He grabbed Irene's arm, and rushed her adroitly through the crowds. Mr. Pycraft was left hopelessly behind; but the Form-master had no difficulty in tracing the spot to which Handforth and Irene went. He saw them get to their seats—and he saw Church and McClure and Potts and Gresham and the others.

"Oh, indeed!" muttered Mr. Pycraft, his eyes gleaming. "So they think they can defy me, eh? I'll show them!"

He pondered for a moment. It might not be good policy to force his way to the actual spot and order the boys to leave. It was even possible—indeed, probable—that they would defy him. They would take advantage of the publicity and refuse to move; and a scene in public must be avoided at all costs.

So Mr. Pycraft dashed off towards the main pavilion. He needed help. And he did not forget the headmaster's stern injunction: "Bring them back, no matter how drastic

your methods." Mr. Pycraft was a firm believer in drastic methods.

But it is doubtful if Dr. Nicholls would have approved of the Form-master's next move. Near the pavilion, in a kind of parking spot, he halted dead in his tracks. He beheld a large covered lorry, with the words "Marsh & Co., Ltd., House Furnishers" on it. That name was familiar! Marsh & Co. Ltd was the big removal firm in Bannington! A happy coincidence that one of their vans should be here.

Mr. Pycraft dashed up to the driver.

"Tell me, my man, are you going back to Bannington soon?" he asked breathlessly.

"Almost at once, sir," said the driver, giving Mr. Pycraft a curious look. "Just delivered a load of—"

"Never mind what you've just delivered," interrupted Mr. Pycraft. "I have a load for you to take back—a load of rascally schoolboys! I will pay you liberally if you help me."

The driver became interested.

"What's the exact idea, gov'nor?" he asked cautiously.

"Never mind!" retorted Mr. Pycraft. "Wait here! I must see the responsible officials. Within ten minutes I shall have these boys ready."

CHAPTER 5.

Rough on K.K. & Co.!

CRASH!

Church gave a fiendish howl and toppled over backwards in his seat.

"You silly ass!" hissed Handforth.

"I only gave you a tap! What's the idea of making all this din? And let me tell you, Walter Church, that when I say a thing I mean it! I don't want any of your silly arguments!"

It was characteristic of Handforth to hit out suddenly and unexpectedly. The impulse was always present. He regretted it now, for Irene was looking at him with a chilling coldness. The other girls were indignant, too.

"It's a pity you can't behave yourself in a public enclosure like this, Ted," said Irene, with some asperity. "It looks so bad to punch Church like that! Besides, he didn't do anything to deserve it. I think you're a bully!"

"Two can play at that game!" panted Church hotly. "You silly ass, Handy! Do you think I'm going to let you punch me like that—here, at Lord's?"

He brought his own fist round, and Handforth received it with a terrific jolt on the point of his nose. Handy forgot everything then; he forgot Irene and Lord's and the Test-match. The redoubtable Edward Oswald was all ready for a fight.

"All right!" he gasped. "Come on!"

Irene stood up.

"I think we girls had better go," she said icily. "There's plenty of room just over here, and we can sit with Parkington and Deeks and those other fellows. They won't brawl

like this, I'm sure."

"Here, I say!" protested Pitt. "That's not fair, you know! We'll soon settle Handy—"

"I'm sorry," broke in Doris, "but we prefer those Carlton chaps."

And the girls, one and all, went over and joined K.K. & Co.—much to the satisfaction of those young gentlemen. Their satisfaction would have turned to horror if they could have known that the girls, by their innocent action, had paved the way to disaster!

FOR it so happened that Mr. Pycraft was emerging just then from the official quarters. Two gentlemen were with him; they had seen Dr. Nicholls' letter, and they were anxious to get these truants out of the enclosure as quickly as possible.

"Police will be the better way, I think," said one of the officials. "We don't want a big fuss, and the boys will hardly dare to defy the police officers. Mr. Pycraft, perhaps you will be good enough to point out these boys of yours?"

Half a dozen sturdy custodians of the law were procured—there were scores of them in and about the grounds—and Mr. Pycraft, in the meantime, cast his eagle eye over the crowded enclosures.

"There!" he said, pointing. "You see those boys with red and blue caps?"

"Sitting with some schoolgirls?" asked the official.

"Yes!" said Mr. Pycraft viciously. "They seem to have moved their position, but there is no doubt that they are the culprits, for they were with the girls when I saw them earlier. There are twelve. Bring them all."

"And you really mean to take them back in a lorry?" asked the official dubiously. "I'm not quite sure that it's a sensible—"

"I trust you will leave me to know what is sensible, sir!" interrupted Mr. Pycraft acidly. "Dr. Nicholls has left this matter in my hands, and I do not intend these boys to defy me. They shall go back—and at once!"

The police officers, grinning, set about their task. They regarded it more or less as a joke, and so did the watching crowds. Within a few minutes the players would be coming out, but any diversion was attractive.

"Just a minute, young gents," said the sergeant who was in charge of the enemy force. "I shall have to ask you to come out of these seats. Twelve of you here, aren't there?"

"What's the idea?" asked Parkington. "We paid for these seats—"

"I dare say you did, my lad—but that's not the point," replied the sergeant. "One of your masters is here, and he wants to see you boys rather particularly. Sorry, but you'd better come," he added kindly. "I played truant myself when I was a young 'un, and I know what you must be feeling like. But it can't be helped."

The Carlton Gang was staggered. "You're all wrong!" shouted Baines. "We're not playing truant. It's those other—"

He broke off, reluctant to give Handforth & Co. away. He glanced round, too, and was dismayed to see that the Old-Timers were not in evidence. Handforth's crowd had gone off to the refreshment bar to soothe themselves. This was unfortunate, for they saw nothing of the police, and were thus unable to give themselves up—as they certainly would have done, in common fairness to K.K. & Co., had they known.

"Now, I'm going to put it to you nicely," said the sergeant. "Are you coming quietly, or must we carry you? Better make up your minds, young gents!"

"But it's all rot!" protested Decks. "We've got official permission, and you can't lug us out—"

"We're not going to let them lug us out," interrupted K.K. "We'll go quietly, and explain things to the officials. Leave this to me."

Parkington was sensible. It would indeed have been a humiliation to resist, and to have these police officers drag them away by force.

"That's the idea, my lads," said the sergeant warmly. "I knew they'd be sensible about it."

Even now the situation might have been saved if Mr. Pycraft had remained. But he had left the police to attend to this work, while he went off to telephone to the Head, so anxious was he to crow over his success.

K.K. & Co. were grinning cheerfully as they accompanied their police escort to the waiting van, but their grins vanished when they were invited to get into the vehicle. Unfortunately there were no officials here.

"Wait a minute!" said K.K. "There's been a mistake, and—"

"In with 'em!" said the sergeant briskly.

"Hi! What the—"

K.K. said no more. He was the first to be bundled headlong into the van. In this comparative seclusion the police felt that they could act drastically. Within a couple of minutes the entire Carlton Gang had been

dealt with, and the doors were slammed hard.

Mr. Pycraft arrived a few minutes afterwards, and he jumped in beside the driver. He took no notice of the thumps and muffled shouts which sounded from within. It was unfortunate that the driver's compartment was completely shut off from the rest of the van.

When Handforth & Co. learned—from the girls—what had happened, they were staggered. They did their best. Dashing out, they arrived just after the van had gone. And, as play was just starting, they felt that they might as well remain. After all, it was Mr. Pycraft's blunder, and nothing could alter the fact that the Carlton Gang had "got it in the neck."

DR. NICHOLLS was waiting when the van drove into the Triangle at St. Frank's. His face was grim, and he swished a cane in his hand.

Mr. Pycraft opened the doors with a flourish—and K.K. & Co., hot, dishevelled and furious, bundled out. The master's eyes nearly goggled out of his head as he recognised them. He rocked on his heels.

"What—what is this?" he babbled.

"Mr. Pycraft!" thundered the Head. "These are not the twelve boys!"

Mr. Horace Pycraft was speechless. Indeed, he was nearly on the point of fainting, and he wished that the ground would open and swallow him up. The headmaster was too disgusted to say much, and Kirby Keeble Parkington and his unhappy followers were equally unable to find words to express themselves. Once again they had been dished!

They crawled away, sad at heart as they thought of Handforth & Co.—who were heartily enjoying themselves at Lord's!

THE END.

(Another rollicking yarn featuring the Clums of St. Frank's next week—with E. O. Handforth and The Carlton Gang providing plenty of fun.)

The Cowboy Kid & Co.

(Continued from page 5.)

fat potato fell rather than waddled from the stake. Then he turned, and was just in time to see Poo-poo, who had by this time recovered, sneaking towards the crowd.

A thousand threatening hands were pointed at the old rascal. The whole front row of guards covered him with their spear points. He turned and ran—right into the arms of Wambo, the executioner.

The crowd swallowed Loopy up as the guards marched him in triumph back to the royal palace. An hour later Kiki brought him the news that Wambo, in a fit of rage, had lopped off the head of the witch-doctor.

A few moments later Wangaloola waddled into the royal reception-room and dumped himself down on his fat knees. He began to talk, humbly, submissively.

"What does he want, Kiki?" asked Loopy Lane, who was perched upon the royal throne.

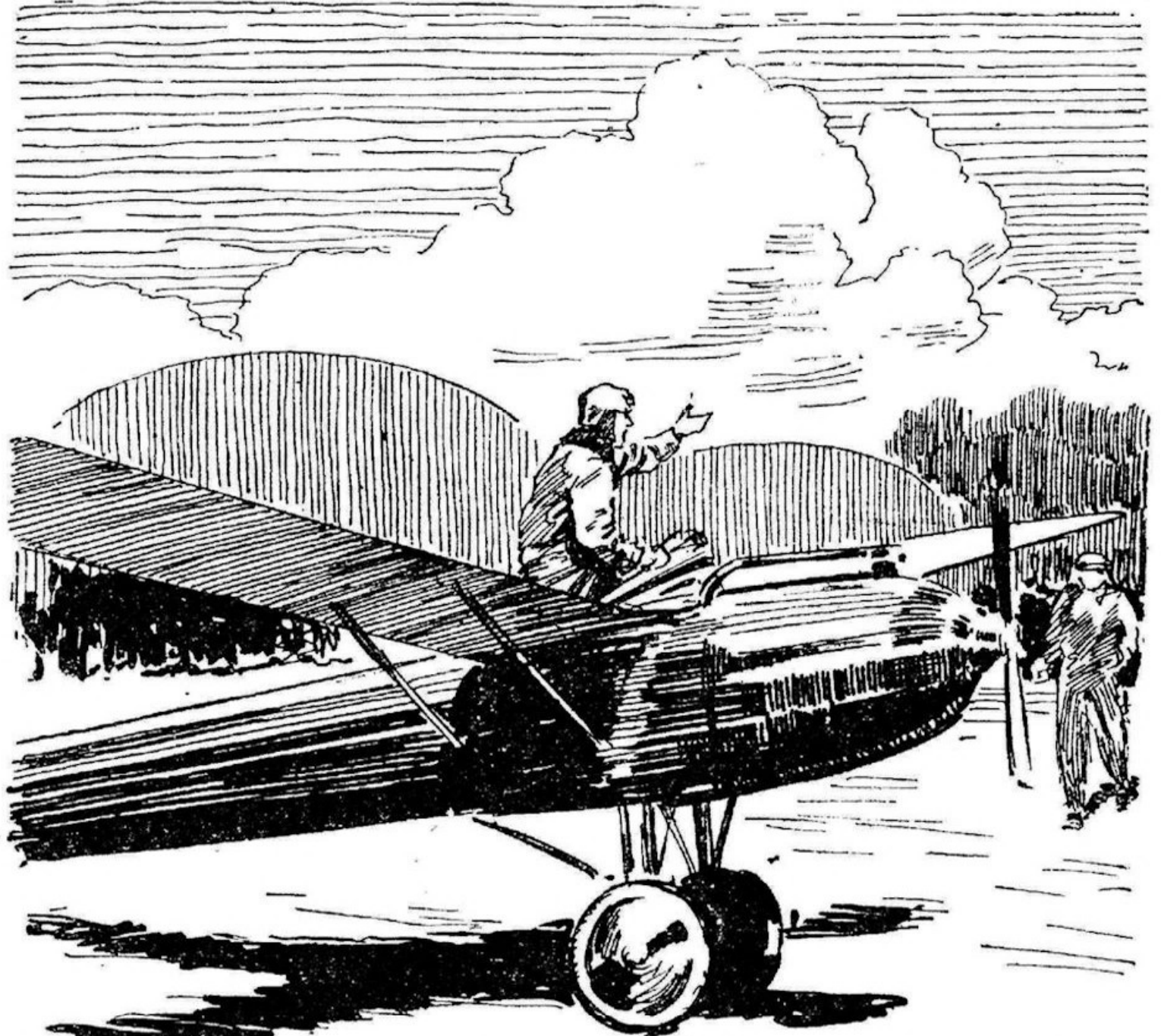
"Oley Wangaloola askey King Loopy makeum dishey washer in royal kitchen," translated Kiki.

"All right," said the Kid. "He can have the job. Perhaps he'll be out of mischief there."

The End.

(More trouble—and excitement—for the Cowboy Kid in next week's enthralling story. Don't miss it, clums.)

Complete 'Tec Yarn Featuring Nelson Lee And His Schoolboy Assistants!



THE LONE FLYER!

CHAPTER 1.

The Mad Flyer!

"SUICIDE!" said Mr. Robert J. Billings curtly. "Just plain, crazy suicide."
"You said it, boy!" agreed a perfect stranger near by.

Mr. Billings was a reporter on the staff of the "New York Bugle," and he spoke his mind freely. He was one of a crowd. They all looked at the tiny light airplane which stood ready for departure with the evening sunlight glinting on its golden wings.

Roosevelt Field, the famous flying ground near New York, was crowded in this par-

ticular spot. Many people were interested in the Butterfly monoplane. It was an ordinary standard machine, chosen at random from the scores of machines which were daily turned out at the Butterfly Works.

Mr. Billings shook his head wisely as he inspected the fragile little craft. It was one of the tiniest types of airplane in existence—even smaller than the famous British-made Gnat. There was something fragile, delicate, even ethereal, about this 'plane. One felt that one could lift it from the ground. It seemed altogether too frail to fly—let alone carry a human pilot. Yet the Butterfly was one of the most successful types

which had been evolved—being, in fact, a close copy of the Gnat, which had already proved its sterling worth in England.

But a joy ride for a hundred miles or so across country in one of these machines was one thing, and an attempt to cross the Atlantic in a similar machine was another. Hence Mr. Robert J. Billings' curt reference to suicide.

He was not the only man who felt that way. Most of those people on Roosevelt Field copied Mr. Billings, and shook their heads as they watched. They admired the pluck of



by
Robert W. Comrade

the young pilot, but they deplored his folly. Elmer Dayle was only twenty-five, and whatever other people might say, or think, he was supremely confident that he would win through. He had made definite arrangements; he had even cabled to the famous London aerodrome at Croydon instructing the officials that he would arrive at a certain approximate hour.

"It's cream in the can," declared Elmer Dayle calmly. "I know my 'plane, and I know my engine. If I don't make Croydon according to schedule I'll go right out of the airplane business. This little hop is a cinch."

This flight, it seemed, had developed out of an argument. Elmer Dayle was the young president of the Butterfly Airplane Corporation, and somebody had scoffed at the idea of such 'planes being

really useful. All right for fifty-mile hops, but worse than useless for a genuine flight.

Young Dayle had taken this as a challenge, and he had declared his intention of picking a standard 'plane at random as it left the works and of flying it straight across the Atlantic.

Everybody thought he was joking—until he started in earnest.

The 'plane was not specially tuned in any way. The only alteration to its standard design was the fitting of an extra petrol tank. This, of course, was a handicap rather than a help, for the Butterfly was not designed to carry heavy loads. Not that the petrol tank was large. The engine of this remarkable little machine was only ten horse power—hardly bigger than the power unit of a motor-cycle. For Dayle to think of crossing the Atlantic in such a frail, under-engined craft was ridiculous.

"I tell you, it can't be done," said Mr. Billings, almost angrily. "The chief sent me along here to get the full dope, but I guess there's nothing to it. This guy means to take the hop, and it's a sure thing he'll croak himself. I'll be writing his death notice next."

"Looks risky to me," said another man. "They say that he's only got just enough gasoline aboard to take him across in a dead-straight line."

Mr. Billings nodded.

"Sure!" he agreed. "That's just the craziness of it. What about head winds? Or side winds? What's going to happen to this poor sap if he gets off his course? Dog-gone it, he doesn't stand a chance? If his compass lets him down, and he gets a point or two off his route, he'll be sunk. No, sir, he can't get away with it. He doesn't stand one chance in ten million."

"He's certainly the Mad Flyer all right," said the other man.

Elmer Dayle himself was not mad to look at. Attired in light overalls, he stood by his 'plane while numerous Press photographers took snaps of him.

"Boys, it a cert!" he declared, speaking to everybody in general. "You think I'm crazy, eh? Well, this hop will show you! My 'plane is the surest winner ever constructed. When I jump off into the blue I'm going on a little trip which thousands of people will be doing this time next year."

"You'd best think again, Elmer, and give it up," said one of his friends. "Why, boy, you won't get half-way across, let alone fly the whole distance. The thing's impossible. And you're mad to try it."

"I'm happy, anyway," said Dayle, laughing.

**A Lump of Earth Turns
Triumph Into Disgrace!**

He frowned a moment later when he saw a stoutish, elderly man hustle frantically out of a big car which had drawn up beyond the crowds. The big man now came lumbering up at the double.

"Gee, this is tough!" said Elmer Dayle. "I figured on getting away before my uncle could show up. This is a bad break for me."

Mr. Otis Carruthers Dayle, hot and red, seized his nephew by the shoulder and shook him hard.

"I'm glad I got here in time, boy!" he said breathlessly. "Tell me that this thing is all a bluff. You can't do it, Elmer. Darn your hide, you young fool, I won't let you!"

"You're making it pretty hard, Uncle Otis," said the young man awkwardly. "If you'd come ten minutes later I should have been gone."

"Then you mean it?"

"As I never meant anything in my life before!"

"Say, why doesn't somebody arrest this young chump?" demanded Uncle Otis, glaring round. "What are the police doing? This boy is out of his mind!"

"We've done all we can, Mr. Dayle," said a police captain, who was one of the crowd. "We can't arrest him for a thing like this. He's old enough to know his own mind."

Elmer Dayle laughed.

"You make me laugh, uncle," he said lightly. "You don't know a thing about 'planes—never did. But this is my business—my life. And I guess I'm going to prove to the whole world that the Butterfly 'plane is supreme."

His uncle almost danced with exasperation.

"Dreams—dreams!" he shouted. "You're not old enough to know what you're trying. Why, darn it, boy, you've never even been across the Atlantic—by 'plane or ship. You don't know the size of it. Easy enough to figure these things out on the map, but it's mighty different when you—"

"Sorry, uncle, but this is where I get aboard," interrupted Dayle, putting his watch away. "I'm aiming to start dead on schedule."

Uncle Otis clutched his arm.

"It would be a risk on a big 'plane," he urged, "but on this kid's kite it's as impossible as trying to reach the moon. I hate to think that this is the last I'll see of you, Elmer. Give it up, boy! It's a pluckier thing to do than to attempt it!"

"You said it!" put in somebody else. "Dayle, listen to reason!"

But Elmer Dayle ignored all the entreaties. Calmly, deliberately, he climbed into the tiny cockpit of his fragile 'plane. His uncle and the rest, realising that he was indeed determined, stood back, silent.

The engine purred into life.

"All set!" sang out Elmer Dayle. "Well, good-bye, folks! See you some time next week!"

"Hurrah!"

Now that the die was cast, the crowd showed its admiration by giving a mighty

cheer. This boy was plucky! He revealed the true, dogged American spirit. Success—or death! There could be no half-way line.

Cameras and movie apparatus clicked as the 'plane started. She ran across the aerodrome, gathering speed, then rose gracefully into the air. Her golden wings reflected the last rays of the setting sun as she banked over.

More cheers rang out. Higher and higher climbed the tiny machine; and when, at last, she was a thousand feet over the aerodrome, Elmer Dayle set his course eastwards, and sped off into the evening haze.

And every human being on that great aerodrome felt that this was the last they would ever see of man or machine.

CHAPTER 2.

Mr. William Garland's Opinion!

"HALLO!" said Nipper, looking round. "What's all the excitement about?"

He was with two other "cubs" of Nelson Lee's celebrated Detective Academy. They had just stepped out of a big Paris-London air liner, and Nelson Lee himself was some yards ahead, talking with an official.

"I fear, Brother Nipper, that you do not keep yourself au fait with the events of the day," said William Napoleon Browne. "Surely you know that we have arrived at Croydon at a most opportune moment?"

"Have we?" grinned Nipper.

"Not, however, that I shall elect to remain," continued Browne. "I cannot help feeling that we are now gazing upon London's Super Optimists. Otherwise, what could have brought them here?"

With a wave of his hand, Browne indicated the vast crowds of people who were waiting all round the great aerodrome in the hot June sunshine. Even on the aerodrome itself there were unusual numbers of people.

Lee and the cubs had been over to Paris on business—a brief trip, since they had only left England the previous evening. Croydon Aerodrome is generally fairly busy on a fine day; but there was something exceptional afoot now.

"Oh, you mean that American flyer?" said Nipper, as a thought occurred to him. "I read about him in the papers, but I'd forgotten for the moment. Surely people don't expect him to arrive this morning?"

"One would hardly think so—but what other explanation is there?" said Browne. "Alas, that ambition can lead men to such perilous folly!"

"He's not the only one," said Stevens. "And everybody knows that the Americans are a reckless lot. Poor chap! I suppose he's at the bottom of the Atlantic by this time. He couldn't possibly have survived."

"If he has survived, and if he keeps to his schedule, he ought to be here within a

couple of hours," remarked Nipper. "What did the newspaper say? If all went well, he'd land at one-thirty to-day."

Nelson Lee joined them.

"Been talking about that American flyer, sir?" asked Nipper.

"Yes," replied the great detective soberly.

"I'm afraid it's all up with him."

"Bad news, guv'nor?"

"That's just the point—there's no news at all," replied Lee. "Not that the aerodrome officials are surprised. They have made the necessary preparations, but they have never actually expected young Dayle."

"Looked upon it as a hopeless attempt, eh, sir?"

"They looked upon it in the only sensible way it can be looked upon," replied Lee. "For of all the mad flights which had ever been organised, this is surely the maddest. That boy has no wireless aboard—only a scanty supply of petrol—and his engine is utterly unfitted for such an ordeal."

"Hasn't some ship reported him, sir?" asked Stevens.

"According to all I can hear, Elmer Dayle's machine has not been seen or heard since it flew over the American coastline the night before last," said Nelson Lee. "No ship has reported him, and although a look-out has been kept on the west coast of Ireland, nothing has been heard. Not that there was ever much chance of his reaching Ireland."

The official to whom Lee had been speaking now hurried up.

"Extraordinary thing, Mr. Lee!" he said, almost excitedly. "We've just had news about that Butterfly 'plane.'"

"Indeed?" said Lee. "Down in mid-Atlantic?"

"Not a bit of it, sir," said the other. "Hanged if I know how he's managed it, but a telegram has just arrived saying that the 'plane was seen over Cornwall this morning."

"Cornwall!" put in Nipper excitedly. "Then he's done it! He's flown the Atlantic on that toy!"

The aerodrome official nodded.

"It certainly looks like it—although how he managed the trip will be one of the biggest mysteries of aviation," he declared. "Personally, I didn't give the fellow a ghost of a chance."

"It is certain that the 'plane was Dayle's?"

"Small golden 'plane, flying at great height," said the official. "It's hardly likely that there'd be another to answer to that description. She was flying due east, too."

He hurried away, and Nelson Lee looked thoughtful.

"An extraordinary young man, this Dayle," he commented. "And that machine of his is more extraordinary still."

"I say, guv'nor, can we stay and see him land?" asked Nipper eagerly.

"I must confess that I am intensely curious on my own account," said Nelson Lee with

a chuckle. "And as we need lunch, anyhow, we might as well have it here."

BEFORE luncheon was over they heard another item of news.

A second telegram had arrived—and a third. There was no longer the slightest doubt that Elmer Dayle had achieved the seemingly impossible. It was his 'plane, and none other, which had crossed the Cornish coast and which was now winging its way towards Croydon. It had been seen and identified over Hampshire, and it had been seen again over Surrey. At almost any minute it might appear in the sky.

Nipper and the other cubs hardly waited to finish their meal. They wanted to be outside, so that they could catch the first glimpse of this intrepid airman who had risked his life and who had gained fame.

"It's almost unbelievable," commented Nipper excitedly.

"A ten-horse-power engine," said Browne, shaking his head. "A standard 'plane—untuned for the big job. I must confess, brothers, that I am mystified. Perhaps fools' luck is the explanation."

The sudden cheering of a large section of the crowd caused the cubs to stare eagerly up into the sky, and after a few moments they located the object which was causing all the excitement. Flying very high, a green speck was just visible amid the vast dome of blue.

The first cheering subsided, and a complete hush fell over the big aerodrome. The golden 'plane could now be seen in outline—a small, graceful monoplane. It was circling, and descending gracefully towards the ground.

"This isn't strange—it's positively uncanny," said the official who had spoken to Nelson Lee at first. "Do you know, Mr. Lee, that he's arrived almost dead on the minute?"

"Yes," nodded Lee. "An astounding achievement."

"Astounding!" broke in a big, prosperous-looking man who was near by. "I beg to differ, sir! There's nothing astounding in it. The thing's plainly impossible. It just can't be!"

"And yet Dayle is here, Mr. Garland," said Lee dryly.

"I don't care whether he's here or whether he isn't here," retorted the other. "If this is Dayle's 'plane, then there must have been some trickery. But how do you know me, sir? I think you have the advantage."

"This gentleman is Mr. Nelson Lee," said the official.

"Your photograph is so frequently in the newspapers, Mr. Garland, that you must forgive me for my familiarity," smiled Nelson Lee, as they shook hands. "I agree with you about this Dayle flight—in so far as the incredibility of it is concerned. But don't you think you are a little hasty in declaring that there must have been some trickery? It's a dangerous thing to say, Mr. Garland."

"Dangerous or not, I do say it—and I'll say it again!" retorted Mr. William Garland.

He was a man who should have known what he was talking about, for he was the managing director of Gnat Aeroplanes, Limited, the biggest builders of light 'planes in Europe. What Mr. Garland didn't know about this type of machine was scarcely worth learning—for in addition to being managing director he was the designer.

The tiny machine was now just on the point of landing. With a long, graceful sweep, the Butterfly dropped towards the ground; with scarcely a bump the 'plane touched, bounced a trifle, and then taxied towards the hangars.

A great roar of cheering broke out. Wave after wave of tumultuous shouts passed from one end of the aerodrome to the other. The officials had difficulty in keeping back the throngs. Only a specially privileged group, in addition to the mechanics, approached the visitor when she came to a standstill. Nelson Lee, Mr. Garland and the cubs were among them. A little combined windscreen and hood hinged back, and Elmer Dayle, looking tired but happy, came into view.

"Well done, sir—well done, indeed!" shouted somebody.

"Hallo, folks!" was Dayle's greeting. "So this is England! Say, this is a swell drome of yours. Mighty glad to meet you!"

"How in the name of all that's mystifying did you do it?" demanded a well-known English pilot. "What sort of a trip did you have?"

"Well, I'm here," replied Dayle, as he climbed out. "Couldn't have been a bad trip, could it? I'm glad Croydon wasn't much farther on, or I shouldn't have made it. I guess my gasoline is just about through."

"What's your reserve?"

"Down to the last pint!" replied Dayle coolly.

CHAPTER 3.

Nelson Lee's Commission!

MR. WILLIAM GARLAND grunted. "Down to the last pint, eh?" he commented. "This boy may fool the rest of you, but he doesn't fool me!"

"What do you mean, sir?" asked a man in the crowd.

"I mean that this machine could never have flown the Atlantic!" retorted the famous aircraft manufacturer. "The thing's impossible."

The other man's eyes blazed.

"Don't you think you'd better keep your opinions to yourself, sir?" he asked hotly. "Do you want this young American to think that we're poor sportsmen in England? Give the boy the credit that's due to him! He's done a marvellous thing, and he deserves honouring."

Mr. Garland was about to make an angry retort when Nelson Lee took him by the arm and gently pulled him away.

"It won't do any good, Mr. Garland, to create a scene here—within Dayle's hearing," he said quietly. "I'm as equally puzzled as you—but we must not forget that there is a possibility that Dayle genuinely flew the Atlantic."

"There isn't!" insisted the other. "Not a shred of a possibility! Don't you think I know? Haven't I been designing this type of 'plane for years? Man alive! Do you realise that this Butterfly is an almost exact copy of my Gnat? My firm is instituting proceedings against these American manufacturers for infringing our patents."

"Yes, but—"

"And I say that this machine could never have crossed the Atlantic!" continued Mr. Garland excitedly.

Lee persuaded the angry man to accompany him out of earshot of the crowd.

"But what is the alternative, Mr. Garland?" he asked pointedly. "If this machine didn't fly the Atlantic, how could it have got here? We know definitely enough that Dayle was in America on Monday evening; at mid-day on Wednesday he's in England. What have you got to say to that?"

"I'm not pretending to explain how it was done—all I know is that it's a fraud!" declared Mr. Garland.

THE evening papers were full of the daring exploit. Pages were filled with the news, and various photographs of Elmer Dayle and his celebrated machine. Atlantic flights are more or less commonplace now, but this one was exceptional—the lone venture of a young man in a machine which all the experts had declared to be incapable of the feat.

Nelson Lee read the reports with interest as he sat in his study that afternoon. The sunlight was streaming across Gray's Inn Road and pouring in through the open windows. Nipper found Lee in a very thoughtful mood.

"Somebody to see you, guv'nor," he said. "It's that Mr. Garland—the man you were speaking to at Croydon this morning."

"Oh! You'd better bring him in," said Lee, laying his papers aside. "I'm beginning to think there's something in what he was saying, Nipper."

"That the flight was a fraud, sir?"

"Yes."

"But how could it have been?" asked Nipper sceptically. "Flying the Atlantic is one of those things you can't fake."

Nelson Lee sighed.

"How many times, you young ass, have I told you that you must never take anything for granted?" he asked. "Just because this particular fake has never been done before, it doesn't mean to say that it is an impossible achievement."

"Sorry, guv'nor!" said Nipper, abashed.

He hurried out, and ushered in Mr. Garland—who, if anything, was even more excited than he had been earlier.

"Have you seen the papers, Mr. Lee?" he asked, breathing heavily.

"Sit down, Mr. Garland," invited Lee. "Help yourself to a drink. You really mustn't agitate yourself so much."

"But the papers!" insisted the visitor, flourishing one in his hand. "Look at this, Mr. Lee! A late cablegram from New York! The Butterfly Works is already being inundated with thousands of orders! All within a few hours!"

"This flight has helped Dayle's firm a good deal," nodded Lee.

"Helped the firm?" spluttered Mr. Garland. "It's made it—and it looks like ruining my own American branch, too! Look here, Mr. Lee, I've come here to consult you professionally—and I want you to accept a commission. I don't know how you're going to do it, but you've got to prove that this flight was a fake."

Nelson Lee smilingly shook his head.

"I'm a crime investigator, Mr. Garland—not an aeronautical expert," he said. "Much as I would like to help you, I don't see—"

"It is a crime!" broke in the other. "It's

a crime of the worst kind—bare-faced fraud deliberately designed to ruin my firm."

"But your firm is British—"

"American, too," said Mr. Garland quickly. "Our people have just opened a big factory in America. And these infernal Dayle people have copied our designs and produced the Butterfly. Their factory is little better than a corrugated iron dump. I tell you, Mr. Lee, it's a stunt—a fraud to popularise the Butterfly 'plane.'"

Browne hooked his foot round the valet's leg, tripped him up, and then nipped into the bedroom.



"I must remind you that all this is mere theory."

"Exactly—and I want you to get hold of the proof," said the other. "That's why I'm here—to get you straight on this job. I've faith in you, Mr. Lee; and I believe you can get the evidence I need. I'm convinced that Elmer Dayle is a good-for-nothing scamp."

Lee was impressed by the other's vehemence.

"Here he is, being fêted and honoured, until it makes me feel sick," continued Mr. Garland bitterly. "He's having a sleep this afternoon, if you please—and this evening he'll be entertained at a great dinner. Tomorrow he'll be a guest of honour at another dinner, and so it'll go on."

"Do you know where Mr. Dayle is staying?"

"At the Apollo Hotel," replied the visitor. "Look here, Mr. Lee, I'm going to tell you something. I've just come from the Air Ministry—and what I learned there proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that Dayle could not have flown the Atlantic in that Butterfly plane."

"Indeed?" said Lee keenly. "What, exactly, do you mean?"

"I mean that I've got a chart of Dayle's route," said the aeroplane manufacturer, unfolding a large sheet of paper. "It's the direct route, as you can see. It had to be, or

the flight wouldn't have been possible at all."

"Well?"

"I learned from the Air Ministry that there was an extraordinary phenomenon in the Atlantic during the early hours of last night," said Mr. Garland tensely. "There was an extraordinary hailstorm—with hailstones of an almost unprecedented size—raging over a certain latitude. And the hailstorm was at its worst over a two-hundred-mile stretch of Dayle's course."

"This is certainly important," remarked Lee.

"Important? It's vital!" declared the other. "Dayle had to fly through that patch! If he had attempted to avoid it, it would have meant a detour of at least five hundred miles—and he hadn't enough petrol aboard to allow for it."

"Yes, I can understand that," said Lee. "But why do you say it is so impossible for him to have flown through the hailstorm?"

"Because that tiny machine couldn't have withstood it," said Mr. Garland impressively. "Don't believe me if you don't want to, Mr. Lee. Go to the Air Ministry and make your own inquiries. At least half a dozen ships have reported that their decks were overloaded with gigantic hailstones. Two liners have wirelessed that windows were broken and much other damage done."

"Couldn't this hailstorm have been very low down—so that Dayle flew over it?"



Jokes from readers wanted for this feature! If you know of a good rib tickler send it along now—and win a prize! A handsome watch will be awarded each week to the sender of the best joke; all other readers whose efforts are published will receive a pocket wallet or a penknife. Address your jokes to "Smilers," Nelson Lee Library, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4.

THE BIG PUSH!

With perspiring face and shortness of breath the wealthy motorist entered the garage, only to find the sole occupant was a lazy youth of sixteen.

"Here, boy," he cried, "I want some petrol quickly! Now pull yourself together and get a move on!"

The youth in overalls regarded the motorist with a lazy smile.

"You'll never get anywhere like that," said the motorist. "You must push. Push is essential in this world. When I was young I pushed, and it got me where I am to-day."

"Well, gov'nor," drawled the youth, "I reckon you'll have to start pushing again, 'cos

we haven't got a drop of petrol in the place."

(Rowland Preston, Carrum Street, Oakleigh, S.E.12, Victoria, Australia, has been awarded a handsome watch.)

PLEASANT DREAMS!

Master: "Why are you late for school this morning?"

Johnny (breathless): "P-p-please, sir, I dreamt I was at a football match, and the referee ordered extra time to be played, so I stopped to see the finish."

(J. S. Butler, 7, Somerset Road, Walthamstow, E.17, has been awarded a penknife.)

TOO MUCH FAG!

A man walked into the village inn and took from his pocket a five-pound note.

"Here is a fiver for the laziest man in the room."

"Come and put it in my pocket," came a voice from the corner.

He won.

(T. Blunn, 97, Gainsboro' Avenue, Oldham, has been awarded a penknife.)

HOW TO DO IT!

The police commissioner was interviewing an applicant for a position in the force.

"If you were ordered to disperse a mob, what would you do?"

"I thought of that, but the meteorological experts declare that the storm was widespread—a sort of cyclone," said Mr. Garland. "It was very high, too. If it hadn't been high, the hailstones couldn't have formed."

"Don't think I am doubting your word, Mr. Garland, but I shall have to verify this statement of yours," said Lee. "This hailstorm is highly important—indeed, it might prove to be the one factor by which we can expose the fraud. I'll accept your commission, and I'll get to work at once."

"And you'll succeed, Mr. Lee—of that I am certain," said Mr. Garland, with great relief. "This thing means tens of thousands of pounds to my firm. If this audacious trickery goes through, the Butterfly people will steal every one of our orders, and all the capital we have invested in America will be lost."

"Do you know if Dayle spoke of this hailstorm?" asked Lee, who had evidently been in deep thought.

"Not a word! That's just it," replied Mr. Garland. "He told the reporters that he had had fair weather right across the Atlantic. That's why I was so startled when I heard about this hailstorm. He did nothing to avoid it."

"It is undoubtedly a big point," said the famous detective.

Nelson Lee spent a busy hour after Mr. Garland's departure. He visited the Air

Ministry, and there learned that the aircraft manufacturer's statement was accurate. That phenomenal hailstorm had been noted over a wide area of the Atlantic. It was more than curious that Elmer Dayle should have made no mention of it.

Returning to his chambers, Nelson Lee rang for William Napoleon Browne.

"Browne, I've got a job for you," said the famous detective. "I want you to go to the Apollo Hotel and seek an interview with Elmer Dayle."

"My pencil, Chief, is already sharpened," said Browne.

"You are to pose as a reporter——"

"A task, Chief, which comes naturally to me," murmured Browne.

"I must tell you that no other newspaper reporters have got near this American," said Lee dryly. "I don't think that this will discourage you, however."

"On the contrary, it gives me added zest for the attack, Chief," said William Napoleon smoothly. "Is there any special object in this interview?"

"You are to get Dayle's personal impressions of the flight, and you must particularly ask him what his experience was in the hailstorm," replied Nelson Lee. "Now, Browne, I am relying on you for this. I'd do it myself, but there are reasons why it is better that Dayle should have no inkling of my investigations."

"Pass the hat round, sir," was the reply.
(Gont Oldful, 16, Stewart Lane, Penang, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

FATHER'S PARTING SHOT!

Son: "Good-bye, dad; I'll write home every week."

Father: "Oh, try and make your money last longer than that!"

(B. Lynch, Mount Pleasant, Howth, Dublin, has been awarded a penknife.)

SPECIAL MUSIC!

A schoolmaster caught a small boy scribbling something on a slip of paper. Confiscating it, he read: "Blow, blow, suck, blow, suck, blow, suck."

"What's the meaning of this?" he asked.

"Please, sir, it's the music for my mouth organ."

(G. H. Worthington, 64, Lombard Street, Fairfield, Liverpool, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

OUT OF DANGER!

They were hurrying to catch the city train.

"What's the idea of the big suit-case?" asked Wilson's neighbour.

"I've just heard that our church is going to hold a jumble sale," replied Jones,



"and I'm taking all my clothes up to the office until it's over."

(C. Hinchliffe, 14, Grosmont Terrace, Bramley, Leeds, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

WHY HE WAS CHEERFUL!

He was the only cheerful one in the gloomy crowd that waited for the dentist, and they looked at him in wonder and envy. His turn came last.

"Well," said the dentist, "an extraction?"

"Yes," replied the cheerful one. "I've come to extract that ten pounds you owe me for painting and papering this room."

(A. Waters, 83, Northampton Buildings, Roseman Street, Clerkenwell, E.C.1, has been awarded a penknife.)

SENSIBLE LAD!

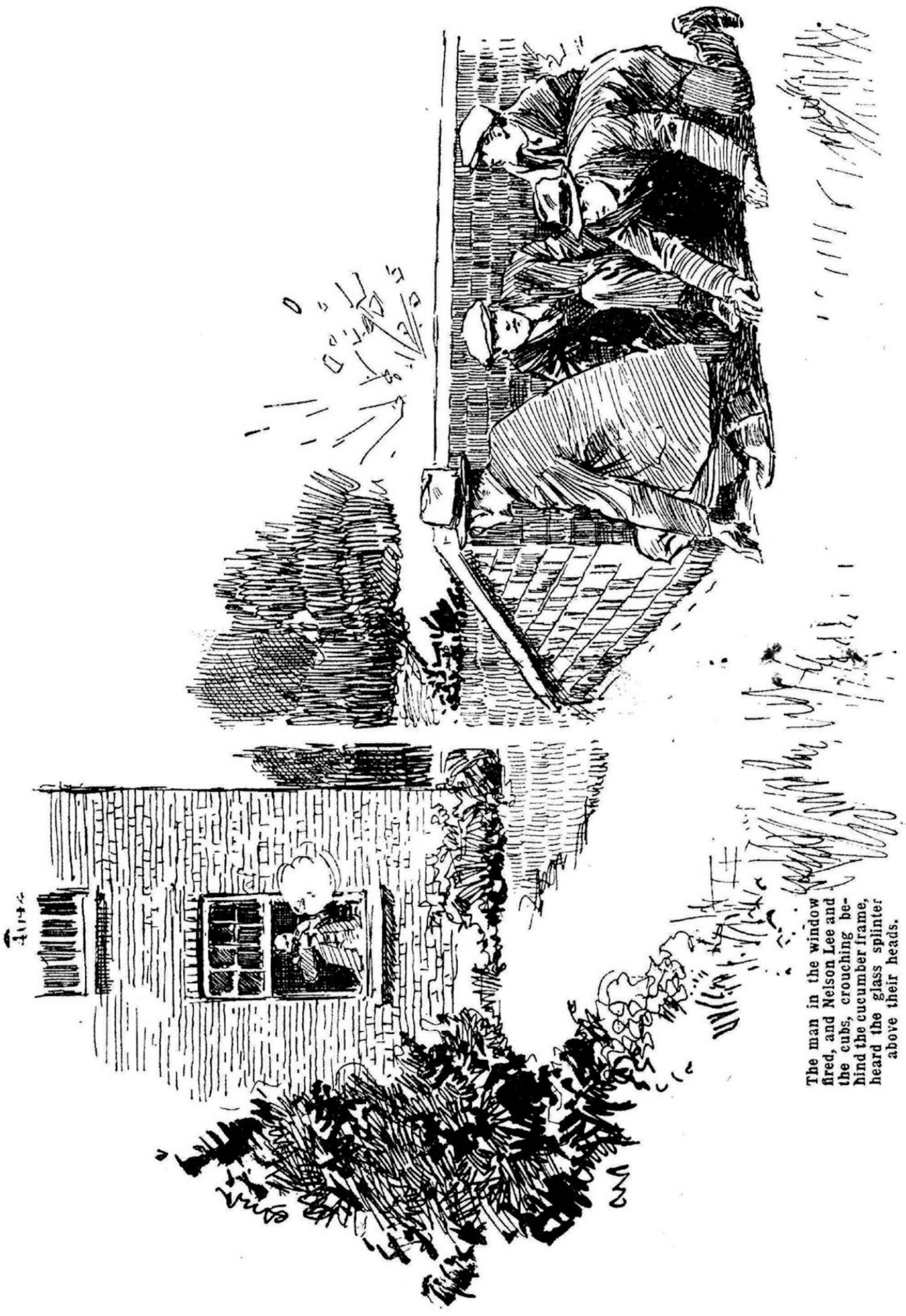
"Now, boys," said the teacher, "if you were to have another eye, where would you like to have it?"

"On my finger tip," one boy replied.

"And why there?" asked the teacher.

"So that I could stick it through the railings and see the cricket match."

(A. Noble, 4, Portland Place, Inverness, has been awarded a penknife.)



The man in the window
fired, and Nelson Lee and
the cubs, crouching be-
hind the cucumber frame,
heard the glass splinter
above their heads.

"Without egotism, I may safely say that this matter is as good as done," declared Browne. "The interview is all but over. If Brother Dayle escapes from me, Chief, you can send me back to St. Frank's."

CHAPTER 4.

Browne's Brainwave!

BROWNE had no settled plan in mind as he made his way to the Apollo Hotel. He merely knew that he had to interview Elmer Dayle, and that was all there was to it. When William Napoleon set out to do a thing—he did it.

He strolled into the spacious foyer of the Apollo, and his keen eyes noted at least three energetic young men who were obviously hanging about. Reporters, and they were waiting to interview Elmer Dayle.

A hand was suddenly clapped on Browne's shoulder.

"Well, well!" said a kindly voice. "This is a pleasant surprise, old chap."

"Purely a matter of opinion," replied Browne smoothly.

He was well acquainted with Mr. Trevor Dexter, the enterprising star reporter of the "Daily World." Indeed, there was a certain similarity between these two. Dexter, like Browne, was long and lean, and he was a cool-headed, audacious young gentleman. When it came to cheek, however, Browne led him by a mile.

"I suppose you don't feel like doing me a favour?" asked Dexter.

"You?" said Browne, raising his eyebrows. "Come, come, brother! Surely you are not confessing that you are in need of aid?"

"It's this confounded airman chap," growled the reporter. "He saw one or two of our crowd when he landed at Croydon, but since then we haven't been able to get near him. He's as inaccessible as a monarch, with crowds of guards stationed at every entrance!"

"And how do you assume that I can help in this matter?"

"Well, you're not a reporter—you're one of Mr. Lee's brilliant assistant detectives," said Mr. Dexter smoothly. "You might be able to get into touch with Dayle on a pretext—and I could slip in after you."

"A brainy suggestion, brother—not to say a cunning suggestion," replied Browne. "But I fear that there is nothing doing. Who am I to interfere with the peace of Brother Dayle? And, painful though it may be to you, my sympathies are entirely with your intended victim. The longer he can elude you, the more I shall admire him."



The man in the window fired, and Nelson Lee and the cubs, crouching behind the cucumber frame, heard the glass splinter above their heads.

With a nod he strolled on, leaving Mr. Dexter uttering disgusted comments under his breath. Browne could hardly explain to the "Daily World" representative that he himself was posing as a reporter, and that he had come to the Apollo to succeed where the accredited newspaper men had failed.

Browne was an opportunist. He was also a fellow of considerable brilliance, and he was never chary of taking a chance. He took one now.

A smartly-dressed man strode briskly towards one of the lifts, and Browne saw that he had a big cardboard box under his arm. It bore the name of a famous tailor. Possibly this man was merely bringing a suit for one of the hundreds of guests in the hotel who was in no way connected with Elmer Dayle. Yet Browne remembered that Dayle was to attend a dinner that night; and it was certain he had not brought any evening clothes with him. It was worth investigating.

Like a streak William Napoleon raced up the stairs. He took them three at a time, much to the indignation of two or three

guests who were sedately walking down. This sort of thing was not done in the Apollo.

Browne knew that Dayle's suite was on the third floor, and that the number was 207. By this rapidity of movement he arrived at the door marked 207 a few seconds before the lift stopped. The man with the box got out.

Browne was standing in the doorway of 207, earnestly making one or two notes on the back of an envelope. His heart beat faster as he saw that the man was coming straight towards him. His chance shot had hit a bullseye!

"Excuse me, sir," said the man with the box.

"One moment, brother," said Browne gently. "This, I presume, is Mr. Dayle's evening raiment?"

"Yes, sir. I——"

"Quite so," interrupted Browne. "I am Mr. Dayle's private secretary. In no circumstances must he be disturbed. Splendid! If there is any charge——"

"The bill will be sent on, sir," said the man.

If he had any suspicion it was speedily destroyed by the fact that Browne turned, opened the door, and vanished into the private suite. Browne found himself in a sitting-room, and a quiet-looking man—evidently one of the hotel valets—gave him a sharp look.

"Isn't it usual to knock before you come in, sir?" he observed reprovingly.

"Mr. Dayle, I believe, is sleeping?" asked Browne.

The valet automatically glanced at one of the two closed doors on the other side of the sitting-room—as Browne had anticipated.

"He mustn't be disturbed until six o'clock, sir," said the man.

"I'm having a pretty bad time, what with these reporters and——"

"I can quite believe you," put in Browne gently. "However, brother, when it comes to a matter of clothes there must be no delay. Allow me. I think, on the whole, your presence will not be necessary."

He strode towards the bed-room door, and the valet dashed up.

"You can't go in there, sir!" he said excitedly.

"Five years ago," said Browne, "I erased the word 'can't' out of my dictionary."

With an adroit



movement he hooked his foot round the valet's ankle, and the unfortunate man went sprawling. Browne dodged into the bedroom, closed the door, and locked it. Elmer Dayle was sound asleep in bed.

"We are progressing famously," murmured Browne, with a contented sigh.

He crossed to the bed, sat on the edge of it, produced his note-book, and tapped Elmer Dayle on the forehead with the end of his pencil.

"Hallo! What the—— What are you doing here?" ejaculated Dayle, waking up with a start.

Browne eyed him closely—searchingly.

"Forgive this invasion, Brother Dayle, but we reporters are a relentless mob," said Browne. "We stick at nothing. If you will be good enough to arouse yourself I should like you to answer just a few simple questions. Allow me!"

He stuck a cigarette into Mr. Dayle's mouth, lit a match, and the startled American was smoking almost before he knew it.

"Say, you fellows are pretty nervy, aren't you?" he ejaculated. "I always thought our own newspaper men were infernally daring, but you've got them knocked cold. Of all the darned cheek——"

"This interview," said Browne, "will probably occupy three minutes. If, however, you insist upon arguing, its duration may be lengthened to six minutes. Therefore, Brother Dayle, the sooner we get down to brass tacks, the better. Do not forget that the entire population of the British Isles is waiting, with bated breath, for the slightest whisper from your lips. You, brother, have performed a feat of extraordinary daring. You are the man of the moment. Kings, presidents, millionaires, and even Hannen Swaffer and Edgar Wallace have fallen into insignificance. The public is demanding a story from Elmer Dayle."

The American airman grinned. At first he had shown signs of becoming furious; his eyes had glittered with a resentful light. But there was that naïve something in Browne's personality which killed all anger.

"You're a cool card!" said Dayle, staring.

"I would remind you, brother, that I am here to discuss your qualifications, and not mine," said Browne gently. "You have flown the Atlantic in a machine which is only one degree removed from a glider. It is the achievement of the century. Briefly, succinctly, kindly tell me of your chief impressions."

Elmer Dayle made a last struggle.

"Supposing I refuse to tell you anything at all?" he asked.

"Then I shall sit here on your bed until you change your mind," replied Browne. "If you desire to sleep again, speak. The sooner you consent to answer my questions, the sooner shall I depart."

"You confounded news-hound!" snapped Dayle. "I've a good mind to shout and have

the hotel people throw you out of these rooms."

Browne smiled.

"The story would not read well in my newspaper," he murmured. "You must remember, brother, that you are a public hero—and public heroes do not do such ill-mannered things."

The American scowled.

"Well, get it over!" he snapped. "What do you want? If I had you thrown out of these rooms I believe you *would* publish it—and in a garbled form, too! Hang your impudence!"

"We will agree as to my impudence," nodded Browne. "Impudence, Brother Dayle, is the one asset of the reporter. I would like to know if you met with any storms or atmospheric phenomena of any kind on your epoch-making flight?"

"I have already told you fellows that the flight was absolutely uneventful," replied Dayle, apparently coming to the conclusion that the quickest way of getting rid of this human leech was to answer his questions. "I'm not claiming any merit for what I've done. It was the machine. Don't forget to say that. Every time it was the machine. The greatest little 'plane ever built. And, mark you, a standard 'plane—exactly the same as any member of the public can buy for a thousand dollars."

Browne's pencil scribbled busily.

"The Butterfly 'plane is a revolution in aircraft," continued Dayle, waxing eloquent. "Tell your public, my friend, that a machine that can fly the Atlantic is the machine for everyday use! And tell your public, too, that after my firm has dealt with the rush of orders back home, we'll build in England the biggest airplane factory——"

"Much as I hate interrupting, I must point out that we are drifting from the theme," said Browne smoothly. "We are not discussing your future plans, Mr. Dayle, but the flight which has made you so famous. You have told me that your hop across the Atlantic was quite uneventful—that, in fact, you encountered no atmospheric peculiarities of any kind?"

"That's so."

"For example, you did not pass through a hailstorm in the eastern Atlantic?"

"Hailstorm?" said Dayle, giving Browne a sharp look. "Say, what are you trying to put over? Some other guy mentioned—— Well, it doesn't matter."

"I hate to differ, but in my opinion it matters a very great deal," said Browne. "Why be so modest about this hailstorm? You passed through it, Brother Dayle, and if you think for a moment you will appreciate that your machine will gain a much greater advertisement if you speak openly. It is said by those who know, that in no circumstances could you have avoided a singularly severe hailstorm."

"By those who know?" asked Dayle sharply.

(Continued on page 26.)



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- W. BILLINGTON, Russets Lodge, AMPHILL, Beds.
- T. A. Burke, 106, Old Bidston Road, BIRKENHEAD.
- Miss H. Bull, 174, Clifton Road, Aston, BIRMINGHAM.
- R. B. Boa, 9, Atholl Place, EDINBURGH.
- C. Cadman, 25, Park Hill, AWSWORTH, Notts.
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- A. Emery, The Rectory, CRAWLEY, Sussex.
- A. Frumkin, P.O. Box 69, South Porcupine, ONTARIO.
- D. Fuller, Bed 20, Addison Ward, Guy's Hospital, LONDON.
- J. Cannon, 2, Comely Park Place, GLASGOW, E.I.
- A. E. Gray, 28, Devonshire House, Bath Terrace, LONDON.
- B. Griggs, 15, Mabel Street, Meadows, NOTTINGHAM.
- N. Harding, 31, Deerdale Road, HERNE HILL, S.E.24.
- L. H. Hickenbottom, 50, Waterlow Road, DUNSTABLE.
- E. Hope, 23, Hamilton Road, TWICKENHAM
- C. Howell, 364, St. John's Lane, Bedminster, BRISTOL.
- Miss K. Jones, 10, Duncan Road, DERBY.
- G. Kearney, 11, Barden Park Road, TONBRIDGE, Kent.
- R. Kelvey, 210, Syston Street, LEICESTER.
- E. S. Lane, Waterford, LYMINGTON, Hants.

- F. E. Lane, 16, Russell Street, HASTINGS.
- A. O. Lockwood, 121, Lymington Ave., LEIGH-ON-SEA.
- Miss E. Loose 34, Nansen Road, Saltley, BIRMINGHAM.
- P. McSillicuddy, 7, Algonquin Ave., TORONTO 3, Ontario.
- L. C. A. Mansfield, 7, Tower Rd., Boscombe, BOURNEM'TH.
- T. J. W. Mayhead, 25, St. James Road, BRIXTON, S.W.9.
- K. Murphy, "Laxton," BRAY, co. Wicklow.
- D. F. Noble, 15, Mason Street, HEBDEN BRIDGE, Yorks.
- G. Osborne, 29, Atalanta Street, FULHAM, S.W.6.
- Miss M. Owen, 15, Ratchester Rd., SOUTHSEA, Portsmouth.
- W. Parker, 43, Rolle Street, EXMOUTH.
- C. Pavey, 18, Beech Road, WATFORD.
- J. Revell, Rickneys Cott., nr. WARE, Herts.
- B. Richardson, 25, Holden Street, CLITHEROE
- F. Richardson, 11, Pantygwydr Road, SWANSEA.
- H. Sheldrake, 3, Montgomery Street, EDINBURGH
- T. Stanley, 21, Undercliffe Street, BRADFORD.
- G. Stevenson, 7, Lord Haddon Road, ILKESTON.
- C. H. Steward, 118, Bright Street, WOLVERHAMPTON.
- V. Thompson, Primrose Bank, Grove Road, VENTNOR.
- H. Turland, 72, New Heston Road, HESTON, Middx.
- G. Wallis, 22, Dagmar Road, DORCHESTER.
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Any reader overseas whose name appears in the list, or reader who has since gone abroad, should note that the closing date for Overseas Claims is September 19th.

THE LONE FLYER!

(Continued from page 24.)

He was silent for a moment, and then he suddenly laughed.

"Well, I guess I'd better spill it," he said, with a shrug. "I was keeping that back until the dinner to-night—as a surprise. Yes, boy friend, I *did* fly through that hailstorm, and you can tell the world that it was the greatest test any 'plane ever went through."

"Splendid!" beamed William Napoleon.

"I sure thought I was done for," continued the Atlantic airman. "The hailstones battered my little ship, driving her down and down—until I was only two or three hundred feet from the sea."

"It is said that these hailstones were phenomenally large," said Browne.

"Large?" retorted Dayle. "Say, they were like rocks! The noise as they smashed against the planes and under-carriage was louder than the beat of the engine. It's a miracle my wind-screen wasn't shattered."

"And may I tell our readers how you escaped from this singular peril?"

"You may!" replied Dayle. "My only chance was to climb. Oh, boy! How that little ship climbed! I put her to it, and she won through. Yes, sir! Not big to look at, but a giant in strength. I'm not saying I wasn't lucky; I hit an upward air current which helped me a whole lot. And once I was above that storm area everything was jake. The rest of that flight was just cream in the can."

Browne closed his note-book with a snap.

"My sincere thanks, Brother Dayle," he said contentedly. "I venture to predict that this interview will create a sensation such as journalism has never before witnessed. And now, if you desire to sleep further, the room is yours."

He retired gracefully, and took no notice of the valet in the sitting-room, who was talking excitedly to a gentleman—probably the under-manager. Browne strode out before they had time to think about stopping him. Within half a minute he was in his recently acquired Wolseley Hornet, speeding towards Gray's Inn Road.

"Well done, Browne—I knew I could rely on you," said Nelson Lee, after he had had Browne's report. "This information is of vital importance. I now have a clear line to work upon, and somehow I have a feeling that this whole affair will soon develop into a sensation."

CHAPTER 5.

The Microscope Clue!

NELSON LEE did not waste any time. He had promised to look into this matter for Mr. William Garland, and he was now becoming thoroughly convinced that Mr. Garland had every justification for his suspicions. Somehow, in some way, there had been trickery. Elmer Dayle

had not flown the Atlantic in that 'plane! But how to prove this? Nelson Lee was frankly puzzled. For the life of him he could not think of any logical explanation.

His first move was to examine the now-famous Butterfly 'plane. This had been stowed in a private hangar at Croydon. Lee had some difficulty in convincing the officials in charge that it was in the interests of justice that he should be admitted to the hangar.

"I'm afraid it's impossible," said one of the officials. "Mr. Dayle has the key. He was very particular that his machine should be locked up—"

"I am not disputing any of these points," broke in Lee. "But if you try to tell me that you have no duplicate key—well, I'm afraid I must disbelieve you. Nobody need know but ourselves, and I can assure you that it is in the best interests of aviation that you should grant me these facilities."

"Well, it's against all orders, but I'll take the responsibility," said the other, at length.

Lee was intensely interested as he made an examination of the small monoplane. The Butterfly was an extraordinarily close copy of the British made Gnat—such a close copy, in fact, that it was frankly an impudent imitation. It was a mass-produced article, and when inspected closely was revealed as a very inferior duplicate of the skilfully constructed Gnat. Every machine which left the Gnat works was the product of brilliantly clever craftsmen. This Butterfly was a machine-made product.

Nipper and Browne, who were with Lee, said little until the famous detective had made a close inspection. The hangar was closed, and the official had left Lee and the boys alone.

"One thing is certain—Dayle is an arrant liar!" declared Nelson Lee. "If this 'plane flew the Atlantic, it certainly did not fly through any hailstorm."

"How can you be sure of that, guv'nor?" asked Nipper.

"Look at the wings—look at the struts of the under-carriage," said Lee. "We know that the hailstorm was exceptionally severe. Many ships have reported that the hailstones were of almost unbelievable size. Then think of this machine driving through the air at about eighty miles an hour. She would have received a terrific battering."

"She couldn't have stood it, in fact," said Nipper.

"Assuming she could have stood it, she would certainly bear traces of the ordeal," replied Lee. "But look at the wings and struts! Not a mark—not a scratch. I am perfectly satisfied that this machine has never flown across the Atlantic. All we are concerned with, now, is to determine the exact nature of the fraud—and to expose it."

The detective continued his careful inspection, and he was particularly interested in the wheels. In one or two places on the tyres, he found small dried cakes of very

distinctive reddish earth. He scraped some off, and carefully stowed it away.

"You can't prove anything with that, sir, can you?" asked Nipper.

"I don't know yet—but it may be very informative," said Lee. "We know that there is no such reddish earth on this aerodrome. In any case, the ground was perfectly dry when Daylo landed."

"I expect it was done over in America," said Nipper. "That's funny, though! If this machine didn't fly the Atlantic—"

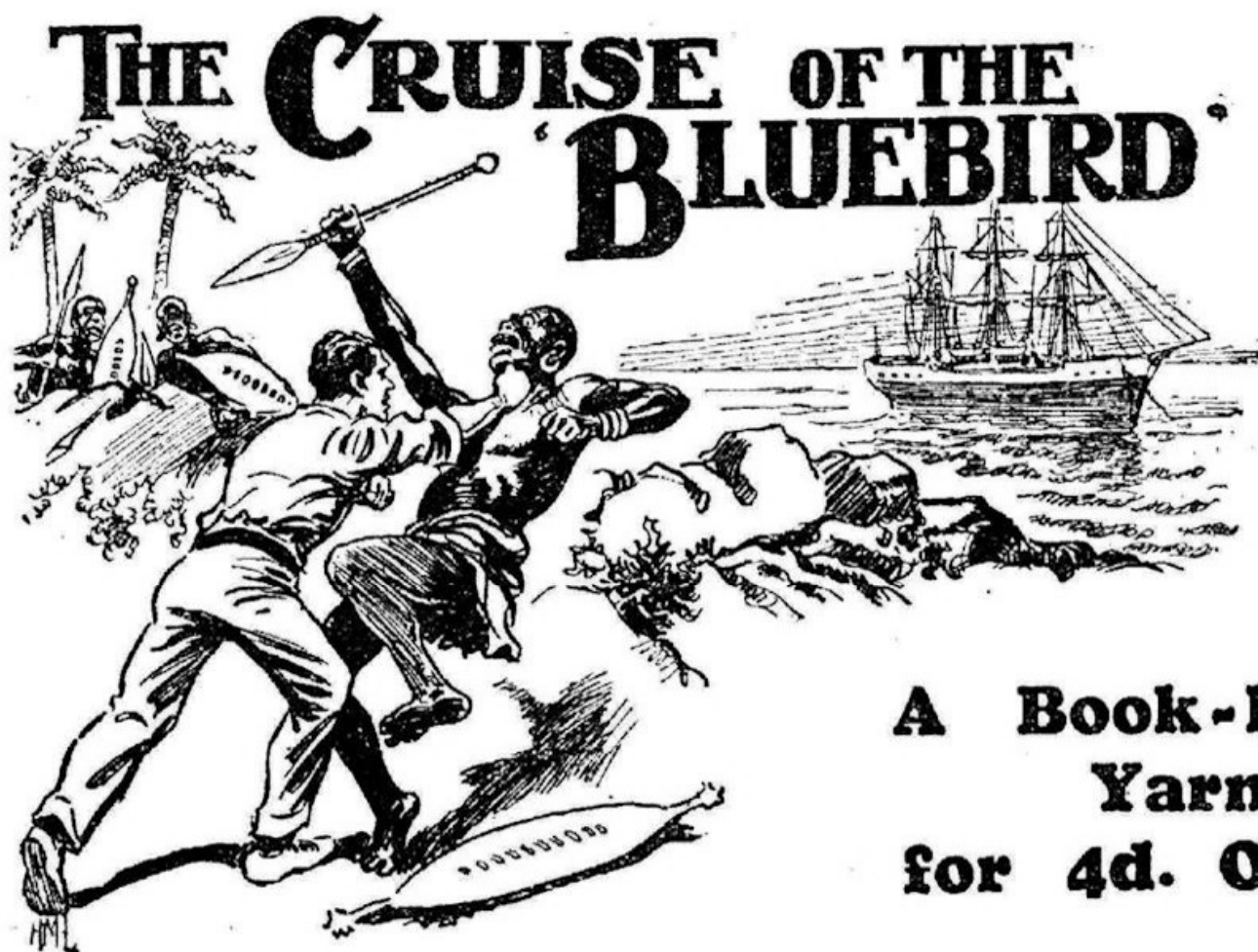
"I have visited Roosevelt Field on several occasions," interrupted Lee. "There is no such earth to be found there. Of course, it may be the result of a previous landing—perhaps in some other part of the United States—but somehow I think we shall find differently. I have made rather a study of geology, young 'un."

IT seemed to Nipper and Browne that Nelson Lee regarded the red earth as a vitally important factor. Having found it, he lost all further interest in the 'plane, and scarcely gave it another glance.

He briefly thanked the aerodrome authorities for their courtesy, but gave them no satisfaction. He was intensely thoughtful on the way back to London. Arriving at Gray's Inn Road, he made a bee-line for his laboratory.

Browne went to the Detective Academy—which, although part and parcel of Nelson Lee's establishment, was a self-contained institution next door. There were not so many "cubs" now, since Handforth and Travers and Glenthorne and many others had gone back to St. Frank's.

Nipper was the only "cub" who hung about the laboratory. He watched Lee with



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interest as the latter carefully prepared a number of microscope slides from the reddish earth deposits he had taken from the landing wheels of Dayle's airplane.

"Very informative, Nipper—not to say significant," remarked Lee, in a satisfied tone, after he had made a careful microscopical inspection of those slides. "Go to the geological shelves— No, don't bother. I'll get what I want myself."

He soon had scores of slides all round him on the bench, every one marked and numbered. Nelson Lee was a methodical man, and during the course of years he had obtained samples of soil from every county in Great Britain—and in lots of cases he had a dozen different samples from one county alone. Earth is peculiar in many ways. A sample from Essex might look exactly like a sample from Somerset in one's hand; but under the microscope there are differences which are immediately obvious to the trained eye.

"We are having a most interesting evening, Nipper," said Lee pleasantly. "It is an extraordinary fact that every one of these slides is different. No two are absolutely identical—although many, of course, are similar in certain respects. There is always *something* which characterises a certain county or district."

"What about these slides you have just prepared, gov'nor?" asked Nipper pointedly.

"Put your eye to this microscope," replied Lee. "Now, watch."

He placed slide after slide on the apparatus, and Nipper was fascinated. The tiny specks of soil became clearly defined. In some slides there were samples of quartz which were entirely absent in others; in others were infinitesimal specks of granite. The formation of the various specimens of soil was always different, although groups and combinations occurred regularly, and it was remarkable how the different combinations would almost certainly point to a definite area. Under the microscope, it was impossible to confuse a sample of Hampshire soil with that of a sample of Norfolk soil, and so on.

"Hallo!" said Nipper suddenly. "What's this, gov'nor? Trying to fool me? You put the same slide in twice."

"No I didn't," replied Lee. "The earth you were just looking at is a somewhat peculiar specimen from an isolated quarter of Dartmoor. As you may have noticed, it has some characteristics entirely its own."

"But this slide you've just put in is exactly the same," said Nipper. "Great Scott! Do you mean that this is the earth you found on the tyres of Dayle's 'plane?"

"I do," said Lee grimly.

Nipper whistled.

"And it's identical with this sample from Dartmoor," he ejaculated. "Then that proves that the machine must have landed on Dartmoor."

"Not necessarily," said the detective. "But might it not have *risen* from Dartmoor?"

CHAPTER 6.

In the Shadow of the Kairn Tor!

NELSON LEE'S Rolls-Royce Special glided smoothly over the rough moorland road. There was no sunshine and the day was chilly. The great lonely stretches of Dartmoor looked uninviting and depressing. Here and there craggy tors lifted their heads upwards, grim and grotesque outlines against the sky.

The three cubs who accompanied Nelson Lee were eager and excited. It was amid this rugged countryside that they hoped to make discoveries which would startle the world.

At various points Nelson Lee had inquired if anything had been seen or heard of a small airplane in these parts during the recent weeks. Nothing had.

Not that there were many people in this part of the country of whom to inquire. This was one of the loneliest parts of the moor.

The last cottage had been passed two or three miles back, and, with the exception of a shepherd's hut here and there, no human habitation was within sight.

"That is the spot we are making for," said Lee, as he pointed to a high, towering mass of rock in the distance. "That is the Kairn Tor. A very famous landmark in this part of the country."

The cubs were interested. Nipper was accompanied by Browne and Tommy Watson. Others had wanted to come, but there was insufficient room.

"Why are we heading particularly for the Kairn Tor, gov'nor?" asked Nipper.

"Because that scrap of soil is characteristic of this particular district," replied the detective. "The composition is exact. And although I tested many other samples of earth, none corresponded so closely as this. Therefore this is our starting point."

"Well, it's rummy, that's all I can say," said Nipper. "If that airplane had been out here on the moor, somebody must have seen it—or heard it, anyhow. That clue of the red earth seems a bit too thin, gov'nor."

"Nevertheless, it is the only clue we have to help us," said Lee. "And if it comes to that, Nipper, I did not expect any of these inhabitants to tell us that they had heard mysterious airplanes. Our quarry is altogether too clever for that. The fact that we have learned nothing is not at all discouraging."

To the great detective it was extremely significant that the scraps of reddish earth he had discovered on the wheel of Dayle's airplane should so exactly correspond with that to be found in a particularly lonely part of Dartmoor, for of all places in England this was the most likely to fit in with the theory which Nelson Lee had formed.

It was exactly the type of country where a small 'plane could be secretly assembled and tested—where it could fly off under cover of darkness without a soul being the wiser.

The Butterfly 'plane, too, owing to the smallness of its engine, was noted for its quietness. Rising from the moor in the darkness, it could very easily attain a great height over a limited area, and, out of sight and so high as to be inaudible, fly off seawards. Then it could turn back—and who was there to prove that the machine had not actually flown the Atlantic?

Thus reasoned Lee; but he was not foolish enough to take anything for granted. He

knew—ever better than his cubs—that this investigation was in the nature of a long shot.

The track which they were bumping over—it could hardly be called a road—was so little frequented that grass was growing up amidst the rough stones. Two or three vehicles a week were perhaps the total traffic, and there was very little chance of meeting a motor-car or horse-drawn cart this afternoon. The Cairn Tor loomed bigger and bigger as they approached—a towering, menacing mass of rock, looking almost sinister in the grey light.

Lee could not help smiling as he drove. He was thinking of Elmer Dayle, back in London—the hero of the hour, the man of the moment. To-day Dayle was being fêted and honoured more than ever. He had promised to give a demonstration on his wonderful little 'plane, and later in the even-



Nelson Lee hurled himself forward, seized the running man round the legs, and brought him toppling over.

ing he would be the honoured guest at another great function.

The newspapers that morning had again been full of his exploits, giving more detailed stories of the great flight. In Amercia, no doubt, the newspapers were even more expansive, and the Butterfly 'plane was getting an advertisement which would unquestionably result in a fortune for its manufacturers. Nelson Lee could well understand Mr. William Garland's intense anxiety. The Gnat, which had hitherto been the most popular 'plane with private owners, was now eclipsed.

"Hallo!" said Nipper abruptly. "There's a house!"

The car had wended its way round a curve of the rugged road, and the great mass of the Kairn Tor towered up on the left of the travellers. Lying some distance below, in the very shadow of the tor, was an old-fashioned dwelling.

The road was high just here, and it was possible to look right down upon the house. The grounds were fairly extensive, and they were completely surrounded by a high granite wall. No human being was within sight—not even a dog or any other animal. Not a coil of smoke arose from any chimney. The place looked deserted and forbidding.

"Are we going to have a look at this place, gov'nor?" asked Nipper.

"Whatever we do we must be cautious," replied Lee.

He spoke abstractedly. He wasn't looking at the house so much as the big stretch of moorland just beyond. The ground was flat there—flat and only sparsely covered with grass. The reddish earth showed glaringly.

"Yes," murmured Lee, "an inspection of that ground might be profitable."

He drove on until the car was close to the gates of the isolated house. The gates were padlocked, indicating that the house either had no tenant or that it was temporarily unoccupied.

"How about hopping over the wall and having a close look, gov'nor?" asked Nipper. "It seems to be safe enough; there's nobody about."

"Before we make a move of that description, we must know exactly how we stand," replied Nelson Lee. "No, we won't do any trespassing just yet. Wait here for a bit."

He left the car and walked round the granite wall until he arrived at the far side. There were some other gates here, but they did not lead on to any road. There was certainly a kind of path which wandered off across the moor, but it had long since been disused.

Lee inspected the ground closely. Here and there he fancied he could detect the trace of wheel marks, but he was not certain. If any tyred vehicle had been over this ground, the tyres had no distinctive treads.

"H'm!" muttered Lee, frowning.

The tyres of the Butterfly monoplane were of a well-known American make, and their treads were distinctive. Lee walked on farther out upon the moor. Once or twice he halted, puzzled by odd scraps of straw which

were lying here and there. And then a keen light sprang into his eyes.

Ten minutes later he was back at the car, climbing into his seat.

"Found anything, Chief?" asked Browne.

"A few scraps of straw, that's all," replied Nelson Lee contentedly.

"Well, you seem pretty pleased," remarked Nipper.

"My discoveries are meagre, but satisfactory," said Lee, as they started off. "Now I think we need a little luncheon. We're a bit late, but our appetites are all the keener on that account."

"You mean we're going right back, sir?"

"No, we're going on," said Lee. "There's an inn some miles farther on. I've been on this road before, and I remember it. And don't forget, my sons, that I'm a geologist, and that I'm very interested in Roman remains."

THE inn proved to be seven miles away. It was the nearest house to the Kairn Tor, and was isolated except for a cluster of small cottages near by. It was on a main road, however, and the innkeeper no doubt obtained a good deal of custom from travellers.

"Roman remains, sir?" repeated the landlord, when his guests were seated in the comfortable, old-fashioned luncheon-room. "I'm not much of a hand at that sort of thing, but I believe there are some Roman remains in these parts if only you know where to look for them."

"I understand that there's the site of an old Roman camp near Kairn Tor," went on Nelson Lee. "I'm wondering if you can help me—"

"Not me, sir," said the innkeeper, shaking his head. "The Kairn Tor's over yonder," he added, with a jerk of his thumb. "You're at liberty to go and look round if you want to. These moors are anybody's property, if it comes to that. Only you'd best be careful of old Mossco. I don't think he'll like it if you get into his grounds."

"Mossco?" repeated Lee. "Who's he?"

"Oh, he's the gent who's living in Kairn House, over by the tor," said the landlord. "Queer sort of old chap. French, they say. A bit touched in the head. Mind you, I've got nothing against him. Never even met him."

"What is supposed to be queer about him?" asked Lee casually.

"Lives by himself, for one thing, and they say he's building a model railway in his grounds," said mine host, with a laugh. "Ain't that funny, sir? A man older than I am, and playing about with model railways! Must be a mechanical sort of old chap, because he's fitting up his own electric light, too."

Nelson Lee nodded as he continued his luncheon. Only Nipper could see the satisfied gleam in the detective's eye.

"I don't think your friend Mossco could have chosen a more desolate spot for his experiments," said Lee, looking up with a smile. "At all events, he's not likely to dis-

turb many people out there on the moor. Have you ever heard the humming or purring of his model railway engine?"

"Once or twice, sir," said the landlord. "Mostly in the evening, after dark. The men in the bar parlour have mentioned it now and again. Sort of humming on the wind. 'That must be Mossoo at his games again,' they'd say. Haven't heard it myself, being a bit deaf."

"I see," said Lee. "Well, there are some strange people in the world, landlord, and this mechanically-minded Frenchman is no stranger than plenty of others. I expect he had quite a number of packing-cases delivered to him during the past few weeks, eh?"

"Lor' bless your life, yes, sir," replied the innkeeper. "The big lorry from the station has delivered two or three loads. In fact, ever since Mossoo came to these parts he's had packing-cases and boxes from the station."

"Looks suggestive, guv'nor," murmured Nipper, after the landlord had gone.

"Our friend was not particularly informative regarding Roman remains, but he has supplied me with much better information," replied Lee smoothly. "As you say, Nipper, very suggestive. A supposedly daft Frenchman with a mania for building model railways. The humming of his toy has sometimes been heard after dark. Rather clever. Not one of these simple people has had any suspicion."

"You think this Frenchman is connected with Elmer Dayle, Chief?" asked Browne.

"I think so—but what I think is more or less unimportant," replied Lee. "We've got to make certain, and as soon as this meal is over we're going back to the Kairn Tor. Before we leave Dartmoor we must have our evidence."

CHAPTER 7.

The Search!

THEY drove back across the moor, Nelson Lee in a thoughtful mood.

"We're going to take the bull by the horns, Browne," he said as he brought the car to a standstill outside the walls of Kairn House. "I don't feel inclined to wait until darkness, and our work ought not to take us more than half an hour at the most. If possible I want to be back in London by the late evening."

"Suits me, Chief," said Browne. "What, exactly, is the stunt?"

"My theory is that Dayle's aeroplane did not fly the Atlantic, but took off from the moor near here," replied Nelson Lee. "It took off in the darkness, flew out to sea at a great height, and returned inland some twenty miles farther south, giving every appearance of having just flown in from the open Atlantic. And if my suspicions are correct we are bound to find some evidence which will support it."

"Did you look for wheel marks, guv'nor?" asked Nipper.

"I did—but found none."

"You mentioned something about straw."

"I believe that when the machine was wheeled out, its tyres were wrapped round with straw, so that there should be no trail," replied Nelson Lee. "This straw was removed some distance from the house, for it was obviously impossible to let the machine go up in that condition—and if we draw a blank in these grounds I shall make a further survey of the moor itself."

"Wait a minute, guv'nor," said Nipper, staring. "This theory of yours can't be right. If the machine took off from here, Dayle must have been in it—because he was in it when it had landed at Croydon."

"Exactly."

"But how did Dayle get here?" went on Nipper. "He was in New York thirty-six hours before the flight started. It's too thick to suppose that he could have been brought over by a bigger machine in secret—"

"We will leave that part of the problem until later," interrupted Lee. "Before I left London I set certain machinery in motion, and there may be some concrete result when we get back. Our present task is to prove that our friend Mossoo is a paid hireling of Elmer Dayle, and that the supposed Atlantic monoplane took off from this neighbourhood. Come along!"

Nelson Lee himself led the way. He leapt nimbly to the top of the wall, scrambled over, and dropped. Nipper, Browne, and Tommy Watson followed. They found themselves behind the shelter of thick evergreens, but when they broke through these they suddenly came upon some crudely-laid miniature railway lines. The lines were already rusty—with the new red rust which told of recent neglect.

"Then that old landlord was right about the model railway?" said Nipper in surprise. "By Jove, I hope we're not making a blunder, sir!"

"It is our friends, the enemy, who have blundered," said Lee keenly. "This model railway is a blind—and a clumsy blind at that. Upon my word! Having gone to such an expense, you would think they would make a better job of it than this."

Lee was impressed by the hasty, temporary nature of the miniature "permanent" way. Somehow, it did not tally. If this old Frenchman was such an enthusiast as to import, at considerable expense, a complete model railway, he would naturally take a pride in his work and construct his track accordingly.

Yet in many places there had been hardly any attempt to level the ground. The sections were only half bolted together, and the whole line zig-zagged atrociously. This was not the work of a man with a hobby, but the work of a man who had been paid to do it.

It was a point which strengthened Nelson Lee's hypothesis. Boldly, openly, he crossed the grounds towards some sheds. He glanced at the house windows now and again, but still there was no sign of life.

The first shed revealed nothing of interest—except a model locomotive and tender of some size, which were red with rust.

"Looks as if it's been run in the rain, and shoved into its shed and left," said Nipper.

"No doubt a shower came on while the experiments were being made," nodded Lee. "Whenever the airplane engine was tested, this locomotive was set going. You see, one noise to cover the other."

"It's strange that we can't find a trace of the airplane engine, though," remarked Browne. "What about spare parts, and petrol?"

"We shall probably come to them soon," said Nelson Lee.

They left the shed and went towards another. Suddenly Nipper gave a yell, grabbed at Nelson Lee, and ducked.

Bang!

There came the deafening report of a sporting gun, and the bushes nearby, were spattered with shot.

"All right, young 'un—I saw," said Nelson Lee grimly. "If I had thought that this fellow would start these games, I wouldn't have let you boys come in. Quick! Get behind the wall of this cucumber frame."

They made a dash, and were soon in cover. Lee, peering up, saw an angry elderly man at one of the house windows.

"What is it you do?" shouted the man with the gun. "Mon Dieu! Is it that you

trespass on my property? I call the police."

"No need to do that, my dear sir," shouted Lee. "If you'll put that gun down, and act like a rational man, I can explain."

"Sacre! I want no explain!" roared the other. "You see! You trespass on my property, and you go. I fire again unless you clear out."

The cubs were feeling uncomfortable. It was a ticklish position, for even now there was no real evidence. In the eyes of the law, they were trespassers. There was always a chance that this Frenchman was a perfectly honest man, and that he had had nothing whatever to do with the Atlantic airplane.

Bang! Bang!

The infuriated Frenchman was impatient. He fired both barrels at random, and the glass of the cucumber frame was shattered to fragments. Nelson Lee glanced at his companions; this position was rather too exposed.

"Get behind that shed—and look lively!" he said sharply.

Before the excited householder could reload, the intruders dashed for the cover of the shed. Lee uttered an ejaculation as he stumbled over a battered wooden case.

"Hallo! Interesting!" he muttered. "This is American. No mistaking this wood—or the stencilled lettering."

He wrenched open the door of the shed and slipped through. At first glance the shed



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was a receptacle for garden tools and flower-pots; but Lee detected the unmistakable odour of petrol. Quickly he flung back some old sacks, and his eyes gleamed.

Hidden by those sacks were a number of petrol cans and two oil drums.

On one of the shelves close by, Lee found some delicate pieces of machinery—valves, the valve gear, carburettor parts, and so forth. At the first glance he recognised them as aero-engine spares.

Within a minute he was outside the shed again.

"We are on the right track, my sons," he said cheerfully. "Where's our pal with the gun?"

"That is a point, Chief, we have been debating amongst ourselves," murmured Browne. "At any moment I expect to receive a charge of buckshot in the rear. It seems to me that something ought to be done about this."

Lee ran to the end of the shed, and peeped round. He was just in time to see the Frenchman cautiously approaching across the garden, half-hidden by bushes.

"Run!" yelled Lee abruptly. "Look out, you chaps—he's after us!"

The Frenchman, knowing he had been seen, sprang out and let fly with one barrel. Lee and the boys ran madly. The instant the detective reached the further end of the shed he dodged sharply round to the side.

"Come on—quick!" he muttered. "Be ready!"

Their pursuer came dashing along, under the impression that his quarry had made for the outer wall. Nelson Lee timed his move to the second. The tackle, when it came, would have done credit to a Rugger international.

He flung himself forward, seized the Frenchman's legs, and they both rolled to the ground. The gun went flying, and Browne, Nipper, and Watson fell upon the Frenchman and soon had him helpless.

"Good lads!" said Lee approvingly. "Now, Monsieur Whatever-your-name-is, I'd like to have a little chat with you."

The prisoner, flat on his back, was cursing volubly—but not in French. He was so enraged and panic-stricken that he hardly knew what he was doing or saying; and for a man of at least fifty he had plenty of strength.

"I had my doubts about your French from the first, my friend," said Lee. "Am I wrong in addressing you as Mr. Jenkins Prior?"

The man was startled into calmness.

"No!" he snarled. "I don't know what you're talking about! My name is Levasseur, and—"

"Think again, Mr. Prior," interrupted Lee. "You are an American citizen, but whether you have French ancestry is a matter which need not be discussed now. Just over twelve years ago you were discredited by your own countrymen for engineering a fraud in connection with a coast-to-coast air race across the United States."

"Who are you?" gasped the man. "How do you know—"

"How I know does not matter," said Lee. "But I have a very good memory for faces, Mr. Prior—and I met you once, in Philadelphia, before you were exposed. At that time you were one of America's greatest pilots. I am sorry to see that you have gone back to your old games."

"Old games!" ejaculated Prior, startled.

"Frauds!" snapped Lee. "Unfortunately, there's nothing criminal in this offence of yours, and I can't make any charge against you."

The man recovered rapidly.

"Oh, you can't make any charge, eh?" he said unpleasantly. "Then what's the big idea? If it pleases me to retire in your country, I can do so—yes, and live as a Frenchman, too. You'd best quit while you're still safe."

"It really won't do, Mr. Prior," said Lee, shaking his head. "Before I quit I am going to make a very thorough examination of these premises. Browne, I leave you to rope up this gentleman. Put him in the car, and remain with him. He goes with us to London."

"You can't do it!" shouted Prior hotly. "You've just admitted that you can't charge me—"

"True," put in Lee. "But I can at least prevent you from communicating with a certain young rascal who is now being honoured in London. And I have a fancy to expose that young rascal in person. A mere whim, I suppose, but I'd rather like to give him a little surprise!"

CHAPTER 8.

The Exposure!

NELSON LEE did not waste much time in making his search. Within ten minutes he was out; and then he set the nose of the Rolls-Royce Special eastwards. The cubs would long remember that ride.

The roads, for the most part, were empty, and Nelson Lee reached London at least half an hour sooner than any express train could have done the trip. It was fairly late in the evening when the Rolls pulled up in Gray's Inn Road.

"Take him straight into your own quarters, and keep him there until you hear from me again," instructed Lee to the cubs. "I don't think you'll be burdened with Mr. Prior for long."

The man attempted to create a scene, but he was swiftly hustled indoors. Lee went to his own rooms, and having read one or two cablegrams which were waiting on his desk, he rang up Mr. William Garland.

"Upon my soul! I'm glad you've rung me up, Mr. Lee," said Garland. "I've been worrying all day. What's happened? Where have you been?"

"I have been very busy on your case, Mr. Garland, and I am now in a position to say that your suspicions were thoroughly justified," replied Lee. "I have, in fact, obtained the necessary evidence to discredit our young friend, Elmer Dayle."

"Good heavens! This is amazingly good news!" almost shouted Mr. Garland. "Shall I come round?"

"No; I want you to meet me in twenty minutes in the lobby of the Owner-Pilots' Airplane Club," said Nelson Lee crisply. "This excellent institution is now in the middle of a dinner for Elmer Dayle's glorification. He is the guest of the evening—and if we are lucky we shall arrive before the final toast is proposed."

"I'll be there—on the doorstep," promised Mr. Garland.

He was as good as his word. When Nelson Lee arrived, in spotless evening-dress, he found the airplane manufacturer pacing restlessly up and down. The Owner-Pilots' Airplane Club was one of the most modern institutions of its kind, and its membership was already considerable. No lady or gentleman was eligible unless he or she owned an airplane and was certificated to fly it.

It was only natural that such a club should honour Elmer Dayle—the man who had presumably done so much for the amateur flyer. By crossing the Atlantic in a tiny monoplane he had demonstrated the sterling worth of such aircraft.

"What have you discovered, Mr. Lee?" asked Garland eagerly.

"You'll hear all about it within a very few minutes," replied Lee. "Let us get into the banqueting-hall."

Swiftly they made their way into the crowded room. This dinner was of such importance that microphones were installed, and the proceedings were being broadcast.

"—and I am sure I shall be heartily seconded when I propose the health of Mr. Elmer Dayle," somebody was saying, as Lee and Garland entered.

A tumult followed. A stout old boy with a red face had proposed the toast, and he was beaming genially upon the guest of the evening. Nelson Lee waited until the toast was drunk; then, as Dayle rose to reply, the detective stepped forward.

"Ladies and gentlemen, forgive me for interrupting at this moment," said Lee smoothly, "but I feel it my duty—"

"Why, hang it, it's Lee!" shouted one of the guests. "Better late than never, eh? One of our most distinguished owner-pilots, by gad!"

"Unfortunately, Colonel Rosmer, I have not come here to join in the festivities," said Nelson Lee. "I will be blunt. For the past hour or so you have been entertaining a charlatan. Mr. Elmer Dayle is not worthy of being honoured by you!"

Dayle stood his ground, pale to the lips.

"What does this gentleman mean?" he asked unsteadily.

"Yes, hang it, you'd better explain, sir!" puffed the old boy who had proposed the toast. "Good gad! You can't do things like this, Mr. Lee! You'd better explain yourself, sir!"

"I am prepared to explain," replied Nelson Lee. "Unhappily, I cannot bring any criminal charge against Mr. Dayle, or I would have brought police-officers with me. However, I openly charge him with fraud. He claims to have flown the Atlantic in a Butterfly monoplane; whereas, actually, he flew no farther than from the West Coast of England."

"It's a lie—a lie!" shouted Dayle violently. "I flew the Atlantic! Who is this man? How does he dare to—"

The rest of his words were drowned by the pandemonium which arose. Everybody was upon their feet, and mingled indignation and excitement were rife. Nelson Lee had expected this, and he had no regrets. He had made up his mind to expose Elmer Dayle in public; thus would the dishonour be all the greater.

"An outrage!" shouted Colonel Rosmer furiously. "I didn't think you were capable of it, Mr. Lee! You'd better apologise—"

"I shall not apologise, but I shall proceed to substantiate my charge," said Nelson Lee. "Ladies and gentlemen, I beg of you to give me a hearing. Mr. Dayle, I am sure, will be anxious to answer me—if he feels capable of answering by the time I have finished."

"The whole thing's an infernal plot!" shouted Dayle, his voice shrill with excitement and fear. "Why should this man be allowed to speak? Everybody knows that I left Roosevelt Field—"

"Wait, my friend," interrupted Colonel Rosmer. "You are an American citizen, and our honoured guest. You may be sure that I, as president of this club, will make Mr. Lee tender a full and complete apology unless he can prove his extraordinary charge. Now, Mr. Lee, kindly proceed."

"Well, in the first place, the Butterfly airplane—as most of you know—is utterly incapable of the Atlantic flight," said Nelson Lee. "Mr. Garland, who is with me, does not claim any such powers for his own Gnat, of which he is the designer. Solely owing to Mr. Garland's suspicions, I investigated—"

"You see?" shouted Dayle. "It's only a business trick!"

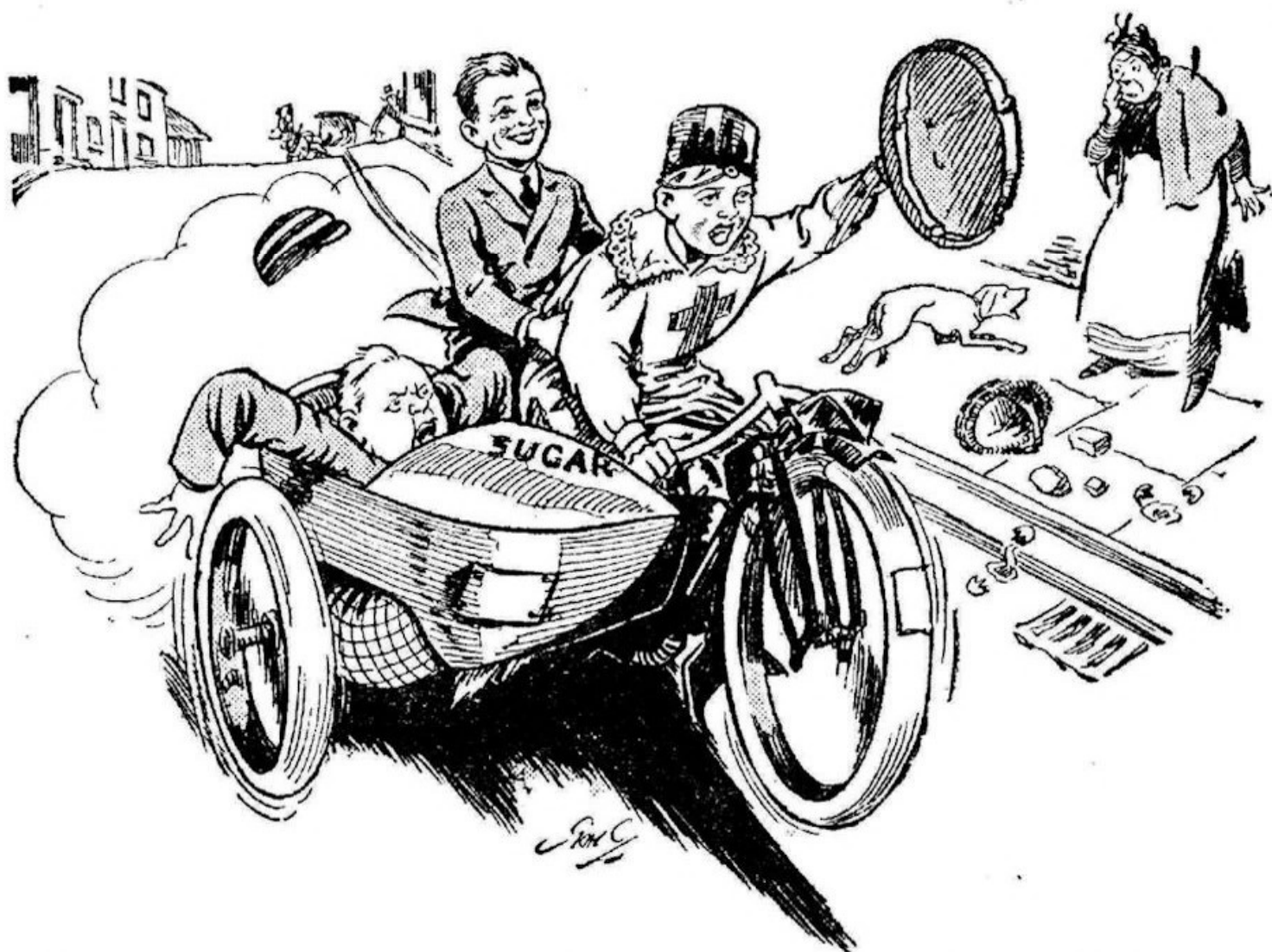
"Precisely—a business trick," agreed Lee. "Moreover, a contemptible, unscrupulous trick. I became convinced that Mr. Dayle had not flown the Atlantic after I had examined his machine."

And Lee, with the quiet, precise tones of a college professor, told his enthralled audience of his investigations. Piece by piece he fitted the case together. He explained how he had failed to find any traces of the hailstones on Dayle's machine. How he had scraped off the red earth, and how he had placed it under the microscope. He told of

(Concluded on page 44.)

CORKING NEW SERIES OF MIRTH-MAKING YARNS!

THE THREE "K" BRETHREN!



The Swearing In!

THE gang had met in Mrs. Drawback's coal-cellar, having gained admittance via the coal-chute. Ern, Mrs. D.'s promising offspring, presided.

The hour was late afternoon, and the third member of the Three "K" Brethren had not arrived. Sam, Squire of Gashouse Property, suggested that the fat one had deserted the Cause.

But Ern, Earl of Backstreet, strode the gloomy domain of the coal-cellar, hoping for the best. He felt hot and bothered, and would feel more so if Mrs. D. found them there.

The brow of Ern was furrowed in troubled thought. His responsibility was great. It is not every youth of fourteen who becomes the founder of such a great gang as the Three "K" Brethren was to become (perhaps!).

At the moment when despair was deep in the heart of the restless Ern—who wore a night-shirt over his clothes, upon which he

THE CHARGE OF THE K.K.K.

Leaving havoc behind them, terror to the right and left of them arousing consternation before them!

had painted a cross in red ink—there came sounds from above.

The coal-hole lid was raised, and the pair below dimly saw the balloon features of Lou Lewis.

"K. Brethren, and a penknife," he breathed.

"Pass, K, and an acid-drop!" countermanded Ern grandly.

Now the coal-chute was narrow, and Lou, Lord of Alleyway, was large, having, in the course of his brief life, broken four weighing-machines. He got his head and shoulders through the opening, and then became stuck.

He kicked, struggled and groaned, his legs working like semaphore-sticks in the air. Ern and Sam seized his arms and, planting their feet against the wall, pulled, me hearties, with might and main.

Suddenly there came a loud pop! like a cork released from a bottle. Neither Ern nor Sam had a chance to avoid the deluge of flesh, bone and blood as the twelve-stone Lou sped on his downward journey.

Lou bounced off his floored companions, sent the table crashing against the wall, and the candle was extinguished.

The commotion was loud enough to awaken the dead. It roused Mrs. D. from her forty winks, and she came toddling to the door at the top of the stairs.

"Ern! ERN! Is that you?" she demanded.

The three quivered against the wall, breathless with fear of discovery.

"I'll come down in a minute," threatened Mrs. D., "if you don't answer me."

Ern shivered. It was Mr. Drawback's night-shirt he was wearing!

"Sure I 'card something," muttered Mrs. D. "Ern, is that you down there?"

"No, ma, it ain't."

"If it ain't you, what is it, then?" demanded Mrs. D.

"Cats; they gets through the broken ventilator," answered Ern feebly.

"If that boy of mine ain't up to mischief, then he's ill," muttered Mrs. D., as she slammed the door and turned the key.

"Yer fault, Lou! You're like a thunderstorm! Can'cher be quiet!" Ern hissed, seeking and finding the candle.

"Can't 'elp yer coal-chute bein' too narrer," snapped the fat one, coal-dust from head to heels. "Much more, an' I'll join Dicky Dyke's crowd! Blimy!" added Lou, as he beheld his chieftain in the white jacket upon which was painted the red cross.

"Ain't yer seen a knight afore?" demanded Ern, taking the only seat. "Now, listen. We three is a gang, the Kourageous Krusade Knights. Get me? Well, we've got to go about doing good, givin' to the pore an'—an' that kind of thing. Like the knights of old. See?"

The other two "saw," for their eyes were wide with eagerness.

"Well, we're the Knights of the Table Round—"

"But it's a square table, wif two legs missing," the fat one pointed out.

"Look 'ere, Lou Lewis, I said it's a round one! Your job is to honour and obey the 'ead knight, wot's me, the Earl of Backstreet."

"All righ'! Wot's me?"

"You're the Lord of Alleyway. Yer see, Fatty, lords take their names from where they lives. An' you, Sam—well, you've gotta earn yer spurs. You is only a squire, Squire of Gashouse Property. Listen, I've bought a motta-bike, wif a sidecar—dirt cheap it wos. That's Micky, my trusted speed. All we 'as to do is away, scouring the countryside. But first let's swear in. No, sorry! I've got to make you a lord, Fatty. Kneel, you lump of dough!"

Fatty knelt, and Ern, Earl of Backstreet, dripped candle-grease upon his head.

"'Ere!" protested Fatty, as a spot went into his ear.

"Lie still!" thundered the leader sternly. "I've anointed yer, fathead! Rise, Lou, Lord of Alleyway, an' see to it that in thought, word and deed, true, loyal and

proper may you be to the Three 'K' Brethren. Say af'er me: 'Blow me pink if I ain't!'"

"Wot does 'Blow me pink if I ain't!' mean?" asked the cautious fat one.

"It's far worse than 'Blow me yellor!'" explained the earl. "Say it."

"All righ'. Blow me pink!"

"Now," directed Ern, "kiss me 'and and say: 'Ern, Earl of Backstreet, Chieftain and Knight Super, I follows yer through sick and fin, 'til death do us part.'"

Humbly Lou obeyed, and after a handful of coal-dust had been scattered over his unhappy head, the ceremony was over.

"Now let's git, for the hour is late an' we has much to do afore the twilight deepens," voiced the earl. "Sam, Squire of Gashouse Property, serve me well and faithfully, an' maybe you'll one day become a lord, like Fatty Lou 'ere."

From a dark corner the squire fetched a dented dustbin-lid, a paint-pot that had been made into a knightly helmet, and a trusty—and rusty—sword, which he handed, kneeling, to the earl.

Lou, Lord of Alleyway, envied such magnificence.

"To norse! To norse!" cried Ern, flourishing his sword, smiting the ceiling and bringing down a square foot of plaster upon their heads.

Ern dived for the chute, and was about to scramble up, when the door was opened, and Mrs. Drawback's voice filled the cellar.

"Is that you, Ern?"

"No, ma—it's cats!" came the ready reply. Bang! went the door.

The Good Steed Micky!

BY the time the Earl of Backstreet had emerged from the coal-hole his white jacket was almost black; but the Black Prince was as good a knight as any in history.

It took the combined efforts of the squire and the earl to pull My Lord of Alleyway up the chute, and then Ern showed them his good steed, Micky.

"Good norse, good norse!" breathed the proud earl, patting the handlebars of a combination that passes all powers of description.

"Do it go?" asked Lou, eyeing the rusty contrivance.

"Yus," answered the earl. "It don't take much strength to push it."

"Where am I to sit?"

"In the sidecar, Fatty."

"There seems to be more side to it than car," voiced my Lord of Alleyway.

"True, good knight and faithful friend," answered the earl. "The bottom's got the 'abit of falling out as we goes along."

"I like not the look of it, good earl."

"Avaunt, then, 'raven coward!" stormed the indignant knight. "Leave us, thou worm; quit our presence, thou quivering elephant of fear! Never will it be said that the Earl of Backstreet feared!"

He waved his sword above his head, and



the blade came away from the hilt. It sailed over the neighbour's fence, and the sound of shivering glass proclaimed a "bull."

"To norse! To norse!" cried the excited earl, as he pushed the combination into the roadway. "That's the second winder this week!"

Sweating and puffing, they ascended a steep hill and paused on the crest.

"It'll go down all righ'," consoled Ern proudly. "Squire Sam, you mount pillion, an', by my gadahook, if there be any sweet maid in distress, or fiery dragon out to devour, then the steel of the Earl of Backstreet shall glisten in Knightly Service, an'—"

"But yer only got yer 'ilt," Lord Alleyway ventured to point out.

"Avaunt, vile miscreant, but I have my 'cart!" was the retort, as Ern sprang lightly into the saddle.

With misgiving, Lou struggled into the sidecar. Squire Sam gave a shove and sprang aboard. The speed increased, until the wind shrieked past and the hedge became a blur.

The knightly brethren were not more than half-way down the hill when there came a loud report, and the bottom of the sidecar was left behind. A large portion of Fatty's anatomy was visible within a few inches of the ground.

"Stop! Stop!" cried the valiant lord, clutching the sides of the wreck.

"No brakes, mate!" hissed Ern, crouching low over the handlebars.

Taking a sharp bend on one wheel, they

Lou, Lord of Alleyway, came scorching down the hill and crashed full tilt into the mayor.

continued their downward rush. But now the street was thickly lined with people, and a rolling cheer greeted them.

At the foot of the hill, in the centre of the road, stood the mayor, with gold chain, etc., and a man waving a red flag.

To stop was an impossibility. The mayor took a flying leap for safety, and the gent with the red flag vanished over a wall.

It was Fatty, Lord of Alleyway, who stopped the machine many yards past the winning-post, half-way up a long, winding hill. He entirely slipped through the floor of the sidecar, and acted as a brake—at the cost of the seat of his shorts!

But he was firmly fixed. After ten minutes' hard work, Ern and Squire Sam had failed to unfix him. It looked very much as if for the rest of his days he would have to walk with half a sidecar attached to him.

"I'll unhitch," said Ern, loosening bolts and nuts and taking off the bike.

Turning to the squire, he was about to issue a command when there came a cry, and, turning, he saw the sidecar, neatly balanced on its one wheel, fast disappearing downhill.

"To norse! To norse!" cried the alarmed Ern.

Leaping into the saddle, the earl turned Micky and set off in pursuit. The squire, ever loyal and faithful, took a flying leap for the pillion, missed, and landed in a puddle.

The Old Crocks' Race.

THE mayor of the town and his fellow-citizens were gathered together to see the end of a motor-cycle old crocks' race.

When the Earl of Backstreet had flashed by, helmet gleaming on head, his stalwart body clothed in a knightly jacket, the spectators mistook him for one of the competitors travelling in the wrong direction—for the "first home" was now about due to appear from the opposite direction.

"Early Crusader period," voiced the mayor, as the combination vanished round a bend of the hill.

"Yes, yer washup," agreed the man with the flag, peeping above the wall. "Can't be many motor-bikes earlier than the Crusades."

"S'pose not, s'pose not!" declared the mayor, who owned an antique business. "King Harold might have won the Battle of Hastings but for carburettor trouble. Use Bang-bang petrol, and avoid choking."

Warily his Worship and the man with the red flag made their way into the roadway again. The mayor felt in need of some liquid refreshment after his little upset, and invited his companion to join him in a bottle of ginger-pop in the near-by marquee. In the middle of their drinking operations a loud cheering sounded from outside.

"Must be the first man home," declared the mayor, with some annoyance. Spluttering noisily in an endeavour to finish his glass of ginger-pop, he then dashed out of the marquee, followed by the man with the red flag. "Wonder who's the winner?"

His Worship didn't wonder for long.

Lou, Lord of Alleyway, scorching down the hill at a terrific lick, still firmly fixed in the bottomless sidecar, caught the mayor smack bang as the latter rushed out of the marquee. His Worship fell backwards upon the fat one, releasing the latter from his fix in the process.

The sidecar, unbalanced, fell over and gyrated round, the mayor calling for help. It came to rest with a dozen citizens piled on top.

A vast and excited crowd gathered round, and, having removed the humanity hiding it, considered the wreck to be a specimen sidecar dating back to the early Britons.

"Probably," spake the mayor, feeling a little dazed, "the type of thing Queen Boadicea visited Caledonian Market in for her Tuesday's and Friday's shopping."

The mayor considered it a marvellous contrivance. One wheel, no bottom to the chariot, no steering-wheel—and yet Lou Lewis had managed to win the old crocks' race!

Lou grasped the situation and played his part, and was awarded a tin of Bang-bang petrol.

Scarcely was the presentation made than Ern appeared down the hill with a swoosh! Having cut the brass band for six, he came to rest amid the wreck of the fire-alarm he had shattered.

"By my dishcloth, this is a fiery steed!"

he muttered, as someone sorted him out from the wreck of the fire-alarm.

The mayor, very confused and failing to recognise Ern as the bloke who had shot past and upset his dignity earlier on, beamed, and congratulated him on being a good second. He further voiced the thoughts of all present by stating that it was a mystery how Ern arrived on such an object of rusty iron.

"Marvellous!" cried the mayor. "What is the make of your machine, sir?"

"A Super-Heinz, your Worship," answered Ern. "It's made up of more than fifty-seven varieties."

"Wonderful! And how does it go?"

"On wheels. I have known 'er to do twenty-five miles per hour, your Worship," assured Ern.

"That is interesting. And it's horsepower?"

"We pushes it ourselves up the 'ills. We ain't got a petrol-tank on it yet, sir," the proud owner confessed. "Didn't think it was worth the expense, seein' as I can't afford to buy petrol yet."

At that moment there came a rattling roar along the street. It came from a motor-bike, which was really the first of the old crocks home.

Dicky Dyke, Ern's great rival, leapt from the saddle and rushed to where the mayor was standing. His machine looked like a string shop. It did, however, have a petrol-tank, much to the envy of Ern.

When Dicky Dyke learned that he had lost the race, his rage was intense. Crossing to where Ern stood, he scowled at the triumphant one.

"Prithee, proud sire," commenced Dicky Dyke, "harken! I shall not let thy victory pass unchallenged. To-morrow, at dawn, I challenge thee to a list in the tilt—I mean, a tilt in the lists."

"In mortal combat we shall meet," laughed Ern, gripping the hilt of his sword firmly. "My good Lord Alleyway, rouse me one hour before dawn, and see to it that a petrol-tank is fitted to my steed, for to-morrow I ride into the lists."

Dicky Dyke, captain of a rival gang, remembering his "Ivanhoe," desired a gauntlet to fling at the feet of his enemy. Having none, he wrenched off a shoe and flung it at Ern's feet.

Ern picked it up and swung it above his head before hurling the challenge away; but it slipped from his hand. A plate-glass window suffered.

"To norse! To norse!" cried the alarmed knight, jumping astride Micky, and thus, propelled by the faithful Squire Sam and the sweating Lord Lou, Ern, Earl of Backstreet, passed from the scene of triumph.

THE END.

(Next Wednesday Ern and Dicky Dyke meet in battle—a laugh in every line of thv's side-splitting yarn!)

GRAND OPENING CHAPTERS OF A STIRRING NEW ADVENTURE SERIAL!

KNIGHTS of the ROAD!



**A Romance
of Olden
Times.**

**By
DAVID
GOODWIN**

The First Chapter.
John Forrester's Will.

DICK FORRESTER stood staring sadly out of the great mullioned window that looked across the deer park of Fernhall. The day was dying in wild gusts of wind and rain, and Dick's thoughts were as sombre as the scene without, for in the chamber above, his father, John Forrester, lay sick unto death.

"I can't believe we're going to lose him!" said Dick to himself. "I won't believe it. I thought he was better yesterday. He's always better when Uncle Vane is away. If I had my way, Uncle Vane would never set his foot in this house. Nor that servant of his, Samuel Slink, with his black coat and his long, damp hands!"

The door opened softly, and Job Oxham, the old house-steward of Fernhall, addressed himself soberly to his young master.

"The doctor bids me summon you, sir," he said. "You are wanted in your father's room at once."

Dick turned with a foreboding of bad news, and just then his young brother Ralph hurried in, close on the heels of the steward.

"Can't I come, too, Dick?" he said eagerly. "He's better, isn't he?"

The old steward looked at him pityingly. "Master Ralph isn't called for, sir," he said.

"Better stay here, Ralph, old boy," said Dick quietly to his brother, and passed out.

He crossed the great entrance-hall where the shield of the Forresters hung high above the doors, and up the wide staircase between the old suits of armour that guarded its foot. He reached the first landing, and was met by a grave man in black, who came softly out of the room opposite.

"Your father has sent for you," said the doctor. "He is conscious now. But it is my sad duty to tell you he has but a few minutes to live."

Dick entered the chamber, his heart like lead within him, and feeling as though his heart would burst. He felt the hot tears near

his eyes, but he took a grip of himself and kept them back.

Old John Forrester, Squire of Fernhall, lay in the great oak bedstead, his head propped by three pillows, and though the hand of death was upon him, he was good to look on. His hair was as white as driven snow, and his face a little darker, but the clean-cut features and high, commanding nose marked him as a leader of men. Yet there was a weak, wandering look in the

Two more words only were wanted to bequeath the Forrester estates and fortune to Dick—and those two words were never written!

eyes that used to be so stern and fierce.

"Is that you, Dick?" he said in a faint voice. "Come here, boy! I am dying, and I have something to say to you—something that needs all your courage to hear."

"Father, you are not dying! You are stronger to-day!"

Despite what the doctor had told him, Dick felt a gleam of hope as he took his father's hand. Not for long had the old man looked so alert.

"It is the seal of death, Dick. I am going fast. What will you do when I am gone?"

The boy choked. He could not trust himself to speak, and his eyes dimmed.

The old man wandered again in his speech. He seemed to be groping in a brain that was partly decayed, and flashes of reason showed in his words, while the rest seemed the babblings of fever.

"Yes, I am going. You will be master of Fernhall, Dick, and all its acres. No, not master—not master, Dick! You must learn a trade. That's what Uncle Vane said.

"A trade, Dick. It seems strange, I know; but it's right. I was to have put you to learn a trade, but I haven't, and it weighs on me."

"Don't tire yourself with talking, father. Why should I learn a trade?" said Dick soothingly.

"A Forrester to learn a trade! It sounds odd, doesn't it, Dick? Eight hundred years ago we won Fernhall by the sword, and we have kept it by the strong hand. And you are the eldest son. But Fernhall is not for you, Dick. It goes to Uncle Vane."

"Yes, father," said Dick.

He thought the old man was wandering, and wished only to let him die quietly.

"You do not oppose it?" said John Forrester, turning his eyes eagerly on his son. "You see that it is right, Dick? It is the only way to lift the curse that lies on the Forresters! The estates and all that is ours must go to the younger branch for a generation, not to the line of the eldest son. So Uncle Vane gets all."

Dick felt a sudden amazement at this.

"Fernhall goes to Uncle Vane?" he said slowly.

"Ay, Dick! He is my half-brother, you know—your uncle. He knows all about the curse—more than I, who have done naught but use the sword all my life."

"But the curse is nonsense, father!"

"Boy, you talk like a child!" said the old man passionately. "At every fifth generation the curse descends on us, and terrible ill-fortune comes with it. You are the twentieth generation, and it means death with dishonour and shame unspeakable.

"The Forrester of the tenth generation was hanged, drawn, and quartered for joining in the Western Rebellion against the Protestant religion. The Forrester of the fifteenth was hanged for piracy, for he had gambled away all save the house itself, and sought to recoup himself under the Black Flag in James' reign. In both cases the estates went to the younger line, who built them up again in wealth by prudence and wisdom."

"So I have heard," said Dick grimly. "By stealth, and the grinding of the poor, and by trickery."

"You are a wild, untamed spirit, Dick, and well-fitted to help the curse settle upon you. Our race must not be dishonoured again. The curse clings to Fernhall, and takes only those of the eldest line for its victim. So, if the hall and estates go straight to the younger branch of the family—for Uncle Vane was my father's son by his second wife—the dishonour will be saved. It is hard fortune for you, Dick, and for Ralph, but the honour of our house must stand before all."

Dick Forrester felt dazed as he listened. Only too clearly he saw how matters stood.

He had a deep distrust of Vane Forrester, the big, dark, smooth-tongued man who had been such a power in the house of late. He recognised his uncle's cleverness and plausible speech, but he hated him. A man of strength and stature, yet who could not handle a sword or sit on a horse, and whose god was money, had no attractions for Dick; but it was the crafty eyes and glib tongue that the boy most disliked. Vane returned that hatred with interest.

Since John Forrester's illness, Vane had taken up his quarters at Fernhall, and was with his half-brother almost night and day.

No doctor was allowed to see John Forrester save by Vane's selection, and the old warrior's once iron will seemed to bend utterly to that of Vane. His eyes grew duller and his mind weaker day by day. Dick had loathed the intrusion of Vane, though his father allowed it; but till now the boy had never dreamed that any ill could result to his parent by it, or that anyone but himself could succeed to Fernhall and the rest of the property—though Dick gave little thought to that side of the question.

As to this curse of which John Forrester spoke, Dick believed it to be no more than a strange old tale, devoid of truth.

A terrible suspicion began to creep into Dick's mind. How had his father been brought to disinherit his sons, and give the Fernhall estates to a stranger, though related in blood, simply through this old tale? What had Vane Forrester and his servant been doing during the past three months? What had caused this strange, swift decay of mind and body in his father? Was it Vane's doing?

"And I never thought of a trade, Dick, by which you might earn your bread." The old man's voice wandered again. "I am forbidden to leave you even a shilling—that would undo all the good. Vane will send you to school, and then bind you to a trade—you and Ralph. You must break it to Ralph. I cannot face him—he is too delicate and weak."

"Father!" cried Dick in agony. "Don't say such things! If you are to die, neither of us cares who has Fernhall."

He covered his face with his hands. In all the world his father and brother were all he cared for, and if his father were to go, the

loss of worldly goods was nothing to Dick.

"Ay, I've taught you nothing useful!" muttered the old man. "I have instructed you in the small sword, and you can use a rapier with skill, and have a pretty manner of fence, as becomes a gentleman. With guns and pistols, too, you have little to learn, and you are a good horseman, even for a Forrester. But these are but accomplishments for men of wealth and station, and you will be a beggar."

"Say no more, father!" pleaded Dick. "Wealth is nothing to me! Don't let us waste the little time we have together!"

"I am very weary—my eyes are dim," said John Forrester. "Where is that blue phial? Ay, Vane is away! I will have it! He

"What was I saying? Ah, the curse, and the way to defeat it, so it was. 'Od's blood! It seems strange for a Forrester to fear such a thing. Never has a Forrester yet feared man or devil!"

Dick gazed at him in astonishment. The change was sudden and startling.

"It seems hard that you are to lose all, Dick. I'll—I'll give you ten guineas." The old man seemed to hesitate. "It can't do much harm. Shall I, or had I better not? My head's queer again. Give me another draught from the phial, Dick."

He drank it and sat up. The blood seemed to course quicker in his veins.

"Ay! I'll leave you ten guineas to start in the world! I'll leave you twenty—nay,



As John Forrester made to sign the will a change came over his face. The pen fell from his fingers and he dropped back—dead!

denied it me, but it is a fine old medicine, and well known to our household. I made Oxham get it me, since Vane went, and it puts life into my old bones. Quick, Dick! The large blue phial in the cupboard!"

Dick turned to obey. He opened the cupboard doors, and found the blue phial. Under his father's directions the boy put a little water in a glass, and added six drops of the liquid from the phial into it. The old man swallowed the draught and lay back again, a tinge of colour in his cheek, and his dull eyes brighter.

"That is better!" said John Forrester. "Wonderful stuff! The things Vane and his doctors give me made my head feel so queer. I feel a new man!"

He raised himself on his elbow,

fifty! Bring me my will and testament—it lies in the secret cupboard in the wall, and you know the key of it, Dick. You're the eldest son. I'll add a codicil, leaving you fifty guineas. Call in Oxham to witness it!"

Dick found the parchment on which the will was written, and summoned the faithful old servant, Oxham, whose eyes were wet with tears at his master's plight.

"Come here, Oxham," said John Forrester. "Nay, don't grieve, man. I'm allowed to leave nothing away, but I've made it a condition that you are to be kept in service here. But you don't know of the change—I forgot that. I leave you fifty—nay, a hundred guineas, Dick. See, I sign this codicil. Both of you sign beneath my name—so."

"What is this?" murmured the old servitor to himself—he always thought aloud. "Why should Master Dick have one hundred guineas left him when all Fernhall is his?"

John Forrester, who had sunk back on his pillow exhausted, heard the words and started.

"Ay! Why should he," he muttered, "when all Fernhall is his? But it isn't; it's Vane's—or it will be when the breath's out of my body. My head's queer again. Dick, another draught from the phial, and mix it strong!"

"Nay, sir, pray!" pleaded Oxham eagerly. "The potion is not meant to be taken so. It will give you strength for a little, but the after-effect is perilous and sudden."

"What matter?" exclaimed Forrester. "I feel death's hand on my heart now—cold, so cold! I will live again before I die, if only for a minute—who say me nay?"

Dick had misgivings, but never in his life had he dared disobey his father, who was not called the Eagle of Fernhall for nothing, and this was not the time to begin. He mixed up the third draught; the old man drank it, and it brought his old vigour back.

"What am I lying here for? My horse—my sword. Nay, am I ill? What is this paper? I remember—my will and testament, leaving all to Vane."

The dying man's voice rang like a trumpet through the great bed-chamber, and he flung out an arm.

"Why did I do it? A fig for the Curse! A fig for Vane! Am I not a Forrester and you are my son? Tear off the back leaf of the parchment Dick, and write."

Dick snatched up the pen and waited in silence.

"I, John Forrester, of Fernhall, declare this to be my last will and testament, and hereby I revoke all former wills signed by me. To my eldest son, Richard, I bequeath Fernhall and all the lands I hold with it, and all moneys accruing therefrom. To my second son, Ralph, I bequeath my Suffolk estate of Huntercomb Hall.

"Write no more, Dick—I feel my end near. Give it me to sign. A lawyer would have made it longer, but it holds good in law. Fetch in the doctor, and he shall witness it, too!"

Dick opened the door, and summoned the doctor quietly, for the old man had sunk back again, looking white and strange.

Suddenly the wheels of a chaise, furiously driven, and the thunder of hoofs sounded on the park road without, and pulled up at the great door with a jerk.

"Who is that?" said Dick. "Who drives so fast?"

"It is Mr. Vane Forrester," replied the old steward, and his face darkened.

A moment later rapid steps were heard on the staircase.

"Give me the pen!" cried John Forrester. "See me sign, in your presence, good people!"

The door opened roughly, and a large, sinister, black-browed man in a travelling cloak entered the room.

"What is this?" he cried.

John Forrester glanced at him, took the pen from Dick, and set it to the paper, unheeding the black-browed stranger. But, before he could write the first letter of his name, a terrible change came over his face. He fought for breath, the pen fell from his fingers, and he sat up, swaying from side to side.

"Father!" moaned Dick in agony, supporting him with his arms. "Father!"

The old man's face relaxed, and he sank back. No answer came from his lips.

The potion of the blue phial had done its work. John Forrester was dead!

The Second Chapter.

News that Vane Forrester Brought.

NO sound broke the silence but Dick's muffled sobs as he knelt by the bedside, his head on his arms.

The physician stepped noiselessly to the bedside and looked at the peaceful face of John Forrester. Then he turned a questioning glance upon the newcomer, who stood motionless and impassive at the foot of the bed, his dark eyes fixed on the dead man.

"It is the end," said the doctor gravely; "a sad but merciful release, Vane."

He bowed to Vane Forrester—for such was the newcomer—and quietly left the room, followed by Oxham, who was speechless with sorrow.

Vane Forrester still stood immovable, his eyes roving swiftly over everything in the room. Then he stepped nearer.

"Pens and an inkhorn?" he said, and a very ugly look grew upon his face. "What were these for, eh? Speak, boy—do you hear?"

Dick lifted his head, looked at his uncle, and turned away again. Vane's eye lit on the will Dick had written at his father's orders. It had fluttered to the floor, and the man picked it up. His brow grew black as he read it, and he swallowed an oath. But when he came to the end he gave a malicious laugh.

"I came in time," he said, looking threateningly at Dick. "Just in time, it seems, to stop some very pretty doings! I can quite understand, Master Dick, that this will would have suited your views exactly. But it is not signed, you see, and it is worth—that!"

He held the parchment out to Dick, pointing mockingly to the blank spot where John Forrester's signature should have been. Then he tore the document across and across viciously and flung the scraps on the floor.

Swiftly Dick rose and faced him, his eyes burning like hot coals.

"Hush!" he said in a low, hoarse voice. "How dare you speak like this in a chamber of death! Lower your voice, and leave these matters till a fitting time."

"You dare use such words to me!" said Vane. "I am master here, and that precious document of yours is waste-paper! This—"

he snatched the former will up from the bed"—is the deed that the law will confirm, and Fernhall is mine. So see that you address me with proper respect while you remain here. It will not be long. And now—"

But Dick stepped swiftly across to the door and opened it wide. Then, without a word, he caught Vane Forrester by the arm, and with one pull brought him out on to the landing. Then he closed the door.

"What do you mean——" Vane began furiously.

"If you go back there," said Dick very quietly, "I will kill you!"

Vane gasped.

"You may be master of Fernhall," said Dick, "but no man in England shall brawl in my father's death-chamber."

"Let us have this out," said his uncle in a dry, suave voice, returning to his old manner.

He had dropped it like a mask on finding himself master of the situation, and gave his overbearing, boorish nature full play. But finding Dick less easily bullied than he expected, he fell back upon his old mood, and with a bitter sneering running at the back of his words. He led the way into the old library, and Dick followed.

"Richard Forrester," said his uncle, "your father is dead, and his lands and fortune pass to his heir. Do you know who that heir is? It is I. This will—" he tapped the parchment—"gives all Fernhall and Huntercomb to me."

Dick made no reply. But the scorn in his eye made even Vane Forrester wince.

"I," said Vane, "am the head of the younger line. I have no personal wish to own a couple of country estates, and worldly goods are nothing to me. But I consented to become your father's heir that the curse of the Forresters may be avoided, thus saving the honour of the house."

"Honour," said Dick, "is a word that comes ill from your lips, Uncle Vane. The less you say of honour the better."

"Boy," said Vane darkly, "do you know that you insult me?"

Dick laughed savagely, and turned to where a pair of Charles II. court rapiers hung on the wall. He flung one across to Vane, who started violently, and gripped the other himself.

"I hardly thought it possible to insult you," said Dick; "but if I have succeeded, you shall have every reparation."

Vane bit his lip and scowled, but he made no effort to pick up the rapier. Dick laughed a grim laugh.

"I forgot," he said, "that I was not dealing with a gentleman!" And he threw his blade down. "Enough of this! Let us finish what we have to decide, for it tastes very ill in my mouth. And as to the curse of the Forresters, do me the favour not to try to frighten me with that nursery tale."

"Then you imagine yourself wiser than your father," said Vane maliciously, "and braver to boot. For he believed in it, and thus he did what he has done."

"Ay, under the care of you and your hare-lipped rogue of a servant!" returned

Dick fiercely. "And your hired physicians and bottles and secrecy. I shall reproach myself to my dying day for not keeping a watch on you, but I never suspected treachery in my father's house!"

"Treachery!" snarled Vane.

"Ay, treachery!" cried Dick. "And worse!"

Vane said no word, but there came a look into his eye which Dick read plainly, and from that instant he knew what to expect. It was war to the death between himself and his uncle, and he saw the sudden glance of fear in Vane's face, followed by the silent menace. Dick, though knowing nothing, had hit on the truth. There were secrets of those three months Vane had spent with the invalid that must be kept from all save himself and his servant at any cost. And Vane, suddenly suspecting that Dick knew more than he chose to say at the time, decided that there was no safety for him while the boy lived.

Vane Forrester controlled himself.

"We shall gain little by quarrelling," he said. "There is another matter to settle. Under the will, you and your brother become my wards. It is not fitting that you remain here, so I shall send you both to a school—in the north, near Newcastle—and afterwards have you taught a trade."

Dick felt a cold chill at this. If the law made him his uncle's ward he would be largely in his power, and the mention of the school in the north was ominous. Dick had heard of such places, and the sinister reputation they owned.

"I suppose," said Dick, "this will cost you money?"

"Not very much," replied his uncle with a sour smile. "And perhaps not for very long," he added to himself.

"I prefer to be beholden to you for nothing!" said Dick. "See, the codicil to the will leaves me one hundred guineas! Give me that, and I will go into the world and never darken your doors again—and take Ralph with me!"

(Will Vane agree to Dick's proposal? Don't fail to read next week's gripping instalment of this magnificent new serial.)

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THE LONE FLYER!

(Continued from page 34.)

the search on Dartmoor. By now his audience was tensely silent. Conviction was growing upon them that Elmer Dayle was, indeed, an impudent fraud.

"As for Dayle's claim that he left Roosevelt Field earlier this week, I can easily disprove that," said Nelson Lee. "I have been in communication with my special agents in New York. They, acting on my instructions, have made some close inquiries into the Dayle family. And when I tell you that our young friend here has a twin brother, you will guess the rest."

Elmer Dayle clutched at the table, and seemed on the point of collapse.

"Lewis Dayle was supposedly killed in a train smash in Utah over ten years ago—long before his family became in any way connected with aviation," continued Lee. "And as Lewis Dayle had presumably been killed after robbing a bank, his people hushed the whole affair up. Lewis Dayle was not killed—but hidden away by his uncle and brother, so that the police should not get him. As he was still a wanted man it was necessary that he should remain 'dead.'"

"You can easily see what happened now. These people desired to boost their product. Lewis Dayle posed as his brother in New York—while Elmer Dayle was over here in England, making ready. It was Lewis Dayle who flew off from Roosevelt Field into the dusk. He did not cross the Atlantic, but in the darkness he doubled back and landed in a specially-prepared spot. Later, Elmer Dayle took off from Dartmoor and flew over the

English coast as though he had just arrived from the Atlantic.

"Their uncle was in this fraud up to the hilt—although he pretended to urge his nephew not to attempt the flight. The Gnat plane, much superior to the Butterfly, threatened to swamp the Butterfly business; hence this attempt to popularise the Butterfly by giving it the splendid boost of an Atlantic crossing. Now, ladies and gentlemen," concluded Lee, "if Mr. Dayle can refute my statements, he is at liberty to do so."

But Elmer Dayle was in a condition of utter collapse. The fraud was exposed, and he knew that there was no possibility of escape.

It was fortunate that the proceedings were being broadcast, for the whole nation learned the startling truth from Nelson Lee's own lips. From being a world hero, Elmer Dayle was obliged to skulk off, a figure of scorn.

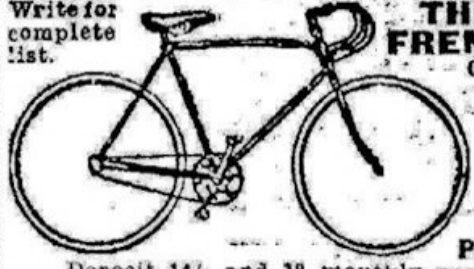
Needless to say, the Butterfly Airplane Corporation of America went into immediate liquidation. The concern was utterly ruined. Yet it had been a narrow thing, and but for Nelson Lee's careful and brilliant investigations the fraud might easily have been an unqualified success.

As a direct result, the Gnat plane established itself as a first favourite, and the American factory was soon working to capacity. Incidentally, Mr. Garland proved his gratitude by presenting Nelson Lee with the latest type of two-seater Gnat plane.

THE END.

(An amazing new series of yarns featuring Nelson Lee and his cub detectives starting next Wednesday. Look out for the first thrilling story entitled "Shanghaied!")

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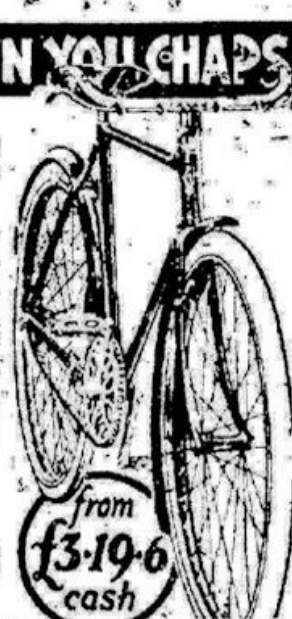
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