

NO. 11.—FOR READERS OF ALL AGES.—1^D.

NELSON LEE

LIBRARY

1^D



THE WAR FACTORY MYSTERY
OR THE MAN FROM KRUPP'S

Week ending August 21, 1915.



CHARLIE CHAPLIN

WILL APPEAR
NEXT WEEK

IN

PLUCK LIBRARY

In that Great Film Screen,

"CHARLIE IN THE PARK."

5/- MONTHLY.

Privately by post, Suits, Raincoats, Bedding, Cutlery, Clocks, Gramophones, Wristed Watches, Rings, and Jewellery. (BOOTS 2/6 Monthly.) Patterns and Lists free. State which of above required.—MASTERS, LTD., 6, HOPE STORES, RYE. (Established 1824)

BLUSHING.

FREE to all sufferers, particulars of a proved home treatment that quickly removes all embarrassment and permanently cures blushing and flushing of the face and neck. Enclose stamp to pay postage to Mr. D. TEMPLE (Specialist), 37, Maddox Street, Mayover Square, London, W.

BLUSHING.

Famous Doctor's
Recipe for this
most distressing

complaint (4d. P.O.). Never fails. Hundreds Testimonials. MR. GEORGE, 24, STROUD ROAD, CLEVELDON.

SPORT—Catapult, with shot, 1/6. Catch birds alive traps, 1/6, 2/6 each. Bird Lime, 4d. 6d. Four Lates! Wire Puzzles, 2d. All post free.—WICKS BROS., NORWICH.

XMAS CHOCOLATE CLUBS—Any person, young or old, can earn £1 to £10 spare time. No Outlay. Particulars—Samuel Driver, Beeston Road, Leeds.

DOUBLE YOUR STRENGTH

By wearing a pair of Magnet-cups inside your socks. No more aching legs or tired feet. Magnet-cups pour a continuous current of electro-magnetism into you. You can walk twice as far. You can lift more. Splendid for the health. Should be worn by every soldier, scout, factory worker, miner, sportsman, and all whose work is hard and tiring. Price 2/- a pair, post free, from MAGNETONE Co., 12, Finsbury Pk. Bldgs, London, N. Send to-day. You will be delighted



This 1915 Model **30 DAYS Free Trial.**



EXTRAORDINARY OFFER —30 days

(one month free trial on this finest of bicycles—the Mead Coventry Flyer Superbo. Warranted 15 years. Fitted with Dunlop Tyres, Brooks' Saddle, Coaster or Speed-Gear Hub. We will despatch it to you on approval, packed free, and carriage paid without a penny deposit in advance. This offer is absolutely genuine.

WRITE TO-DAY for big catalogue showing full line of cycles, for men, women, boys and girls, at prices never before equaled. It's free.

TYRES, SPEED-GEAR HUBS, inner tubes, lamps, cyclometers, and parts for all bicycles at half usual prices. Exceptionally Easy Payments Accepted. A limited number of second-hand bicycles taken in trade will be cleared at once, at 15/- to £2:10:0 each.

RIDER AGENTS wanted in each town to ride and exhibit sample 1915 model Mead furnished by us.

It Costs You Nothing to learn what we offer. You will be astonished and convinced. Do not buy a bicycle, tyre or accessories until you get our catalogue and new special offers. Write to-day.

MEAD CYCLE CO., Dept. 22F, LIVERPOOL

THE WAR FACTORY MYSTERY;

.. or ..

THE MAN FROM KRUPP'S.

How Nelson Lee, in his capacity of Inspector of Government Factories, discovered a vast conspiracy in connection with the War, and brought the conspirators to book.

CHAPTER I.

"A Strange and Serious Shortage in Output."

—The Man from Krupp's.

SHARP and shrill rang the telephone bell in Nelson Lee's chambers. The famous detective answered it himself. He held a brief conversation with someone at the other end of the wire, then laid down the receiver.

"I'm wanted at the office of the Minister of Munitions, Nipper," he said. "I must go at once."

"My word, sir, Mr. Lloyd George hasn't given you much rest since he appointed you an Inspector of Government Factories a few weeks ago."

"This isn't a time for rest, my boy, but for work. We've all got to put our backs into it to finish this war. That's why, knowing my engineering experience might be useful, I volunteered my services. Fetch me a taxi."

In a minute, he was whirling along the Gray's Inn Road, along Holborn, and through a maze of streets to Whitehall Gardens. Alighting, he entered the offices of the Minister of Munitions.

"Mr. Lloyd George expects me," he said, handing his card to the official who came forward.

"Ah, yes, you are Mr. Nelson Lee. Mr. Lloyd George has been called away to a conference with the Prime Minister, but he has deputed Sir Reeveley Chart to see you, sir. Will you please step this way?"

Quickly—everything was brisk and thorough here—the detective was ushered into an inner room, where Sir Reeveley Chart, one of the Minister's right-hand men, awaited him. He plunged into business at once.

"I believe, Mr. Lee, that in your tour of inspection of factories, you included Bordwell's Small Arms and Ammunition Factory down at Blackfield."

"That is so, and duly made a preliminary report."

"I have it here. We have been discussing it, and it is the reason for the Minister's sending for you."

"Anything wrong, Sir Reeveley?"

"We fear there is. Look at this Table of Output." He passed the detective a blue paper. "Over two thousand hands are employed, yet the number

of rifles, shells, and smaller ammunition is barely half what it should be."

"This is grave indeed," said Leo, with grave eyes fixed upon the paper. "I am at a loss to account for it."

"They were running at full speed when you were down there?"

"Day and night—double shifts. Not a lathe or machine idle."

"Do the men drink?"

"No. There may be a slacker here and there, but the bulk of them are splendid fellows—good, honest, hardworking Yorkshiremen."

"That makes the affair all the more inexplicable. Beyond all question, there is a strange and serious shortage in output, and the reason for it must be discovered. Will you take the matter in hand?"

"I will go down to Yorkshire at once."

Two hours later, Nelson Lee and Nipper were in a fast train bound for Blackfield. The detective was deep in thought. The shortage of which the Minister of Munitions complained was indeed as mysterious as it was serious, and the more he thought over it, the more it puzzled him.

"If they were a hard drinking lot, I could understand it," he said to Nipper. "But I could find no signs of that when I was at Blackfield three weeks ago."

"Perhaps they've broke out since, sir. Shouldn't wonder if the German agents have been on their favourite lay of treating men so as to hinder work."

"That, of course, has occurred to me. I must get a look at the time-sheets."

Arrived at Blackfield, he made straight for Bordwell's factory. As a Government Inspector, he was graciously received by Mr. Jasper Murton, the managing director. From him he learnt that the men were working splendidly and keeping regular hours, a fact which the time-sheets fully confirmed.

Further corroboration was forthcoming when Lee presently walked through the workshops. Here were row on row of whirring and whizzing lathes, all engaged in their different, highly technical tasks. Various and intricate these, for, as Leo well knew, more than fourteen hundred different operations go to the making of a single service rifle. Not a single lathe was idle, not a wheel or press or drill or rod, but was fulfilling its part.

It was the same in the shell and cartridge departments. Every man, woman, girl, and boy was working at high pressure.

Nelson Lee left the place quite satisfied everything was in order from an industrial point of view, and more puzzled, in consequence, at the shortage of output.

He had left Nipper to await him outside the factory gates. To his surprise he could see nothing of him as he reached the spot. Looking about him, his eye almost at once caught sight of a curious mark made in green chalk upon the pavement.

It was the figure one and the letter "R" drawn side by side thus:

1 R

"A signal from Nipper," muttered Lee. "Means he's gone, and taken the first turning to the right. Something must be up. I'll follow."

He moved along with a leisurely air so as not to attract attention. Turning to the right, he traversed a narrow street to the end, his eyes searching the pavement every few yards. Right at the corner, he found the outline of a bent arrow also made in green chalk.

It signified that Nipper had gone to the left this time, and Lee at once followed. He now found himself amid a maze of railway arches, so dark

even in the daytime, as to necessitate the lighting of a lamp or two to guide pedestrians on their way.

Here Lee was compelled to stop, not knowing which of several ways to follow. Suddenly, as he stood there in mild perplexity, a faint meow as of some cat reached his ears.

He looked round, and with his eyes growing accustomed to the gloom, made out a figure standing close to the wall in a dark recess.

It was Nipper, and he was beckoning, with one finger on his lips to enjoin silence.

Nelson Lee stepped into the recess.

"What's the matter?" he whispered.

Nipper pointed to a low door leading to a sort of warehouse beneath one of the arches.

"A man's gone in there," he answered in a low tone. "I followed him from Bordwell's factory, where he evidently works."

"What about it? Do you know him?"

"That's just it, sir. I've seen him somewhere before to-day, but I can't fix him. Big chap he is, with a square head, and short curly hair."

"And you don't know when you saw him before? Was it when we were at Blackfield two or three weeks ago?"

"No, sir, I'm sure it wasn't. It was longer ago than that, and it wasn't in Blackfield at all. I'm certain of that, but where it was I did see him I can't say."

"H'm, it's a little curious. I'd like to get a peep of him myself. I wonder if——"

"Back, sir, back," whispered Nipper, gripping Lee's arm. "He's coming out."

They pressed themselves back into the corner, and watched the man as he issued from the cavernous archway and locked the door behind him.

It was impossible to see his features in the darkness, but Lee was bent on getting a clear view of him.

"Stay here, Nipper," he said, and hurried after the man.

Nipper waited for five minutes, then Nelson Lee came back. The detective's face rarely betrayed his feelings, but there was a look of most unusual excitement in it now.

"Well, sir?"

"You were quite right, my boy. You had seen the fellow before, and so had I. It was nearly two years ago at Essen, in Germany."

"Where Krupp's factory is?"

"Yes. It was at Krupp's you saw him. He was an overseer in one of the shell shops. He's a German, and his name is Wolfram Sachs!"

"A German from Krupp's, and working in a British ammunition factory! What can it mean, sir?"

"Mischief, Nipper, that's what it means!" said Lee, with emphasis. "I shouldn't wonder if we haven't struck a clue to the shortage of output. Wolfram Sachs is a man we must watch!"

"How will you do it, sir?"

"By getting a job at Bordwell's factory myself. The presence of this man Sachs, here in Blackfield, is most strange, and we must not leave a stone unturned to find out what it means."

Nelson Lee lost no time. In an excellent disguise, and in the role of an engineer, he presented himself at Bordwell's factory the next morning, and applied for a job.

He was informed he must see Mr. Peter Mott, one of the foremen. On being conducted to Mott's office at the end of one of the big workshops, he

was somewhat surprised to find that the individual who went by this name was no other than Wolfram Sachs."

"So he poses as a real Englishman," thought Leo, and forthwith made his application for work.

"Nothing for you," said Mott curtly, as he eyed the applicant up and down with his shrewd, narrow eyes.

"But I thought you could do with extra hands—there's a notice up."

"That's for cartridge fillers," said Mott shiftily. "We've no vacancy for engineers. Good-day!"

"No go," said Lee to Nipper presently when he rejoined him outside. "I saw Sachs. He calls himself Mott—Peter Mott. He seems to have the engaging of all the engineers, and evidently likes to select his own men. He fights altogether shy of me."

"It's the look in your eye, sir. However you may disguise yourself, there's always something in your optics that tells a shifty customer to look out for himself, if he's only clever enough to see it. Mott must have seen it."

"Maybe so," said Lee. "He's shrewd and suspicious enough anyway. But we're not at the end of our resources yet. Since I can't get a job in the factory, you must."

"I'm willing, sir, but what as?"

"A cartridge-filler. They're short of hands in that department, and with luck you'll get taken on."

"Right ho, sir. I'll have a smack at it straight away."

Luck was to favour Nipper. In the name of Harry Watkins, he made application for a job as a "filler," and was engaged there and then.

"Good," said Lee, when he heard the news. "Now we can get to work. It's up to you, my lad, to find out all you can, especially about Mr. Peter Mott, inside the factory. As for me, I must do the best I can outside."

CHAPTER II.

What Nipper Saw in the Padlocked Room.

IN four days Nipper had become quite an expert at his new job. He had also struck up a friendly acquaintance with a good-natured lad of about seventeen, named Tom Parsons, who worked next to him in the cartridge room.

"My eye," said Tom, as they crossed the factory yard to go to dinner together, "You ain't half picked up the knack of your work quick. I heard the overseer say as you were a quicker hand than many who've been at it for months."

"Very kind of him, I'm sure," smiled Nipper. "But I ain't anything like as quick as you, Tom, yet. When I am, I shall put in for a rise. But what a lot of stuff Bordwell's must be turnin' out."

"Much as any private firm in England I should think," said Tom. "Tens of thousands of shells every week. Still, it's nothing to what we shall be doing in a few weeks' time."

"What do you mean?"

Tom cast his eyes to the top floor of the great factory, and jerked his thumb over his shoulder.

"Ah, of course, you don't know what's going on up there," he said mysteriously. "Few of the hands do know for that matter. But I happen to know that they're testing some wonderful new machines for shell making. Got 'em fixed up there, they have."

"Have they really? Have you seen 'em, Tom?"

"No fear. They don't allow the likes of us to see 'em. Everybody's been forbidden to go near that part on pain of instant dismissal. The new machines are a strict secret. The top floor's kept padlocked, and Mr. Mott keeps the keys!"

Nipper said no more, but he was profoundly interested. Presently, when he saw Nelson Lee, he repeated what Tom Parsons had told him.

"This is important, Nipper," the detective said. "Of course, this tale about new machinery may be all right, but it's queer that the testing should be in the hands of Peter Mott, who isn't an Englishman at all, but a German. I wonder if you could manage to get a peep into the forbidden place?"

"I'll have a try, sir."

"Do. You can't do it during working hours. You'd be at once missed from your place. The attempt must be made after you knock off. Understand?"

"Yes, sir. I'll hide up somewhere. Then, when the night-shift have fairly started, I'll see if I can get to the top floor."

Nipper was not one to let the grass grow under his feet, and he lost no time. When that evening he knocked off, he did not leave the factory with the rest of the day-shift. Instead, he hid himself behind a pile of ammunition boxes and remained stowed away there for some time.

The night-shift trooped in at the gates, and quickly moved to their appointed places. Nipper waited in his hiding-place until the routine of the factory was again in full swing. Then, at a moment when the coast was clear, he crept stealthily out and mounted the stairs.

There were five storeys in the factory, and the four lower ones were busy enough; but on reaching the top floor Nipper found it quite deserted. Not only that, but every door that he inspected was secured with a padlock.

This was disappointing. He had hoped to find at least one door unlocked, and had planned a way of getting from such a room to some of the forbidden chambers by climbing out of one window, working his way along the guttering under the parapet, and so achieving an entrance by means of another window.

Finding every door fast knocked that plan on the head, and his heart sank a little.

Not for long, however. Even while he stood reflecting what he should do, a heavy footstep sounded on the broad, stone stairway. In a moment Nipper shrank back into a dark corner, and looked in the direction from which the sound came.

It was quite dark, but almost immediately the rays of a lantern cut the gloom in half, and, sending up one mounting shaft of light, lit up a human face, revealing the saturnine features of Peter Mott, the overseer.

Looking neither to the right nor the left, the man passed quite close to where Nipper was, and made for a big door in the very middle of the corridor.

Selecting a key from the big bunch he carried, he opened the padlock, and, with his lantern swinging in his hand, entered the room, leaving the door ajar.

This was Nipper's chance. If ever he was to get a peep inside the forbidden room, it was now.

He moved out from his place of concealment, and, on tiptoe, crossed the corridor to the door. Peeping through, he found to his surprise that all was dark. The man with the lantern had passed right through the room and into another. So much could be guessed by the single ray of light that shone through a door some ten yards away.

THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY

Growing bolder, Nipper entered the first room. By such dim light as came through the grimy windows, he could see that the room was filled, not with machinery, but with stacks and stacks of ammunition, piled up from the floor almost to the ceiling.

This was strange, seeing that stocks of ammunition were supposed to be sent to Government stores as soon as completed. But Nipper had no time for speculation just then. The light moved again from the inner room, and Nipper had barely time to crouch down behind the great stack of cases ere Peter Mott once more appeared.

Straight to the outer door he came, passed through, closed it and relocked it.

"Geewhiz!" exclaimed Nipper to himself, with a blank look. "This is a go! I'm locked in. I wonder what'll happen if Mott comes back and finds me here? Well, I must risk that. And, as I am here, I may as well see all there is to be seen."

He had brought an electric torch with him, and, waiting till Mott's footsteps had died away, switched it on and stared about him.

Yes, cases of ammunition were piled all about, and here, near to him, was one the lid of which had not been fastened down. It was three parts full of cartridges. Nipper gave a violent start as he caught sight of them.

No wonder, for instead of the cartridges of the sort he had himself been engaged in making for the British service rifle, these were heavier and broader in the head.

"Mauser cartridges!" he panted, and then wiped his brow, which had become suddenly moist at this discovery.

What could it mean? Such ammunition as this was of no earthly good to the British Army. It could only be fired from the particular pattern of rifle used by the Germans!

Nipper's heart beat fast as his brain got to work. German ammunition in a British factory—stacks and stacks of it! What did it mean? Was the stuff being made there? If so, it was infamous, monstrous, traitorous!

With head throbbing, Nipper passed through the inner door to the other room. Here a similar sight met his gaze. Scores and scores of ammunition cases were piled high—ammunition of the same pattern as that he had examined.

"They're making it here!" broke from him in hot indignation. "It's horrible to think of. Here they're supposed to be working day and night turning out cartridges for our own brave fellows in the trenches, and all the time they're working for the cursed Huns. It's too horrible to think of."

His blood boiled in his veins as he thought of the enormity of it all. He longed to go at once to Nelson Lee and tell him of his amazing discovery. But that was impossible just yet.

"I'm locked in," he muttered, with exceeding bitterness. "There's nothing to do but wait here till Mott comes back again. If he spots me there'll be trouble. I shall have to try and dodge him somehow."

He returned to the outer room, and, selecting a place amid the stacks of cases, stretched himself at full length.

"It means staying here till to-morrow morning most likely. It'll be as well to get a nap if I can."

He closed his eyes, but for some time his mind was too active for sleep. Only when at length the stuffy atmosphere pressed upon his brain like a narcotic were his excited feelings lulled, and he fell to sleep.

Over four hours must have passed thus, for when he suddenly awoke it was to the deep, solemn boom of a distant church clock. It was chiming.

A momentary pause, and it struck the hour. Two o'clock!

"Long time to wait yet," murmured Nipper. "I'll try and get to sleep again, and—"

He broke off with a catch in his breath. A key was grating in the lock outside, and there also came the mumble of low voices.

Open came the door, and in came two men—Mott, carrying a lantern as before, and another man whom Nipper did not recognise.

"The vans are below, you say, Nierstein?" asked Mott in an undertone.

"Waiting in the lane ready for the signal," was the reply.

"Then open the platform door and give the signal. We must get to work so as to be clear before daylight."

From where he crouched, Nipper could see the man called Nierstein approach a wide door facing the street, take down the heavy bar, and push the doors open.

This disclosed a small platform gaping over the street, with a crane dangling just overhead. Such an arrangement existed on each floor, as Nipper knew, and was used for the lowering of goods into the street below. But what was the meaning of such work at such an hour.

He was soon to see. Following a low whistle from Nierstein, there came the rumble of heavy wheels below. A covered van had halted beneath the platform. At once Mott and his companion got to work. Case after case of ammunition was dragged to the platform, made fast by the grappling-hooks, and lowered by a long chain to the waiting van.

Duly the carman gave the signal that the van was full. As he drove off, Mott and Nierstein moved into the inner room for a brief rest and refreshment.

"Now's my chance," said Nipper to himself, and made for the door giving on to the corridor.

To his dismay he found it locked.

At the same moment, and before he could creep back to his hiding-place, one of the men came back into the room.

It was Nierstein, and the first thing he saw was Nipper as he scuttled away from the door. Violent wrath flashed in his eyes, as, with an oath, he made a dash at the youngster.

But Nipper was ready. With a swift movement to the right he avoided the onslaught, and as the ponderous Nierstein lumbered past landed upon his ribs so heavily with his left as to knock the man completely off his balance.

Out rushed Peter Mott at the sounds of the scuffle. A revolver gleamed dully in his hand, and Nipper saw it. He saw also that Mott would not hesitate to fire, since the sound of a shot in an ammunition factory would attract little attention from the outside world.

One chance remained for Nipper, and one alone. As Mott raised his pistol hand, he ducked, and, with a leap, gained the little platform projecting over the street.

In an instant he had grasped the crane-chain, and, agile as a monkey, was lowering himself swiftly down.

One glimpse he got of Peter Mott as, with eyes shining like those of a fiend and his face all torn with wild rage, he craned over the platform as far as he dared. Lucky then for Nipper that a sudden fit of giddiness made the villain quickly draw back and clutch the side of the door for safety, while the revolver dropped from his momentarily nerveless hand.

But by this time Nierstein had regained his feet. Running forward to the platform, he whistled sharply.

Nipper, dangling in mid-air, looked up at the sound, then down, as a second covered van, similar to the first, rounded the corner and drew up immediately beneath him.

"Hallo, what's this game?" cried the carman, dropping his reins in amazement at sight of Nipper. "Who the blazes are you?"

"Seize him, Garker!" cried Nierstein, in a hoarse whisper from aloft. "He's a spy! Don't let him escape!"

The carman leapt from his seat, and, just as Nipper dropped to the ground, pounced right upon him. His heavy fist crashed on to Nipper's left eye with such force as to send him reeling to the ground.

On to him Garker pounced, one hand gripping his throat to prevent his shouting, the other grasping his sleeve.

"I've got him!" he called, looking up.

"Hold him, then, till we come down!" cried Nierstein, and disappeared.

"I'll hold him all right——" Garker was beginning, and then stopped abruptly.

For in the middle of his speech someone came running up behind. A blow on the jaw made the carman relax his hold, and sent him sprawling. Then Nelson Lee—the newcomer was no other—stooped quickly, hoisted his young assistant to his feet, and whispered into his ear:

"Run, Nipper, down this passage, fast as you can! It's our only chance!"
In a moment they were sprinting away as though for dear life.

CHAPTER III.

Foul Play—The Lone House on the Moor.

TWO hundred yards away they pulled up breathless, but safe from pursuit.

"My word, sir, but you came up in the nick of time," said Nipper.

"Another few seconds, and that fellow would have choked me. How came you to be on the spot?"

"I waited about on purpose, fearing that something might happen. Why did you have to escape by that crane-chain? What happened inside the factory?"

Nipper explained. Into Lee's eyes, as he listened, came a look of deepest gravity.

"Mauser cartridges!" he exclaimed. "You are sure?"

"Absolutely, sir; cases and cases of 'em, of exactly the same pattern as we saw at Essen two years ago. One van drove away full of 'em."

"I saw it go. Nipper, this is a most serious business, and the discovery you have made is most important. Do you think Mott recognised you?"

"Pretty sure he didn't, sir; it was too dark. And the other cove—Nierstein—had never seen me before, neither had the carman."

"All the better, then. You will be able to go to the factory as usual to-morrow morning. Behave, of course, as if nothing had happened, and just keep your eyes and ears open."

"I can keep my ears open all right, sir," said Nipper. "But as to my left eye, it ain't no easy job. That fellow nearly bunged it up when he landed with his right."

"Yes, it's getting black already," said Lee, scrutinising the damaged optic by the light of a street lamp; "but I'll give you something to take the pain away presently. Any other damage?"

"None at all, sir. I feel as right as a trivet."

But Nipper had sustained some other damage, as he discovered when on his way to the factory the next morning. Not physical damage, but slight material damage. A piece of cloth, about an inch or so long, was missing from the sleeve of his tweed coat.

That was a small matter, for the coat was an old one; yet, as will be seen, it was to prove a fateful matter for Nipper.

For that evening, as he was about to leave the factory, he chanced to come face to face with Peter Mott. The latter scowled at him, as he had been wont to scowl on previous occasions, for, from the first, Nipper had been out of favour with the overseer.

But on this night he was not content with scowling.

"You're the chap I want to see," he growled. "Come along to my office."

Nipper felt suspicious, but dare not disobey. To refuse meant the sack, and to get the sack meant hampering further investigations. He followed the overseer without a word.

No sooner were they in the room, than Mott turned the key in the lock. At the same moment Nipper beheld Garker, the carman, standing at the other end of the room.

"Now then, you young cur," hissed Mott, "tell me how you came by that black eye?"

"Had a bit of a dust-up with some bloke on my way home from work last night," replied Nipper, with a light attempt at evasion, though his heart was beating fast.

Mott gripped him suddenly by the sleeve, drew a small piece of cloth from his own pocket, and peered close down into his face.

"And you got your coat torn at the same time, didn't you?" he hissed, his face all twisted with fury and hate. "Here's the piece. You left it in the carman's hands. Who are you—who are you?"

"You already know my name. It's Harry Watkins."

"That isn't your real name at all. Who was the man who came up and rescued you?"

"Why should I tell you that?" retorted Nipper stoutly, despite an inward quaking. "Let me go!"

"Let you go? No fear! What were you doing on the top floor of this place at two o'clock in the morning? Curse you, you're a young spy!"

"Let me go!" said Nipper again. And, with a sudden jerk, wrenched himself free and dashed towards the door.

Too late, he remembered that it was locked!

"Open this door and let me—"

He said no more. With a torrent of oaths, Peter Mott came at him. He had snatched up a heavy, ebony ruler from his desk, and now whirled it aloft.

Up shot Nipper's arm to ward off the blow. Useless. The force of the downward sweep broke through his guard, and straight upon his head the ruler crashed, knocking all the senses clean out of him.

That evening, Nelson Lee waited for Nipper's return, and waited in vain. As hour after hour passed with no sign of his assistant, a dread anxiety began to fill him.

"It may mean they have recognised him as being in the forbidden room last night. If so, it may have gone hard with the poor lad. I did wrong to let him go back to the factory to-day, but I thought he'd be safe enough. I wonder if there's been foul play? Ought I to go to the factory and inquire?"

He pondered this question for several minutes. His whole inclination was to go at once in search of Nipper, yet what good would that do? If Nipper had really fallen into the hands of Mott, the latter would certainly not give himself away.

On the other hand, a visit from Lee at such a time would reveal his own identity, and spoil all his plans by putting Mott and the others on their guard.

"I must trust to luck to find poor Nipper safe and sound later on," he decided. "Meanwhile, I must pursue another plan."

He waited at his lodgings till midnight, still hoping against hope that the lad might return. But with no sign of him as the clock struck twelve, he dressed himself in a shabby old suit, and disguising himself by means of a wig and a scraggy, false beard, started forth.

Making straight for Bordwell's factory, he took up a position in a dark corner which commanded a view of that side of the building where the covered van had been loaded up some twenty-four hours before.

Inside the factory, the night shift were hard on as usual: From the various workshops inside came the whir and whiz of lathes and other machinery, and the low, buzzing sound of hundreds of hands working at full pressure at their various tasks.

But in the street all was silent, while the lane running out of it was quite empty.

"It's early yet," Lee said to himself. "The van didn't appear till two o'clock last night. I'll wait."

He did so, his purpose being to follow the van to its destination if to-night it again appeared. The secret cartage of so much ammunition intended for the enemy, was altogether puzzling. What could they do with it? Impossible for them to transport it to Germany or Austria or Turkey. The British Navy, those vigilant sentinels of all the seas, and safe custodians of the Empire, would see to that. A vessel carrying contraband of war had only to show itself in the North Sea, or elsewhere, for it to be brought to, and convoyed as a prize back to the nearest port.

What, then, could be the meaning of these strange movements? Lee was resolved to find out, and so waited patiently for the van again to appear.

His patience was rewarded. At two o'clock, punctual to the minute as on the preceding night, the platform doors opened at the top of the building, and Nierstein, craning out, gave a low whistle.

At once came a rumble of wheels, and round the corner of the narrow lane appeared again the covered van with Garker in charge. Then once more began the loading up of contraband ammunition.

"Full up!" came from Garker presently; and, with a wave of his hand to Nierstein, he drove off.

It was easy for Lee to follow, for with such a heavy load the horse could only proceed at a walking pace. On through the streets it lumbered, with the detective shadowing it some forty yards behind.

Mile after mile it went, until it was beyond the confines of the town, and travelling across a broad and lonely moor. It was a stiff climb for a long time, and frequently the horse had to stop for a breather. But after a while came a change.

Arrived at one of the highest points on the wide upland, the van at length turned, and by means of a rough and rutty track began to descend into a valley. Less a valley perhaps than a shallow ravine. Each side showed banks of mingled vegetation and stone. These growing over higher and higher, presently assumed the appearance of cliffs all bristling with great boulders and spikes of jagged rock.

"Rum place this!" thought Lee. "As desolate 'n spot as you could find. Not a soul about; not a house to be seen. Hallo, though, I'm not so sure!"

His last words had been prompted by the van suddenly turning again, and disappearing through a break in the cliff wall on the right.

Moving stealthily forward, Lee came to the spot. The van had passed through a gate, hanging in ruin by one hinge, and along by what once might have been a gravel drive, but which was now overgrown with grass and thistles and endless other weeds. But two very distinct obliterations of these, showed that vehicles had passed along with their broad wheels many times of late.

The road wound and dipped into a further hollow that formed a valley within a valley, and presently revealed a grove of trees on the right hand.

And through this dark and dense belt, gleamed one solitary light! It gave Lee quite a start, so long had he been travelling in darkness.

"A house at last!" he exclaimed to himself. "And so this lonely place is the van's destination.

He could hear the lumbering wheels grating on the rough road. Moving forward, he stopped amid the trees and watched. Before him was an ancient house—long, low, and flat-roofed. It was castellated, and in the long past might well have been a manor, but now the most cursory glance showed that it had long lacked a tenant, and been allowed to fall gradually into decay. From a room on the top floor gleamed the solitary light that had attracted him.

The van had already drawn up beside a short flight of descending steps, leading to a sort of area door at the side of the old house. From this door three or four men stepped, and began at once their task of unloading the van.

Lee watched the operation for a long time, noting case after case of ammunition as it was carried below.

In twenty minutes or so the work was finished, and, with a word and a wave of his hand, Garker drove off.

Lee lingered where he was. What he had so far seen had stirred his curiosity deeply, and he was eager to discover more. He waited till the van had disappeared and the men had returned into the house.

"I'd like to get a peep into that lighted room," he murmured. "Wonder if it's possible?"

He moved cautiously out of the grove of trees to reconnoitre. On so dark a night there was little chance of his being seen, and he stepped quite close up to the walls.

Not a water-pipe or similar means of climbing up to that lighted window showed itself; not a handhold or foothold of any sort on the front of the house.

"No luck so far. Wonder if the other side is any better?"

He passed to the end of the house to the south side.

"Ah, here's a chance!" broke from him.

And in truth there was a chance. An old and tough wisteria stretched out its twisted branches and knots all over the side of the house, right up to the very parapet of the flat roof.

Nelson Lee lost not a moment. With his foot planted in an angular junction of branches, and his hands gripping the stem at a higher point, he hauled himself up. Apart from the risk of missing his footing in the darkness, there was no great difficulty in the climb.

Caution itself, the detective steadily ascended foot by foot, until he was able to grasp the parapet itself. Like a gymnast at the horizontal bar, he pulled himself up, and swung himself on to the broad gutter.

In front of him was the protective castellated wall, while behind him the shallow roof inclined upward to its apex, from the crest of which rose up two stacks of broad, stunted chimneys.

Slowly moving along, and now and then casting an eye over the low wall, he halted presently and peeped over. Immediately below him, at a distance of no more than eight feet, gleamed the lighted window. From somewhere behind the window came the low murmur of guttural voices.

Without a second's delay, Nelson Lee removed his coat and waistcoat, and quickly uncoiled a hempen rope which he had wound about him.

Donning his coat and waistcoat again, he made the rope fast about one of the castellated projections of the wall. Then, looping the other end under his arm, he slowly let himself down until he was on a level with the window, and about two feet away from it.

Held firmly by the rope, he worked his hands along the face of the building, so that, by craning his head, he could see into the room.

He started as in a moment he recognised the nature of the place. The room was fitted up like a chemical laboratory, and was full of retorts, test-tubes, and innumerable brown jars, from which came the pungent reek of chemicals.

At a table sat two men, obviously resting from their labours. One was a man of very distinguished presence, with a flowing grey beard, and deep-set eyes partly hidden by shaggy brows and a pair of round, gold-rimmed spectacles.

"Otto Bergmann!" gasped Lee to himself. "Late professor of experimental chemistry at Eastminster University! How comes he to be here? He was supposed to be deported to Germany immediately after war broke out!"

Professor Bergmann was talking to his companion in German, and Lee strained his ears to listen. But before he could catch a single word, something else happened.

A shout of alarm came from below. Lee looked down, to behold to his horror that a second van had drawn up near the area door, and that the carman in charge was shouting and pointing up to him as he hung there in mid-air!

Only a second passed ere there came the sound of rushing feet, and out of the area door appeared several men. Angry cries came from them at once.

"A spy—a spy!" came distinctly to Lee's ears. "Fetch a rifle, somebody, and bring him down!"

At the same moment Professor Bergmann and his companion, roused by the din below, rushed to the window. Seeing a man swinging there within a foot or so of him, Bergmann made a grab.

He caught Lee by the foot; but, with a violent kick, the detective wrenched himself free. Then, nimble as a sailor, he hauled himself on to the roof.

Only just in time, for barely had he ducked down behind the wall than there came a bang—a bullet flattened itself against the stone coping!

Below, and all round the house, Lee could see that the place was alive with men.

"A ladder! Fetch a ladder!" was the next cry, and three or four men ran off in obedience to the order.

"Trapped!" said Lee, and bit his lips. "But they sha'n't take me if I can help it!"

To face a score of armed and desperate enemies would be madness. Meekly to yield himself up would be equally insensate. They would question him, would discover who he was, and then his fate would be sealed. His only chance of escape must lie in some other direction.

He looked carefully about him for a minute. The sounds of the men returning with the ladder reached him; he heard them planting it against

the wall. Then, full of desperate courage, he threw himself flat on the shallow roof, and edged himself up towards a squat, broad-mouthed chimney stack.

Never hesitating, he hauled himself up, and at the very moment that the first man appeared upon the roof, revolver in hand, dropped over the lip of the wide-mouthed chimney, and let himself slowly down.

Descent was a fairly easy matter. The shaft had been built ages ago, and was provided with projecting bricks, to allow of the free passage of a "climbing boy" in days when chimneys were cleaned, not as they are now with a telescopic broom, but by a cleaner who would ascend brush in hand.

At the same time, instead of being perpendicular, the chimney was built in a zigzag form, to prevent too free a rush of air on wild winter nights.

For this latter fact Nelson Lee had good reason to be thankful. For on reaching the roof, and not seeing their quarry anywhere about, one of the men who had ascended by the ladder, made a rush for the chimney and stared down it. Seeing nothing of Lee, and not being able to detect its zigzag formation in the darkness, he promptly hurried away to search elsewhere.

Not daring to strike a light or to switch on his electric-torch, Lee descended very carefully. Feeling with hands and feet, he made his way down, inch by inch. There were several minor shafts giving off from the main one, and doubtless leading to various upper rooms.

But these he carefully avoided—as indeed he was compelled to for the most part, on account of their narrowness—keeping to the main chimney so as to land ultimately on the ground floor, if possible.

At last, after several minutes downward climb, during which he could now and then hear the sounds of the searchers on the roof, he became aware of a feeble glimmer of light a few feet below him.

This gave him a start. The light must come from one of the downstairs rooms; and in that case, if anyone were there, the moment of his betrayal might be very near.

At the same moment a sobbing sound reached his ears. Holding his breath he listened.

The sobbing continued for a minute. Then came low words, spoken in low, broken-hearted feminine tones:

"Oh, Leonard—dear Leonard, if only I could see you just for one moment! If only I could let you know that I am not the heartless girl you must think me, but that I am still true to you and love you dearly in spite of everything! Oh——"

The strange, half-hysterical speech ended in a long-drawn sigh, pregnant with soulful sorrow and bitterest anguish.

It would have been a strange speech to hear under any circumstances, but for Lee to hear it, as he crouched in the chimney shaft, added greatly to its strangeness and weirdness.

For the words were spoken in English, and the voice was that of a young girl. Their purport told of love, of some dramatic misunderstanding of two young hearts. An English girl shut up in an old house which, as he had good reason now to believe, was full of conspirators against England—what could it mean?

He must find out at whatever risk to himself. The girl might be a prisoner in the hands of unscrupulous enemies. Since the war such things had happened to teach him that Germans were no longer to be reckoned among the civilised races, but as savages. Creatures endowed with a devilry, and fiendish, primitive cruelty, which, at any moment of passion,

was wont to break through their veneer of education and "kultur." In that case, the position of this girl might be—

He hesitated no longer, but descended stealthily. In five seconds he found himself at the back of a big open fireplace, staring into a room.

Seated near to a small table was the weeping girl. Her arms were outspread upon it, her face was buried in her arms, while her hair, which had worked free from its fastenings, hung in rich, brown masses about her shoulders.

With pity in his heart he watched her as she wept softly to herself. Of a sudden she raised her head. The light of the lamp fell upon it and revealed one of the most beautiful faces he had ever seen in all his life!

CHAPTER IV.

Lee Escapes, and Undertakes a Romantic Errand.

SHE leapt to her feet, wild-eyed and terror-stricken, as Lee stepped forth into the room. She would have shrieked, but her tongue clove to the roof of her mouth.

In that second of respite the detective spoke.

"Have no fear, dear young lady," he said gently. "I am not an enemy but a friend."

"A friend!" she said, recoiling a little at his words. "But you are English?"

"Do you not look upon the English as your friends? Surely you are an English girl yourself?"

"My mother was an English lady, but my father is—is——"

"A German?" he asked, finishing her sentence.

"Oh, do not ask me!" she said, with a sudden deathly pallor coming upon her beautiful face. "Who are you, and why are you here? Why did you come that way?"

"To escape those who would have killed me. But never mind me. Tell me of yourself. Are you in this house against your will?"

"Yes!" burst from her involuntarily, then she checked herself hastily. "No, no, I did not mean that! I am here because my father—— I am under his protection. But you must not ask me any question. If you are in danger, as I can well believe, you must go. I can help you to escape."

"I shall be glad to avail myself of your help. But first you must tell me something of yourself. You are in great trouble. While I was in the chimney there, I heard you speak."

"You heard! What did you hear?"

"I heard you talk of someone named Leonard. He is your sweetheart?"

"Yes—oh, yes, he was. But my father—— But I cannot tell. I cannot!"

"You must. I heard you say that if only you could let Leonard know——"

"Ah, yes!" Her tear-dimmed eyes suddenly lighted up with a wonderful glow. "If only someone could take him a letter. Could you?"

"Certainly."

"Then here it is." She drew a letter from her bosom. "I have had it written days and days, waiting for a chance to post it, but without getting any. If you would post it for me——"

"I will. More than that, if you will tell me——"

"Hush!" Again that deadly pallor overspread her face. "Listen, they are coming this way!"

Footsteps sounded plainly along a passage outside.

"You must go! This way. Follow the passage, it will lead you to the stables."

She rolled back a strip of carpet, tugged at a ring set in the floor, and lifted a trapdoor. Lee would have lingered, but to do so would have been folly.

"Good-bye!" he whispered. "I will see that your letter reaches its destination. Good-bye until we meet again!"

The trapdoor closed over his head, and the strip of carpet was replaced. From where he was, he could hear the excited voices of the men who had just entered the room.

"There is an enemy in the house!" he heard one say. "We think he must have escaped from the roof by the chimney. Have you seen or heard anything of him?"

"I have seen no enemy—I have heard no enemy," came back in passionless tones from the girl.

"Heaven bless her for those words," murmured Lee. "She spoke the truth after all. For Heaven knows I am no enemy of hers. Yet she might have betrayed me after all. How I wish I could help to get her away from this place. But it is impossible at present—quite impossible. I shall be lucky if I get away safely myself. She said this passage led to the stables. I must try and find my way there."

He switched on his electric-torch to find himself in an underground passage some five feet high by two broad, and quite dark. In a stooping posture he moved cautiously along it.

There were extensive cellars to the right and left of him—great, rambling gloomy places, where once upon a time rare vintages had probably been stored.

He passed these with no more than a quick glance, and moved on. Some seventy yards on, and he came to a dead stop. He had arrived at the end of the passage, and a door barred his path.

Turning the handle he found to his relief that it was unlocked. It gave on to a little square, paved area, with some steps beyond. Ascending these, he found himself under the fading stars in the stable-yard.

With no desire to risk capture now by lingering, he hurried away, gained the belt of trees in front of the old house, passed through the broken gate, and reached the rutty lane along which he had followed the van.

With little likelihood of meeting anybody, he hurried through the ravine, and at length reached the high moor. The morning had dawned by now, and he was able to retrace his steps to Blackfield unmolested.

The sight of a post-office reminded him of the errand he had undertaken. He took the letters which had been given him from his pocket. It was stamped and addressed thus:

"Leonard Baring, Esq.,
University College,
Eastminster."

"Poor fellow, if I can judge from her demeanour, he'll be glad enough to hear from her."

In the very act of dropping the letter into the box he paused.

"No, that won't do. I may be able to help them both. I'll make it possible in any case."

He entered the post-office and wrote a brief covering note, explaining who he was, and how the letter had come into his possession. Then enclosing the whole in another stamped enveloped, addressed to Leonard Baring, he posted it.

He was tired and ready for sleep, but he had much to do before he could think of rest. The mystery of the lone house on the moor remained to be solved, and no time must be lost. Hurrying back to his lodgings, he inquired eagerly for news of Nipper. None was forthcoming. Having bathed and changed his things he had breakfast, and then at once hurried along to Blackfield Police-station.

Inspector Shuter listened to his story in amazement.

"Bordwell's making ammunition for the enemy!" he exclaimed incredulously. "It seems impossible!"

"It's true, nevertheless."

"It surely can't be done with Mr. Murton's connivance?"

"I should say it would be most difficult to do it without."

"But I could swear he's a real patriotic Englishman."

"That remains to be seen. Inspector, we must go along to the house on the moor and arrest those scoundrels. They're a desperate lot, so you'll need a strong force of men."

"Right. We shall be ready in a few minutes."

Less than half an hour later four taxicabs, all full of police officers, and with Nelson Lee and Inspector Shuter in the leading one, were on their way back to the lonely house.

Duly they alighted at the gate and disposed themselves so as to surround the place. That done, Nelson Lee and the inspector boldly approached the door and rang the bell.

It echoed through and through the old place, but no answer came.

They rang again. Still no answer.

Lee tried the door, and it opened at a push.

They entered the hall, and Leo called out:

"Hallo! Anyone here?"

The echo of his own voice came back to him, but no other sound. All was silent.

Quickly, with the aid of other officers, they searched the place from top to bottom. No inmates were visible.

"We are too late," said Lee. "They've taken alarm, and have bolted!"

"Seems like it," said Shuter. "And that certainly makes it look suspicious. What can we do now?"

"You must leave the matter in my hands for the present, inspector."

"But aren't we going to Bordwell's factory to make enquiries there?"

"Not under any consideration—yet. If Murton's in it he'll doubtless have been put on his guard. But he mustn't be told more at present. Ho mustn't know what part I've played in this business, or that I've told you. For the present the matter must be kept a profound secret."

"Very good, Mr. Lee; I understand."

All felt disappointed on their way back to Blackfield, and the journey passed in silence. During the remainder of the day Lee went about making cautious inquiries after Nipper, but without hearing any news of him.

Not till late that night did he retire to bed. By that time he was completely worn out, and hardly had his head touched the pillow than he fell to sleep.

CHAPTER V.

An Unexpected Visitor—Startling News.

HIS sleep was deep and long. Not until nearly eleven o'clock the next morning did he awake; then a tap at his door from Mrs. Saxby, his landlady, aroused him.

"There's a gentleman called to see you on most important business, sir," she called through the door.

"A gentleman? What's his name?"

"Mr. Leonard Baring, sir."

Nelson Lee was out of bed in a second.

"Ask him into my sitting-room, and say I will be down in a few minutes."

He dressed with unwonted excitement, and descended the stairs. A good-looking, well-dressed young fellow of about six-and-twenty rose to meet him as he entered the sitting-room.

"You are Mr. Nelson Lee?" he said, and the detective could not help but notice his inward agitation.

"I am. And you are Mr. Leonard Baring? You received my note with its enclosure?"

"That is what has brought me here, sir. I got it by the first post, and caught an early train from Eastminster. Please tell me how that letter came into your possession, and why Miss Greta Bergmann did not post it herself."

"Greta Bergmann!" said Lee, with a start. "Is that the young lady's name?"

"Yes. She is the daughter of Professor Otto Bergmann, late of Eastminster University, where I am an assistant mathematical master. Until I received this letter, I had no idea she was in England. I thought she had gone back to Germany with her father at the outbreak of the war!"

"They are both in England," said Lee. "Let me tell you all I know."

He recounted what had happened on the previous day, Leonard Baring listening with pained interest as he spoke of the professor as an enemy of England.

"I had feared it from the first," he said brokenly. "And now I know from my dear girl's letter that it is true. For years past he has been playing the spy. Poor Greta—poor Greta! To think that she is in his power!"

"But she is his daughter. Surely she has nothing to fear from her own father?"

"She has everything to fear. He has always been cruel to her, and now she says he is going to force her to marry a German named Heinrich Lutz when they get back to Berlin. Poor girl, her mother was a sweet English lady, but she died within a few days of the outbreak of war. The shock killed her. She loathed the idea of being deported to Germany with her child, for she, too, had suffered at Otto Bergmann's hands."

"Mr. Baring," said Lee, "tell me all about yourself and Miss Bergmann."

His visitor did so. He had known the German professor's daughter for five years, and had loved her from the first. She had loved him, too, and some few months previously they had become engaged. The professor, with ideas of his own regarding his daughter, had frowned on the engagement from the first, but had been unsuccessful in persuading Greta to break it off.

Then the war had broken out. To Leonard Baring, going to the college one evening to meet Greta as usual, was brought the news that she and her father had left Eastminster and had returned to Germany.

Gone, without a single word of farewell! That had seemed to suggest that she no longer cared for him, and the thought had almost broken him down. When weeks and months had gone on without his ever getting a single word from her, his heart had come well-nigh to breaking.

Judge, then, of his amazement when her letter reached him through Nelson Lee, saying that she still loved him with all her heart, but had been unable to let him know this on account of the close guard kept over her by her father.

"And now it is too late," he moaned. "She does not love her father, yet, like the dutiful girl she is, she feels compelled to obey him. She will go back to Germany with him, and she will be forced to marry Heinrich Lutz, the man her father has chosen for her."

"Don't make too sure of that, my young friend," said Lee comfortingly. "She is not back in Germany yet. She is in England."

"Where is she?"

"She was in a house a few miles from here yesterday, but now she and her father have gone. He, at any rate, is a fugitive from justice."

"Gone," he said gloomily. "I have lost her—lost her for ever."

"Don't despair. While she is in England there is hope. Hope on; everything may turn out all right yet."

He spoke on in that strain for some time, for, in spite of Baring's efforts to control his emotions, it was easy to see that he loved Greta Bergmann deeply, and that his estrangement from her was causing him the most acute distress.

"Leave the matter in my hands, Mr. Baring, for the present," Lee said, as they shook hands. "It will be part of my public duty to find her father; therefore, it is not unlikely that I shall find her as well."

"Cannot I help you in the search, sir?" he asked anxiously.

"Not just yet, at any rate. If I find you can be of use, I shall not fail to let you know at once."

Lee remained deep in thought for a few minutes after the fellow had gone; then, with his mind made up, he sprang to his feet.

"The plot has begun to thicken. I must solve it before it becomes quite impenetrable. I must go back to the house on the moor. I feel sure that if there is a clue to be picked up, I shall find it there."

Young Leonard Baring departed, sad at heart still, but a little comforted. He had confidence in Nelson Lee, and knew that if it were possible to restore his sweetheart to him the famous detective would do it.

Any qualms he might have had under other circumstances in regard to running her father to earth did not exist in this case. He knew the professor for a cruel, hard-hearted man—a man who would sacrifice his own daughter's happiness in order to satisfy his own wishes and ambitions.

Now, also, he had learnt from Lee that Bergmann was a traitor to the country which had given him hospitality for years. He had known Bergmann as a great experimental chemist, and he found it easy to believe what Nelson Lee had hinted at, that he was even now engaged in the secret preparations of violent explosives and poisonous gases, to be used in vengeful hatred against innocent British people when the proper moment should arrive.

Therefore, for the father of his sweetheart he had but little pity, and he felt that, dutiful as Greta had always shown herself, she also would have little pity for him when the full extent of his vile practices became known to her.

CHAPTER VI.

Amid the Mountain Caves—Hidden Armaments.

ONE particular thing had puzzled Nelson Lee greatly at the time of his visit to the old house on the moor with Inspector Shuter. Not the disappearance of Professor Bergmann and the rest of the conspirators. That was a thing to be expected, once they had been forewarned of the danger of detection.

What did puzzle him was the vanishing of the cases of ammunition he had himself seen unloaded, together with quantities that had presumably been brought there on previous days.

It was, to be sure, quite natural that the gang should wish to remove all traces of this tell-tale war material, but how they had managed to do so in the hour or two at their disposal was a baffling question.

Yet though he and Shuter had searched everywhere—including the cellars giving off the tunnel of which previous mention had been made—not a sign of the cases or their contents was visible.

"How did they get it away so quickly, and where have they taken it to? That's the first thing to discover," Lee said to himself, as once more he arrived at the old house, where a couple of police-officers had been left on guard.

Forthwith he set out to discover it. Letting himself into the tunnel through the trapdoor by means of which Greta Bergmann had helped him to escape, he started on another systematic search of the several cellars.

For a time this was no more successful than the previous search. The cellars were empty, save for a solitary cask which at some time or other may have contained beer. Upon the accumulated dust on the floors were patches and marks, showing where the missing cases had probably stood before their hurried removal, but nothing more.

"Strange—very strange," murmured Lee, as he sat down on the up-turned barrel to think things out. "That ammunition was no light stuff to shift in a hurry. How on earth did they get it clear away in the time. It's almost as baffling as the building of the pyramids."

Speaking thus to himself, he toyed with his electric torch, letting its powerful beam of light play upon the floor.

Suddenly something made him start and drop on to one knee. From where he was, two straight parallel lines ran to a recess in the wall some eight yards away. These lines were really nothing but narrow, clean spaces in the dusty floor, and were faintly broken, at regular intervals of ten feet, by little ridges of caked mud, formed of dust mixed with some greasy substance.

To an ordinary man they might have passed unnoticed, yet they riveted the attention of Nelson Lee at once. Experience had long ago taught him what great results sprang from small things, and how the tiniest clues often led to the unravelling of the deepest mysteries.

On the instant then he was examining the double track with his lens, the while his razor-edged deductive powers were hard at work.

"Dead parallel," he mused. "Like a miniature railway or tramlines in a coalmine."

He paused, then sprang up.

"Tramlines! Why not? Why shouldn't they have conveyed the ammunition away in miniature trams? Germans are always resourceful and thorough in their methods. Of course, they tore up the lines in a hurry before they went away, so as not to give the game away. The lines must have been laid in ten-foot lengths, and the ridges of mud show where the dust got through at the joins mixed with oil!"

It seemed a feasible theory, but a discouraging fact presented itself almost at once.

For the lines should have led outward into the passage to allow of the transport of the cases, whereas they simply led up to the solid wall at the end of the cellar.

Solid! Was it solid, though?

Once again he dropped to his knees and examined the base of the wall. His heart gave a jump as he discovered a small drilled space at the base

plugged up with wood. A similar plugged hole appeared two feet away, the two apertures forming a continuation of the mysterious parallel lines.

"Ho, ho! I'm on the track!" he exclaimed, and out came his knife.

In a minute or two he had extracted the concealing plugs. He thrust his fingers through. They touched metal on the other side of what was evidently a thin wall of plaster, and not solid stone at all!

The metal seemed like a small iron knob. He pressed on it. It yielded to pressure as though set on a powerful spring, and instantly an extraordinary thing happened.

The lathe and plaster wall moved sideways, and, with continued pressure, slid into a grooved space in the recess. A sudden click, and the wall remained fast, revealing a tunnel beyond.

Lee stooped and stepped through. His torch flashed ahead, and mowed down the darkness like grass. And then he could have cried out, so completely was his preconceived theory verified.

For straight ahead, far as the beam of light would carry, was a double line of tramlines set two feet apart!

"My luck's in—dead in!" he exclaimed, with a joyful whoop. "I've only to follow the tramlines and I'm bound to discover something."

He strode forward along the narrow way for quite a long distance—a full half-mile as he computed. Yet still the tramlines ran on ahead of him.

But now he noticed that the nature of the place had undergone a transformation. Whereas at starting the tunnel showed itself to be the work of cunning engineers, it now revealed itself as entirely a work of nature. It was true that the ground had been levelled to allow of the laying of the rails, but wall and roof were jagged and spiky.

"I'm under the moor itself," Lee said. "This tunnel may run for miles. Yorkshire has subterranean places of this sort, I know. I remember exploring part of the 'Craven Fault' years ago. That runs miles and miles under the Penine Chain. Heavens, but those Germans are a cunning and ingenious lot to bore through and join up with a natural tunnel like this! Must have taken them a heap of time. But, after all, they've been preparing for war against France for over forty years, so why not against England, too?"

He hastened on, compelled to duck now and again where the rocky roof loomed low, but never hesitating to follow the clearly defined track which the parallel rails made.

Of uneven width and height, as has been mentioned, the tunnel still remained in the course of the first two miles, nothing but a tunnel, perhaps in days long past the bed of some subterranean stream.

But presently came a change. The tunnel widened out in a series of four or five chambers, separated by natural pillars of rock, and resembling gigantic oval beads threaded on a string.

In the first of these caves, Nelson Lee pulled up short. He had to, for the way was blocked. On the rails which he had been following, there stood, like a diminutive train, half a dozen small trolleys loaded with ammunition cases.

Lee gave vent to an exclamation of pleasure. He had found what he had come to find.

But it was not to be the end of his discoveries—it was only the beginning. Skirting the trolleys, and walking a few yards on, he came upon several great, high stacks of similar cases.

"Good heavens!" he exclaimed. "Millions on millions of rounds of ammunition! This is a find!"

Still his amazement was to grow. In the next cave, his electric torch

flashed upon thousands of rifles, all ranged upright in rows of wooden racks. He snatched at the nearest, and examined it.

"Mausers!" he gasped. "Beyond all doubt intended for the enemy!"

Still moving on, he discovered that the next cave was filled in similar fashion, while in the next were mighty stacks of still more formidable things.

Shells in abundance, both shrapnel and high explosive, as their labels showed!

Little wonder that such a series of startling discoveries should hold the detective spellbound, and that he should stand staring wide-eyed at this secret store of accumulated armaments.

Thus lost in thought, his sense of hearing was, for the time being, deadened. Otherwise he might have heard the stealthy creeping of three men towards him. As it was, he remained oblivious of the danger which now threatened him.

In the very act of turning from the shell-chamber, to penetrate still further, he suddenly heard a dull, swishing sound close over his head. The next second the torch was knocked from his grasp, and instantly all was darkness.

Simultaneously a sandbag came crashing down upon his head. He sank to the ground beneath the weight, was conscious for a moment that two or three men had leapt upon him. Then, with his senses drifting from him, he knew no more!

CHAPTER VII.

Among the Yorkshire Fells—Greta's Threatened Fate.

IN a desolate cottage among the mountains, some six miles from the spot where Nelson Leo had been struck down, sat two people. A grey-bearded man of cold, cruel, and treacherous aspect, and a beautiful young girl.

They were Greta and her father, Professor Otto Bergmann, and for the time being they were alone.

"I have sent the others away, Greta, because I want to talk to you," the professor said, in a harsh, guttural voice. "I have news for you. Heinrich Lutz has smuggled himself into England."

"Indeed, father," she said, with an inward shudder she could not hide.

"Yes. He has been employed at Essen, as you know, in the chemical laboratories there, but now he has been sent to England to assist me. There's no cleverer man in the Fatherland than Heinrich in devising poisonous gas shells."

"And he has come to England to do that?" she asked faintly, while her face went white.

"That is so," he chuckled brutally. "There is much work to be done here in that direction. Tens of thousands of gas shells to be made. What a time there'll be when they are done, and when we get the signal to use them!"

"What is to be done with them, father? What will happen?"

"What will happen?" He threw up his hands in fiendish ecstasy, while his eyes burnt behind his glasses with a diabolical fire. "What will happen? Why, whole towns will be wiped out! People will die by the thousand—by the tens of thousand!"

"Women and little children as well as men!" came from her horrified throat.

"And why not? Are they not English, and do we not hate the English with a hate that nothing but their wholesale annihilation can quench? Ah, but they shall be exterminated, you shall see! Curse the English!"

"Oh, father, do not say such things! You frighten me! Surely to kill people in this way, little babes and poor, defenceless women, is not war? It is blind, ruthless murder!"

"What of that? They are English, let that suffice!"

"But I am half English myself."

"Stop!" he hissed. "Do not say that again. It is true that your mother was an Englishwoman. It was because of that that I came to hate her at the last."

"You hated my mother!" A dreadful shudder shook her. "You hated the dear, sweet lady who was your wife?"

"Ay, with a complete hate! Why did I ever marry her? Why did I not marry one of my own countrywomen? But if I made a mistake, you shall not repeat it. I have told you that Heinrich is in England. In a day or two we shall meet him, and you shall then become his wife!"

"Oh, father, father, I cannot—I cannot!" she broke out sobbingly. "Spare me that, oh pray—pray spare me that! I do not love him! I never can love him! My heart is given to somebody else!"

"To that cursed Englishman, Leonard Baring!" he said, with narrowing eyes. "Have you not got him out of your mind yet? I advise you to do so at once. Rather than you should marry a cursed Englishman, I would see you dead at my feet. I would kill you myself—with my own hands—rather than such a thing should come to pass. No; Heinrich Lutz shall be your husband, and you shall marry him within the next few days! How now, Guworth, why are you here? Didn't I say I was not to be disturbed?"

"I beg your pardon," said the man who had rushed unceremoniously into the room in a great state of excitement, "but something has happened. Velmar has just come in with some startling news. He and two others had gone to work in the tunnel as usual, when they suddenly came upon Nelson Lee!"

"Nelson Lee, the English detective!" cried Bergmann, leaping to his feet. "How came he in the tunnel? How came he to get on the track?"

"He has been recognised as the same man who was seen on the roof of the Manor House, and who escaped. But he did not escape this time. Velmar and the others saw to that!"

"Ah! They killed him?"

"No. They knocked him senseless, and bound him hand and foot. Then they left him in the tunnel, and came back here for instructions. They wish to know if they shall return and finish him?"

"No. I have other work for them to do, and there will be no time. We all move from here in the next twenty-four hours. I have to meet Herr Heinrich Lutz."

"But what about this man Nelson Lee? What is to be done with him?"

"Leave him where he is. You say he is safely bound, so we need fear him no longer. Leave him where he is to starve to death. Send for Velmar; I wish to talk with him. Greta," he added, in a whisper, and with a hard look in his eyes, "you may go to your room. Remember what I have said. You are to marry Heinrich Lutz within the next three days."

The girl tottered away, as though all her strength had left her. And of a truth she was horrified enough. Not only at the prospect before her of being forced to marry a man she not only did not love but whom she positively abhorred—not only at that, but at the dreadful news which Guworth had told her father.

Nelson Lee—the man she had helped to escape—had fallen into their hands. He was lying senseless in the tunnel, and was to be left there until death from starvation should overtake him. Oh, it was awful—awful beyond all words!

In an agony of despair, she threw herself on her bed, and sobbed as if her heart would break.

All through the day she was left alone. Food was brought into her by her father, but she left it untouched. Night came, and with it the time when she should have slept.

But she could not sleep. How was it possible when her mind was seething with so much that was awful to contemplate? Leonard was lost to her for evermore. She would never see him again. Within three days she would be forced to become the wife of Heinrich Lutz. It would be good-bye to all her dreams of happiness then—good-bye to even a life of tolerable peace.

She would be joined to a hateful and unscrupulous man—a man who, like her own father—how she thrilled with horror at the thought!—was engaged in a wicked, revolting, and murderous work.

Could she endure it? Why should she endure it? Hitherto she had always obeyed her father implicitly, believing that, although she did not love him as a girl should love her father, it was at least her duty to obey.

But now was she bound to do that? Was she, in the sight of a just Heaven, compelled to ally herself to a man who was not only an enemy to England, but to civilisation itself?

Surely not, surely filial duty did not compel her to go so far as that?

"Oh, mother, my dear, darling mother!" she cried, throwing herself upon her knees in front of the window, and gazing with misty eyes up at the starlit heavens. "Tell me what I am to do!"

Did a voice answer her? It seemed impossible, for her words had been spoken only in a whisper. Yet to her heart, if not to her ears, there came spoken words in reply, and the words she heard, spoken in her dear, dead mother's voice as it seemed, were these:

"Fly from this place, dear child. Fly from this place, and go to him to whom you have already given your heart!"

Startled by the strange incident beyond all description, Greta sprang to her feet, with a burning light of resolution in her eyes.

"Yes," she said to herself, "I will fly from this place. I will leave this house, this very night—this very minute!"

She wrapped a cloak about her, and pushed open the window. All was silent within and without. The cottage was one of one storey. She clambered on to the sill, and jumped to the ground. In another moment she was hurrying along the lonely mountain path.

CHAPTER VIII.

Lee's Agony of Mind—Set Free—His Rescuer Made Captive.

MANY hours passed ere Nelson Lee recovered his senses. It was, in fact, although he had no means of judging the time, nearly midnight.

Opening his eyes at last, he found himself staring into a void of blackness. Impossible to see in the utter darkness, he could only imagine the jagged rocks frowning down on him.

He was bound hand and foot, and ached all over. An intolerable weight

seemed to be dragging at the back of his head, while his throat was constricted, and dry as a newly baked brick.

But worse than pain of head or limbs, was the fearful anguish of mind with which reviving memory at once overwhelmed him. He knew not of the fate which Professor Otto Bergmann had mapped out for him, but he knew that he had fallen into the hands of bitter enemies, and that he was a helpless captive in a place from which rescue was a thing almost beyond all hope.

Who was likely to search for him here? Who was likely to know even of the existence of this tunnel, save those foes of England who had probably for a long time past, used it for their own nefarious purposes.

Besides, even supposing that, by some providential inspiration, anybody did think to search for him there, was it not only too likely that they too would fall victims to the same malign foes as he had himself?

His case then was almost beyond hope, and as he contemplated it, he was filled with a dull, dragging anguish of mind.

Not on his own account. He had faced death a hundred times in his life, and he was ready to suffer death now, bravely and stoically.

It was for his country's sake that he now longed to live. For the sake of his beloved England, against which these vile, inveterate foes were conspiring. Full details of their vast and complicated plot were as yet unknown to him, but he had discovered enough to imagine that its ramifications were many, and that the net result aimed at would entail much suffering and dire calamity.

That great store of shells and cartridges; that hidden collection of rifles; Bergmann's fiendish chemical work; what could these things mean save some cunning, subtle blow aimed at England's peaceful population!

Oh, to be free to frustrate such knavish tricks, to expose the infamy of these alien sojourners in our land, and to bring them to justice!

Lee tugged at his bonds in his despair, till the cords chafed and cut into his wrists. In vain. Against such tight-bound bonds his strength was useless.

Tears of bitter vexation started to his eyes, and he actually cried out in his anguish.

And then he suddenly checked himself. Out of the darkness, from a distance along the tunnel, came a pin-point of light.

With straining eyes he watched it grow and grow as it came nearer, until he could make out the distinct glow of a lantern.

His enemies were returning then? It must be they. What would they do with him?

Even while he asked himself this question, the glow of the swinging lantern revealed the outline of a skirt. A woman then was carrying it, and not a man! Who could she be?

He was not long left in doubt. The graceful figure carrying the lantern drew closer and closer, looking to the right and left as she came, as if searching for someone. Was she searching for him? It might be so. He cried out aloud at the thought.

At once came an answering cry, and up went the lantern above her head, the better to see into the darkness.

"Miss Bergmann!" gasped Lee, recognising the beautiful features in an instant.

"Mr. Nelson Lee!" She dropped to his side in a second. "Thank Heaven I have found you. Let me cut those cruel cords, and set you free!"

And while she sawed at his bonds, she told him in a voice all shaking with profound emotion, of the circumstances which had led up to this strange, dramatic meeting.

"And so you have left your father, dear young lady?" said Lee. "Well, let me say that you have done quite right. Let me also thank you from the bottom of my heart for thinking of me. You are a good, brave girl to have come to save me."

"How could I leave you here to--to die?"

"Your father intended that I should be left here to die?"

She could not answer so direct a question; could not accuse her own father of projected murder. She turned her head away to hide her agony. Lee read her sufferings, and did not press his question.

"And now that you have left your father, what do you intend to do?" he asked.

"To go back to Leonard—to Mr. Baring. He surely will help me."

"Ay, that he will, and without the asking. Miss Bergmann, he loves you more dearly than ever. I know that, for I have seen him."

"You have seen him?"

"This very morning. I posted your letter to him, and enclosed a note with it offering my help. He came by the first train to see me. He will indeed welcome you back with open arms."

Her eyes glowed with the love that was in her heart.

"Will you take me to him, Mr. Lee?"

"Yes, indeed. Come, we will leave this place at once. We will retrace our way to the Manor House."

"No, there is another way. A quarter of a mile further along is an opening from this tunnel, giving on to the mountains."

"Then lead the way. We shall be safer out of this place. Your father may miss you. If he does, he may send this way in search of you. Lead the way!"

He rose to his knees, then partly to his feet. As he did so, a sudden attack of vertigo seized him, the result of many hours in a cramped, recumbent position.

To her alarm, to say nothing of his own, he rocked and reeled, and had to clutch at the jagged wall for support.

"Water—can you get me water?" he gasped, and then, before he could utter another word, or she make answer, he toppled to the ground.

"He has fainted!" she panted in anguish. "Water, yes I must get him water. Through the gap in the tunnel there is a little mountain stream."

She was gone at a run, before Nelson Lee, who had not actually fainted, as she had supposed, could recall her. He scrambled to his feet, this time with less giddiness, and moved after her. He cried out, but his voice was faint, and failed to reach her as she sped along.

Well, he would go after her as fast as he could. He would make for the gap of which she had spoken, and where she herself was going in order to get water. Among the mountains, both he and she would be safer than in this tunnel.

Progress with him was slow, for the effects of the blow he had received had left him very weak and dizzy. More than once he had to stop and lean for support against the wall, before he reached the gap.

But he reached it at last. A streak of grey light from the outer world showed where it was. He stooped, and passing through the tunnel wall, found himself upon the mountain side.

He looked about, but could see nothing of Greta until the gurgling sound of rushing water drew his eyes to the right.

Yes, there was a tumbling waterfall, the stream of which she had spoken, and there was the girl herself, stretching over to catch some water in a can which she had evidently brought from the tunnel.

The moon had risen, and from where he was, he watched her rise, and

with the can in her hand, start on the return journey. She had hardly gone twenty paces, and was still some hundred and fifty yards from him, when she suddenly uttered a shrill scream of alarm!

The cause was to be seen at once. Round a bend in the mountain path came three men, the foremost of whom was easily recognisable as Professor Bergmann!

Straight up to his daughter he went. Another scream came from her as he shook her roughly by the arm. But that was all the sound she made. For, without hesitation, Otto Bergmann clapped a cloth over her mouth and nose, and there she was, drugged into a state of collapse.

Nelson Lee watched the scene in horror. Had he been in his usual health, he would have raced at once to the rescue. As it was, he tottered forward, bent on putting up as good a fight as he could.

But by the time he had laboriously arrived at the spot, the three men—two of them carrying Greta between them—had vanished completely.

Crushed by this new calamity—for he rightly regarded the recapture of Greta Bergmann by her relentless father as such—and with his little strength overcome by pain and fatigue, Nelson Lee suddenly sank down, and for a second time within a few hours, his consciousness left him.

And there, upon the bleak mountain side, he was found in the early hours of the morning, by a shepherd. Alarmed by his discovery, the latter hastened away to a cottage for help. Help being forthcoming, Nelson Lee was placed upon a hurdle, carried to the cottage, and put to bed, there to await the arrival of the doctor who was at once sent for.

CHAPTER IX.

Dismay of the Villains—The Flight from the Mountains.

HOW had the recapture of Greta come about? In the simplest manner possible.

Within an hour of her flight, her absence had been discovered by her father, and instantly he had given the alarm. He recalled now how, when Guworth had told him of the capture of Nelson Lee, his daughter's face had changed. Knowing of her inveterate sympathy with England and her whole-hearted hatred of things German, it had struck him at the time that she would, if she could, go to Nelson Lee's assistance.

When he discovered that she had disappeared, he rightly guessed that part of her motive for this was to set the English detective free, for, previous to that, he had suspected that it was she who had helped him to escape from the Manor House.

Full now of a boiling rage against her, he summoned Guworth and Velmar and at once set out with them to the tunnel. Although the tunnel continued for nearly two miles beyond the spot where Lee had been struck down, the nearest way to where he lay was across the mountain path, and so through the gap in the rocky wall—the very way which Greta had herself traversed.

Thus it happened that they came upon her just as she was about to return to Lee with the can of water. To stifle her cries and to drug her into insensibility, was the work of a moment, and this, as has already been seen, was promptly done.

With hardly a word spoken, Guworth and Velmar, carrying her between them, marched down the mountain path, with Otto Bergmann walking by their side.

His heavy brows were knit in a thunderous frown, while beneath his long, grey beard, his jaws worked like those of a champing tiger.

Suddenly he rapped out a sharp word that brought the others to a dead halt.

"Stop!" he said. "Before we return to the cottage, we have something else to do. Velmar, return to the spot where you left Nelson Lee, and see that he is still there."

"Why shouldn't he be still there?" asked Velmar, with a lift of his eyebrows.

"She may have set him free!" hissed Otto Bergmann with a glance of hate at Greta. "She must have found him. Why else should she have been getting water? Go back and make sure, we will await you here."

Velmar hurried away. He had barely gone a dozen yards when Bergmann shouted after him.

"You have your revolver with you?"

"Yes."

"Then if you find Nelson Lee where you left him, use it. Put a bullet through his head, and so get rid of him for ever."

Velmar sped away, leaving the others to await his return in a fever of anxiety.

In something more than half an hour he arrived back, breathless with excitement.

"Well, did you find him?" snapped Bergmann.

"No, he has gone!"

The eyes of the professor blazed with an evil light, while his teeth closed over his lower lip.

"It is as I feared," he hissed. "She did set him free. By Heaven, if she were not my own daughter, I'd——"

"But if Nelson Lee is free we are in the greatest danger," broke in Guworth.

"You are right!" exclaimed Bergmann, checking the wild outburst that had threatened. "He will return to Blackfield and raise the alarm. The police will come, and we—— Quick, pick that girl up, we must get clear of this place before daylight comes!"

"Do we return to the cottage?"

"No, it will not be safe. Make for the landing stage at the end of the tunnel. We must board one of the barges, and escape to Pursleydale by canal. Quick, we have no time to lose. Curse that girl! She is my own flesh and blood, but she has betrayed us to the English. Curse her, I say!"

They had halted almost at the foot of the mountain. Now, as they continued their way down into the valley, they changed their direction. Instead of following the path that led back to the cottage from whence they had come, they pursued another that wound round the lower slopes.

Here, some two miles on, they arrived at a lonely improvised wharf on the banks of a canal. Against the wharf a barge was moored.

At a whistle from Velmar, a man showed himself out of the cabin door.

"You're here, then, Waldeck?" whispered Velmar.

"Of course I'm here," came back in surly answer. "Didn't you expect me as usual? Seems as if you didn't, for there's no stuff here to load up with. No sign of a single trolley or case."

"All right, Waldeck," said Otto Bergmann, stepping forward. "There's been no time to get it along the tunnel. Something has happened. We must get clear of this place, or we shall have the police after us. Got your horse ready. We are all coming aboard. We must return to Pursleydale at once."

"Why, professor, what has happened?"

"Don't waste time by asking questions. Get your horse in at once."

Waldeck jumped ashore, and hurried along the bank to shelter among the rocks. Returning with a stout horse, he harnessed it, and quickly attaching it to a long rope which was fastened to the barge, followed the others who had already stepped aboard.

"This is the second queer load I've had," he muttered as the barge began to move slowly along. "The first one was last night."

"What was that?" asked Bergmann.

"Why. Peter Mott brought along a prisoner—a boy!"

"What boy?"

"Name of Nipper. Believed to be assistant to Nelson Lee, the London detective!"

"So Mott has captured him. Good. How did he manage it?"

"Don't know any details. All I know is he was brought aboard this barge late last night, stowed aboard between the cabin and the keel, and taken on to Pursleydale, the very place we're going to now."

CHAPTER X

Nipper in Captivity—What Happened at the Lock-house.

WHAT Waldeck had said was perfectly true. Nipper was at that moment in safe-keeping in an ancient lock-house some miles further along this very canal.

After Peter Mott's attack upon him, he had been conveyed from Blackfield under cover of the darkness, placed aboard the barge, and taken to the place named.

As to the canal, it was not greatly used in these days, the railways long having superseded it in utility. But it was still navigable, and the German plotters had for years past recognised that when "The Day" should come, it was likely to prove more than useful to them.

So, in the thorough and methodical manner which would seem to shine alone as the solitary virtue of Germany as a nation, the most complete steps had been taken to secure free and uninterrupted passage-way for their contraband traffic.

Not a lock on that part of the canal existed, but was kept and managed by a German masquerading as an Englishman, or by some other man in Prussian pay. Thus barges could pass and repass loaded up with rifles and ammunition intended for the enemy, without any awkward questions being asked; and, since the wicked traffic went on by night, without any but the smallest risk of detection.

But to return to Nipper. At this very moment he was lodged in a dreary, miserable and secure prison-house.

A dark loft, immediately under the roof of the lock-house, formed his cell. Cold and draughty it was, and mildewed, and heavily-draped as to the ceiling and corners, with festoons of ancient cobwebs.

For bed a sack of straw had been provided, while, so that he should have no chance of escape, his right wrist had been placed in a steel manacle, attached to a six-foot chain made fast to a stout beam. Mercifully he had not been gagged, but any inclination he might have had to shout for help had been effectually checked by Peter Mott immediately after their arrival.

"You will be closely guarded," Mott had said. "Raise your voice in a cry of alarm—not that it would help you, for you have no friends here—but dare to do it, and your mouth will be closed for ever in this way!"

At the ominous words Nipper had raised his eyes, to find himself staring at a revolver-barrel within a foot of his head.

Deeming discretion the better part of valour for the present, at any rate, Nipper had lapsed into silence, and so had remained for the best part of the twenty-four hours he had been there.

Miserably depressed he was, as may well be understood. Apart from the fact that the food supplied to him had been quite insufficient, consisting as it did of a mug of water and dry bread, his position naturally filled him with the gravest apprehensions.

He knew now that he was in the hands of enemies without pity or scruple, and what next might happen to him he did not know. Many—many times he thought of Nelson Lee, and wondered whether he would ever again see the old employer he loved.

At such times the tears would well up into his eyes, for the bond between himself and his master was that of a friendship which endures, and which had been fostered by dangers which often and often they had faced together.

Nevertheless, Nipper was not one to give way to unrestrained grief, nor yet to despond unduly. While there was life there was hope—that was the thought that saved him from falling into too deep a depression.

And, closely confined prisoner though he was, he still found a means of relieving himself from too much brooding on his probable fate, and to escape the dreadfulness of the perpetual darkness.

The floor of the loft was, as has already been said, formed of old beams. These also formed the ceiling of the room below. On the underside this had been overlaid with a layer of plaster. But in the course of years of neglect this had cracked in more than one place, so that when there was a light there, a faint streak or so would penetrate into the loft where Nipper was.

He very soon discovered this, and, glad of the light for company, resolved to increase it if it were possible. With a long splinter of wood from one of the beams which he inserted through a crevice, he managed to drill two or three small holes through the plaster, which, by transferring his eye from one to the other, afforded him a fairly complete view of the room below. It need hardly be said that he performed this operation at a time when the apartment was unoccupied.

This was not often. The room seemed to be used for all sorts of private consultations, and many times during the first twenty-four hours of his incarceration quite a number of people came, and went, after conversing in low tones on some topic of seemingly great importance and secrecy.

Most of these visitors were men of sinister aspect and guttural accent, so that in spite of the fact that many of them spoke quite passable English, it was not difficult to see that they were mostly German and Austrians.

To Nipper the whole place seemed to seethe with intrigue, and he very soon made up his mind that the lock-house was a sort of local headquarters for these foreigners, and a veritable hot-bed of conspiracy and sedition.

Among others whom Nipper saw come and go during the first three days of his imprisonment were Peter Mott and Felix Murton, the managing-director of Bordwell's Ammunition Factory.

The burden of such scraps of conversation as reached his ears quickly made it plain that Murton was as deep in the conspiracy as Peter Mott himself.

While the contemplation of these things were sufficiently engrossing to take Nipper out of himself and prevent his brooding too much on his probable fate, something occurred on the evening of the third day to stir his emotions in a different manner.

The room below was lighted up as though for some special function, and the sound of a deep and angry voice made Nipper at once apply his eye to one of his peep-holes.

To his surprise he beheld an elderly, grey-bearded and spectacled man, dragging into the room a beautiful girl in bridal attire.

The man was no other than Professor Otto Bergmann, while the girl was his daughter Greta!

Although Nipper did not know this, the incongruous sight at once riveted his attention. So did the words which the man was speaking in so angry a tone.

"Stop this absurd crying, and dry your eyes!" he said. "The priest will be here presently with Heinrich Lutz. In a few minutes you will be his wife."

"Oh, father, father!" she pleaded, dropping to her knees and clasping her hands together, the while the tears streamed down her pale cheeks. "Spare me—spare me this awful ordeal! I have told you I do not love Herr Lutz—that I never can love him!"

"Quatsch!" he exclaimed irritably. "Love will come afterwards, and if it doesn't what matters? Heinrich Lutz stands well with the Court at Potsdam—ay, even with the Kaiser himself. As my son-in-law he will be able to advance my fortunes, and Heaven knows they stand in need of advancing!"

"But it means death to all my hopes of happiness."

"Your hopes—what are your hopes compared to mine?"

"But think of me a little, I pray, father. I have always been a dutiful daughter. I have obeyed you in everything."

"And you must obey me now!"

"But it is the crisis of my life!"

"It is the crisis of my life, too. And because of that, you must obey me. Think of the new gas-bomb I have invented. It is all but completed, all but perfect. I only need a little help and advice from Heinrich. When he is my son-in-law he will give me that help and advice, and then—and then—the Emperor will recognise my true worth. I shall have fame and fortune, and shall win high honours. You shall marry Heinrich—you must!"

"Father——"

"Hush! I hear his voice. He is below with the priest. They are coming up. Not another word of objection."

Nipper had listened to the foregoing conversation with heart and brain on fire. He read the girl's story, knew that she did not love the man her father was forcing her to marry, and from the bottom of his heart he pitied her.

Yet he could do nothing to aid her. All he do could was to remain with his eye glued to the beam and watch what was going forward.

Into the room strode a tall man of perhaps forty with a close-cropped, square head, and the jaw of a bulldog. This was Heinrich Lutz.

He was followed by an older man dressed in a sort of cassock—the German priest who was to celebrate the marriage.

At first sight of the bridegroom Greta turned her head to hide her distress, but at a whisper from her father she allowed Lutz to take her hand.

There were a few preliminaries; the priest gabbled over some sentences from a book he held; then questions were asked and answers made; by the bridegroom in loud, harsh tones, and by the bride in a low, trembling, emotional voice that told all too plainly of her despair.

Then with a look of triumph on his face, Heinrich Lutz took from his

pocket a plain gold ring. He was about to place it on the third finger of Greta's right hand when the door of the room was flung open, and into the place strode a big, ungainly man with a fierce, upturned moustache, a wide jaw set like an iron vice, and eyes that flashed with a violent anger!

"General von Schoffen!" gasped Heinrich Lutz, dropping Greta's hand and the ring in his amazement, while the others fell back.

"Yes!" came raspily from the new-comer. "I have arrived seemingly just in time. What is this mummerly?"

"Herr Lutz was about to marry my daughter," said Otto Bergmann, with an apologetic bow.

"Marry your daughter—at such a time as this! Has he married her?"

"No, sir."

"Then delay the ceremony till a more fitting time. I have much important and urgent work for Heinrich Lutz to do—work that will not wait. Till it is done all private considerations must be put aside. Professor, conduct your daughter away, and return here yourself without delay. We have business to discuss that will not wait."

Otto Bergmann took Greta by the arm, and led her from the room and from the house towards another small cottage two hundred yards away, where they had been staying for the past three days.

He was greatly angered by the interruption of the wedding; but General von Schoffen was a masterful, iron-willed man whose commands must not be disobeyed, whose word must not even be questioned.

"Why did he come at such a moment?" he muttered. "If only he had delayed a minute longer, you would have been Heinrich Lutz's wife."

"Is it not better as it is, father?" quavered Greta, whose heart was bursting with gratitude at the respite from the awful fate which had threatened her. "It seems like an intervention of Providence."

Her father's lips curled with cruel scorn.

"If you think that, and are glad, your satisfaction will be short lived," he answered. "You are not his wife yet, but you will be very soon."

They had reached the cottage by now. It was unoccupied, save by themselves. At once he led her to an upper room, thrust her in, and locked the door on her.

"Stay there till I return!" he ordered, through the door. "And do not make a sound! The general wants me: I am going back to him."

He was gone, leaving her alone with her tortured heart.

— —

CHAPTER XI.

General von Schoffen's "Frightful" Scheme—Nipper's Tragic Position.

NIPPER'S relief at finding the wedding interrupted after all, gave place to a feeling of amazement at the cause of it.

Even if the new-comer's name had not been mentioned he would have recognised him instantly. No German general had been more photographed and described in the British Press than the iron-visaged Von Schoffen, and none had proved himself more active and successful than he in the prosecution of the war.

What then was the meaning of his presence in England—in that house of conspiracy? What great and secret plans were in course of formation, to allow of his being spared from the campaign in Flanders? Surely they must be of supreme importance from the German point of view.

They were, as Nipper, straining his ears so as not to miss a word, was presently to learn.

Following the return of Professor Bergmann, Felix Murton, Peter Mott, and two or three other men who had evidently been sent for, came into the room.

"Be seated," said General von Schoffen, in a deep voice of unquestionable authority, not tinged with arrogance. "We have important matters to discuss. You did not expect me so soon—eh?"

"We did not, sir," replied Heinrich Lutz respectfully.

"I am glad I came, else you might have committed an irreparable folly by tying yourself to a wife."

He half turned to Otto Bergmann to make an explanation.

"I am not saying, professor," he went on, with an oracular wave of his hand, "that your daughter would not make an altogether satisfactory wife for our friend. Doubtless she is a most charming girl. But the present is no time for sentiment; certainly no time for any of us to hamper ourselves by the forging of conjugal fetters. Herr Lutz has important work to do here in England. It will require all his time, all his attention, and all his energy. Therefore, until that work is completed, all other matters must be pushed on one side. Herr Lutz, you understand?"

The man addressed bowed.

"Very well," pursued Von Schoffen, with a grim smile; "having disposed of that, we will come to real business. You know why I am in England?"

"We have some inkling of the great plans afoot," replied Otto Bergmann. "But we are not yet in possession of full details."

"We are coming to that almost immediately. But first, I want to know how far advanced are the preparations you have in hand, Wolfram Sachs?"

Peter Mott, whom he addressed, answered:

"As Mr. Murton can tell you, we have secretly turned out no less than fifty thousand Mäuser rifles, and several million rounds of cartridges."

"Good—and shells?"

"Of shells for the buried guns, sir, there is an ample supply."

"Excellent! Now look at this map. It is an Ordnance Survey map of Great Britain. You will observe upon it various marks and notes. These indicate the various places in this country to which the arms and ammunition are to be conveyed. The blue circles show where concrete bases for big guns have been made, and where the shells will be wanted. You, Wolfram Sachs, will take that matter in hand."

Peter Mott bowed, and took the proffered map. General von Schoffen turned to Otto Bergmann.

"And you, professor—how stand your preparations?"

"I and my staff have been working hard on the gas bombs and poison shells from the moment we received instructions," Bergmann replied. "In addition to that, I have a new invention in hand which, with a little help from Herr Lutz, can be completed. It is an invention which will be capable in the space of a few minutes of wiping out whole populations of cities where it is put into operation."

"Excellent news!" said Von Schoffen, rubbing his heavy hands together. "Doubtless Herr Lutz will give you all the help necessary."

"Most certainly, sir."

"And now, gentlemen," went on the general, "I wonder if you know exactly why all these arms and ammunitions are wanted."

"For invasion purposes, I presume, sir," said Lutz.

"Perfectly so; but not for the invaders to us. There will be an invasion, and that very soon. But the hidden rifles are not for invading forces. They

are to be used by the sons of our Fatherland who are at present interned in the various concentration camps."

A murmur of surprise ran through the room.

"Yes," continued Von Schoffen, "it is astonishing, but it is true. All the preparations have been made. Every German at present a prisoner here has been told what to do. At a given signal, all will revolt, break out of camp, and arm himself at a place he already knows of."

Otto Bergmann lifted his heavy brows.

"Will that be easy, sir? The camps are well-guarded, and——"

"It will not be difficult, because everything will be timed to the second. The invasion will take place. Our troops will be landed at a dozen different places on the British coast. With such suddenness, and in such numbers, shall we sweep down upon these islands, that the whole country will be panic-stricken."

"They are not easily driven to panic, sir," ventured Bergmann. "The British are a calm, imperturbable race, and never more calm and resolute than when faced by a great and sudden danger."

General von Schoffen's face darkened with anger.

"I tell you we shall shake them out of their calm! They will be panic-stricken, I tell you they will, when the invaders come. Every British soldier possible will be hurried forward to the coast to repel them. As a consequence, the guards at the interment camps will be greatly weakened. That will be the moment for rebellion. The prisoners will rise like one man, overwhelm their few remaining guards, arm themselves, and over-run the country."

"Meanwhile, our Zeppelins, specially appointed for the task, will drop gas shell and incendiary bombs over the big cities. In this work, you, Professor Bergmann, and your men will assist."

"It sounds a magnificent scheme, sir," said Lutz, with a sycophantic air.

"It is a magnificent scheme!" repeated Von Schoffen, with emphasis.

"It has taken years and years to plan, but now it is all complete. Within a month of the blow being struck, perhaps less, this proud and boastful England will be ground to powder under the Prussian heel!"

With what feelings Nipper had listened as the details of the diabolical scheme were unfolded, it must be left to the reader to imagine.

Had he been free the chances are that he would, in his uncontrollable and righteous indignation, have rushed into the room, and done his best to administer physical chastisement on Von Schoffen, heedless of the consequences to himself.

As it was, it was only with the greatest difficulty that he checked an impulse to shout out. Chained there by the wrist to an iron staple driven into one of the beams, he ground his teeth in impotent rage, and shifted about restively.

In his restiveness and wrath, he raised one foot in the air and brought the heel of his boot down on to the beam with a savage kick.

The result of this was electrical on those in the room below. General von Schoffen sprang to his feet with an oath, while the others, who for the time being had forgotten all about Nipper, looked at one another in horrified amazement.

"Und tausend teufels!" roared Von Schoffen. "Someone is overhead. Who is it?"

"It is a boy, sir," replied Peter Mott, in a tremble of fear. "An English fellow whom we made prisoner three days ago."

"A prisoner!" came hoarsely from the enraged Von Schoffen. "And you place a prisoner in a room where he can overhear all our plans? Who is the fellow?"

"His name is Nipper. He is assistant to Nelson Lee."

"Nelson Lee, the detective who has done more than any other man in beating down our spies in this country! Worse and worse! What folly possessed you to leave his assistant to overhear all I have had to say? There is only one thing for it now—the fellow must die this very hour. Bring him to me!"

Like a very death-knell the words fell on Nipper's ears. Bitter indeed did he regret his folly in permitting his feelings to get the better of him, so as to remind these below of his presence there.

But it was too late now. Heavy footsteps were already ascending the ladder leading to the loft. The trapdoor opened, the light of a lantern showed, and into the loft came Peter Mott and another powerful man.

"Curse you, you Englishman! Your hour has come!" hissed Mott, as he unlocked the manacle on Nipper's wrist. "Down you come with us!"

Roughly they seized him and dragged him down the ladder to the room below. Von Schoffen's eyes blazed like live coals as he looked at him. He seized Nipper by the arm with a tigerish clutch, and with the strength almost of a horse, dragged him to the window which had now been thrown wide open. Against the light showing from the room the deep waters of the lock immediately beneath gleamed to the sight.

"You see that?" cried Von Schoffen, from between his clenched teeth. "Look well upon it. It is the last thing you will ever see. It is to be your grave."

Nipper gave one awful shudder. Then, with a cunning wriggle, and with the strength of despair, he suddenly wrenched himself free. Up swung his right fist, and full and hard it crashed on Von Schoffen's square jaw, sending him staggering, and almost knocking him down.

It was a fine blow and a plucky one, but it was all Nipper was able to do. With hoarse yells, Peter Mott and two other men threw themselves upon him, bearing him roughly to the ground, where they hacked at him with their heavy boots until all the wind was knocked out of him.

Anguished groans broke from the poor lad, but Professor Bergmann, stepping forward, stilled them on the instant by clapping a drugged pad over his face.

General von Schoffen, still nursing his jaw, scowled down at him.

"Curse the English viper!" he hissed. "Up with him, and out of the window with him! Hurl him into the lock! He shall drown under our very eyes!"

Murder was in every Hunnish heart as Mott and another man stooped and picked the unconscious Nipper up, and carried him close to the window.

Once, twice, thrice they swung him to and fro. Then at a word from Von Schoffen they let go.

Through the air Nipper was hurled; then down—down—till his inanimate body cleft the waters with a great splash!

"Drown—drown like a wretched rat!" cried Von Schoffen, and laughed like a fiend.

What was that sound? Running footsteps? Yes. Made by that stalwart figure rushing out of the shadow into the glow of light.

What was it? Would it be possible that it was Nelson Lee? Yes, beyond all manner of doubt. How he came to be there will presently be told. For the moment it is sufficient to say that, in the very nick of time, he had caught a glimpse of Nipper in the hands of his enemies overhead, and had seen him hurled to almost certain death into the deep lock.

It seemed certain death to him also to attempt a rescue. Yet Nelson Lee did not hesitate one second. Nipper, after his first immersion, had bobbed up to the surface.

That was enough for the detective. In another moment he had dived to clutch the drowning lad by the collar with one hand, and then, swimming to the lock side, to clutch with the other a chain that dangled there.

Saved now could both of them have been had there been a friendly hand to help. But the only available hands were not of friends, but of enemies.

The men assembled in the room above had seen Lee rush up and dive to the rescue. More than that, both Peter Mott and Velmar had recognised him as for a moment he stood in the glow of light.

"It is Nelson Lee!" cried the latter.

"Do you say that?" roared Von Schoffen. "Nelson Lee here, and attempting a rescue! Madman that he is, he has delivered himself into our hands. Both shall drown now. Come!"

Downstairs they rushed, and out of doors. On the bank was a skiff, and in it a pair of sculls. Seizing one of them, Von Schoffen rushed to the lock-side, and leaning over, aimed a blow at the head of Nelson Lee, who was still clinging frantically to the chain.

He avoided the blow by ducking beneath the water. But he could only remain so for a second or two. As he rose to the surface, Von Schoffen, lying down and leaning over the lock wall, fixed the blade of the scull upon Lee's shoulder, and pressed with all his strength.

The detective dived again, and releasing his hold of the chain swam across the lock to where another dangled on the other side. As he did so Nipper opened his eyes for the first time.

"You, sir!" he gasped feebly.

"Yes—I, Nipper. I'll save you yet!"

"Not much chance, sir. Look, those fiends are running round! They are armed with long poles. They'll batter our heads in, or press us under the water. Best let go of me, sir, and do your best to save yourself."

"Not if I know it, old chap! If you are to die, I die with you!"

Death to both certainly seemed inevitable, for by this time Von Schoffen and two of the other men, both armed like himself with oars, were crossing the narrow bridge over the lower sluices, bent on forcing Lee and Nipper beneath the water.

But of a sudden came a loud cry of alarm from Peter Mott.

"Look!" he cried, and pointed skywards, from whence came a whirring and whistling sound.

Those on the lock-bridge halted; and looked up amazed. And no wonder. For overhead, at no very great height and still descending, was a huge, cigar-shaped airship, that blotted the stars from their sight.

"A Zeppelin!" yelled Von Schoffen. "And, great Gott! They are dropping bombs! They must have lost their bearings and taken us for enemies. Quick, somebody, a light—a light! Flash a signal to them!"

He himself dropped his scull, and raced back into the lock-house, followed by the other panic-stricken crew.

It was, as it happened, the very worse thing they could have done. Descending sufficiently low to make certain of their aim, the crew of the mighty Zeppelin dropped a big bomb straight on the lock-house.

With a boom as of thunder it crashed through the flimsy room, and in a moment the house was battered into ruins as if it had been built of cardboard.

Up shot the flames, and east, west, north and south came hurling masses of wood and masonry, while walls collapsed with a resounding crash, burying those within the house under a mass of burning debris.

CHAPTER XII.

Saved by a Zeppelin—Greta Bergmann's Peril—Rescued.

IN the midst of all this unprecedented excitement, Nelson Lee had not for a moment lost his presence of mind.

At sight of that falling bomb, he had at once realised that, perilous as his and Nipper's plight was, they were really in the safest possible place.

With a word to Nipper, whom he was still supporting with one hand, he waited till the bomb was about to plunge through the roof of the house, and then dived!

When, a few seconds after, they rose again to the surface, it was to find the house in a mass of flaming ruins, while the Zeppelin, which had gone higher again, was circling round as if in search of other buildings.

But there had been another effect of the explosion. Whether as the result of concussion, or what, part of the lower sluice-gates had been blown away, making it possible now to escape through into the lower level of the canal beyond.

Lee saw it, and seized the chance at once. Still supporting Nipper, he swam to the ragged aperture, worked through it, struck across the "basin" on the other side, and so gained the bank.

As they did so, a number of men from a neighbouring village came running up, headed by a constable. To the latter Nelson Lee explained what had happened.

"We saw the airship, sir," the constable said, "and heard the explosion. Heaven have mercy on us! They've made a pretty wreck of the old lock-house. Wonder if there was anybody inside?"

"Several men," replied Lee. "But nearly all Germans and enemies of England. Heaven knows how many of them are dead. You'd best get to work with buckets to put the fire out. It's impossible to search till then."

"Groat heavens!" gasped Nipper suddenly, as the policeman and the villagers hurried towards the house. "I'd forgotten. There was a girl inside the house. A beautiful girl, the daughter of a villainous German professor."

"You mean Miss Greta Bergmann?"

"You know her, sir!"

"Yes; and she is safe. I watched her father take her from the lock-house to another cottage over yonder, directly after General von Schoffen's arrival. One thing I could not understand. That was that she was in bridal attire."

"I can explain that, sir. Her father was forcing her to marry a man named Heinrich Lutz. I saw the whole business."

"And is she married to this man?" asked Leo anxiously.

"No; Von Schoffen stopped the ceremony in the nick of time."

"Heaven be praised for that! You shall tell me all later on, Nipper, and I will tell you how I came to be on the spot. Meantime, we must go to the cottage yonder, and see if the young lady is safe."

"Hallo," cried Nipper suddenly, "that Zeppelin's on the job again!"

It was. After ascending, it was descending again.

Nelson Lee caught his breath as he noted its position.

"It's coming right over the cottage where Miss Bergmann is!" he gasped. "And look, they are dropping another bomb. What fiends they are, yet what fools to waste their ammunition on such fruitless enterprises. Down, Nipper--flat down till the explosion is over!"

Both dropped to the ground amid some bushes.

Boom! came a report. But this time the explosion was far less loud than the preceding one. It was an incendiary bomb that had been dropped this time.

Dropped with deadly aim, though, right on the solitary house to which the girl had been taken!

"The place is one mass of flames," said Lee, as they again moved forward. "Heaven help the poor girl if she's still inside."

That she was became plain at once. Across the intervening space came a piercing, feminine scream of agony. Three seconds afterwards, and Greta Bergmann could be seen, framed by tongues and banners of flame wreathing about one of the upper windows.

Instantly Nelson Lee was rushing away. Not, however, towards where the girl stood in such peril, but back towards the lock.

"Good heavens, sir, aren't we going to help the poor young lady?" cried Nipper in amazement.

"Wait half a minute!" shouted Lee over his shoulder, and hurried on.

In a few seconds he was racing back, carrying a white bundle in his arms.

"A folded sail," he explained. "I had noticed it lying in a boat. Quick! We've not a moment to lose!"

Haste indeed was necessary, for the girl's peril was extreme. While she had so far escaped being set on fire herself, it was clear she could not do so much longer.

All the room in which she was, was one vast glow of fire and flame.

"Miss Bergmann!" roared Lee from the ground immediately beneath the burning window.

"Mr. Nelson Lee!" she shrieked.

"Yes. Come to save you! One second!"

He threw one end of the sail to Nipper. Quickly unfolding it, they spread it out like a sheet, and held it three feet or so from the ground.

The girl had climbed on to the smouldering sill.

"Jump!" cried Nelson Lee.

She obeyed, landing in the middle of the sheet unharmed. It sagged beneath her weight. They lowered it to the ground. She stepped out.

And then her strength, which had carried her magnificently through her terrible ordeal, at last gave out. With just one swift look of gratitude and pathetic pleading at Nelson Lee, she threw out her hands, and fell into his arms in a dead swoon.

"Fainted!" said Lee. "Well, it's not to be wondered at. She's gone through enough, poor girl, goodness only knows. But we must get her to shelter at the nearest village."

The village was about a mile away, and as they made their way thither, the sound of the Zeppelin could be heard high up. It seemed to be going in an easterly direction.

"Going back to Borkum or Heligoland, or wherever it came from, I suppose," said Lee. "In a day or two the German newspapers will report a raid on some fortified English town. There won't be a word of the actual truth of what they've done. Strange, Nipper, that you and I should have been saved from German foes by a German airship! The commander of it must have been drunk or mad to bombard those two houses as he did. He certainly could never have guessed that General von Schoffen and the other German arch-plotters were in one of them."

"Wonder what's happened to them, sir?" said Nipper.

"Impossible to say till the fire has been got under, and the ruin

searched. But I very much doubt if any of them can have escaped. But we shall know later."

They talked on till they arrived at the village. Here Greta was placed in charge of a kindly woman, while Lee and Nipper made for the local inn in order to get their clothes dried.

While thus waiting, the two exchanged accounts of what had happened to them since they had last parted at Blackfield, Lee informing his young assistant of how he had been attacked in the tunnel, afterwards rescued by Miss Bergmann, and later on discovered by the shepherd in an exhausted condition on the mountain side.

He had remained at the shepherd's cottage for twenty-four hours, and feeling by that time quite recovered, had once more renewed his search of the tunnel.

Continuing along past the gap by which he had made his exit on the previous occasion, he had at last come to the end where it gave on to the wharf on the canal bank.

A few hours of watching there, and he had been rewarded by the appearance of Velmar and several other men. They had come with a barge for another cargo of rifles, shells, and cartridges.

"I followed," concluded Lee. "It was an easy thing to do with a slow thing like a barge, and in that way I tracked them down to Pursleydale."

"And arrived just in time to save me, sir."

"Oh, I'd been hanging about the place for some time before that. I saw Von Schossen and several others arrive. I also saw Otto Bergmann take his daughter to that other house. I'd no idea you were in the lock-house, or I might have done something sooner."

"Perhaps it's as well you didn't, sir, as things have turned out. They were about ten to one, and a murderous lot, I can tell you. And the scheme I overheard! My word, talk about German frightfulness!"

"What was the scheme, Nipper?"

"I'll tell you everything, sir." And the boy did.

Nelson Lee listened, amazed. He had already surmised that some particularly vile and dastardly scheme was afoot, but the extent and completeness of the plans for it, astounded him.

"Good heavens, Nipper, it seems as if a most elaborate and wicked plot has been frustrated. And to think they've been hoist by their own petard; that they've come to their end through one of their own Zeppelins!"

"Poetic justice, sir. Compensation for some of the poor little babies of Southend and other places."

"You are right. And you say the arms and ammunition have been sent to various places all over the country?"

"So Von Schossen said. He handed Peter Mott the marked plan."

"How I wish we could have got hold of that plan! It's just possible we may yet, if the body of Mott is found."

They talked on until their clothes were dry. Then, having put them on, they went into the outer air, intending to return to the lock-house, to see how things were progressing there.

As they entered the village street, a sudden uproar arose at the end. Quickly the meaning of this became clear.

The Zeppelin had returned to that neighbourhood, and was scudding along at a great rate, with something else scudding after it.

A British aeroplane! One of a squadron that had been sent up from one of the coast towns a few miles away, to intercept it on its way back to Germany.

They had intercepted it, and had driven it back to the very sphere where it had been operating only an hour or so before.

It had escaped from most of its enemies, but one remained upon its track. The night was clear enough for people on the ground to see both crafts, but a light, billowy cloud floating between them prevented them seeing each other.

Not until the aeroplane had manœuvred quite close, did the Zeppelin hear the whir of its propeller.

When it did, it acted on the instant. It began to "searchlight" the smaller craft, sending his flicks of lights in various directions till it spotted it.

Then came a r-r-r-rip; as, with machine-gun trained, it spat out a fusillade of bullets.

But for these the pilot of the aeroplane was ready. For some minutes past he had been going for height for all he was worth, in order to mount above the huge gasbag. Now he avoided both bullets and searchlight, by turning outwards, and placing a bank of mist between them.

The Zeppelin, unable to see its adversary, rose, too, and for a minute all was silent, save for the whir of propellers and the throb of engines.

Suddenly they came into view of each other, and then it was seen how completely the British aeroplane had out-maœuvred its huge foe.

For there it was, plain for all those on firm earth to see, straight over the Zeppelin, with only a few hundred feet separating them.

Something like panic seemed then to seize the German crew. A machine-gun was instantly trained on the aeroplane. But too late!

With a downward drop that brought him still nearer the gasbag, the intrepid Britisher dropped three bombs in quick succession.

So short was the range that every one found its proper mark. Three loud reports reached the ears of the watchers below. They were followed by a fearful and tremendous roar of sound, while a great sheet of flame shot up and illumined all the sky.

"Hurrah!" cried Nelson Lee. "Our brave fellow has settled the enemy. The Zep's beaten!"

Ay, beaten and done with for ever, as was now to be seen. For, all on fire and battered all to wreckage, the great murder machine turned right over, and with incredible speed swept down—down—down, till it struck the earth with an awful thud, a mighty mass of flaming ruin, and with all its crew dead and buried beneath it!

A few minutes later, and the aeroplane descended safely to earth a few fields away. Both pilot and observer were quite uninjured, and loud and prolonged were the cheers that greeted them when they came down.

Having given his hearty congratulations to them both, Nelson Lee and Nipper hurried on towards the lock-house.

By the time of their arrival, the fire had been got under, and a partial search of the ruins made. The result of that search was the discovery of many dead bodies. General von Schoffen was amongst them, so was Professor Bergmann, and Felix Murton. They, with others, had perished in the burning house.

Wolfram Sachs, alias Peter Mott, alone seemed to have escaped. Nothing of him had as yet been found. Still, some of the ruins remained yet to be explored, and in this grim work both Nelson Lee and Nipper forthwith assisted.

Strenuous and difficult work it was, and all the more weird for having to be done in the darkness of the night. But it duly met with its reward.

In the grey of the morning dawn, the detective and Nipper came upon:

a huge section of blackened wall, which had apparently been bent outwards by the force of the explosion.

Hacking and hauling away at this for some twenty minutes, Nipper suddenly gave vent to a cry.

"What is it?" Lee asked.

"A dead man!"

"Who?"

"I can't see yet. He's lying on his face."

"I'll come and help you."

Lee sprang over a heap of debris, and stooped over the dead man lying there. Gently he turned the body over, and looked upon the still face.

"Wolfram Sachs!" he said. "Evidently killed as he was making his escape from the house."

"What about the map General von Schoffen gave him, sir? I saw him place it in his breast-pocket. Perhaps it is there still."

"Yes, it is!" And Lee, taking the map from the dead man's coat, unfolded it.

"A complete plan of everything you heard Von Schoffen explain," he said, after examining it a moment. "Nipper, this is a most valuable find! It will put the British War Office in possession of all those stores of arms and ammunition!"

He paused a moment, then spoke again.

"Our work here is finished, my lad. We will go back and see how it fares with Miss Bergmann."

CHAPTER XIII.

Conclusion.

WHEN they arrived back at the village, it was to find that Greta, thanks to the good woman in whose care she had been placed, and the kind-hearted doctor who had been sent for, had quite recovered from her swoon.

She had already been informed of the wreck of the lock-house, and of how her father, with the others, had met with their deaths.

Her grief at the death of her parent was, of course, keen. But it was not of that deep and poignant character which would have marked it, had he been a man of a different stamp.

All her life she had endured much at his hands. He had been cruel, not only to her but to her dear, dead mother, and had proved himself altogether an unnatural parent.

And to crown all, he had endeavoured, as we know, to force her into a marriage with a man for whom she had the greatest repugnance, showing himself ready to sacrifice all her chances of happiness in order to gratify his own ambitions and aims. That had obliterated from her heart the last signs of anything like filial love.

Consequently, now that both he and Heinrich Lutz were dead, it was not to be expected that their end would cause her very deep or lasting sorrow.

A few tears, a few suppressed sighs and sobs, and she was able to control her emotion.

"Mr. Nelson Lee," she said, when the detective called at the cottage, "I owe you much, more than I can ever repay. You saved my life."

"If I did, it is no more than you did for me, my dear young lady," answered Lee. "I have not forgotten how you set me free in that tunnel. So in that matter we are quits."

"You have been—oh, so kind to me. I can never thank you enough."

"Don't talk of thanks. My reward is to see you well. A greater reward will be to see you made happy for life."

She shook her head mournfully.

"That I fear will never be," she replied, in a low tone.

"Good gracious me! Why not? When you are married to Leonard Baring—"

She put up her hand, the tears starting to her eyes.

"I can never marry Leonard Baring!" she said.

"Good heavens! Why not? He loves you with all his heart and soul."

"Yes, I know that. I am sure of that."

"And you still love him?"

"With all the strength of my being."

"Then what in the world is to prevent your marrying him and being happy all the rest of your life?"

"I cannot. It would ruin his happiness."

"How? Why?" asked Lee in amaze.

"Because I am of German nationality. Oh, my father told me. It was after he took me back from the tunnel. He told me that if ever I ran away again, the English police would arrest me, and that because I was the daughter of a German subject I should be deported—sent back to Germany—for I am a German subject, too."

"So that is what you mean, is it?" said Lee, with a gentle smile. "Well, I suppose you are right. Technically, because your father was a German, you are a German, too, and, therefore, liable to deportation. But in all save paternity you are English. Your mother was an English lady, and you are English in temperament, character, sympathies, looks—everything."

"Yes—yes, that is true; but—"

"And, therefore, I think the technical difficulty can be surmounted."

"How is it possible?"

"I will myself see one of the Cabinet Ministers, and ask him to use his influence in your favour. When I have made your position clear to him, I am quite sure everything will be all right. You will be granted naturalisation papers. You will become English legally, as well as being English in every other respect."

"Oh, if that can be done!" she exclaimed, her beautiful eyes lighting up with hope.

"Make up your mind that it will be done. And make up your mind that you are to be the wife of Leonard Baring."

"Dear Leonard," she murmured, "what will he say when he hears all that has happened? I must write to him at once."

"There will be no need for that," said Lee, smiling. "In a few hours you will see him."

"Am I to go to Eastminster, then?"

"No, he is coming here. I sent a telegram to him an hour ago. By this time he is on his way."

Tears of gratitude welled up in her eyes.

"How good you are to me," she said fervently. "How very, very kind."

Nelson Lee was right about Leonard Baring. Receiving the detective's long, explanatory message, he at once set out for the railway-station. Lucky to catch a train, he arrived at the nearest station to Pursleydale in less than two hours. At once he drove over to the village.

From Nelson Lee, whom he met in the village street, he heard a full account of all that had happened. Towards the detective his gratitude was overwhelming, but Lee would not listen to his thanks.

"Go to your sweetheart, my young friend," he said. "She is waiting for you."

Tender and sweet was the meeting between the two lovers. During their long months of separation they had never been out of each other's thoughts. Sad thoughts often, because there had been times when it seemed as if the obstacles separating them were insurmountable, as if the happiness which both had hoped for could never be achieved.

Now that those obstacles had been removed clean from their path, what wonder that their hearts should overflow with happiness.

"Darling," said Leonard, as he held her in his passionate embrace, "all our difficulties have passed away. There is nothing to hinder your becoming my wife now. You will marry me at once. I will get a licence, and we will be married in three days."

"No, Leonard—no," she said, shaking her head. "That cannot be. I cannot marry you in three days."

"In a week, then?"

"Nor in a week."

"Well, how soon will you marry me?"

"I don't know. Perhaps not at all."

"Greta, what are you saying?" he cried, amazed.

"They may not allow me to become a naturalised Englishwoman."

"But they will—they will. Mr. Lee has spoken about that to me. He is going to see one of the Cabinet Ministers, and——"

"Yes, he has told me that, also. But until he has seen him, and until the matter is quite settled, I cannot marry you, Leonard. Think how awful it would be if after we were married we were torn apart, and I had to be sent to Germany."

"That shall never be, darling. I'm going to see Mr. Nelson Lee at once."

He did. Lee listened to what he had to say.

"So Miss Bergmann is still afraid," he said, with a smile. "Well, all I can say is that if that's the only obstacle, she shall marry you in a week, after all."

"You will see the Minister you mentioned?"

"To-day. I am going to London at once. I have much to report to him."

Indeed he had. When, some few hours later, Nelson Lee sat closeted with the Minister of Munitions in London, the latter listened to the detective's revelations in admiring astonishment.

"Mr. Lee," he said, "this is splendid! You have accomplished a magnificent coup. Such services to our country are impossible of adequate reward, but we must make some attempt at reward. What shall it be?"

"Nothing, sir," answered Lee, with a smile. "I am entitled to nothing. I have only done my duty as a servant of the State. Remember, you appointed me as an Inspector of Factories, and for that I receive an official salary."

"So you do," laughed the Minister. "But over and above that you must have——"

"If you insist on giving me a reward, sir, may I ask a favour?"

"Name it, Mr. Lee."

"It concerns a young lady, the daughter of Professor Otto Bergmann, one of the men who perished through the Zeppelin attack."

"Well?"

"As the daughter of a German she is technically a German, also, and liable to deportation."

"Yes."

"She does not want to be deported. She wants to stay in England and marry a young Englishman."

"Is there anything to prevent her?"

"Nothing except the fear of being deported. To remove that, she wishes

to be naturalised. She is English through and through; nothing of her father's nature is in her."

"And the precise nature of what you call a favour to you, Mr. Lee?"

"That Greta Bergmann be granted naturalisation papers so that she may marry her sweetheart within a week."

"All right, Mr. Lee," said the Minister smilingly. "We must see what can be done for these young people. You had better send for them to come to town."

Wired for by Nelson Lee, Leonard Baring brought his fiancee up to London the next day. The detective met them at an appointed place, and presently piloted them to an office off Whitehall.

Here Greta was questioned by a certain official. Her answers being perfectly satisfactory, and there being not the smallest doubt about her loyalty to England, she was presently granted the necessary naturalisation papers.

"Allow me to be first to congratulate you on becoming a countrywoman of mine," smiled Lee. "You see, Miss Greta, it has come all right, after all."

"Thanks to you, Mr. Lee."

"And now there'll be no difficulty about your wedding—eh?"

A beautiful blush overspread her face, while Leonard Baring added to her pretty embarrassment by saying:

"Come along, darling, we'll go and see about the licence at once. We shall be married in a week, after all."

But before the wedding came off, Nelson Lee and Nipper—who were duly present at it—had a great deal of work to do. Another visit to Bordwell's factory led to the discovery of certain correspondence that had taken place between the traitorous Felix Murton and certain men in the German Secret Service. This made quite clear all that had taken place. An inspection of the top floors of the factory showed not only lathes and machinery for the making of Mauser rifles and ammunition, but actually long lines of cubicles where workers there had slept.

These workers were mostly German and Austrian mechanics, who had been smuggled in on the outbreak of war, and had ever since continued their illegal work unknown to the real, honest workers in other parts of the factory.

Most of these were subsequently arrested, and, in course of time, brought to trial and punished.

For the part he had played in exposing the whole vast plot, Nelson Lee won the thanks of the highest personages in the land.

THE END.

— — —
Another Grand, Long, Complete
Story of Nelson Lee and Nipper,

ENTITLED—

"BRITISH TO THE BACKBONE ;

OR,

THE GREAT TROOP-TRAIN MYSTERY."

Appears Next Week.

The Boys of Ravenswood College;

or, Dick Clare's Schooldays.

A New Story of School Life. By S. CLARKE HOOK.

Author of the famous Jack, Sam & Pete stories, appearing weekly in
"The Marvel Library."

Dick Clare, a rich youngster, joins Ravenswood College, and he soon makes his presence felt.

One day news comes to the school that Dick and his chum, Tom, have been drowned, but ultimately they turn up safe and sound.

Melby, one of the other boys, takes a violent dislike to Dick Clare, and is especially jealous because the Headmaster takes special notice of the new boy.

Dick decides to enter a crew for the sculling race which is about to be held, and he engages a man named Bunny to train his men.

Dick's crew wins the race, which so enrages Gowl that he makes insulting remarks regarding his rival's mother. (Now read on.)

The Mile Race.

"**W**HAT a howling cad the fellow is!" exclaimed Tom. "Still, it would have been a lot worse if there had been a word of truth in it. As a matter of fact, your mother is dressed in white, and is about as much over-dressed as you are. As for the rouge—well, that's a bit too ridiculous."

"Right you are, Tom," answered Dick, watching Gowl's retreating form, while there was an angry glitter in his eyes. "My mother is desperately proud of me without a cause. I'm desperately proud of her with every cause in this world. She has only one fault, and that is letting me have everything I want, and do everything I like; beyond that she is perfect. What do you think of my chances in the mile handicap?"

"You will win it. It's certain; and I believe Gowl knows it. He complained of the start Hal Lakin was giving you; but Hal said he considered it would make a good race between you and Gowl. The captain always gives the Lower School a fair chance. I wouldn't be a bit surprised to see Cedric come in second. He's a fine runner for such a kid, and he's got a very long start. I don't believe Gowl will overtake him. I'm certain he won't overtake you."

"What about Fox?"

"He's not much good at the mile. He's splendid for a hundred yards, but can't last the mile. Gowl will beat him. Melby will lose heart. As for the others—well, I don't believe you need fear them. Of course, Gowl is scratch, but he'll pass most of them. He may come up with you, but it will be by a big effort, and he will be too pumped out for the spurt."

"Right you are. I hope you are correct," said Dick. "We shall see."

"You have got three hundred yards start, you see. That wants a lot of making up."

"So it does."

"Mind you, Gowl will do his level best, because it's a valuable prize. It would look jolly well in our study."

"It's a pity you are not running, Tom."

"Oh, bother! I've got the reputation of being able to run better than I can. You see, you are new to the college, and the captain invariably errs on the right side with new chaps. If I were a betting man instead of being a non-betting boy, I'd back you to win."

Now, Dick considered his running by far his strongest point. Neither the captain nor Tom had seen him at his best, for Hal did not believe in trial races for handicapping purposes. He just kept watch at odd times, and made his notes. He had seen Dick at cricket, and that was all; and he had given him three hundred yards start.

The mile handicap came off in the afternoon. There were three laps to the mile, and Cedric being the youngest boy in the college, had half a lap start.

"Are you ready?" shouted Hal, who was the starter. "Go!"

The pistol shot rang out, then there were roars of laughter from the boys of the Upper School, for Dick had turned, and commenced running in the wrong direction.

"Ha, ha, ha! You are going the wrong way, Clare!" bawled one of them.

"You will lose by six laps!"

"You silly juggins!" yelled one of the youngsters. "Run the other way! Oh, bother it! Think of the Lower School."

But Dick was thinking of the insult to his mother, and the prestige of the Lower School was quite a secondary consideration in comparison. For a hundred and fifty yards he raced back, then turned as Gowl met him.

"We run on equal terms," said Dick. "Our distances are now exactly the same."

"You stupid little idiot!" panted Gowl. "You had a good chance of winning before. You have none now."

He spurred and left Dick three yards behind, then round they went, and Dr. Stanley gazed in wonder. He could not understand Dick's extraordinary conduct at all.

"He has given the race away, sir!" said Hal.

"Undoubtedly," answered the Head. "He is a strange lad. It is quite possible he may want little Cedric to win. The youngster is running remarkably well."

"Yes, sir. He will make a fine runner when he gets a little older. But what do you think of Dick Clare's style?"

"Perfect! But it is impossible that he could beat Gowl over the mile."

Cheers burst forth as Cedric came round. He was not being pressed yet. The Lower School appeared to pin their faith on him, although Dick had been the favourite previous to what they called his rotten behaviour.

All the youngsters came round first. Then came Gowl, who was steadily overhauling the leaders. Next to him; at least six yards behind, came Dick, who was hissed by all the Lower School, laughed at by the big fellows, and cheered by Hal and Tom, although the latter felt inclined to kick him.

But the prize was nothing to Dick. All he cared about was to beat Gowl, who had taken the best position, for he was hugging the ropes.

Round they swept again. Many of the younger boys had now dropped out. Cedric was still leading considerably, but Gowl had spurred, and passing all the rest drew closer to the leader. Dick was a dozen yards behind.

"Last lap!" shouted Hal, handing Mr. Foster the other end of the tape which they ran across the track.

Dick set his teeth, and his breath hissed through them. He quickened his pace and crept up to Gowl, who, in his turn, was overhauling Cedric.

Soon he passed him—so did Dick, who was not two yards behind Gowl. They were half-way round the lap. Both were running grandly.

Dick heard the roar of voices growing louder as they sped onwards. With a few bounds he drew level, and thus they raced for a hundred yards or more.

Then came the final spurt. For some moments the cheering ceased. It looked like a dead-heat, then Dick sprang forward and swept the tape from the holders' hands.

He had won the race, but not by many inches.

They stopped side by side, then Gowl turned on him and panted out a few words which were only heard by Dick.

He sprang forward, and struck the bully a heavy blow on the jaw, while Hal sprang between them.

"Go to my study, Clare, and remain there until I come!" commanded Dr. Stanley, while Dick bowed and walked towards the college.

"Now, what are you doing here?" demanded Vance, as Dick entered the study, which the porter happened to be tidying. "You know perfectly well that you ain't got the right to come here."

"I know jolly well I haven't got the inclination, old chap," answered Dick.

"Then clear out of it, else I'll chuck you out!"

"It can't be done, old boy," said Dick. "I'd very much like to obey you, but I daren't. A Head with a heart has sent me here."

"How the thunder can a head have a heart? You are talking ridic'lous. Do you suppose your heart is in your head?"

"It feels more as though it was in my boots at the present moment. Don't you see, Vance, I have displeased bully Gowl and the Doctor, and the latter has ordered me to come here. Now, I don't mind doing that a little bit; what I object to is his coming here, and he will do it. I feel quite certain on that score. No matter. You leave me to my own sad feelings."

"Is he going to cano you?"

"I did not ask him, not being desirous of putting such silly notions into his head."

"Haw, haw, haw! I hope as he gives it to you hot and strong, 'cos if ever a boy deserved it you are the one. I've got your name down for being late, but I ain't going to trot it up to him till after he's finished with you."

"Pure vindictiveness, Vance. But look here, here is a sum of money for you, and——"

"Of course, that makes all the difference. I shouldn't think of reporting a boy that did the right thing by me."

"This sum of money is a demi-denarius. Know what that is?"

"I don't, young gent."

"In Lancashire they call it a meg. No doubt you will better appreciate its value when I inform you that it is a ha'penny. Go and buy marbles with it, and have a nice little game."

"Drat if I don't report you!" snarled the disappointed porter, picking up the coin and leaving the study.

— — — Up a Tree!

DICK had a long time to wait, then the Head entered the study, accompanied by Gowl, who looked sullen and uneasy in his mind.

"I have questioned Gowl concerning your misconduct, Clare," said the Head, seating himself, while the big and small boy stood before him, "He assures me that he has not the slightest idea why you struck him. Have you any explanation to make?"

"No, sir."

"You mean to tell me that you refuse to give your reason for such misconduct?"

"I hope you will not press me to give any reason. I am quite prepared to take the consequences."

"Was it through some misunderstanding?"

"No, sir."

"Was it done in passion?"

"I expect so, sir."

"Do you wish to express contrition for your misconduct?"

"No, sir. I would strike him again under similar circumstances. I would strike him now in your presence, or in the presence of any living man or woman."

"Do you still assert that you gave the boy no cause for the blow, Gowl? Gowl said something to you, Clare," exclaimed the Head?"

"Yes, sir."

"And that is why you struck him?"

"Yes, sir. I hope you will ask me no more."

"What did you say, Gowl?"

"I never spoke to him. He has spoken falsely now."

"You did speak to him. I was watching you closely. I distinctly saw your lips move."

"I may have made some remark. If so, I have forgotten it."

"You tell me that you forget what you said to make that boy strike you?"

"It is not the first time he has insulted me in public."

"That has nothing to do with what I asked you. Do you assert that you forget the insulting remark you made, or any remark you made?"

"I made no remark that would warrant such conduct, sir."

"You are evading the question. You wish me to believe that you remember you said nothing to warrant the blow, but cannot remember what you said."

"I gave him no cause to strike me, sir."

"You can go," said the Head. And for some moments after Gowl had left the room Dr. Stanley remained silent, as though doubting how to deal with Dick.

"You refuse to repeat the words he uttered, Clare?"

"I hope you will not press me to do so, sir."

"You consider I ought not to know them. That my knowing them would get Gowl into serious trouble? Or is it that you consider such repetition would be 'sneaking' on your part?"

"I don't think the words would get him into serious trouble, sir."

"Now, Clare, I have never known you to pervert the truth. There is no boy in the college—and no master in the college on whose word I would place more implicit reliance than on yours. Tell me, my lad, do you in your own mind consider you were justified in striking that blow?"

"Yes! I know I was."

"Were the words actually against yourself?"

"No, sir."

"You can go, my lad. Tell the captain I wish to speak to him."

Hal soon made his appearance, and he looked rather worried. He liked Clare, and was afraid he would get into serious trouble.

"Do you know what it was all about, Hal?" inquired the Head.

"No, sir. Clare mentioned nothing to me, except that you wished to see me, and he wishes the first prize to be given in place of the third prize, which means that the silver cup would go to little Cedric. Have you any objection?"

"No, if Clare wishes it. The third prize could go to the fourth runner. Now, from what I can gather, Gowl must have made some insulting remark concerning Clare's mother. He said the words were not actually against

himself, therefore I imagine they must have been against Mrs. Clare. I fear the remark was grossly insulting. Gowl denied having said anything, but it was obvious that he was speaking falsely. It is, of course, impossible for me to punish Clare; indeed, I do not consider that he deserves punishment is correct. What I wish you to do is to speak seriously to Gowl. There is some secret between those two boys which I cannot understand at all. It seems to me that Clare knows something concerning Gowl's past life, but the lad is far too honourable to make use of such knowledge. My fear is that Gowl will seek some sort of revenge, and you must try to prevent anything like that. See what you can do, Hal, then dine with me to-night."

"Thank you, sir. I say, what a wonderful runner Clare is."

"He greatly surprised me, because Gowl really ran well. I remember Clare's father was a great athlete, and that is not the only thing in which Dick takes after him. He has inherited his father's love of truth."

That evening Dick saw his mother to the station, and he decided on returning across country, as it saved him nearly a mile. It is true that he had to cross Farmer Garling's land, but as it was pasture land Dick did not consider it mattered. Unfortunately, Garling did. Trespassers always maddened him whether they did any damage or not.

He hated the Boys of Ravenswood for that reason, because they invariably went across his ground when they wanted to make a short cut. He had once flogged a boy so mercilessly that the vicar, who had heard the cries, threatened to prosecute him, and promptly stopped all orders. Garling used bad language to him, and told him he did not care; but he cared considerably when the matter was reported to Dr. Stanley, who transferred his custom to a small farm some miles away.

Dick had heard all about this, but meant chancing it, and fortune favoured him until he had gone about half the distance, then he had some shocking luck—so did Farmer Garling.

It was the fault of an enormous red bull, which Dick did not notice until he got into the particular field, which he did by climbing the gate.

He was half across the field before the bull made its presence known by an angry bellow.

The field was a large one, and to have gained the hedge on the further side before the bull was on him would have been impossible even for such a swift runner as Dick; for the bull no sooner sighted him than it came charging down.

"No you don't, old boy!" cried Dick, bolting towards an old oak-tree which stood in the centre of the field. "You go and toss the varmer."

The tree was close. Dick scrambled into the branches just as the bull came charging down.

He was perfectly safe now, but his position was an awkward one, for the bull waited for him to come down with a patience that was exasperating.

Dick worked his way along a bough. It was a dead bough, and he broke some pieces off, and flung them at the bull in the hope of driving it away, but nothing so fortunate as that happened, and Dick knew he would be late—especially if the bull kept him there all night.

To descend with that angry animal waiting for him was not to be thought of, and Dick almost hoped that Farmer Garling, whose house was on the other side of the hedge, would see him, and drive the bull off.

However, nothing like that happened, and Dick was wondering how on earth he was to get out of his predicament, when the dead bough decided matters for him.

The bull was immediately beneath him. It was cropping some grass, and seemed to be determined to feed off that particular patch until Dick came down.

Suddenly there was a sharp crack. Dick's weight was too much for the rotten old bough, and he fell right on the top of his foe.

He would have gone to the ground—and possibly his death—had he not clutched at the bull's shaggy mane. As it was he went round the field.

Dick could ride a bare-backed horse with perfect ease, but this was the first time he had ridden a bull, and he made a mental vow that it should be the last.

The bull's fury knew no bounds. Madly across the field it dashed, thence through the hedge into Farmer Garling's kitchen-garden.

Now, Garling was accustomed to spend his evenings in that garden plot, and he kept it in excellent order. If anyone in his employ dared to tread on the beds he would howl at them, while if a cabbage was cut it was always the wrong one. As for his customers, he would never allow anyone to go near the frames.

But the bull had no more respect for the farmer than for his garden. It churned up cabbages, onions, and carrots, in the most reckless manner. The currant-bushes would need no summer pruning after the bull had been round the garden once, then it rushed beneath an apple-tree, and Dick was, unseated; but he succeeded in grasping the bough of the tree, and clambered up, bringing down a dozen or so of fine apples.

The bull went on—so did the farmer, for the angry animal was coming in his direction. It caught him up, too, and tossed him into the middle of his cucumber-frames, after that the brute tore its way through the hedge, and commenced to have its supper off a wheatfield, for it had got out on the opposite side of the garden, into a wheatfield which was not meant for grazing bulls.

"Are you hurt, old chap?" inquired Dick.

The question was quite superfluous, for as Garling struggled from the wrecked cucumber-frames his face looked as though he had been poking it into his gooseberry-bushes. He was angry too. You might have heard that half a mile away. The characters he gave the Boys of Ravenswood was even worse than Gowl deserved, while, according to Garling, the masters were rather worse than the boys.

"But, look here, my dear varmer," exclaimed Dick. "Thou mawn look at the thing in the proper light."

"Bust me!" howled Garling, by no means pacified by having his mode of speech mocked. "I'll shoot you! Drat me if I won't!"

"The chances are they will hang you if you will, old boy. What's the good of losing your temper over a little accident. We all have our trials, and must bear them bravely. I wouldn't bother about it if I were you. After all cabbages are cheap enough—so is glass. You can easily mend those frames my dear man, and there you are."

"I'll get my goon and shoot you."

"Why, that's not a bad idea," said Dick, who saw a chance of escape if Garling went for his gun. "You go and fetch the gun."

But Garling also foresaw this contingency.

"Hi, Bill! Bring my goon!" he howled.

Bill was his handy man. It so happened that he was three miles away in a little public house drinking ale. The woman who kept Garling's house in order had gone home for the night, and he had no wife.

For five minutes he howled for Bill, then he once more turned his fury on the prisoner.

"Now, see you here, you young varmint!" hooted the farmer. "If you don't come down it will be the worse for you, and so I tell ee."

(Another rattling long instalment next week.)

"The Air Raiders"

A Stirring New Story of the Anti-Aircraft Corps

BY

SIDNEY DREW

Starts Next Week in

THE BOYS' REALM

The Premier Weekly Sports Paper.

□ □ □

(ONE PENNY — EVERY FRIDAY)

□ □ □

Don't Fail to Get a Copy