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## THE WHITE GIANTS

A Story of Holiday and Detective Adventure, introducing NELSON LEE and NIPPER and the Boys of St. Frank's. By the Author of "Bound for Brazil," "The River of Wonders," "The Dream City," etc.

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# The White Giants.

A Story of Holiday and Detective Adventure, introducing NELSON LEE and NIPPER and the Boys of St. Frank's. By the Author of "Bound for Brazil," "The River of Wonders," "The Dream City," etc.

(THE NARRATIVE RELATED THROUGHOUT BY NIPPER.)

## CHAPTER I.

### THE STORY OF THE DREAM CITY.

REGINALD PITT searched the sky anxiously.

"Well, they ought to be getting back by now!" he said. "They've been gone at least four hours, and I'm feeling a bit queer. I hope nothing's happened!"

McClure shook his head.

"Don't you worry, Pitt," he said. "Don't forget that Mr. Lee is in charge of the airship, and he wouldn't let anything go wrong. The whole party will come sailing back, as safe as houses, before long."

"I jolly well hope so!" said Pitt.

"Hear, hear!"

"Perhaps they've come down in the forest?" suggested Fatty Little.

"Come down in the forest?" repeated Church. "What the dickens for?"

"Well, they might have seen some jolly fine fruit trees, or some nuts, or something else," suggested Fatty Little, nodding his head.

"There's no telling, you know. I know if I was up in the air I should —"

"You'd drop out head first if you saw a tree full of bananas!" exclaimed the Hon. Douglas Singleton drily. "Food

is a kind of magnet to you, Fatty. Directly you see anything eatable, you make a rush for it. They've got something serious to think about on board The Adventurer!"

The group of juniors were gathered near the rail of the steam yacht Wanderer. They were all looking unusually serious, considering that they were members of the St. Frank's Remove. But there was something serious to concern them, as it happened.

The Wanderer was lying close to the bank of the River Majarrah, a small tributary of the Amazon. That mighty river was a good few miles behind, and the yacht was now quite out of the track of civilisation.

It had been lying there for a good many days now, and Lord Dorrimore's party had grown quite accustomed to the climate, and to the surrounding forests. The afternoon was rather hot, the sun beating down from an almost cloudless sky.

And the juniors were not the only ones on board who were looking anxious. Captain Burton himself was on the bridge, chatting with Mr. Hudson, the first officer. And at regular intervals they stared up into the heavens, and occasionally used their binoculars. Various members of the crew followed their officers' example.

Down on the promenade deck, Lady



Helen Tregellis-West was sitting in a deck-chair, and round her were several charming young ladies, including Miss Violet Watson. They, too, were looking serious, and they could not keep their attention from the skies.

As a matter of fact, everybody on board the yacht was waiting for the return of Lord Dorrimore's airship, *The Adventurer*. It had been due back well over an hour ago, and everybody was getting somewhat anxious. This was really not surprising, for, in the region of the Amazon forest, an airship was not exactly the safest of conveyances.

There were many dangers to be considered—for example, if an accident happened on board the aircraft, there was no safe landing ground. And, once an airship descended in those dense forests, there was utterly no hope of its rising into its native element again. Furthermore, Nelson Lee had set out in the morning with the express intention of flying over a deadly swamp—a swamp which was infested with snakes, poisonous insects, and fever. And this terrible mire extended for hundreds of miles, and to land on such ground would be certain death.

However, the party on board the yacht did not think that anything really terrible had taken place. They were only anxious because the airship was somewhat overdue. Everybody confidently expected to see the craft appear before very long.

Miss Janet Kerrigan was perhaps the most worried person on board, for her nephew, Stanley, had gone on board the airship, and, moreover, the object of the trip itself was to find out if anything could be seen or discovered of Colonel Kerrigan—Aunt Janet's brother.

It was chiefly in connection with this search for the lost explorer that Lord Dorrimore had brought his party out to the Amazon. Aunt Janet was convinced, mainly owing to many dreams she had had, that her brother was alive—although he had been reported as dead for over four years. Aunt Janet was positive that her brother still lived, somewhere behind the forests of the Amazon—somewhere out of reach of civilisation, where he could not communicate with the outside world.

And already there had been indications that Aunt Janet's conviction was correct. She had dreamed of a wonder-

ful city, with her brother standing on high ground, with his arms outstretched, appealing for assistance.

Before so very long Miss Kerrigan was to learn that her strange visions were by no means purely imaginary. Convincing proof was even then on its way to the yacht.

"I wish something would happen!" said De Valerie, glancing at his watch. "This watching's jolly rotten, you know. It's half-past two already, and Mr. Lee was expected back soon after twelve."

"Handy's on board, too!" said Church anxiously. "I hope to goodness he's all right!"

"Blow Handforth!" said Jack Grey. "What about Mr. Lee, and Lord Dorrimore, and Nipper, to say nothing of Umlosi? Think how awful it'll be if we never see them—"

"Look!" gasped Fatty Little suddenly. "Look up there! What's that? I—I can see something!"

The juniors all stared into the sky, most of them being very excited. At the same time, Captain Burton, and Mr. Hudson on the bridge, got busy with their binoculars, and they focussed them upon a little tiny spot in the sky which had appeared over the tree tops, far away.

It was only a mere speck, and with the naked eye it was really impossible to tell what it actually was. But it was too steady to be a bird on the wing, and the juniors gazed at it intently.

Captain Burton lowered his glasses, and turned to Mr. Hudson.

"Well, I'm not saying that I've been scared, but I'm mighty pleased to see that balloon coming back, Mr. Hudson," said the skipper. "It's there, right enough!"

"Oh, yes, sir," agreed the first officer, "it's the airship; it is coming along fairly low, too."

Violet Watson, down on the promenade deck, had jumped to her feet, and now she clapped her hands with delight.

"Oh, I am so pleased!" she exclaimed gladly. "I had been getting quite concerned!"

"You silly!" said Ethel Church. "There was nothing to worry about!"

"Oh, but Tommy's on board!" said Violet. "But I knew all along that everything would be all right. With



Mr. Lee in charge, nothing could go wrong!"

Everybody on board had the utmost confidence in Nelson Lee, and a loud cheer went up from the juniors as it was seen that the speck in the sky was really the airship; while very soon the speck became a distinct outline, and there was no longer any question as to the nature of the object in the sky.

It was *The Adventurer*, and she was coming home at full speed, but flying rather low.

The roar of her engines now became apparent—for the air was rather still, and there were no other sounds.

The airship circled over the river once or twice before descending, and Church was the first to notice that something was not quite right. He borrowed a pair of binoculars, and he was gazing up at the airship's car, over which two or three figures were leaning.

"I can't see Handy!" said Church. "He doesn't seem to be there!"

"Rats!" said McClure. "He must be there!"

"Well, he went up—we all know that," said Church. "But you just have a squint through these glasses!"

McClure took the glasses, and he soon focussed them upon the airship's car; but, search as he would, he could see no sign of Edward Oswald Handforth. He distinctly saw young Stanley Kerrigan of the *Third*, and he saw Nelson Lee, also two members of the engine-room staff. And Tom Burton was also leaning over the rail.

"I—I can't understand it!" exclaimed McClure, in a startled voice. "I can see Mr. Lee, and the Bo'sun, and those mechanic chaps. Where's Lord Dorrimore? Where's Handforth? Where's Nipper? Where's Tregellis-West?"

"And where's Umlosi?" demanded Church excitedly.

"They haven't come back!"

"They've all been left behind—six of them. My only hat!"

"Great doughnuts!"

"What on earth can it mean?" demanded Pitt. "Why aren't they on board?"

It was the question that everybody was asking, for now it was apparent to all—without the aid of glasses—six members of the party had not returned.

For the airship was descending slowly and gracefully, and it was now some

distance up the river, almost on a level with the yacht itself, and only a few feet from the water.

And it was an absolute fact that the car only contained Nelson Lee, young Stanley, Tom Burton, and the two mechanics. The six other adventurers were not there!

The excitement on board was rather intense, for as yet no facts were known. Violet Watson was terribly anxious, and she could hardly contain herself. There was a very concerned expression in her pretty eyes, and her expression was grave and serious.

"Oh, I do hope that nothing has happened to Tommy!" she exclaimed in a low voice. "Why hasn't he come back?"

"My dear, you mustn't worry!" exclaimed Aunt Janet, placing a hand on the girl's shoulder. "You may be quite sure that Tom is safe, and that Mr. Lee had a very excellent reason for not bringing him home."

"But it seems so strange—so—so terrible!" said Miss Violet.

Church and McClure were worrying, too. They loved Handforth, in spite of the constant rows they were always having with him. He was their leader, and they had seemed like a couple of fishes out of water all the morning. What would they do if Handy never returned?

It seemed a terrible time to the waiting guests before the airship was anchored to her moorings in the river. In reality, *The Adventurer* had settled down very quickly, and she was made secure and fast. Over a dozen members of the yacht's crew were on the spot ready to help, and, to the surprise of everybody on board the yacht, these men at once became active.

Several of them climbed up into the network of the airship, until they were on the gasbag itself. Others were busy in various ways; but it was only too clear that the airship was being repaired. In some way or other the huge silken envelope had become damaged.

Nelson Lee jumped into the little motor-launch at the earliest possible moment, and he came hurrying towards the yacht, young Stanley Kerrigan and Tom Burton with him. There was quite a crowd at the top of the accommodation ladder when Nelson Lee came up.

"Where are the others, Mr. Lee?"



"Why haven't they come back with you?"

"Oh, please do tell us quickly!"

"Has there been an accident?"

"Have the others come to any harm?"

The famous schoolmaster-detective was fairly bombarded with questions as he arrived on deck; but, although Nelson Lee was looking rather serious, there was no grave expression in his eyes as there would have been if a tragedy had taken place.

"Really, it is impossible for me to answer all these questions at once," he protested. "I have every intention of putting the facts before you, but I must obtain a hearing first."

It was some time before everybody calmed down, and then Nelson Lee found himself surrounded by an eager throng of people, who could hardly contain themselves with curiosity and anxiety.

All the juniors were there—the girls, captain, Lady Helen Tregellis-West, Aunt Janet, and all the officers of the yacht. Several members of the crew hovered near by, anxious to hear the story.

"To begin with," said Nelson Lee quietly, "I had better explain that Nipper and Watson, Tregellis-West, and Handforth and Lord Dorrimore are quite safe."

"Hurrah!"

"Oh, how splendid!"

"But what about Umlosi, sir?"

"Umlosi, of course, is safe also," said Nelson Lee. "I was compelled to leave the six of them behind—although with great reluctance. I was determined to remain behind myself, but Lord Dorrimore insisted upon my keeping control of the airship."

"Quite right too, sir!"

"You're the pilot, sir—the airship couldn't go without you!"

Nelson Lee smiled.

"Well, now that I have explained so much—in order to put your minds at rest—I had better tell you of our adventures from the start. I will do so briefly, as there is none too much time to spare now. However, the engineers will occupy at least half an hour in effecting repairs to the gasbag, so I shall seize this opportunity to tell you the facts."

Everybody listened with intense interest.

"Our voyage out was quite safe and

interesting," said Nelson Lee. "For a considerable number of miles we flew over dense forest land, and then the whole aspect of the country changed, and we came upon a deadly swamp—a swamp which seemed to extend for hundreds and hundreds of miles in every direction, and is nothing less than seventy miles across."

"Oh, how dreadful!"

"What an awful place, sir!"

"It is indeed a terrible morass," agreed Nelson Lee. "It is my firm belief that this mire extends in a kind of circle for hundreds of miles—that is to say, the swamp forms a band, seventy or eighty miles wide, extending completely round a large tract of country, thus forming a kind of island. This tract of country in the centre, some miles in extent, is completely cut off from the outside world. The swamp encloses it, and it is impossible for man or beast to leave. It is therefore out of the question for any ordinary expedition to reach this country, as it is equally out of the question for any inhabitant of the country to approach the outer world. The swamp is a deadly barrier which no man can cross."

"Except by airship, sir!"

"Exactly, Church," said Nelson Lee. "The only way of getting into this tract of country is by the air. Hitherto, this has never been attempted, and so the territory has never been discovered and known to the world."

"Oh, how exciting!" said Miss Violet.

"We succeeded in flying over the swamp," said Nelson Lee, "and, when we had reached the other side, we found ourselves flying over a rocky portion of ground, which extended for a good many miles. The whole country rose at a somewhat acute angle, up to a high ridge. The place was very barren and uninviting, and it was while we were interested in this scene that a startling incident took place. To be brief, an aeroplane came out of the sky, and attacked us!"

"What?"

"An aeroplane, sir?"

"You were attacked?"

The audience regarded Nelson Lee incredulously.

"I am speaking the exact truth," proceeded the detective quietly. "I do not pretend to know how the aeroplane got there and who it was piloted by; but I do know that the machine is a



modern one, and it was probably manufactured in England. It was a biplane of the scout type, and, of course, could fly at practically double the speed the airship could."

"Phew!"

"Oh, my only topper!"

"Extraordinary!" muttered Captain Burton. "I'm hanged if I can understand it."

"The adventure was as much a surprise to me as it is to you," proceeded Nelson Lee. "This red aeroplane, which came out of the distance, commenced firing at us with a machine gun. We rapidly returned the fire, and succeeded in driving the hostile craft away. But not before several serious rents had been torn in the airship's gasbag."

"Oh!"

"And were you compelled to descend, sir?"

"We were," said Nelson Lee. "I considered it highly necessary to seek a landing at once. We did so, and we were able to repair the damage fairly quickly. You will realise, however, that a certain quantity of gas escaped."

"And what did you do then, sir?"

"I must tell you, first of all, that Lord Dorrimore and the boys had gone off for a walk to the top of the ridge," went on Nelson Lee. "They came hurrying back at full speed, just when the repairs were completed. And they brought an extraordinary story with them. From the top of the ridge they had looked down to a glorious valley—a kind of paradise—and in the distance they had seen a wonderful city of white stone, with gleaming minarets and spires and domes!"

Aunt Janet clasped her hands.

"Oh, I knew it was true—I knew it was true!" she exclaimed, in a kind of ecstasy. "My brother is alive! He is there—in the city! It is exactly as I saw in all my dreams!"

"I am convinced that you are right, Miss Kerrigan," said Nelson Lee, nodding.

"But it's impossible, sir," protested Mr. Hudson, looking excited. "I've been up the Amazon many times, and I've heard practically all there is to hear about this region. And never in all my life have I been told of a stone city away in this wilderness. Why, there are only Indians here—savages! They live in straw huts and grass houses!

Thousands of years ago the Incas inhabited those regions, but they do not live to-day—they are practically a historical race!"

Nelson Lee nodded.

"I have been trying to accept that view myself—until now," he said. "But, Mr. Hudson, I have seen with my own eyes—and I must believe!"

"But what did you see, sir?"

"We all saw this wonderful city—afterwards," said Nelson Lee quietly. "Everybody has heard, of course, of the mystic city of El Dorado. I am not saying that this city is in any way connected with El Dorado—but I will declare that it is a wonderful place, and I was positively thunderstruck by all that I saw."

"Oh, do tell us some more, Mr. Lee!" said Miss Violet.

"I intend doing so," continued the great detective. "Lord Dorrimore and the boys caught sight of this city first, as I have said—from the top of the ridge, and then they came hurrying back to the airship, with the story that a great army of gigantic human beings were coming towards us at a rapid speed. They furthermore stated that these human beings were at least eight or nine feet in height!"

"Oh, my goodness!"

"Great Scott!"

"My only hat!"

"Impossible!" said Captain Burton stoutly.

"I thought so myself at the time," went on Nelson Lee. "But, my dear captain, I can assure you that Lord Dorrimore did not exaggerate in the slightest degree. Almost before we could get the vessel into the air, these strange human beings came crowding round, and they actually fired a number of darts at us. And I assure you that these people were at least nine feet in height, on the average!"

"Phew!"

"It—it sounds like a fairy tale, sir!"

"It does!" agreed Lee. "And I feel quite uncomfortable in having to tell you this—for I have an idea in the back of my head that you cannot credit what I have been saying."

"Oh, we believe you?" exclaimed Miss Violet quickly.

"Rather, sir!"

"We know that we can take your word, sir!"



"But, my dear man, it seems positively unbelievable!" cried Captain Burton.

"Well, it is the truth," said Nelson Lee simply.

"And what were these giants like?" asked Mr. Hudson.

"Oh, quite handsome looking fellows," replied Mr. Lee. "They were robed as one sees in pictures of Ancient Rome. They wore gold ornaments on their wrists, on their necks, and round their heads. They were quite white, these giants, and by no means unhand-some. In fact, I judged them to be a refined race of people!"

"More and more surprising," declared the captain. "A race of white giants behind these forests and swamps! Bless my soul! If any other man had told me this, Lee, I should call him a liar!"

Nelson Lee smiled.

"I admire your bluntness, Captain Burton," he said. "And I quite appreciate your feelings. If anything, I have made the least of this story—I have in no way exaggerated the truth. But I will continue."

"Please, do, Mr. Lee!" said Lady Helen Tregellis-West. "I am simply yearning to hear more!"

"Well, as the airship was in perfect trim again, I saw no reason why we should not fly over this ridge, and have a look at the wonderful city from the air," proceeded the detective. "I therefore put this plan into execution, and we actually flew over the city. I cannot tell you much about it, except that it looked a wonderful place from the air. There are wide streets, lined with gracious trees, and parks and flower gardens in every direction. Palm trees grew in beautiful clumps, and there are many pools and fountains."

"Oh, how wonderful!" said Miss Violet, clasping her hands.

"It is indeed wonderful," agreed Nelson Lee. "I wish I could tell you more, but before we could really take stock of the place, the aeroplane I have already mentioned swooped down from the upper air. The pilot commenced firing, and he succeeded in gashing the gashag rather severely. But we fired back in return, and succeeded in smashing his propellor—causing him to nose-dive to the ground."

"Was he smashed up, sir?" asked Pitt.

"No; he succeeded in landing safely,"

said Lee. "We had not time to investigate further, for we discovered we were losing gas rapidly. We therefore flew over the ridge once more, and then to earth when we neared the swamp. It was then discovered that we had not sufficient buoyancy to enable us to come back."

"Over half the crew were compelled to alight, in order to allow the airship to get back to its base. As I have already told you, Lord Dorrimore, and Unlosi, and the four boys remained behind. Fortunately, I succeeded in piloting the airship safely to here—and now I must hasten myself."

"It is necessary to return to our six companions. It will be quite possible to get there, and to arrive back here long before dark. The weather is favourable, and nothing can stop us."

"Oh, I am glad!" said Lady Helen.

"There is really nothing to worry about," went on Nelson Lee. "I do not think that the six will come to any harm during our short absence. Nevertheless, I intend to get back as soon as ever I possibly can."

Nelson Lee's story of the white giants had been told, and everybody had listened to that tale and marvelled.

They were compelled to believe that it was the truth, for Nelson Lee was not the kind of man to exaggerate, or to fabricate. But the excitement on board was tremendous—mostly among the juniors. The St. Frank's holiday party had indeed come to a land of wonders!

## CHAPTER II.

### THE MONSTER OF THE CAVERN.

**L**ORD DORRIMORE tossed his cigarette end away, and glanced at his watch.

"Nearly five o'clock, boys," he remarked. "I expect we shall be seeing something of the airship very shortly."

"I jolly well hope so, sir," said Tommy Watson. "If we don't, we sha'n't be able to get back to the yacht to-night!"

"Oh, don't you worry, my son, I put in. "We shall get back all right—trust the gov'nor. He won't leave us in the cart!"

I spoke with cheerfulness, but, at the



same time, I must confess that I was not feeling unduly optimistic. I was rather worried, for we had expected the airship back before this. Perhaps we were naturally impatient, being imprisoned here, with that gigantic swamp between us and civilisation.

In addition, we had something else to worry us—something of which Nelson Lee knew nothing.

We had been quite prepared to wait in this land of the white giants, for we thought it quite safe. When the airship had started away on its journey home, Lord Dorrimore, and, in fact, all of us, had been quite convinced that no harm could come to us. There were no giants in the vicinity, and we considered that we should be perfectly secure until Nelson Lee returned.

Now, this was wrong!

For the airship had not been out of sight for long when two of the giants made their appearance—two isolated members of the strange race. And these two men had attacked Umlosi—to their cost.

The great Kutana chief had fought them with all his strength, and with all his skill. As a result, they had been put to flight.

But one thing was almost certain to result from this. The two giants would return to their comrades, and it would be very surprising indeed if we were not soon surrounded by a positive horde of these huge fellows.

And if a real army of the giants came, it would be utterly hopeless for us to attempt to fight. We should either be killed straight off, or we should be captured, and then helpless.

Therefore, it was with great anxiety that we searched the sky for any return of the airship.

We had some shelter from the sun because we had gathered in the mouth of a big cavern. We had not explored the place, because we wished to be near the daylight—we wanted to be on our guard for any emergency that arose.

However, we kept it in mind—this cavern—in case the giants came. It would just be possible, perhaps, to squeeze through an aperture which the giants could not manage—their great size would prevent them from following.

"There's no sign of The Adventurer!" said Handforth, after he had been using the binoculars for some time. Great

pip! I hope they haven't come down in the swamp—because it'll never get into the air again. That'll mean that Mr. Lee and those others will be doomed to a terrible death!"

"And it will mean that we shall never see civilisation again," said Lord Dorrimore quietly. "But there's no need to talk in this horrible strain, Handforth. The airship will come all right—keep your pecker up, man! There's no need to get worried!"

"Who's worried, sir?" demanded Handforth. "I'm absolutely certain that Mr. Lee will come back!"

"Good!"

We seated ourselves just in the cavern mouth, in the shade, and from this point we could watch the sky over in the direction from which the airship would appear.

"Strictly speaking, we haven't given the professor time to get back yet," remarked Dorrie, glancing at his watch.

"Don't forget that he had to have those ribs repaired, and the gasbag had to be filled up with hydrogen, or whatever they use. All this takes time—and the journey there and back isn't a hundred yards, either. We ought to see something of the airship within ten minutes or a quarter of an hour now. If an hour passes, and we're still by ourselves—well, I shall begin to worry then!"

We were all rather cheered by Dorrie's words, and we settled ourselves to wait patiently.

"Dear old boys, we are havin' a remarkable experience—we are, really!" declared Sir Montie Tregellis-West. "All these wonders have been tumblin' over one another so quickly that we are getting accustomed——"

"What's that?" demanded Handforth abruptly.

"Dear fellow, you were interrupting me——"

"I can't help that!" said Handforth.

"Didn't you hear something?"

"Hear something?" I repeated.

"From outside, do you mean?"

"No; within this cavern!" said Handy, getting to his feet. "I'm jolly certain that I heard a sound—— There you are!"

We had all heard something this time. Some chunks of stone had been pushed aside, they went tumbling down, and echoing throughout the cavern. We heard distinct movements, too.



We glanced at one another in rather a startled fashion. It seemed as though something huge was pushing its way between confined walls. There was a curious scraping, sliding noise.

And before we could speak we distinctly heard grunts—horrible throaty grunts, which echoed in the most appalling fashion.

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed, jumping up. "What in the world——"

"Run, boys—out of here!" exclaimed Lord Dorrimore sharply. "It must be some animal. It might be dangerous! We mustn't waste a second!"

It was unnecessary for Dorrie to hurry us up. We scampered out of the cavern entrance as fast as our legs would carry us. Umlosi, however, preferred to take things leisurely, for he was quite indifferent to danger. When we had arrived at a point about a hundred yards from the cave mouth, we sat down and watched it.

"I wonder what the dickens it is!" murmured Handforth.

"I expect we shall see in a minute," I said. "In any case, get ready to run!"

"I'm blessed if I'm going to run!" said Handforth. "I don't suppose the thing's dangerous, anyhow!"

I noticed that Lord Dorrimore had two revolvers, and they were both ready to be fired at a second's notice. He held them grimly, and there was a keen expression on his face—an expression which told of keen enjoyment, too.

Dorrie was always ready for a scrap!

Umlosi, too, was prepared for anything that might happen. I carried a revolver, and I did not see any reason why I should not bring it in to use if necessary.

So I took the weapon out to see that it was all in order. Then we watched the cave mouth, anxiously and curiously.

The minutes passed, and nothing happened—nothing came into view. We stood there, in the hot sunlight, waiting, and presently we began to feel that we had been unnecessarily alarmed.

And right in the middle of this tense period, Tommy Watson suddenly let out a yell of excitement and joy.

"Look!" he yelled at the top of his voice. "Oh, look up there!"

"What the deuce——" began Dorrie.

"The airship, sir!" roared Watson.

He pointed wildly, and we followed

the direction of his gaze. At first I could see nothing in the bright sky, but Watson had been watching for some time, and he had seen a sight which was invisible to us at the first moment—but then we distinctly saw a speck—outlined against a cloud near the horizon.

That speck was without doubt the airship, and it was coming—as Nelson Léo had promised to come.

"Thank goodness!" I exclaimed quietly.

We knew now that we should be all right—the airship would be with us within ten minutes, at least. But perhaps this was rather an optimistic view, for the vessel was a long way off yet—ten or fifteen miles, at least.

One is rather apt to be deceived when one sees an airship in the sky at a distance. It seems to be nearer than it actually is.

"I told you not to be worried," said Lord Dorrimore smoothly. "I know what the professor is—and I know he always keeps his word. Within twenty minutes we shall be up in the air again, and we shall be as safe as houses. By the way, what about the animal in this cavern? We've forgotten him, haven't we?"

"Oh, rats to the thing, sir!" said Handforth. "I don't suppose it's anything——"

He broke off, and I was looking at him at the moment. I saw an expression of absolute incredulity and horror come into Handforth's eyes—it was an expression which I had never seen on the face of a human being before.

Handforth was staring at the cavern, and as he did so, Tommy Watson and Montie did the same. And they, too, looked absolutely staggered and bewildered.

I turned quickly, hardly knowing what to see, and then I probably adopted the same expression as Handforth on my own face.

For I saw something which was utterly and absolutely impossible—something which could not be earthly—something which set my heart throbbing wildly, and which made me think for a moment that I was in the midst of some horrible nightmare.

A huge object came lumbering out of the cavern. It was grey in colour; there was a head—as large as a bathing machine.



An enormous body followed. I really don't feel up to the task of describing this monster—it was so huge, so mountainous, so unlike anything I had seen in all my life.

And the monster then lumbered out, and it came into full view before us. And when I could see it fully, strange illustrations of a natural history book came into my mind. This object was something like a creature of prehistoric days—a creature which had existed millions of years ago.

My mind instantly became filled with stories of the Brontosaurus—that prehistoric monster some scientists had recently declared was still living, probably in the heart of the Congo forests of Africa. Personally, I had not believed these stories, and I had regarded them as pure inventions.

But I was familiar with the appearance of a Brontosaurus—I had seen illustrations. And this dreadful creature resembled a Brontosaurus.

By what I could see, the thing had three long, sharp horns projecting from its armour-plated forehead. The mouth was fully seven feet wide, furnished with a double row of wickedly pointed teeth.

Furthermore, this nightmare creature was set something after the style of a rhinoceros, but double, treble as large—and even bigger than that.

It had a humped back, and a very long and thick tail. Its whole body was covered with large metal-like scales; in fact, the whole thing was so ghastly that I could only stare at it and feel like fainting.

"Great heavens!" I murmured faintly.

"Wah! Am I dreaming, that I see such a monstrous object before mine eyes?" exclaimed Umlosi, his voice having a tone that I had never heard before. "My masters, I fear that I am going mad—I fear that I do not really see this thing—it is a figment of my imagination—"

"No, it's there, Umlosi—it's there all right!" said Lord Dorrimore, his voice curiously sharp. "By the Lord Harry! It's a prehistoric animal—it's a tritoratop!"

"A—a which, sir?" put in Handforth weakly.

"A thing the scientists call a horned Dinosaur!" replied Dorrie. "I've studied these sort of things, and I know this fellow at once. He's a Dinosaur,

right enough—and these gentlemen, according to scientists, are carnivorous."

"That means to say that they eat flesh!" I put in quickly. "Good gracious! He could take one of us in his mouth and chew us up in one gulp! Fighting a thing like this is absolutely hopeless!"

Indeed, we did feel helpless—we felt that nothing we could do would prevent this creature killing us all in one blow, if it chose.

Away in the distance the airship was approaching, but it seemed further off than ever now—it seemed hundreds of miles away, and our chances of rescue from the airship were remote.

We were so startled by this apparition, indeed, that we hardly knew what to do—we were thunderstruck, and utterly incapable of action.

It was Lord Dorrimore who awoke out of the trance first.

"Boys!" he said in a low voice. "Umlosi! It's no good standing here and staring at this thing—we've got to shift! We've got to shift fast, too!"

"What—what can we do, sir?" gasped Watson.

"These revolvers of ours are no more use than peashooters!" said Dorrie keenly. "All we can do is to avoid the monster. We don't know whether he'll attack us, or whether he is as much afraid of us as we are afraid of him. As I say, we don't know—but we can't afford to take chances."

"But if we run, sir, the horrible monster can overtake us in half a dozen bounds!" I protested. "We can do nothing—nothing at all!"

"Yes, we can!" said Dorrie. "Do you see that pinnacle of rock just over to our left? It is easy to climb—there are places where one can acquire a foothold at every yard. If we climb to the top of that pinnacle, the Dinosaur cannot possibly reach us—we shall be safe for a few minutes, at all events."

It was no time for hesitation or questions. Watson and Handforth and Sir Montie ran as fast as their legs would carry them, and they were the first to reach the rocky pinnacle. I went next. Umlosi came after me, and Lord Dorrimore brought up the rear.

And even then it was a terribly near shave.

The terrible creature awoke into activity when it saw that we were



moving. A bellow, such as I have never heard in all my existence, awoke the echoes—a bellow which sent our blood freezing in our veins. And then the ground fairly shook as the monster came in pursuit of us.

"Quick, boys—quick!" roared Lord Dorrimore urgently.

How we got up the rocks I shall never know.

We simply piled ourselves up them, and we scrambled up in the most dangerous fashion. One slip would have been disaster to those below; but, somehow or other, we managed.

There were no misses, and we mounted higher and higher.

And Lord Dorrimore, who was last, only just escaped a terrible death.

Even as he was climbing, the enormous animal reached the spot, it reared itself up on its hind legs, and put up a terrible paw. It was as large as a tree trunk, and it only missed Lord Dorrimore by a few inches.

The next moment Dorrie had got out of reach, but he did not stop climbing. He came up after us, and we stared down breathlessly, and our limbs shivered with the excitement of it all.

For the moment we were safe—but should we be rescued in time?

### CHAPTER III.

#### SAVED FROM THE AIR.

**N**ELSON LEE smiled confidently as he glanced at his watch.

"You may expect to see us back not later than eight-thirty this evening," he said cheerfully. "That is giving the airship quite a wide margin—and I don't see any reason why we shouldn't be well within that space of time."

"I hope so, sir!" said De Valerie. "We don't want any more anxiety!"

"The airship's in fine fettle again now," declared Church. "She is just as good as she was when she was put together the first time. All the repairs have been made, and the envelope is full of gas again."

"Well, you will be careful, Mr. Lee, won't you?" said Violet Watson earnestly. "Oh, you don't know how concerned we were! It will be awful if you don't come back to-night!"

Nelson Lee laughed.

"My dear young lady, there is no doubt whatever that we shall be back before dark," he said. "I cannot think of any developments that will delay us on this trip. As for not returning to-day—well, you may as well dismiss that thought from your mind."

"Is The Adventurer really airworthy, sir?" asked Fatty Little eagerly.

"Quite!" replied Nelson Lee. "The airship is perfectly fit, Little, I can assure you."

"Then—then perhaps you'll let me come with you, sir?" asked Fatty.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Have pity on the gasbag, Fatty!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It would take the R34 to lift you!" grinned De Valerie.

"Oh, rot!" said Fatty. "I may be big, but I'm not much heavier than Mr. Lee! I'm not so heavy as a full-grown man, in fact. I'd just love to come, sir!"

"I have no doubt about that, Little," said Nelson Lee drily. "Church and McClure have also begged that they may be able to come—and that makes three of you."

"Well, the Bo'sun and Kerrigan aren't going, sir," said Church. "It's only going to be a trip there and back, so we can't come to any harm. And I know for a fact that the airship is designed to carry double the number."

"I think the vessel is quite capable of accommodating twenty people," smiled Lee; "therefore your statement is quite correct, Church."

In the end Fatty Little succeeded in his object, and it was arranged that he should go on the trip with Church and McClure. Needless to say, he was overjoyed.

The start was to be made almost at once, for everything was ready—and the detective did not mean to waste a moment. He was rather anxious about those who had been left behind, and he wanted to get in the air again.

Fatty Little bustled about vigorously. His main concern was to take sufficient food to last him until he got back in the evening.

He managed to get on the right side of one of the stewards, and within a few minutes he panted on deck triumphantly, with a huge parcel under his arm, containing sandwiches, cakes, and goodness knows what else.



Fatty had no intention of starving while he was on the trip, and he had prepared himself well. Church and McClure were too excited to think of eating. They were anxious about Handforth, and it was splendid to go out on this trip, where they could be reunited with their leader as soon as they arrived.

Nelson Lee had taken other precautions now. A machine gun was mounted on board the airship's car—a modern weapon which was very powerful, and very deadly.

The detective did not think it would be necessary to use it, but, at the same time, it was a wise precaution, and it gave everybody a sense of greater security.

In addition, some small bombs were placed on board—to say nothing of an assortment of fireworks—these latter were smoke-bombs, rockets, and all manner of other harmless fireworks. They might come in useful, in case of emergency. Lee did not wish to hurt anybody, and therefore he had taken these fireworks. They would probably have a terrifying effect on the white giants, if there was any occasion to use them, and it was just as well to be on the safe side.

The start was made very soon afterwards. Nelson Lee, the two mechanics, and the three juniors went on board from the motor-launch, and as soon as they were all in the car of the airship, the moorings were cast off, and the vessel rose gracefully in the air—as buoyant and as reliable as she had ever been. The repairs had been made in record time, and they were lasting repairs. The job had been done thoroughly. The Adventurer soared up, attained a height of a thousand feet, and then circled round over the Majarrah and over the yacht, which looked very small indeed from that height.

The Removites were greatly interested in all they saw. They leaned over the rail of the car, quite engrossed.

"Great doughnuts!" exclaimed Fatty Little. "Is that the yacht? Why, it doesn't look any bigger than a rowing boat!"

"Of course it's the yacht, you fat ass!" said McClure politely. "Ain't it grand? My hat! I'm enjoying this trip! It's the first time I've been up in the air!"

"Same here," said Church. "It's simply ripping!"

Fatty Little nodded.

"It gives a chap an appetite, too!" he said. "I'm feeling peckish already, you know!"

"You greedy bounder!" said Church. "Why, you had a terrific meal just before you came away, and you've got tons of grub in that parcel of yours! If you scoff it all up now, you'll have nothing for later on!"

Fatty's appetite, however, was always formidable, and he never allowed excitement to deprive him of his most valued possession. His appetite was the one thing he prized more than anything. Without his appetite—without his ability to break the record in the eating line—Fatty would have been miserable.

The airship behaved splendidly. She set off on her course across the forest swiftly and smoothly. Her engines were working to perfection, and she carried her load with extreme ease.

There were many fresh sights for the adventurers to see as they flew over that deadly swamp. There were many miles of this, and Nelson Lee purposely flew low, so that he could examine the different aspects of the swamp at close quarters.

His binoculars were to his eyes almost the whole time, and he took many photographs.

The juniors were even more interested than Lee, for all this was new to them—they had not seen these wonders before.

Fortunately, the weather was very fine, with hardly any wind, and with the sun shining from an almost cloudless sky.

"My hat! What a rotten-looking place!" said Church, with a slight shiver. "I'll bet there are snakes down there half a mile long! Whacking great boa-constrictors and anacondas that could kill half a dozen men within one second!"

"There's fever, too!" said McClure. "Swamps are terrible places like that, you know. They're full of mosquitoes and flies, and snakes and lizards, and all sorts of horrible things!"

"Well, it'll be a pretty bad job if we come down in the middle of it!" said Fatty, munching away at a sandwich.

"You needn't fear that," said Church. "We're in no danger at all. Why, this airship is just as safe as a railway train



—and safer, for it can't run off the rails!"

"I'll bet those other chaps are green with envy," grinned Fatty. "They were pretty green before we left, in fact. I reckon it was jolly decent of Mr. Lee to bring us along with him!"

"Rather!" said Church. "It's a grand treat!"

Perhaps the juniors would not have expressed these views had they only been permitted to glance into the future. But they were in happy ignorance of the adventures which were destined to befall them before very long.

The airship continued on her course rapidly, and covered the ground—or, rather, the air—at a record speed. True, she had had a slight following wind, and this was all to the advantage.

The journey home could be taken more leisurely, as it would not be so important. The main thing then was to get across this swamp, to pick up those who had been left behind. Once that was accomplished, it would be quite easy to set out for home at a leisurely, sedate pace.

At last, in the dim distance ahead, the end of the swamp came within view, with the rocky ground rising gradually to the high ridge beyond. Even from this height it was impossible to look down into that glorious valley which lay beyond. There was no sign whatever of that wonderful city.

It was quite possible that a view of the valley could be obtained from a much greater altitude; but Nelson Lee did not feel inclined to waste precious time by climbing. He wanted to get to the journey's end in the shortest space of time possible. It would be an easy matter to take the airship up aloft later on—she was quite capable of it, with a full load.

"We sha'n't be long now, boys," remarked Nelson Lee, as he strode up to the three juniors. "Do you see that ridge yonder? That's where Nipper and Lord Dorrimore and the others are—just below the ridge—this side. I took good care to memorise the different landmarks."

"You think you'll be able to steer the airship back to the exact spot, sir?" said Church.

"I am certain of it, Church," replied Nelson Lee. "We are keeping to our course perfectly, and there is no necessity for us to alter our position in the

slightest degree. In ten minutes we shall probably sight our friends."

"Oh, good!"

"That's splendid, sir!"

"Rather!" said Fatty Little. "I expect they're hungry, too. I suppose you've brought some grub along, sir?"

Nelson Lee chuckled.

"Upon my soul, Little, you're always thinking of food. I don't believe you can speak for one minute on any subject without bringing food into the conversation! As it happens, I have brought nothing. I had more serious things to think about."

"That's rough luck, sir," said Fatty. "They'll be as hungry as hunters!"

"But you've got a huge parcel of grub with you, Fatty," said Church.

"Oh, this—this bag?" said Fatty. "Well, I brought that for myself—I must keep my strength up to the mark, you know. I'm not selfish, or anything of that sort, but when a fellow's got an appetite like I have, he's got to look after it!"

"You certainly do that in the most perfect manner, Little," smiled Nelson Lee.

"In other words, Fatty, you're a greedy bounder!" said Church.

"Great pancakes!" snorted Fatty. "Greedy! Well, I like that! You call a fellow greedy when he overeats himself!"

"And, of course, you don't?" asked McClure politely.

"No, I jolly well don't!" said Fatty firmly. "A chap who overeats himself is disgustingly full—he can't manage another mouthful when he's finished a meal. I'm never like that. As a matter of fact, I've never eaten enough to satisfy me! I may be all right for half an hour, but then I get hungry again!"

"Well, we didn't come on this trip to discuss your beastly appetite," said Church.

"Dry up about it, and scoff up all the sandwiches you like. We want to examine the landscape!"

Fatty was undoubtedly interested in the wonderful scenery—but it must be truthfully said that he was far more interested in the contents of his parcel. He had unfastened it several times, in order to take just one more sandwich out—and he had wrapped it up again with the express intention of leaving it alone until the return journey com-



menced. But, somehow, that parcel was irresistible.

The swamp was now no longer beneath them—it had been left behind, and the rocky ground was commencing. Nelson Lee searched about through his binoculars, and he knew that he had come to the exact right spot.

His compass and his own sense of direction had led him true. He recognised the landmarks, and he knew that the party of six he had left behind were somewhere in the vicinity of some curiously shaped rocks.

Lee particularly remembered a tall pinnacle of rock which stretched out towards the sky like a church spire.

He could see that pinnacle now, but there was no sign whatever of Lord Dorrimore or the others. But then Nelson Lee watched more closely, for he had seen something.

Two or three figures came hurrying round some rocks, and they rushed at that jagged pinnacle as though a thousand devils were at their heels.

Nelson Lee recognised the pair as Tommy Watson and Sir Montie Tregellis-West. Handforth was with them, and then came another junior.

Of course, it was me. Nelson Lee was watching us as we made our dash to safety, out of reach of the gigantic monster which menaced us.

The gov'nor then saw Umlooi and Lord Dorrimore. And he was astonished to see that the whole six of us were running as though our very lives depended upon it—as, indeed, they did.

And it was at that moment Nelson Lee saw why we were in such a panic. For, following us closely behind, those on the airship saw the horned dinosaur.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Nelson Lee, in a startled voice.

"What is it, sir?" asked Jarvis, one of the mechanics. "It can't be anything living, surely? Why, it's as big as a house!"

Nelson Lee nodded.

"I don't pretend to know what this means, Jarvis," he said grimly. "But, by all appearances, that object is an animal which became extinct millions of years ago, a relic of the prehistoric age."

"Holy smoke!" said Jarvis blankly. He stared down, and the other

mechanics stared, too. Fatty Little, Church, and McClure were gazing over the rail as though they were in danger themselves. They wore horrified expressions, and their eyes were fixed and staring.

By this time the airship was almost immediately overhead, and it was not flying at a great height. Therefore those on board were able to see the whole scene with great distinctness.

"What is it?" gasped Church. "It's bigger than an elephant!"

"An elephant!" yelled McClure. "Why, an elephant is a mouse compared to this thing! It's—it's as big as a two storey building!"

"By chutney!" said Fatty Little breathlessly. "I've never seen anything like it before! I—I thought I'd eaten too much, or something, and was seeing things!"

But the juniors were very grave. They could see clearly enough that we were in great danger. Lord Dorrimore had just succeeded in getting out of reach of the horned dinosaur, but, at the same time, there was no telling how long safety would last.

The monstrous creature was climbing already—insistently, doggedly, and with a deliberation that made us shudder, the huge monster was steadily climbing upwards, clinging to the rocks in the most tenacious fashion.

And Lord Dorrimore could climb no higher. We were all at the top of the pinnacle, but there was not room for two or three abreast. And as Lord Dorrie was the last of us, he would naturally be the first victim to be claimed by the foul beast below.

Nelson Lee could see this, and he knew that there was not one second to waste. If anything was to be done in order to help us, that thing had to be done on the instant. The delay of one second might mean the sacrifice of Lord Dorrimore's life.

Nelson Lee was a man of action, and he acted briskly now.

"Lower, Jarvis—lower!" he rapped out sharply. "Bear a little to the left, and then stop your engines completely. But we must get lower!"

"Right, sir!" said the mechanic.

Nelson Lee's orders were carried out, and they only occupied a few seconds. Meanwhile the gov'nor was rummaging



quickly in a wooden box, which stood near the rail. And when Nelson Lee stood upright, Church and McClure and Fatty saw that he was holding two two curious looking objects in his hand.

They were round, and black, and the juniors had no difficulty in recognising them as fireworks.

"What—what are you going to do, sir?" asked Church, panting heavily.

"You will see, Church—you will see!" rapped out Nelson Lee.

He leaned over the rail, waited for just two seconds while the airship got in the correct position, and then Nelson Lee hurled one of the round objects down.

We could see what he was doing, although we had no idea of the nature of the object the gov'nor had thrown. In any case, we did not have much hope--we did not see how it was possible to deal with this terrible creature.

And then—

Boom!

A sharp echoing explosion sounded, almost at the bottom of the rock pillar. We could see it quiver as we clung to it, and a great cloud of smoke came bellying up to us.

But we knew what had happened.

Nelson Lee had thrown down a particularly aggressive kind of firework. It went off with a terrific bang to start with, and then jumped about in the most frantic fashion, casting forth huge sparks of red, blue, green, orange, and every colour of the rainbow.

These sparks were sizzling great things, and they each burst into separate explosions like the cackle of machine guns from a distance.

And this faked firework affair had dropped within two feet of the dinosaur! The effect was immediate—and somewhat surprising.

The gigantic creature stood quite still for a moment, and then let out a huge bellow of sound, whether it implied fury or fright, we did not know.

Sparks were flying wholesale, and this prehistoric monster evidently did not like the look of them. He was, in fact, thoroughly scared.

For, after that one brief period, he whirled round, and thundered away lumberously—his very footfalls causing the

rock pinnacle to quiver. He disappeared over a hillside, and did not once look round. Big as he was, the creature was frightened by what had happened, and it did not seem likely that he would return in a hurry.

We had been saved!

"Thank Heaven!" I muttered fervently.

"Begad! I thought it was all up with us, dear old boy—I did, really!" murmured Trogellis-West. "I was shockin'ly worried about poor old Dorrie—I thought he was goin' every minute!"

"No need to worry about me, my son," called Dorrie from below. "Don't you realise that I've got as many lives as a cat? Strictly speakin', I ought to have been dead years ago—but nothin' will kill me. I bear a charmed life. Ask Umlosi, and he'll tell you the same thing!"

Umlosi grunted.

"Thou art of good cheer, N'Kose," he rumbled. "And it is even as thou sayest, O my father! Thy life is indeed charmed. Thou art surely a great man!"

"You mean, I am a lucky man!" said Lord Dorrimore. "I can tell you straight, old man, I thought my left leg was going to be chewed off that time—just a toothful for his majesty, so to speak!"

"Well, get down, you chaps," said Handforth. "I don't see the fun of staying up here—"

"You stick there, Handforth," called out Lord Dorrimore. "I'm not moving yet—not likely! That little mouse might return—an' I'm not takin' any chances."

We did not feel inclined to say much. Our thankfulness was so great that we could only cling to those rocks, and watch the airship.

I was full of admiration for Nelson Lee's ruse to frighten off the dinosaur—assuming that the gigantic animal was one of those creatures.

That firework trick had been amazingly effective, and it was not likely that the monster would return.

However, it was just as well to be on the safe side, and we were determined not to move from our lofty perch until the airship actually came to earth.

One brush with the triteratop was quite sufficient for us!



## CHAPTER IV.

## CAPTURED BY THE WHITE GIANTS.

**T**HE airship touched the ground gently.

And it was then, and not until then, that we made a move. One after another we climbed down from that rocky pinnacle, and then hurried over the rough ground towards the spot where the airship had landed.

By the time we arrived the vessel had been made temporarily secure and Church and McClure were on solid earth.

They came rushing forward.

"Good old Handy!" roared Church. "Thank goodness we came in time to save you!"

"No need to make a fuss about it!" said Handforth, pretending to be indifferent. "And who the dickens allowed you chaps to come along? I didn't think we should be bothered with you again until I got back to the yacht!"

"Oh, cheese it, Handy!" protested McClure. "We—we were anxious about you, and so we asked Mr. Lee if we could come——"

"Like your cheek," said Handforth. "Well, what do you think of that little squirrel that was on our track just now?"

"I thought I was dotty when I first saw it!" said Church. "Good gracious! It was about six times as big as an elephant!"

"Yes; and if it had had the chance it would have eaten us all up!" said Handforth grimly. "Those kind of things like human flesh, you know, and the whole six of us put together would only comprise an ordinary breakfast!"

"Breakfast!" exclaimed Fatty Little, coming up, and pricking up his ears. "Who's talking about breakfast! It's tea-time——"

"You greedy, fat ass!" interrupted Handforth, glaring. "All you think about is eating! I simply can't understand Mr. Lee bringing you! How can anybody expect the airship to fly if you're on board?"

"Oh, I expect he's ballast!" grinned Church. "If we get into difficulties, he'll simply be thrown overboard!"

"That's the best thing to do with him!" declared Handforth.

Meanwhile, Lord Dorrimore and I were already in the car, and we were excitedly talking to Nelson Lee and to the mechanics. We lost no time in re-

lating Umlosi's great fight with the giant. And we reminded Nelson Lee that it was quite possible that a number of huge men would shortly be on the spot.

Nelson Lee nodded.

"I can accept these giants," he said. "They are, after all, men—men of big stature, but there is nothing otherwise abnormal about them. With regard to the monstrous animal, however, I am totally amazed. It was, without doubt, a species of the horned dinosaur, and for such a creature to be alive to-day is staggering. Every scientist in the world is unanimous in the opinion that this creature vanished off the face of the earth thousands and millions of years ago."

Lord Dorrimore nodded his head.

"That's what I've always understood," he said. "But we live an' learn, you know. I can't explain, an' I don't intend to. All I know is that the blighter chased us, an' that we were nearly colared."

"There can be only one explanation," said Nelson Lee. "This big tract of country, cut off completely from the rest of the world by this swamp, has apparently remained in its natural condition. Even the prehistoric animals have survived."

"It seems a good country to keep away from, sir," said Jarvis.

"Eh?" exclaimed Dorrie. "By the Lord Harry! It's the very one spot on the face of the earth where I want to be! With animals of this breed knocking about, an' with giants nine feet high all over the shop, it's a glorious place for adventures."

"Thy words, N.Kose, are even my thoughts," said Umlosi. "This wondrous land is full of perils, and full of amazements—but thou and I are warriors, my father, it is in our blood to laugh at dangers!"

His lordship nodded.

"That's the whole thing in a nutshell, old man," he agreed. "We've explored the Congo Forest, we've exhausted the wild places of Papua, we've been everywhere, in fact. Africa is stale to us, an' we've seen everythin' there is to be seen. But here is different—here we've got somethin' new, somethin' startlin'."

"There's no doubt about that, Dorrie," said Nelson Lee. "At the same time, if you fondly imagine that you are to be left in this country with Umlosi—well,



you are mistaken. I'm not quite anxious to regard you as a memory just yet. You will return to the yacht with the rest of us."

Dorrie sighed.

"I've received my orders, so I suppose I'd better submit," he said. "But wild elephants won't keep me away for long. I want to explore this place—I want to see things closely. If I don't, I shall pine away an' die!"

"We can discuss all these matters later on," said Lee. "The main thing, at the moment, is to get in the air. We do not want to be caught by surprise. You must remember that I am responsible for these boys, and I must think of their safety before anything. The sooner we get back to the yacht the better."

"Yes, I suppose you're right," said Dorrie. "But what about the colonel?"

"My dear man, we cannot discover anything more at present," said Lee. "I am almost certain in my own mind that Colonel Kerrigan is in that wonderful city, down in the valley. But we cannot go there now—we must be patient. After we have returned to the yacht we will discuss the whole subject, and we will make definite plans."

"Good!" exclaimed his lordship heartily. "That's the kind of talk I like, old man! When you get busy with that kind of palaver, I know thundering well things are going to hum!"

But, as the gov'nor had said, the main point was to get back to the yacht at once. Nothing could be done here at present—nothing serviceable, at all events.

Very careful plans had to be made before the city of the white giants could be entered. It would be madness itself to venture upon such an enterprise without having made careful and calculated plans.

"Come along boys!" called Nelson Lee briskly. "All get on board!"

"Right, sir!" shouted Handforth. "Come on, you chaps!"

"We shall just be on the Majarrah in nice time," said Fatty Little. "We'll have a terrific feed ready for us—"

"You—you glutton!" roared Handforth. "All you think about is feeds."

"He can't help it; he's got a kink that way," grinned Church. "I believe he was born hungry. Hallo! What on earth— Great Scott!"

"What's the matter?" asked McClure.

"Look! Look up there!" gasped Church. "What—what are all those figures?"

"The giants!" roared Handforth excitedly.

We all stared round as we heard his words, and we were rather startled by the sight which met our gaze. From almost every rock in the near vicinity human figures had appeared—great human figures, in white robes with gold bands. We were surrounded by the gigantic inhabitants of this remarkable country!

"By gad!" said Lord Dorrimore calmly. "The cunning beggars!"

"There is not a second to lose!" exclaimed Nelson Lee sharply. "Come on, boys! Get on board! We shall just be able to get into the air in time."

There was a rush for the car, and the juniors scrambled on board in next to no time. Everything was ready for the start, so Nelson Lee was confident of getting out of range of the giants before any real harm could be done.

The huge men were some little distance off, almost surrounding the airship in a wide circle. But directly it was seen that everybody was getting into the car, the giants made a rush forward. They came from all directions, and ran across the rough ground at a remarkable speed.

However, I could see that we should be able to make our escape quite comfortably. The engines commenced roaring at once, and within a minute we should be up in the air. Everybody was already on board.

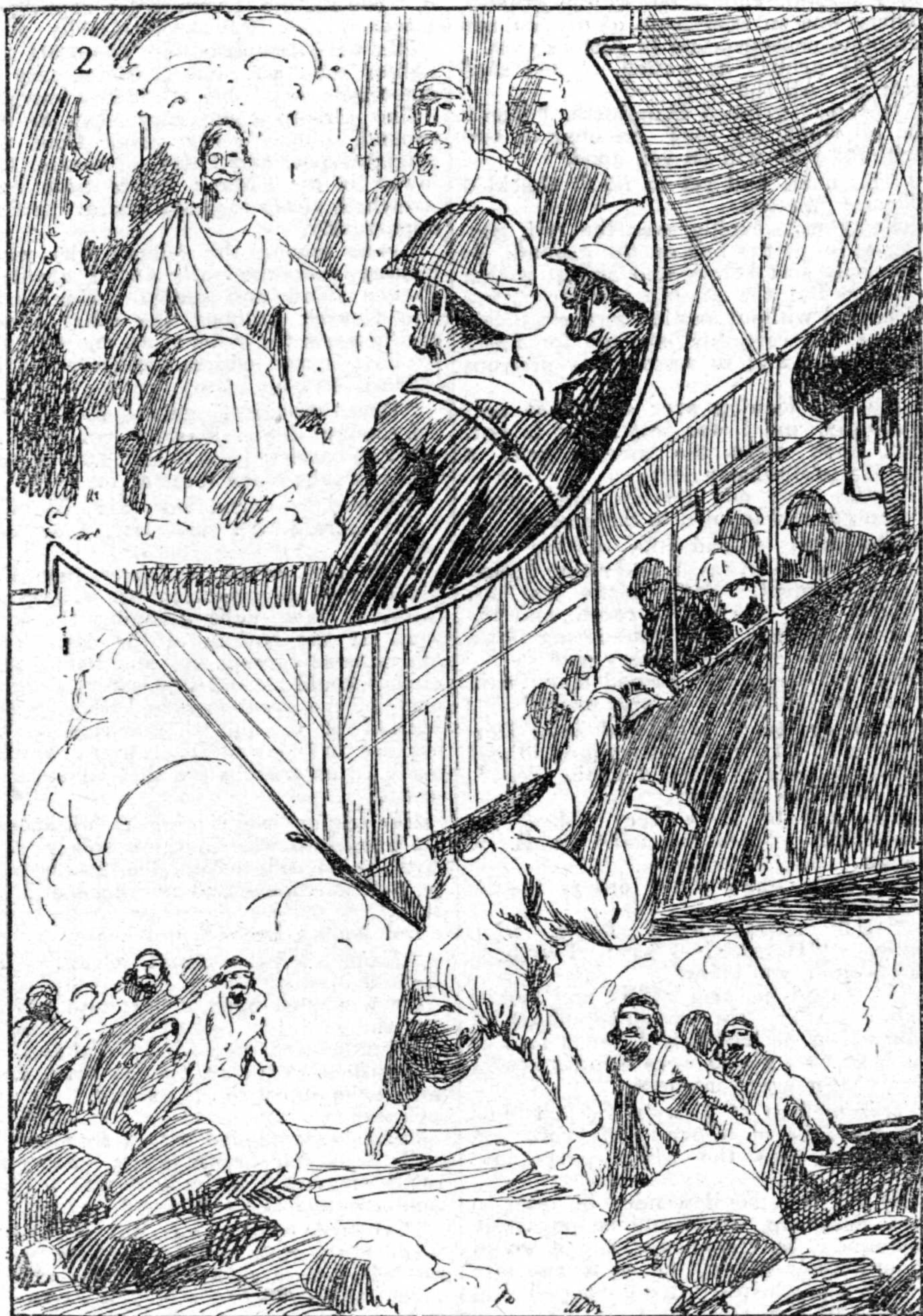
"Buck up, Fatty! We don't want to leave you behind," said Handforth briskly. "Never mind about that silly parcel!"

Fatty Little was in the act of scrambling over the rail; he was, in fact, already aboard. His movements were somewhat encumbered by the fact that he hugged the bag containing his sandwiches, cakes, etc. He had eaten a good many of them, but a considerable portion remained.

"You—you fathead!" gasped Fatty. "Do you think I'm going to leave my grub behind? Great cocoanuts! Look—look what you've done!"

Somebody had jostled Fatty at the last moment, and, to the fat junior's horror, the bag of food was knocked out





1. Fatty gave one terrific howl, overbalanced and toppled to the ground.
2. It was the Comte de Plessigny.



of his hand, and it fell to the ground. There was an expression of dismay and absolute consternation in Little's eyes.

"My grub!" he wailed. "I—I shall starve! All the stuff——"

"Rats!" grinned Handforth. "You'll be all right, my son! An hour or two without grub will do you good."

"So near, and yet so far!" chuckled Tommy Watson.

Fatty was leaning over the rail, gazing sadly at the bag on the ground. It was only just below, and almost within reach. But the airship was preparing to ascend without another second's delay. There was certainly no time for Fatty to get out and to recover his precious parcel.

He was leaning over somewhat precariously, and I was just about to pull him back when the airship gave a sudden preliminary jerk.

Fatty gave one terrific howl, overbalanced, and toppled to the ground.

The next second the airship was twenty feet from earth, and rising higher every moment. Fatty Little was left behind. He was out of reach, and the horde of giants came thundering down towards the spot from every side.

"Stop, sir—stop!" gasped Handforth, in alarm. "Fatty's toppled over!"

"By Jupiter!" exclaimed Lord Dorrimore. "Of all the silly young idiots! We shall have to descend again, Lee!"

Nelson Lee frowned.

"It will be risky—very risky!" he exclaimed. "But we must do it, of course."

He gave some rapid orders to the mechanics.

"Hi!" roared Fatty Little, from below. "Help! I—I say! I've been left behind, you know."

He waved his arm wildly and looked rather scared. He was quite unhurt, of course, for he had only fallen a foot or two; but the giants were coming nearer and nearer every moment.

This mishap of Fatty's, in fact, just for the sake of a parcel of grub, was likely to lead the whole party into disaster.

By the time we descended in order to pick Fatty up, we should be positively surrounded by the enemy, and it would be extremely difficult for us to rise into the air again without being compelled to engage in a terrible fight.

However, the situation had arisen, and we had no choice but to cope with

it. The airship descended as rapidly as possible, but it was necessarily slow under the circumstances. The craft was lighter than air, and it is not easy to manœuvre such a big affair in a hurry.

The airship came very near to the ground, some twenty yards from the original spot, and Fatty, of course, followed it up. Many hands were outstretched, ready to grasp him at the first opportunity.

I was among the fellows who were leaning over the rail, and I grabbed Fatty's hand and pulled. Handforth and Church grabbed the other hand, and between the three of us, and assisted by Fatty's own efforts, we succeeded in holding him up.

"Great bloaters!" gasped Fatty. "I—I thought I was done for, you know."

"You careless idiot!" said Handforth. "This might mean disaster for——"

"Begad," ejaculated Sir Montie. "I'm afraid it's too late, dear old boys."

I glanced round, and saw that the giants were approaching us. Three of them, in fact, were grasping the network at the bottom of the car. The others were coming up, and before the airship could ascend into safety fully a score of the great men had seized some portion of it, and they succeeded in holding her down. That extra weight made it impossible for the Adventurer to lift.

Her engines were going at full speed, the propellers whirling enormously; but it made no difference. The giants had us, and it seemed that nothing could be done.

But Nelson Lee was not beaten.

"Mind, boys! Stand clear!" he shouted briskly.

He wrenched open a box, and seized something which looked like a bomb. The juniors scattered wildly, and Nelson Lee rushed to the rail, leant over, and hurled the object to the ground.

Crash!

The thing exploded with a roar which fairly took our breath away. For one awful moment I thought it was a real bomb; later I knew different.

That little object was, in reality, a harmless firework. It was nothing more nor less than a smoke bomb, an object which, when crashed into sharp contact with the ground, exploded and released an enormous cloud of smoke.

The effect was immediate.



Several of the giants released their hold, and their voices came up to us in spite of the noise of the motors. They were thoroughly scared, and they backed away from the airship precipitately.

But Nelson Lee was leaving nothing to chance. He threw bomb after bomb, and presently the smoke was rising in dense clouds.

"Let's all take a hand!" yelled Handforth excitedly. "By George, we'll show 'em what's what!"

There was another box near Handforth, and he tore open the lid and seized a round object which closely resembled those which Nelson Lee was throwing. The gov'nor turned quickly as he saw Handforth's movement, and he gave a shout of alarm.

"Put that down, Handforth!" he exclaimed hoarsely.

"I'm only joining in, sir," said Handforth. "We might as well——"

"Boy, do as I tell you!" said Nelson Lee. "That is not a harmless smoke-bomb, as these are."

"My hat!"

"If you drop that object it will burst, and a dense cloud of gas will be released," said Nelson Lee sharply. "The gas is harmless, I will admit; but it will make us all insensible within twenty seconds!"

"Oh, my goodness!" shouted Handforth faintly.

He stared at the round thing in his hand and rushed forward to put it back in its box, but then came the disaster.

Handforth was clumsy—he was renowned for his clumsiness—and his foot caught in a wide crevice of the floor. The next second Handforth went down heavily, and the bomb flew into the air.

"Good heavens!"

Nelson Lee made a valiant attempt to catch that bomb, but he just failed, and the thing struck the floor of the car at the far end.

Boom!

It exploded, and a dense cloud of pure white vapour rolled out, spreading rapidly and coming towards us like something solid.

"Throw yourselves down, boys—down!" roared Nelson Lee.

We did so, but it was useless. That cloud of vapour enveloped us in less than five seconds, and we were in a dense fog.

I can't exactly remember what hap-

pened after that. My senses reeled, and there seemed to be something clutching at my throat.

I became dizzy, and Handforth, who was just in front of me, trebled himself in a most extraordinary manner. I saw three of him, and they were all hazy and indistinct.

Then I felt myself slipping to the deck, and after that came absolute and complete oblivion.

## CHAPTER V.

### AN ASTOUNDING SURPRISE.

NELSON LEE opened his eyes, with a sense of great comfort.

He felt that he had awakened from a long and delicious sleep. He was drowsy and lazy, and for some moments he did not trouble to think where he was, or what he was doing. Somehow he had a dim kind of idea that he was lounging back in a deck-chair on the promenade deck of The Wanderer.

Then voices came to his ears—strange, musical voices, but very powerful, and the language they uttered was totally unfamiliar to the great detective.

He shook off his languor, and opened his eyes wide.

And then he knew the truth.

On every side of him stood towering, gigantic figures, clothed in white robes, with gold clasps, and Nelson Lee knew that he was a prisoner in the hands of the white giants. Round about, on every side, were other prisoners.

The whole party, to tell the blunt truth, had been captured.

Nelson Lee knew the circumstances at once. Memory came back to him vividly. He saw the airship only a hundred yards away, carefully anchored to the ground, in a perfectly unharmed condition, and whole. Round about it were many of the giants, examining the craft with interest.

Nelson Lee set his teeth, and his eyes were grave.

"What a terrible pity!" he told himself. "What an appalling catastrophe!"

The schoolmaster detective knew that only about twenty minutes had elapsed since the bursting of that fatal bomb. He was the first to awaken—probably because he had the presence of mind to cover his mouth and nostrils by his

handkerchief at the moment of falling. It made no difference, however. He had become unconscious, and during that time the airship had been seized, and everybody on board had been captured.

And it had all come about because of Handforth's eagerness to help. Nelson Lee could not really blame the unfortunate junior. He had only acted for the best, as he thought. He had never supposed for a moment that he would bring disaster upon the party by seizing one of those bombs.

Unfortunately, Handforth had grasped a bomb of the wrong variety. It was quite harmless so far as after-effects went, but it had brought a catastrophe to the whole party.

The vapour contained in that bomb was in no way dangerous. Its only effect was to send anybody within the radius of the charge into a peaceful sleep.

This sleep was only brief, and there were no unpleasant after effects, as one would feel after being chloroformed.

Those bombs had been designed to throw at a possible enemy in case of emergencies. Both Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore had made up their minds to do no killing if a fight could be won without this drastic measure.

So they had prepared themselves with various methods of defeating an enemy, without causing any deadly effects.

By a strange mischance, Lord Dorrimore's party had succumbed to the vapour instead of the enemy.

Nelson Lee had purposely not used those bombs because the airship was so near the ground, and Lee had been afraid that the fumes would arise into the car. But the bomb had exploded in the car itself, and it had been utterly impossible for any one member of the party to retain consciousness.

The result was immeasurably serious. Once in the hands of these giants, it was extremely difficult to estimate when an escape could be made. In fact, Lee was gravely concerned, and he had an idea that there would be no escape at all.

However, the famous detective was not the kind of man to give up hope. He was not the type of man to despair. This mishap had occurred, and the only thing was to make the best of it. If ingenuity and determination could find a method of escape, then the party would gain freedom.

For Nelson Lee was fully determined

that these present circumstances would not continue for long.

As it happened, I was the next member of the party to recover my wits, and I awoke to the realisation that we were in a very bad fix.

Within five minutes my brain was clear, and I was quite myself again. The vapour left no unaccountable headache, no sickness, and no numbing of the senses.

"I see that you are awake, Nipper," came a voice from my left. "Well, my boy, we appear to be in something of a predicament."

I glanced round, and saw Nelson Lee looking at me.

"My goodness!" I exclaimed. "This—this is awful, sir! What the dickens shall we do?"

"I am afraid we can do nothing at the moment, Nipper," replied Lee. "We must submit to the inevitable, and we must allow these giants to do as they will. I am hoping, however, that they will not prove to be hostile. If we can only get on friendly terms with them, we shall be safe—and then it will be more to our advantage that this incident took place."

"But will they understand, gov'nor?" I asked anxiously. "Oh, what a silly idiot Handforth was! He's let us into this cart—and he ought to be jolly well slaughtered!"

"It is too late to talk about that sort of thing, Nipper," said Nelson Lee. "Handforth was not really to blame—except that in the fact that he was extremely careless. In any case, it is quite useless to scold him now, the damage has been done, we must make the best of it."

"That's all we can do, sir," I said simply.

I looked round me with interest, and I could not help being impressed by all I saw. The very size of those men staggered me. It was the first time we had seen them at close quarters—within a foot or two, and I felt like a mere pigmy as I lay on the ground, with my back against a chunk of rock.

Two of the giants near by simply towered towards the sky, and their limbs were appallingly thick and cumbersome—at least, so they seemed to me; but this was really only because of their size.

The giants, in truth, were pretty well formed, and they had superb figures.



Their skin was not exactly white, but rather sallow, and was perfectly clear. The muscles stood out on their arms in knotted masses, and their strength was evidently enormous.

Presently one of the great men—a fellow who wore much more gold than the others—shouted out something in a high voice, and he spoke continuously. His language was new to me, and I could not understand a word.

But it was evident that he was giving some orders, for, without loss of time, the other giants seized me, and we were lifted from the ground like babies. I felt myself in the arms of one huge fellow, and he carried me just as I would have carried a puppy. My weight seemed to be a mere trifle to him, and he held me in his arms, apparently without effort.

He saw that I was awake, of course, and he looked into my face with a simple curiosity which in no way alarmed me. That man was not ferocious, he was not hostile—he was simply interested.

"It's all right, old chap," I said. "You've got the upper hand, and we've got to sing small. Only I do hope that you won't shove us in the cook-pot!"

The giant looked at me intently, and with interest. His eyes expressed great intelligence, but it was quite impossible for him to understand what I had said. He could see, however, that I was not frightened, and this seemed to please him.

He nodded and smiled—quite a nice smile.

And then he commenced walking, and the others walked, too. We went up the long slope towards the top of the ridge in a great column, many of the giants carrying different members of the party.

Umlosi, being exceptionally big, was rather too much for one individual, and he was therefore carried by two of the giants. As yet, Umlosi was unconscious, but I judged that there would be some little trouble when he came to himself.

And so we went on, leaving the airship to look after itself—or, rather, to be guarded by six giants. For, on looking back, I saw that a small party had been left; these were walking round the captured airship with the obvious intention of remaining there on guard.

It would be idle to say that I was not alarmed with the whole situation. We had been confident of getting away—

of escaping into the air. And now this trouble had come; we were in the hands of the white giants, and there would be no telling when we could escape. I could picture the consternation, the alarm, the terrible worry of all those who were on board the yacht, waiting for our return.

They would wait in vain, and they would conclude the worst.

But, in spite of our grave predicament, I could not help being greatly interested. I put all thoughts of worry out of my head—for no good ever comes of worrying—and I gave myself up to the enjoyment of the journey.

For, to be quite truthful, this trip was indeed enjoyable. I was being carried, and my position was most comfortable. It was extremely gratifying to find that our captors were quite gentle, and it was clearly their intention to do us no harm.

Not one of us had been hurt in the slightest degree, and before we had been travelling for fifteen minutes, practically everybody was fully awake, and alive to the true position.

The giants were apparently well pleased to find that we were none the worse for our experience. I judged this to be so because many of them talked as they walked along, and, from their tone and from their expressions, I could see that they were discussing us, and they were gratified by the fact that consciousness had returned so soon.

And I could not help marvelling at the speed we progressed at. The giants were walking, but it is no exaggeration to say that they covered the ground something like eight miles per hour.

We simply raced along, so it seemed to me—although our captors were only walking easily and freely. My own particular friend—he who had me in his arms—did not get tired. He carried me mile after mile, and my weight did not inconvenience him at all.

The other members of our party were talking, of course, for we were all within earshot.

"What do you think of it?" asked Tommy Watson, when he happened to catch sight of me through the ranks of the enemy. "I say, Nipper, this is a pretty kettle of fish!"

"Dear old boy, you're quite right!" exclaimed Sir Montie's voice. "I'm frightfully concerned—I am, really! My aunt will be in a terrific stew!"

"What about my sister?" said Tommy Watson. "She'll nearly die of worry!"

"And it was all Handforth's fault," said McClure, who was further behind. "The silly ass ought to be boiled in oil!"

"How the dickens could I help it?" roared Handforth from further along. "I didn't know that silly bomb had any gas in it—at least, I didn't know it until Mr. Lee told me—and then it was too late!"

"Well, it's no good making a fuss now," I shouted. "We've got to make the best of this trouble—and there's no sense in having an argument. If it comes to the rock-bottom truth, the whole trouble was started by Fatty!"

"Great doughnuts!" came Fatty Little's voice from the left. "How did I start the trouble?"

"By dropping your sandwiches overboard!" I replied promptly.

"And by dropping yourself overboard after them!" said Watson.

"It wasn't my fault!" protested Fatty. "The airship gave a jerk just then, and I was chucked over. Handy ought to have had more sense than to drop that bomb——"

We lost the rest of his words, for several of the giants commenced talking, and their deep, musical voices drowned Fatty's. I was greatly interested, and I listened keenly, but it was quite impossible to judge what was being said.

Mile after mile we progressed, until we were well down the slope and into that wonderful valley which we had already seen.

The whole aspect of the country had changed; it was no longer rocky, and the swamp was miles behind, and we were walking through a kind of paradise. I completely forgot our troubles in the beauty of the whole scene.

On every hand there were long vistas of green—beautiful, smooth grass land, clumps of palm dotted here and there, and, further in the distance, glorious woods and trickling streams here and there. One or two waterfalls caught my eye, and there were wonderful flowers growing wild.

And as we progressed, so the scene became better and better. Presently I noticed that we were traversing a splendid highway—a well-made road, as smooth as a billiard-table—and then I noticed that there were cultivated fields

on every side. They were mapped to perfection, and everything was growing in glorious profusion.

Vegetables, corn, different kinds of fruit—all these were to be seen.

And upon this cultivated ground many of the giants were working. They wore shorter robes than the men who had captured us, and the gold ornaments were less.

I came to the conclusion that our captors were the warriors of the race, while those in the field were the workers—or the lower classes. These latter individuals ceased their work, and turned to watch us with great interest, and everything struck me as being extremely peaceful and contented. There was no hostility shown towards us by anybody. We were simply captives; but our guards seemed to be more curious than anything else.

I think every member of the party forgot to be alarmed long before we had arrived at the wonderful city. There was so much of interest to see on the way that we were apt to overlook the fact that there was a possibility of us never seeing our own civilisation again.

The cultivated fields grew more numerous as we approached the city itself. The whole countryside, on every hand, was like one tremendous garden—a flower garden and a fruit garden and a vegetable garden, all combined.

Bananas, oranges, pineapples, and fruit of wonderful kinds were to be seen everywhere. And the graceful palms dominated every other tree. There was no swamp here—no wilderness—no wild and tangled forest. Everything was like one would picture in a paradise—it was indeed a valley of beauty.

And then we became interested in the city, for this was looming nearer and nearer as we progressed. Already we could see the high wall which surrounded the big town.

From the air this wall had not seemed anything particularly impressive, but we now realised, in approaching the city along the ground, that the wall was tremendously high and massive.

For we could see none of the great buildings of the great town. The whole vista itself was completely filled by the wall. It towered up in the most amazing fashion.

And the nearer we got the more imposing that wall became. When we were still fully half a mile away we



could see it raising its parapet up towards the sky, like some ancient battlement.

And when at last we were practically within a stone's throw, we realised to the fullest extent what a wonderful piece of architecture the wall was.

I judged that it had been built as a safeguard—probably to keep out enemies. And then I thought of that terrible dinosaur which we had encountered on the other side of the ridge.

It struck me that these giants had built the wall, perhaps in the dim ages of the past, as a means of protection from these great prehistoric monsters. It needed a wall of that height to provide a complete barrier.

Towering hundreds of feet above us, that tremendous wall seemed like some great mountain—a huge cliff. It did not seem possible that it could have been erected by human hands; but this actually was the case, for it was built of massive stone blocks, and the whole surface was engraved and embossed with figures of fantastic design, which had been executed in a manner which I could only describe as being marvellous.

The skill of those ancient builders must have been stupendous—and almost unbelievable to western eyes—to modern eyes.

For all our civilisation, the forefathers of this strange race of giants had constructed something which equalled—which completely overshadowed—any architectural masterpiece of the Romans and the Egyptians.

We were all rather awed by this tremendous wall, and we had very little to say. And then we passed through the gateway—the gateway which led into the city.

From afar it had appeared to be a mere hole at the bottom of the great wall—a low aperture through which a man would be compelled to crawl on his hands and knees.

But, now that we were close, we saw how greatly we had been mistaken, for this gateway was at least forty feet in height, and proportionately broad—capable of accommodating an army, almost.

And it seemed that we were walking through a tunnel—we went almost into the darkness, and by this we knew that the wall itself was hundreds of yards in

thickness. It must have occupied fifty or a hundred years in its manufacture.

Fresh wonders met our gaze after we had passed through, for we found ourselves now in a totally different atmosphere. The open country had been left behind, and we were in the midst of the city. It was a city of wonders.

In the midst of our army of captors, we were carried down a broad, beautiful street. On each side grew graceful palms, and the road itself was so perfectly smooth and clean that the highest wind would not have raised a speck of dust.

Tall houses were on both sides of us—houses built of a curious worked stone which looked like marble, and which was in a wonderful state of preservation. All the facings were carved and figured in the most elaborate manner.

And there was something else which occasioned us great surprise. Upon the houses, in various places, there were metal plates—crests and scrolls, all of beaten metal—a yellow metal which looked exactly like gold.

We were convinced, in fact, that the metal actually was gold—and we must have passed millions of pounds worth of that valuable metal before we arrived in the centre of the city.

The giants stared at us curiously and interestedly as we passed on our way. There was no hostile reception—no demonstration. We were simply regarded with great curiosity.

And we could not help noticing the girls and women of the race. These were present in large numbers, and they were intensely eager to catch sight of us.

The members of the gentler sex were smaller than the male population—although they were giantesses. Not one was an inch less than six feet, and the majority were between six and a half and seven feet. They were clothed in a more elaborate fashion than the men, and they wore far more gold ornaments.

And we could not help being struck by the fact that the women, particularly the younger ones, were certainly handsome. They were, indeed, beautiful and surprisingly graceful, in spite of their size.

Now and again we passed a different kind of building—a huge temple, it seemed, with domes and minarets, and architecture which fairly staggered us in its beauty.

Of windows there were none. Now and then a covering of some light material could be seen; but there was no glass, and no other sort of protection. The weather in this valley was probably always of a genial character.

At last we arrived in the centre of the city, and here, surrounded by beautiful gardens and shimmering pools of water, stood the most magnificent building of all.

We guessed it to be the king's palace.

Somehow or other I could not help feeling that this was all a dream—that we were in a kind of fairy-land—a scene from some wild, imaginative story-book. The whole place was too magnificent, too beautiful to really exist.

We were halted outside this palace, and we were placed on the ground. After our long ride, we were rather pleased to stretch our feet; but we were not allowed to walk any distance, for we were surrounded by the giants; we stood together in a group.

"Well, old man, I'm hanged if I know what to make of it!" exclaimed Lord Dorrimore. "Somehow, I'm not at all sorry that we were captured—it's worth anything to see this sight!"

Nelson Lee smiled.

"If we get away, I entirely agree with you, Dorrie," he said. "This experience is indeed a wonderful one. The beauty of the hidden city is almost unbelievable!"

"Thou art surely right, O Umtagati," rumbled Umlosi, his voice filled with wonder and admiration. "This is indeed a city of vast and wondrous enchantment. And this strange race of men—who, indeed, are men—appear to be of a peaceful character. But there will be bloodshed yet, I fear. I have seen the red mists, and I know."

"Well, there's no need to talk about red mists and bloodshed now," said Lord Dorrimore. "Wait until the scrap starts. Hallo! It looks as though we're going to be shifted on!"

"Ain't it wonderful, you chaps?" asked Handforth. "By George! It's worth quids to see this—it's worth being captured—it's worth any old thing!"

"Dear old boy, I'm inclined to think you are right—I am, really!" said Sir Montie Tregellis-West.

We were moved on again, but this time we walked, and we were taken into a magnificent entrance lobby—the foyer,

so to speak, of the palace. Beautiful white marble whirls, and wonderful pillars surrounded us.

And then we were taken through a great lofty passage, until, finally, we reached the central chamber—the royal chamber of the palace.

Here there were many hundreds of the giants, and right in the centre of that tremendous apartment, stood a raised dais, a kind of throne.

The throne itself was a gorgeous piece of work—a carved masterpiece of stone, smothered with glorious gold ornamentation. The gold on that throne alone must have weighed many hundred-weights—probably over a ton.

And there, seated in the huge chair, was the figure—and we were surprised to see that the figure was small—our own size—not a giant like the others.

He was attired in long, fine robes and gold ornaments, it is true. But he was very different.

And then he lifted his face, and looked at us. It was a face which took all of us by surprise—a face with a short beard, and pointed moustache.

I stared, stood stock still as though frozen, and then I caught my breath in with a tremendous gulp.

"Guv'nor!" I gasped. "Am I mad, or can I see him really? Look! Look—that man is——"

"The Comte de Plessigny!" said Nelson Lee quietly.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE KING TELLS HIS STORY.

THE Comte de Plessigny!

I stood there, thunderstruck. I was staggered—I was held to the ground, unable to think clearly. My mind, for those few moments, was in a state of chaos, and my brain seemed incapable of performing its functions.

The Comte de Plessigny!

It was too absurd—too preposterous—too utterly impossible.

I remembered the count very well. We had had many dealings with him at St. Frank's, during the summer term, before the holidays. The Comte de Plessigny had proved himself to be a very clever rogue, and we had never expected to see him again.

The count had lived in Bannington, several miles from St. Frank's. And



he had been mixed up in a curious affair concerning Handforth's brother-in-law, Mr. Heath, who had been the temporary master of the Remove.

The Comte de Plessigny, for some curious design of his own, had attempted to get Mr. Heath into his power by means of a stolen diamond.

He had succeeded to a certain degree, and he had compelled Mr. Heath to act as a spy—a spy upon Lord Dorrimore. The Comte de Plessigny, it seemed, had wanted to secure information concerning Lord Dorrimore's plans for the summer holidays. And when the count's own scheme had come to a head, he had failed—and the count himself had disappeared. That was the last we had seen of him—till now!

Here—here in this wonderful city of giants, hundreds and hundreds of miles from civilisation, we had found him again.

The Comte de Plessigny—sitting here on the throne, of this gigantic race of human beings?

It was altogether too preposterously wild to be true. But yet there he was—himself—smiling at us in his own cynical way. And it was quite clear that he recognised us.

"My friends, allow me to welcome you to this most wonderful city!" exclaimed the Comte de Plessigny. "You may be sure that I am overjoyed to see you—my fellow countrymen. It is a pleasure I would not have missed for any consideration. You are welcome to El Dorado!"

"Well, I'm hanged!" exclaimed Lord Dorrimore calmly.

"Great pip!" roared Handforth, his excitement finding a bursting point.

"It's—it's the count!"

"Begad!"

"Oh, my only hat!"

"The count himself!" panted Fatty Little. "Oh, great toasted scones!"

"It's amazing, guv'nor! I—I can't believe it!" I exclaimed breathlessly. "The count himself—here! How—how did he—"

"It is my intention to enlighten you on these little points, my dear Nipper," interrupted the Comte de Plessigny. "In England—at Bannington—I was an ordinary, citizen. Here—I am lord of all I survey. I am the king! I am he who rules supreme! My subjects are in-

numerable, and my slightest order is obeyed without question."

"Great Scott!"

"By the Lord Harry!" said Lord Dorrimore. "This beats everything!"

"You have surprised us considerably, De Plessigny," said Nelson Lee smoothly. "You are certainly the last man in the world I should have expected to find here. Am I right in assuming that you were the pilot of the red aeroplane?"

The Comte de Plessigny smiled.

"Your detective powers, my dear Mr. Lee, are of the most remarkable quality," he exclaimed mockingly. "Yes, I am the culprit."

"You rotter!" shouted Handforth. "You tried to kill us all!"

"Dear, dear!" exclaimed the count. "I sincerely trust that no one else has that dreadful impression? You are quite wrong, I can assure you, my boy. My sole intention was to disable you—so that you would be compelled to come down within my domain. You are probably aware, however, that your own shooting nearly cost this race of giants their valuable ruler—meaning, of course, myself!"

"You asked for trouble—and you got it!" said Dorrie faintly. "But what the deuce does it mean? How in the name of all that's uncanny did you get here?"

"It is my intention to explain these little points, as I have already said," replied De Plessigny calmly. "But you must consider yourselves my prisoners, and it is my intention to deal with you somewhat drastically. However, I will deal with that later. For the moment I will content myself with explaining."

"We are highly gratified," said Nelson Lee.

The comte waved his hands, made several peculiar signs, and uttered one or two words in a strange language—which the giants evidently understood. For we were left completely alone, standing in front of the throne, and the comte lit a cigar, puffed at it for a few moments, and then smiled at us.

"I do not wish to alarm you, my dear friends," he said. "But I am seriously afraid that you will never see civilisation again. I have an inkling that you have looked your last upon the outside world. You are here, in this swamp surrounded country—and you will never leave!"

"That remains to be seen!" said Lord

Dorrimore grimly. "Get on with the explanation, and cut that other stuff!"

The count smiled.

"You will learn, in due course, that it is not expedient to address the King of El Dorado in that fashion," he explained gently. "It must not occur again, Lord Dorrimore. You are a commoner—a prisoner. I am king. Please remember that point."

"The King of El Dorado, eh?" said Lord Dorrimore smoothly. "That's deucedly interesting. Who supplied you with the information that this place was El Dorado?"

"I know the truth—and I am perfectly aware that this wonderful city is El Dorado itself," said the Comte de Plessigny. "You may be sceptical—you may not believe my words. They are true. The real El Dorado has never been discovered hitherto—but this is the city. Since none other has been discovered, and since this great place tallies in every respect with the mythical pictures of El Dorado, we can come to no other conclusion. My friends, you are sitting in the king's palace of the modern El Dorado—the real El Dorado—the only El Dorado!"

"There's a lot of El Dorado about it!" said Handforth bluntly.

"And this strange race of people—the wonderfully educated and refined giants, are known as Arzacs!" went on the Comte de Plessigny. "I have become an Arzac—I am king of the Arzacs. I am the lord and master of all I survey. My slightest wish is an order—my every desire is obeyed without question."

"And how did you get into that comfortable position, may I ask?" inquired Lord Dorrimore.

"It was really a simple matter," said the count. "To be quite honest, it as much applies to me as to you. I can talk with perfect freedom, since the subjects of mine cannot understand a word we are speaking. I have managed to pick up many of their words, and I can make myself understood. But nobody in El Dorado, so far, has mastered the English tongue."

"But how did you get here?" I asked wonderingly.

"I came, as you may guess, by aeroplane," replied De Plessigny. "You have come by airship—which is very little different. You will never see civilisation again—I shall."

"Don't you be so jolly sure," muttered Handforth. "We're not going to stick here all our lives, I can tell you!"

The Comte de Plessigny smiled.

"In the case of these young gentlemen, it is quite likely that they will see their native land once more," he said. "When I return to England, after my work here is accomplished, I shall not have many more years to live, in the natural order of things. I am already somewhat elderly—although, I can assure you, I am active. Before I die I shall make it my business to write a will. In that will I shall give out to the world the secret of the hidden city. Then, doubtless an expedition will set forth, and those among you who survive, will be rescued and taken back."

"We—we've got to stay here for years!" ejaculated Fatty Little. "Great doughnuts!"

"It is a startling idea, I know," smiled the count. "However, it must be done—you will surely realise that I dare not allow you to escape now. For my own safety's sake, I cannot allow that to happen. You will probably guess why I came—and why I was so anxious to prevent your arrival on the Amazon."

Nelson Lee nodded.

"I have no doubt that the secret of the business closely concerns Colonel Stanley Kerrigan," he said. "Am I right, count? It is my belief that the colonel is here—a prisoner—and that for some reason best known to yourself, you did not want him to be discovered—and you have no intention of allowing him to reach the outside world."

"Again I must compliment you upon your wonderful deductive powers," smiled the count. "Yes, Colonel Kerrigan is here, and he will never return. I cannot afford to let him leave this country. Neither can I afford to allow you out. It would not suit my plans at all."

"May we inquire what those plans are?" asked Lord Dorrimore.

"You may; you have my permission to ask anything you please," replied the Comte de Plessigny. "At the same time, it does not necessarily follow that I shall satisfy your curiosity. In this instance, I have no intention of doing so. I have reasons for not wishing Colonel Kerrigan to return to Europe. I have excellent reasons. It is now also imperative that you should not return. In fact, not a single member of your party."



Everybody of those on board the yacht *Wanderer* must be conveyed to this land, so that not one single trace will ever trickle back to civilisation."

"Your programme is an ambitious one!" said Nelson Lee grimly.

"Admitted," said the comte. "It is ambitious, but it will be carried out. Have no false impression on that point, my dear friend. From the very start I have been determined to win through, and I shall do so. Since you have come here you must accept the consequences."

"All this is frightfully interesting, you know," said Dorrie. "Pray go on, old man."

"It was not my wish that you should come up the Amazon, and up the *Majarrah*," continued the comte. "I did my utmost to prevent you—I made several attempts to disable the yacht—although you will admit that I did not do anything of a murderous nature. True. I tried to blow a hole in the yacht's side, but there would have been ample time for everybody on board to escape. I was humane in every instance."

"I am ready to admit that," said Nelson Lee. "Please go on, count."

The comte knocked the ash from his cigar.

"Well, since my efforts to stay your progress failed, I was compelled to resort to other plans," he said. "I knew that you were coming here, and I knew that you were carrying an airship, which enables you to fly to *El Dorado*. Therefore it was necessary for me to arrive first. I did so in a particularly clever way, I think. I have been a certified pilot of an aeroplane for many years, and I quickly purchased one of the latest machines I could lay my hands on, and I came out to South America by a fast mail boat. Arriving at the mouth of the Amazon, I chartered a steam launch, and came up this river with all speed, turning into a tributary not far from the *Majarrah* itself. And from that point I took my great hazard, and flew over the great forests, over the great swamp, until I arrived in this land."

"It was certainly a risky trip," said Nelson Lee.

"My dear sir, there was only one chance in a hundred that I should be successful," said the count. "However, I was determined—and determination wins. My aeroplane is a reliable one.

and it did not fail me. At the moment it is disabled, since the propeller is smashed to atoms. However, that can be remedied. I shall fly to my own base in your airship, and I shall secure a new propeller. I have also other matters to attend to."

"Your own base?" repeated Lord Dorrimore.

"Exactly, my friend," said the count. "I think I mentioned that I have a steam yacht on a river not far from the *Majarrah*. I shall fly there in your excellent airship, and I shall perform many things—I will not tell you of now. When I arrived over the mystery city, I took my courage in both hands, and landed. I was fairly certain that Colonel Kerrigan was here, and I had reason to keep him here. So I landed, hoping for the best."

"And the best happened?" asked Lee.

"Most decidedly," said De Plessigny. "To my utter surprise, I was hailed as a spirit from the other world. I was regarded as something more than human, since I could fly. And the *Arzacs* lost no time in making me their king—their sole and complete ruler. You will readily guess that this arrangement suits me splendidly, and I am more than delighted with it."

"Perhaps we're regarded as tin gods, too," said Lord Dorrimore.

"By no means," replied the comte. "When you arrived I very soon made my subjects understand that you were evil spirits—that you were enemies, and it was their duty to destroy you. However, since you are alive, I shall not harm you in any way. You will be gratified to learn that the religion of this race forbids any man to be killed."

"That's one good thing," said Tommy Watson in a low voice.

"Probably you are hungry and thirsty after your journey," went on the Comte de Plessigny. "Some of my subjects will conduct you to my chambers. Food will be brought, and you will rest until the morning."

The comte de Plessigny waved his hand, and uttered a few words in that strange tongue. We were again surrounded by our escort.

Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore both attempted to reopen the conversation.

They plied the comte with questions, but it was useless.

We were compelled to move with the

giants, and we were taken from that wonderful chamber of gold and marble, and we once again found ourselves in the passages.

Finally, a great door was thrown open and we were ushered through, only to find ourselves in a great, bare, stone apartment with no window. Far above us, out of all reach, was a flat roof. And in the centre was a great square through which the sunlight blazed. It was a prison of prisons—a fortress which could not possibly be conquered.

To escape was utterly impossible. And we felt almost too overcome to speak—to discuss this most amazing series of events. We were left breathless and wondering. The full gravity of the position did not strike us at the moment, for we were all so astounded by what had taken place.

But Nelson Lee was looking grave and concerned.

He, at least, knew what this meant. We were captives in El Dorado, and we were cut off completely from civilisation.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE ANXIOUS WATCHERS.

“O H, what can it mean—what can it mean?”

Violet Watson clasped her hands as she uttered the words. Her pretty young face was anxious and worried as she spoke, and her beautiful brown eyes were gazing upwards into the dark evening sky. Round her were the other girls, and near by stood Lady Helen Tregellis-West and Miss Janet Kerrigan.

The Wanderer was lying still and peaceful at her moorings on the Majarra. Her electric lights were already gleaming, and overhead the first bright stars were showing in the darkening sky. And, somehow, there was a hush all over the yacht.

On the bridge, Captain Burton and Mr. Hudson were talking in low tones, and they both held binoculars. They both gazed out over the forest in the direction of that dreadful swamp. They were waiting—waiting with far greater anxiety than they dared express. They were waiting for the return of the airship.

There had been one other experience

like this. The Adventurer had been late in returning on the first occasion, but not so late as this. Nelson Lee had set out in the afternoon, stating it as his intention to be back long before nightfall.

Already the airship was three hours overdue, and not one soul on board could understand it. The anxiety was terrible—it was appalling. And nothing could be done. It was only possible to wait—to wait and watch.

“It’s—it’s awful!” said Reginald Pitt gravely. What does it mean, you chaps? Why ain’t they back? It’s nearly dark, and there’s no sign of the airship!”

“I—I feel like doing something desperate!” exclaimed Jack, clenching his fists. “Three hours ago they ought to have been back, and now night’s coming on. Oh! my goodness! I wonder if they’ve fallen into that swamp?”

“My dear chap, it’s no good getting into that state of mind,” said the Hon. Douglas Singleton, in his calm way. “All sorts of things might have happened—but then, again, it’s quite likely that we’re alarming ourselves over nothing. The best thing to do is to wait as patiently as we can.”

“But it’s so awful,” said De Valerio huskily. “It’ll be pitch dark soon, and then what shall we do? We know jolly well that the airship can’t come over the forest in the dark. It will mean that they have lost their way—that they’re still up in the sky somewhere, and that they’re roaming about, trying to find the Majarra.”

“That’s assuming that they haven’t already met with disaster,” said Morrow of the Sixth, who was standing with the juniors. “It reminds me of the case of an airman, setting out to cross the Channel, and getting lost in the North Sea. He goes about, flying in every direction, until his petrol is exhausted—and then he comes down. It may be something like that in this case. Mr. Lee may have lost his bearings, and he can see nothing else but the forest on every side—and I suppose it looks very much alike from up there.

“And, finally, the airship will come down in some terrible swamp, where help can never reach it,” said De Valerio miserably. “Oh, it’s awful! Perhaps we shall never see them again!”

“Poor old Fatty!” muttered Gray. “Poor old Nipper—I—I don’t know what to say!” Everybody was seeming



queer, and, later on, the night came down, dark and still, the anxiety was trebled.

Captain Burton himself was in a terrible way. He didn't know what to do. He hardly knew what he was thinking about, or what his actions were.

But, a little later on, he gave many brisk orders. He still had a faint idea that the airship might be aloft, doing her utmost to find the Majarrah.

And there was one way of giving a signal—of making the return of the Adventurers absolutely certain.

If the airship was in the sky, attempting to find her destination, there was one method of attracting attention.

Gigantic flares were illuminated. They were placed upon rafts in the river, and they were set on fire. The terrific glare lit up the darkness of the river, in an eerie, lurid fashion. The yacht was outlined in the yellow blaze, and the pale, anxious faces of those on deck were clearly visible. Even when midnight came not a soul thought of sleep. Sleep was absolutely impossible.

In addition to the flares, rockets were sent up at intervals of half-an-hour. Showers of rockets, sending forth stars of every colour. They must have been visible for many miles distant—supposing the airship was in the sky. Those rockets, combined with the flares, could not possibly fail to attract attention.

But the night dragged on, and the airship did not come.

Hour after hour slipped past, and still there was no sign. The night remained still and calm, and although those on board were listening intently, they heard no sound of the airship's throbbing motors—they heard nothing—they saw nothing. Their vigil was fruitless.

Some of the juniors fell off to sleep at last—from sheer exhaustion. They were tired out, anxious, and weary. It was impossible for them to keep their eyelids open. So sleep came to them—just where they were—on deck.

Miss Violet, and the other girls did not go below. They could not have rested. And so they lay back in deck chairs, snatching a little sleep now and again. It was a period of such anxiety as none on board had ever before experienced.

And then came the dawn.

It was a glorious dawn—which, under

ordinary circumstances, would have delighted the adventurers exceedingly. The sun rose in full majesty from behind the forest, and the river was full of bird life, and was a place of glory.

But those on board *The Wanderer* thought nothing of these scenes. They saw nothing, they were watching the sky.

And now black despair had begun to settle. It was taken for granted by almost everybody, that the airship would never return. It had come down in the swamp—it had met with an accident—it had caught fire in the air—many and many were the theories which were put forward.

And when the sun was shining in its full glory, the party on the yacht accepted the worst. It was hardly possible for the airship to return now—after all this time. It was clear enough that she had met with some terrible and unforeseen accident.

Captain Burton had been on the bridge all night, without a wink of sleep. And at last he dragged his weary limbs towards the ladder, with the intention of going below. His face was ashen in colour, and drawn with anxiety and worry.

"It's no good, Mr. Hudson," he exclaimed dully. "We've done our best—and we've failed."

"I'm afraid so, sir," said Mr. Hudson, looking through his binoculars.

"Don't keep those infernal things to your eyes, man!" said the captain. "What's the good? It's too late to think of anything, now—"

"I—I can see something, sir!" shouted the first officer abruptly.

The skipper snatched at his own glasses, and focussed them. A stir took place on the deck below. Excited exclamations were uttered.

"Captain Burton's looking at something!" said Jack Grey suddenly.

"Oh, it's no good now!" said De Valerie. "There's not the slightest hope—"

"I'm not so sure!" said Pitt. "Who's got some glasses—quick!"

A moment before all the juniors had been pale and apathetic, and nearly asleep. But now there was a remarkable change. They were alert, brisk and excited.

"I don't see anythin' to make a fuss of," yawned Ralph Leslie Fullwood. "I reckon all hope's dead!"

"Same here," said Gulliver. "We shall never see that crowd again."

"It's a bit rotten," said Bell. "Mr. Lee, and Lord Dorrimore, an' all the rest of 'em missin' like this! They must have come down in that swamp!"

"That's about the size of it," said Fullwood. "Well, it was their own dashed fault. They shouldn't have been silly enough to go across a forest of that sort in an airship. I always thought it was jolly risky from the start."

"It's a queer thing you didn't say anythin', then," said Gulliver shortly.

"What was the good of me speakin'?" demanded Fullwood. "Do you think anybody would have taken any notice of me? Not likely! I decided to keep my tongue still."

"It's the airship!" yelled De Valerie with unusual excitement.

"What!"

"Oh, my only hat!"

"It can't be—it can't be!"

"It is, I tell you!" yelled De Valerie.

"Oh, it's true—it's true!" came Miss Violet's voice along the deck. "It's the airship!"

"Thank heaven!" said Lady Helen Tregellis-West, with deep feeling.

"Oh, Lady Helen, isn't it wonderful—isn't it glorious!" exclaimed Miss Violet, her bright eyes sparkling with pleasure and relief. "And we thought the airship would never come back! Dear old Tom! I—I've been worrying terribly——"

"Yes, my dear, and you've been crying too," said Lady Helen gently. "Well, there, there! We shall soon be hearing the truth, now—as soon as they get on board they will tell us why they have been delayed all night. I expect it will be something quite simple—and we shall have been concerning ourselves for nothing."

"But they're coming back! They're coming back!" exclaimed Miss Violet triumphantly. "Oh, I want to dance—

I want to shout—I want to do all sorts of things. It's wonderful, Lady Helen—it's wonderful!"

The bustle and activity on the decks was now quite remarkable. Five minutes earlier the ship had been one of silence and desolation. Now it was a scene of the utmost life, and everybody was speaking at once. All the members of the crew had turned out, and they were talking to one another excitedly, and they let their voices go, too.

And then a mighty roar went up.

"Hurrah!"

It was a cheer which came from every throat—from every heart. It was a cheer of relief, of joy and hysterical emotion.

For there, in the clear morning sky, something was flying towards the yacht—something which could not be mistaken. It was the airship! She had come at last—she had returned after everybody had believed it to be too late.

But those on board *The Wanderer* were perhaps somewhat too premature.

They did not know the whole truth. It was the airship, certainly—but who was on board? Not Nelson Lee—not Lord Dorrimore—not any of the boys. It was the airship, but it contained—the Comte de Plessigny!

There were many adventures to be gone through before everything came right. There were many perils to undergo, many excitements. Everything did come right, of course—otherwise I should not be setting down this record. But our adventures were only just beginning, if the truth must be told.

And the Comte de Plessigny, as he flew towards the yacht in the airship, smiled serenely to himself, and rubbed his hands.

He seemed highly pleased with himself, and he was looking genial and content. But the rascally count had come to the Majarrah on a sinister mission!

THE END.

## "The MODERN EL DORADO!"

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***A Tale of Life and Adventure in the North-West.***

**INTRODUCTION.**

*Two brothers, Jack and Teddy Royce, with their chum, Gerald Telford, are trying their luck in the wilds of North-West Canada. A plan of a gold mine is stolen from them by ruffians. After several adventures the lads eventually capture the villains. They are taken through the forest to an Indian camp five miles away and handed over to the care of Tall Wolf, the Indian chief.*

*(Now read on.)*

**Bad News from Tall Wolf.**

**Y**OU will be responsible that these men are in your hands when the redcoat comes for them," Jack told the chief. "And remember, chief, the redcoat will be very angry if he comes and finds you have let them escape. They are bad men; the judges of the white men want them, for they have slain their fellow-man."

The chief nodded gravely. He was only the head of a small party of wandering and homeless hunters, but he knew well enough what the power of the North-West Mounted Police was. He was quite sincere when he promised that he would take every care that Jack's orders were carried out.

Snaith and Olesen looked very sullen the last thing the Royces and Telford saw of them. Their hands and feet were still tied, and they were thrown down like sacks beside a small camp-fire.

Jack did not give them another glance, but turned away and left the Indian camp, followed by his chums and companions.

"That ends the affair of Snaith for a bit, anyhow," he said, with a sigh of relief. "Now, Gerald, we can settle down in confidence that you won't be molested again, anyhow."

Jack Royce was a smart lad, and as clever as most. But he was not always right. They had not seen the last of Obed Snaith as a free man, as it happened.

The next several days were spent in idleness, and the Royces and Telford spent enjoyable hours by the Little Snake River, fish-

ing, when they felt so inclined, or boating, or canoeing. This was like a holiday to them; and as Teddy and Gerald had certainly need of a change, the easeful time they had speedily caused those two to forget the grim experiences they had gone through.

But after two or three days the inactivity of it began to make Teddy itch for movement. He was a glutton for excitement, was the younger Royce. Having lived all his life in quiet surroundings, having worked for two years in a stuffy manufacturer's office, now he was out in the wilds, he wanted to live the wild life.

"Look here—about that gold again!" he said, one evening. "Every time I think of it, it makes me sweat blood! Suppose somebody else finds it before us!"

Jack was enjoying this holiday to the full. It was not often he could indulge in this sort of life, which was a picnic all day long, with full pay and rations thrown in. He was lying full-length on his back beside the river, in the roar of the falls, his wide hat shading his face from the hot rays of the summer sun.

He yawned when Teddy spoke.

"At it again, young 'un?" he said. "Why can't you settle down and enjoy a quiet life while you've got the chance? Gold—this is worth all the gold in Dead Breed Lake—if there is any there, which I very much doubt, as I believe I've said before."

"Well, look here!" said Teddy. "If you won't make a move, Gerald and I are going up there ourselves!"

Jack sat up sharply at that. He shook a reproving finger at his headstrong young brother.

"Say, young fellow," he said, "you and Gerald went off on your own once before—forgotten that? I had the deuce of a search after you, when I came round from the clip on the head I got, and, if I remember rightly, I had to do a kinema stunt to save you from going over these falls. Well, now, let me tell you this: If you and Gerald start going off on your own again, I'll just leave you to your fate."

He grinned as he spoke, but Teddy did not



feel like chaffing. He had that gold very much on his brain.

Gerald Telford lay beside the bigger Royce, listening, but saying nothing. Secretly, he, too, was eager to get to Dead Breed Lake, to see if the gold really were there. But he had something of Jack's patience, and he was not above waiting till the time when the survey party would get to that region, in the course of its duty.

"I think you're a slow, lazy, unbelieving beast!" cried Teddy. "I—Hullo! Who's this coming?"

He turned his head away from the river. A man was approaching—a man dressed in the garb of an Indian. As he came nearer they saw he was none other than Tall Wolf, the Indian in whose charge they had left Snaith and Olesen, till such time as they could get into touch with a member of the North-West Mounted Police.

The Indian was grave as he came to a halt, and looked down on Jack Royce. He held his hand, palm to the front, above his head, in the old-fashioned style.

"How!" he grunted.

He was a dirty, but picturesque old fellow. Although the Indian of the present day is not at all the same man as his forefathers were, he still appeared to retain considerable of the dignity that had once characterised the race. Nowadays, the Indian is a dirty, lazy, unhealthy fellow, stupid in intellect.

"How!" said Jack; while Gerald and Teddy looked on silently.

"I have come to tell my white brother that the two bad white men, whom you left in my lodges, have escaped," said Tall Wolf.

At this Jack Royce came to his feet, with an exclamation of anger.

"Escaped!" he roared. "But didn't I tell you not to let 'em get away from you? What do you mean—"

"It was not the doing of myself, or of my honest men," said the old chief, with superb dignity. "It was the doing of some women, the squaws of my men. The white men promised them much gold if they would sever their bonds. The women were tempted, and in the night they allowed them to escape. The women have been punished!"

"But—but they can be tracked!" said Jack. "Go back, and set your men after 'em, to track 'em!"

"I have set some of my men to track them, but I have also come to tell you the news," said Tall Wolf. "I have spoken."

He turned away. Jack looked disgustedly at his receding back.

"That Snaith's a slippery cuss, anyhow," said Teddy Royce. "I don't believe that old man's Indians'll ever track the blighter. I bet I know where they'll make for."

"Where?" grunted Jack.

"Dead Breed Lake, of course," said Teddy. "Didn't the old man say they'd tempted the Indian women with the promise of gold if they'd release them? Well, then, that shows the gold is still in Snaith's mind. They'll both try to make their way to Dead

Breed Lake, and—and they'll get there before we do, if you don't make a move."

Jack gazed thoughtfully at the peaceful-looking river. The others watched his face, and suddenly Teddy nudged Gerald, and grinned slyly. Jack was muttering to himself. He seemed to be doing mental calculations.

Suddenly he turned to his chum and his brother.

"All right," he said simply. "We'll see if Simpson, the boss, is willing to grubstake us for a flying trip down-river to Dead Breed Lake. I think, maybe, he will. He doesn't expect a reply to his message from headquarters for another three weeks yet. And if, as you say, those hounds have gone up to the Lake, we mustn't let them be there first, if it so happens that there is such a thing as the Mad Prospector's mine in that region."

"Hip—hip—hooray!" yelled Teddy, throwing his hat in the air. "We've stirred the old slacker into action at last. To Dead Breed Lake, Gerald! Think of it! Soon we're all going to be millionaires!"

"Well, I hope you're right," Jack Royce grinned.

### A Race for Dead Breed Lake.

**S**IMPSON, the chief surveyor, raised no objections to the scheme, especially when Jack Royce promised him that he, his brother, and their friend had no intention of deserting his party for good, but just meant taking a flying trip to Dead Breed Lake, having a look round, and returning again.

As the surveying party were halted indefinitely, owing to the hitch that had come about in the work, the expense of feeding the men was going on just the same, and therefore Simpson quite agreed with Jack that they would eat no more food by travelling than by staying where they were.

Accordingly, the party of three, having secured two canoes from the near-by Indians, loaded these with provisions, blankets, cooking-utensils, and rifles and ammunition. They fancied their journey to Dead Breed Lake and back would occupy a month or so. But, even then they travelled as light as was possible, and, the morning after the news that Snaith and Olesen had escaped from the custody of Tall Wolf, the Indian, the three chums started off early, long ere the survey-camp was awake.

They made good progress, on the whole, for they went downstream, following the Little Slave River, which, for the first several days was clear of falls and rapids.

They worked hard each day, Jack paddling one canoe, which bore the lighter load of rations and equipment, while Teddy and Gerald manipulated the other one, containing all their kit and the major portion of their food supply.

They were now in the very heart of the wilderness. For days on end they never

(Continued on page iii of cover.)



saw a human soul, but travelled serenely through the most gorgeous country Jack Royce had ever seen; and Jack had thought he knew Canada thoroughly long ago. To Gerald and Teddy, still only green to Canada, the scenery through which they passed filled them with awe and admiration, for it was never the same on two consecutive days, save for its grandeur and solitude.

"My hat!" Teddy murmured one day, as he drove his paddle steadily and not unskillfully into the water. "Wouldn't I give a lot to be able to travel about here for months as a holiday? Talk about the Isle of Man, or Margate!" He laughed aloud at the comparison.

"What's the trouble?" Gerald, who was kneeling in front of him, asked; turning his head back towards his romantic little pal.

Teddy told him.

"Well," Gerald said, "what more do you want? We are our own bosses here."

"But we've got to hurry, to get back to Simpson's crowd as soon as possible," Teddy objected. "I mean, I'd just love to spend my life roaming about this country, doing as I liked, going back to civilisation when I felt like it, or staying out in the wilds as long as I wanted."

"Well," said Gerald thoughtfully, ceasing to paddle, and watching the broad back of Jack Royce immediately in front of him, as he forged his canoe steadily downstream—"well, old sport, when we've found the Mad Prospector's gold at Dead Breed Lake, we'll be well enough off to do as we like, and we can live here if we want to."

"Yes, when we've found the gold," Teddy said, his eyes gleaming. "I say, old chap, don't you hope it's there?"

"Of course I do, and so does old Jack," Gerald grinned. "But Jack is such a stolid old chap that he won't let on he cares tuppence whether he finds it or not. Tries to let on that he's only making this trip to humour us—sort of playing the big brother to us. But I'm sure he's as keen as we are."

"I wonder if Snaith and the Big Swede are coming along, too?" Teddy asked. "I'm afraid we haven't seen the last of those rotters. It'll be an awful sell if they get that gold before we do."

"They'll have to work some to beat us in this race to Dead Breed Lake," said Gerald, automatically quickening his stroke, however, on recollecting that this was indeed a race for the Mad Prospector's mysterious gold.

But, though they saw practically everything on the river-banks as they followed its course downwards, they did not see anything to suggest to their minds that Snaith and Olesen were ahead of them. They saw no signs of anybody having camped beside the river.

And so for ten fine days they toiled and slaved, and, though their hands became as hard as iron, though their young muscles grew developed to a degree that no amount of pick and shovel work could have developed them, they saw scarcely a human soul. Occasionally they passed some Indian tepees pitched close to the water's edge, and then

the red men used to stand gravely outside their lodges and watch the three young adventurers as they hove into sight and passed out of it again, acknowledging the boys' hand-waves with signs, and then, no doubt, retiring to the tepees again to discuss the madness of the white men, who never seem able to rest within their own lands, but must ever be forging into new country.

A canoe journey such as this cannot be expected to continue indefinitely without a hitch. Anxious as the three youngsters were to get to their goal and to find out whether the Mad Prospector's chart and his dying words had not been, after all, only the words and doing of a madman, they perhaps neglected essentials that older and more experienced voyagers would never have thought to neglect.

Canadian Indian canoes are very flimsily constructed out of birchbark, specially treated, and, on the whole, are very serviceable. But care has to be taken of them, and, at the end of each day's journey, they should be thoroughly overhauled, and, when necessary, repaired with patches of birch-bark and coats of gum; otherwise they will soon get out of condition.

It is to be feared that Jack Royce overlooked this very necessary precaution for the first ten days of the journey, and that they got on so well without mishap speaks well for the craftsmanship of the Indians who had built these hired canoes.

But on the eleventh day the inevitable happened.

Gerald and Teddy had been paddling for, maybe, an hour, and were nicely in their swing now, when Gerald, who was bow paddler, suddenly gave vent to an exclamation, and stopped his work.

"We've sprung a leak!" he exclaimed. "See! The water's simply spouting in!"

The bottom of the canoe had become so saturated and rotten for want of its coat of spruce gum that, all at once, Gerald had driven one of his knees clean through, and when he hastily shifted his position, the water came bubbling through a distinct hole.

By this time they were paddling in mid-stream in a part where the river had widened out considerably.

Also, their canoe was heavily loaded, and, even as Gerald tried to shove his knee back in the hole he had made, the bows of the canoe sank perceptibly. And the harder Gerald thrust his knee into the cavity, the bigger the hole seemed to grow. The canoe began to fill rapidly, and, even before Gerald and Teddy had grasped the seriousness of their position, the gunnels of the frail craft were almost awash.

"Get to shore, Teddy!" Gerald shouted, at length, making frantic efforts to turn the canoe's head landwards.

Jack Royce was now well ahead, unconscious of his comrades' danger.

For, though both Gerald and Teddy were good swimmers, there was danger for them—and for Jack as well.

(To be continued.)





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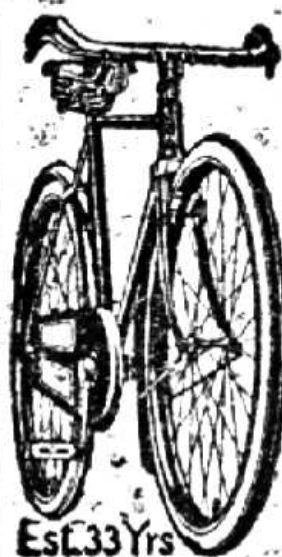
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