

THE
Ne'er-Do-Well

By
REX BEACH

Author of
"The Spoilers," "The Barrier,"
"The Silver Horde," Etc.

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SYNOPSIS.

Kirk Anthony, son of a rich man, with college friends, gets into a fracas in a New York resort. A detective is hurt. Jefferson Locke insinuates himself into the college men's party.

Locke, aided by Kirk's friend Higgins, who thinks it a joke, drugs Kirk and puts him aboard a ship bound for Colon. Kirk is on the passenger list as Locke.

"Broke" and without baggage, aboard the ship Kirk makes the acquaintance of Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Cortlandt.

(Continued from last week.)

Once in his own stateroom search showed Kirk that even his watch was gone and that his only asset, evidently overlooked by the hilarious Higgins and his co-partner in crime, was a modest three stone finger ring. He had neither baggage nor money. He was regarding his ring speculatively when the purser knocked, then entered at his call.

"I've just heard that there's a mistake about your ticket," the newcomer began. "It is made out to 'Mr. Jefferson Locke,' but the doctor says you insist your name is something else."

"That's right. My name is Anthony." "Then how did I get this ticket?" "I'm sure I don't know."

"Have you any baggage?" "I don't know."

"What is your destination?" "I don't know. You'll pardon my limited vocabulary?" "But I don't understand."

"Neither do I. But I must have some luggage. I need a clean shirt and collar."

"If you are not Mr. Locke the ticket is no good."

"Hurray! Put me off."

"You don't understand—the ticket is good, but—"

"Pardon the personal nature of the question—but what size shirt do you wear?"

"Seventeen."

"Saved! Let me have about six. Will you?"

"Certainly not," returned the other. "I need all I have. I'll have a look for your baggage. Mr. Anthony, and I'll see the captain about this ticket also. I'll look you up later."

He departed, shaking his head as if this were a form of insanity he had never before encountered. A moment later Kirk followed him and made a round of the deck, staring at each man he met and mentally estimating the girth of his neck. Then he made his way toward the smoking room, determined to enlist the help of his new acquaintance, Stein.

leather upholstery, was Mr. Cortlandt, as pale, as reserved and as saturnine as at breakfast. He was sipping Scotch and soda, and in all the time that Anthony remained he did not speak to a soul save the waiter, did not shift his position save to beckon for another drink. Something about his sour, introspective aloofness displeased the onlooker, who shortly returned to the deck.

The day was warming up, and on the sunny side of the ship the steamer chairs were filling. Two old men were casting quarts; a noisy quartet was playing shuffleboard. After idling back and forth on deck for a time Kirk selected a chair and stretched himself out.

"Do you wish this chair for the voyage, sir?" asked the deck steward.

"Yes, I think so."

"I'll put your name on it."

"Anthony, suit A, third floor front."

"Very well, sir." The man wrote out a card and fitted it to the back of the chair, saying, "One dollar, if you please."

"I haven't got a dollar."

The steward laughed, as if to humor his passenger. "I'm afraid, then, you can't have the chair."

"So I must stand up all the way to Panama, eh?"

"You are joking, sir. I'll have to pay it myself if you don't."

"That's right. Make me as uncomfortable as possible. By the way, what size collar do you wear?"

"Sixteen."

Kirk sighed. "Send the purser to me, will you? I'll fix up the chair matter with him."

While he was talking he heard the rustle of skirts close by and saw the woman he had met earlier seating herself next to him. It annoyed the young man to realize that out of all the chairs on deck he had selected the one nearest hers.

"Did you send for me?" he inquired.

"Yes. There was a strange man around just now, and he wanted a dollar for this chair."

"Well?"

"I want to establish a line of credit."

The purser grunted.

the funny part; I'm still sick. What I can't understand is this: It took all my money to pay for the supper, and yet I wake up with a first class ticket to Panama and in possession of one of the best suits on the ship. It's a problem play."

"You say you were sick afterward?" Kirk turned his eyes upon the speaker mournfully. "My head isn't right yet."

"You were drugged," said the woman. "By Jove!" He straightened up in his chair. "I'm beginning to see. It



"Is he your father?"

was Locke. That's how I got his name. This is his ticket. Oh! There's going to be something doing when I get back."

"You did not impress me as a college student," said the stranger.

"I'm not. I graduated four years ago. I barely made it, but I did get through."

"And you have never been to the tropics?"

"Not since I had my last row with the governor. Have you?"

"Many times. It will prove an interesting trip for you. At least you have that consolation."

"What is it like?"

Evidently the artless effrontery of the young man had not offended, for his neighbor talked freely, and in a short time the two were conversing as easily as old acquaintances.

When at last she rose, after an hour that had swiftly sped, she was gratified at the look of concern that came into his eyes. She looked at him with genuine approval as he bowed and said:

"Thank you for the pointers about Panama. I hope I may have the pleasure of talking to you again."

When she had disappeared he murmured admiringly:

"Jove! She's a corker! And she's not so old, after all. I wonder who she is— He leaned over and read the card on the back of her steamer chair. "Mrs. Stephen Cortlandt, Suite B." It was lettered. Straightening up, he grumbled with genuine disappointment: "Just my blamed luck! She's married."

By pledging his one article of jewelry Kirk became possessed that afternoon of several shirts, collars and handkerchiefs, likewise a razor, over which he exercised a sort of leasehold privilege. The purser made it plain, however, that he had not sold these articles, but merely loaned them, holding the ring as security for their return, and this arrangement allowed Kirk no spare cash whatever. Even with all his necessities paid for, it surprised him to find how many channels remained for spending money. He suffered most, perhaps, from the lack of tobacco, but even in the matter of cigarettes he could not bring himself to accept favors that he could not return.

other company than a long glass and a siphon.

One day when Kirk had begun to feel that his acquaintance with Mrs. Cortlandt was well established he said to her:

"Stein told me to-day that your husband is in the diplomatic service."

"Yes," said she. "He was consul general to Colombia several years ago, and since then he has been to France and to Germany."

"Are you diplomating now?"

"In a way. We shall be in Panama for some time. Colonel Jolson will be interested in you."

"I don't see the point."

"Your father is one of the most powerful and aggressive railroad men in the country. Perhaps you know something about the railroad opposition to the canal?"

Kirk smiled. "Well, to tell you the truth," said he, "the governor doesn't consult me about his business as much as he ought to. He seems to think he can run it all right without me, and we've only been speaking over the telephone lately."

"One of the strongest forces the government had to combat in putting through the canal appropriations was the railroads. Colonel Jolson has no reason to love your father."

"By the way, when are you going into business with him?"

"I? Oh, not for a long time. You see, work doesn't really appeal to me, anyway. I suppose if I had to hustle I could, but what's the use?"

Mrs. Cortlandt let her eyes dwell upon him curiously for a moment. Then she said:

"Have you no ambition? Is there no girl, for instance? Have you never been in love?"

"Oh, see here, now!" Anthony blushed in a manner to excite the envy of any woman. "I don't like 'em. I'd rather play football."

"You lack stimulus. If you should meet the right woman"— Then, seeing the amusement in his face: "Believe me, I know what I am talking about. I know what a woman can do. Your life has been too easy and placid. You need some disturbing element to make it ferment."

The Santa Cruz was now rapidly drawing out of the cold northern winter and into a tropic warmth. The nights were perfect, the days divine. The passengers responded as if to a magic draft, and Kirk acknowledged to a reluctant enjoyment of the change and found himself less eager to go back.

Mrs. Cortlandt joined him as usual on deck after dinner, and they did a mile around the promenade, chatting idly of many things. The evening was too glorious to permit of early retiring, and a late hour found them leaning over the rail, side by side, while Anthony bewailed the fact that he knew nothing of the country just beyond the dark horizon ahead of them. They talked about the canal.

"It is a big task, Mr. Anthony, and the mere digging of the ditch is the smallest part. There is a great deal more to be done. You see, as men attain culture, they require more than mere food and drink and bedding, and in the same way, as nations attain to greatness, they require more than mere territory—they reach out and absorb power and prestige. Our decision to build the Panama canal is like the landing of another Columbus: the conquest is to follow. After that will come—who knows what? Perhaps more wars, more pillage, more injustice, just as in the old days of Central and South America."

"You talk like a man," Anthony said admiringly. "I had no idea you looked at things in such a big way."

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low, irregular line of mountains in the background and close at hand a town. The ship came to anchor abreast of a point upon which he descried a squat little spider legged lighthouse and long rows of frame dwellings half hidden

(Continued on page 7, Col. 1.)