

**A TALE
THAT IS TOLD**

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A tale that is told by Frederick Niven

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FREDERICK NIVEN

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NEW NOVELS

THE DUCHESS OF SIONA

ERNEST GOODWIN

THE VALLEY OF INDECISION

CHRISTOPHER STONE

MAINWARING

MAURICE HEWLETT

A GIFT OF THE DUSK

R. O. PROWSE

THE PEOPLE OF THE RUINS

EDWARD SHANKS

A TALE THAT IS TOLD

by
FREDERICK NIVEN



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TO
LYNED WILLIAMS
OF CYMRYD
FROM
PAULINE AND FREDERICK NIVEN

'We spend our years as a tale that is told.'

PROLOGUE

I OFTEN look on at myself as I look on at the other little puppet people who appear so small coming down Buchanan Street. Buchanan Street I mention because that is where I have my shop now; and when I am putting the books in the outside boxes—'the dips'—I sometimes glance up and down the street, wondering about them all. So small, and yet so interesting! I look a moment and then go back into the shop, to read a page or two of Tacitus or Herodotus and let the world wag. Puppets we are, puppets under the high stone house-fronts, and under Saint Rollox chimney that volleys out a cloud of smoke all day up there beyond the top of the hill which is as awfully covered with houses of the living as the hill behind Saint Mungo's cathedral with tombstones for the dead. That cloud, despite the height of the stalk from which it fans into the ether, is yet very low to one who, having looked up at it, looks up from it again, into the big gray-blue dome overhead. How small, and yet how busy and eager we all are.

I would not sit down to write this book at all if I did not feel that, besides being in a sense puppets at the end of wires manipulated by very dimly perceived powers, we are something more. A phrase of Myers' often chants in my head: '... within, still deeper depths; without, a more unfathomable heaven.' Because I am interested I write; and if I begin somewhat staccato that is because this is my first attempt. This is my one book, that I have heard is in all of us.

Realising that it takes more than ink, paper, and a