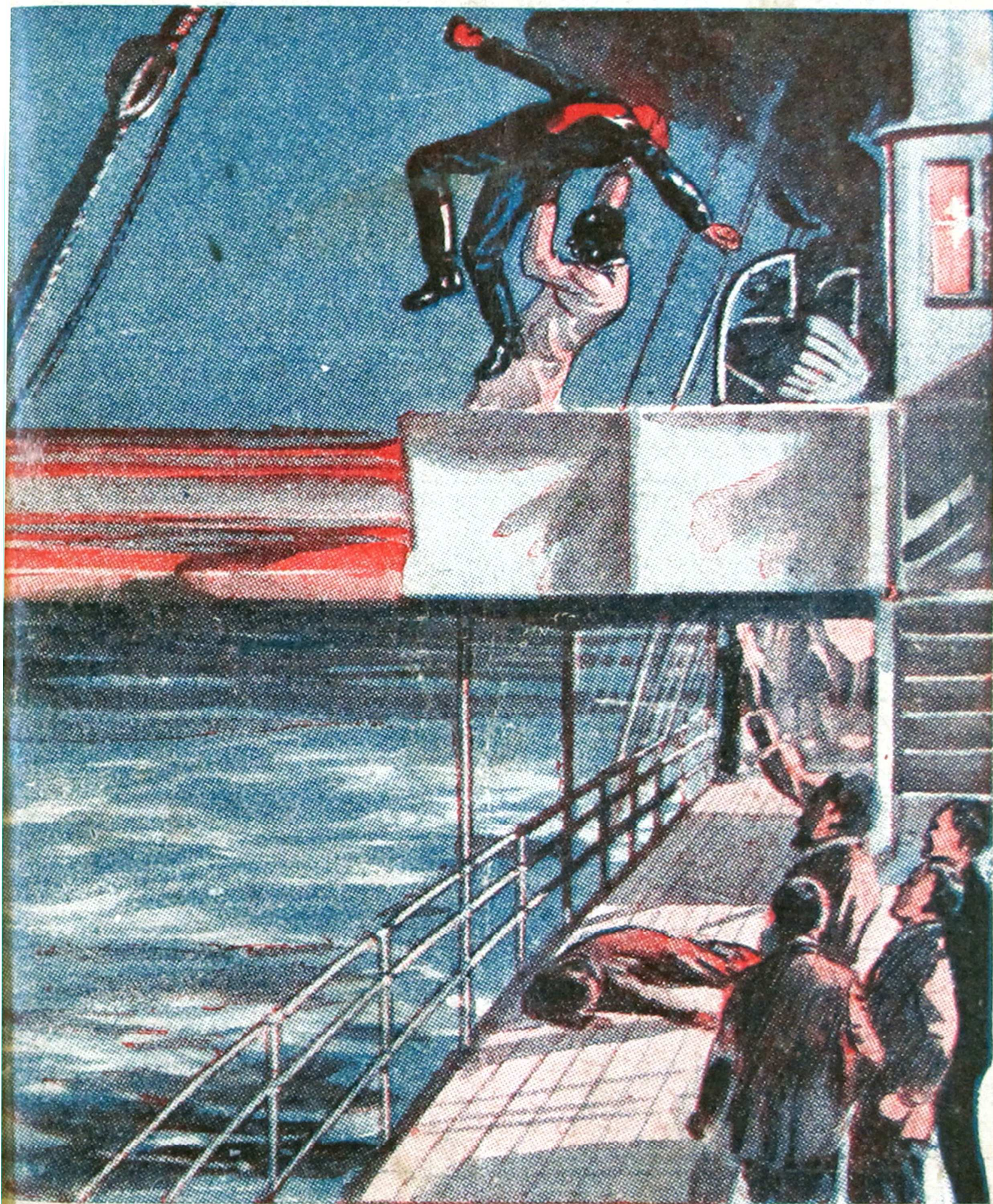


No. 160.—MAGNIFICENT "SEA" AND DETECTIVE STORY!

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UMLOSI HURLED THE DASTARDLY CAPTAIN OVERBOARD!

S.O.S.; Or, **TRICKED BY WIRELESS!**

A Story of Thrilling Adventure, introducing the Boys of St. Frank's, **NELSON LEE**, **NIPPER**, **EILEEN DARE**, **LORD DORRIMORE** and **UMLOSI**. By the Author of "The Schoolboy Stowaways," and Other Yarns. June 29, 1918.

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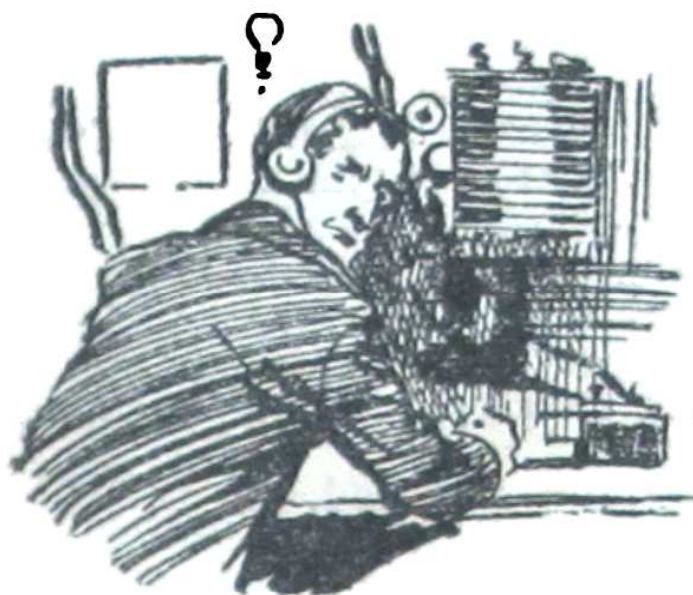
**“The Mount Stonham
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WAR-TIME PRICE—THREE-HALFPENCE.



S.O.S. OR TRICKED BY WIRELESS!

A Story of Thrilling Adventure, introducing the Boys of St. Frank's, Nelson Lee, Nipper, Eileen Dare, Lord Dorrimore, and Umlosi.

By the Author of "The Schoolboy Stowaways," and Other Yarns.

(The Narrative related throughout by Nipper.)

CHAPTER I.

BOUND FOR SUNNY CLIMES—CHARLES DICKENS IS BOUGHT FOR TEN SHILLINGS.

THE sun beat down upon the decks of the s.y. Adventure with almost tropical heat, and the metal-work fairly radiated and was scorching to the touch. North, south, east, and west stretched the limitless blue of the Atlantic Ocean.

The sky was cloudless, and the day could scarcely have been more perfect. Lord Dorrimore's luxurious yacht was steaming steadily and swiftly, and on board everything was comfortable and merry.

Beneath the great awning, sheltered from the fierce rays of the sun, several groups of people reposed in different attitudes. Lord Dorrimore himself and Nelson Lee sprawled in deck chairs, chatting and smoking.

Eileen Dare reposed gracefully in a hammock, and her aunt was quite comfortable in a big lounge-chair. Sir Montie Tregellis-West, Tommy Watson, and myself were engaged in an animated discussion concerning a certain rascal named Captain Jelks.

Not far from us Farman and De Valerie and Yakama were reading, and against the rail Handforth and Church and McClure were arguing, as usual.

The Bo'sun—in other words, Tom Burton of the St. Frank's Remove—was upon the bridge with his father. He didn't mind the glaring sun, but personally I preferred to remain under the awning.

I mustn't forget to mention that His Majesty King Umlosi of Kutaland was sprawling upon the deck in a most unkingly fashion. He was snoring with quite indecent loudness, and, judging by the expression upon his face, he must have been dreaming dreams of great battles in his far-off country. Umlosi always looked happy when he dreamed of gory fights!

"Yes, my sons," I was saying. "I think we've seen the last of Captain Ebenezer Jelks. How the dickens can he do us any harm now?"

Sir Montie shrugged his shoulders.

"Dear fellow, it's no good askin' me," he replied. "It certainly seems as though Jelks is settled, but there's no knowin'. Life's full of uncertainties, begad! It's never wise to be sure."

"Well, you're right enough there, Montie," I agreed. "But we can be nearly sure, at any rate. Those blighters Adams and Hilton have had their giddy teeth drawn, and they're as harmless as white mice now."

"I hope so, Benny—I do really," said Sir Montie.

There was a tiny doubt in my noble chum's voice, and I knew why. He half believed that we should meet with further trouble. Personally, I felt satisfied that everything was all serene, which only shows that Montie was more far-seeing than I was on this occasion.

We were en route to the Pacific, bound on a treasure-hunting expedition. The party from St. Frank's consisted of Removites, and, of course, Nelson Lee. At St. Frank's the guv'nor was known as "Mr. Alvington," and I went by the name of "Dick Bennett"—a little subterfuge which had been adopted in order to smother our trail.

St. Frank's was closed now, of course—the long summer vacation had already commenced, although we had left days before breaking-up. Our trip would take us the whole vacation, and even then we should probably be a week or two late in getting back, which, in the opinion of the Remove fellows, was all to the good.

It had been Captain Burton's idea, and Nelson Lee's friend, Lord Dorrimore, had placed his magnificent yacht at our disposal. Eileen Dare and her aunt, old friends of ours, were also doing the trip with us.

Things had not gone quite smoothly at the commencement, owing to the rascality of a certain individual named Captain Ebenezer Jelks. This man had stolen a map of Captain Burton's island, with the genial intention of obtaining the treasure for himself. He had bribed two members of the

crew, named Adams and Hilton, to cause a mutiny on board, and thus occasion delay. The mutiny had actually occurred, but Lord Dorrimore had dealt with it very effectively in the space of thirty minutes.

The crew, as a whole, were now absolutely loyal. Even Adams and Hilton had shown signs of penitence and were on their best behaviour. We couldn't drop the two men overboard, of course, and so they were still carrying out their duties, but Nelson Lee had his eye on them, and they could do no further harm.

"What's to-day?" I remarked lazily. "Wednesday, isn't it? By jingo, St. Frank's broke up yesterday. It seems ages ago since we left, doesn't it? And yet it's less than a week, really."

Lord Dorrimore turned his head in my direction.

"I say, Bennett, old man," he said languidly.

"What's the matter?" I asked. "Do you want something fizzy?"

"Well, as a matter of fact, I could do with somethin' with chunks of ice in it," replied his lordship, "but I was goin' to ask you to do me a favour. Be a sport, old man."

"Well, what's the favour?" I grinned.

"There's a certain black lump of humanity known as Umlosi, an' he's creatin' a most disgustin' noise," said Dorrie. "Just as a special favour, you might walk over him for me. Tread on his face, for choice!"

"Anything to oblige," I grinned.

Umlosi was certainly becoming worse, and to snore in that fashion when ladies were present was not to be pardoned. Fortunately, Miss Eileen and Aunt Esther were some little distance away, and they were not disturbed.

"Go gently, young 'un," chuckled Nelson Lee.

I was just about to oblige Lord Dorrimore when I paused. Somebody else was doing exactly the same thing as I intended. At that very moment he was calmly walking over Umlosi's chest, en route to his face.

"This is going to be funny," I remarked, winking at my chums.

The "somebody else" was not human, I may as well explain. He was, in fact, a flop-eared dog belonging to a member of the crew. He seemed to be a kind of spaniel, and was white, with liberal splashes of black.

It was unheard-of audacity, of course, for a dog belonging to a member of the crew to wander aft, but the spaniel had taken liberties of this sort several times before. We all liked him, and encouraged him in his wrong-doing.

A minute before he had strolled along the deck, wagging his bushy tail in the most cocksure manner. Finding Umlosi in a most convenient position, he had forthwith proceeded to bestow his affections upon the unconscious black giant.

Having discovered Umlosi's face, the in-

truder proceeded to wash it in the most painstaking fashion. He licked away laboriously, and introduced a playful bite now and again by way of a change.

"By gad!" murmured Lord Dorrimore. "There'll be ructions in a minute!"

Umlosi grunted sleepily, and half-rolled over. His tormentor evidently took this as a signal of encouragement, for he backed away, gave two or three joyous barks, and then placed a splodgy foot upon Umlosi's mouth.

"Oh, my hat!" I chuckled.

Umlosi sat up abruptly.

"Wau!" he rumbled, "by my snake! Is it thou that hast dared to disturb my slumbers, thou hairy imp of mischief? Get thee gone, or I will cast thee into the blue waters!"

The spaniel gave a jump, and licked Umlosi's face again before the gigantic warrior could prevent him. Umlosi made a grab, but the spaniel backed away and barked with triumph.

"Thou slobbering beast!" exclaimed Umlosi wrathfully. "If thou cometh within my grasp again——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"So it pleaseth thee to laugh at my discomfiture, N'Kose," said Umlosi, as Lord Dorrimore grinned very audibly. "Wau! I have a liking for dogs, but dost thou think I will allow this hairy creature to take such liberties?"

"It strikes me, old chap, that you can't help yourself!" remarked his lordship. "Here, Spots, or whatever your name is, you'd better come out of danger while you're safe. Take him for'ard, somebody, before Umlosi hurls him overboard."

There was no danger of Umlosi going to such lengths, for the redoubtable Kutana chief was as gentle as a woman with all animals, in spite of his dire threats. I called the dog to my side and took it for'ard.

But when I turned back, he followed me, and although I used threats which were ten times more blood-curdling than Umlosi's, he persisted in sticking to my heels. This wasn't the first time the little creature had acted in this manner. He seemed to have taken a great liking to me, and had forsaken his own master.

"All right, old son, you can trot along with me if you like," I said, bending down and patting him. "I should like to know what your name is. No, that doesn't tell me anything."

He had barked joyfully, and pranced round me with complete happiness. Luncheon was served soon afterwards, and the dog persisted in sticking to me. He was ejected from the saloon no less than four times, and came back smiling, so to speak, on every occasion.

After luncheon, when Eileen and Aunt Esther had gone into the lounge for a quiet afternoon rest, I went on deck with the

other fellows. And I'm hanged if that blessed dog wasn't waiting for me.

"Well, if persistence is any virtue, you're certainly worth your salt!" I exclaimed, picking the dog up and patting it. "I say, sir, I've a good mind to offer to buy this young bounder. I dare say the owner would sell him for ten bob."

I happened to be alone with the guv'nor and Lord Dorrimore at the moment; the other chaps were on the other side of the ship.

"There's no reason why you shouldn't buy the animal, if you want to, Nipper," smiled Nelson Lee. "He's certainly a nice little dog, and since he persists in following you, you may as well own him."

Without further ado, therefore, I sought out the dog's master, and he proved to be a member of the engine-room staff. He was quite agreeable, for the animal was rather a bother to him.

"Why, no, sir," he exclaimed, when I suggested paying him something. "You can have Spotty and welcome. I don't want no money. He ain't worth anything, anyhow. Just a mongrel, I believe."

"Oh, you'll have to take something," I replied, and I handed him ten shillings. He was quite pleased, I was quite pleased, and the dog was delighted. He seemed to know, instinctively, that he had changed masters, for he followed me aft with an assurance which was very apparent.

"His name's Spotty," I explained, when I got back to Nelson Lee and Dorrie.

"Oh, you can't call him that!" exclaimed his lordship. "Spotty sounds too insignificant. You want somethin' imposin'. Why not call him Charles Dickens, for example?"

"I fail to see the slightest resemblance," grinned the guv'nor. "And really, Dorrie, it would scarcely be a compliment to the immortal Charles."

"It's a shockin' insult, I know, an' I might be prosecuted for libel, but whenever I look at that dog's face I'm reminded of Dickens," said Dorrimore. "Silly, isn't it? But, then, I'm a queer chap."

"I'll tell you what," I said. "We'll call him 'Boz'—it means the same thing, but it's shorter, and a good name for a dog, anyhow."

"A brain-wave!" exclaimed Dorrie. "Boz is the very name you want. I've often wondered why Dickens chose it as a nom-de-plume, but that's nothin' to do with the question. Well, take Boz away an' smother him. I want to get a nap!"

And so the curly little spaniel was christened Boz from that moment. He was to be very useful to us in days to come, although we didn't know it at the time. For Boz possessed a nose which was almost as acute as that of a trained bloodhound. He was simply a marvel in his little way.

I rigged up a kennel for him in a spare cabin next to the one occupied by Sir Montie and Tommy and me, and he regarded it all as a matter of course. He

acknowledged me as his master, and was as pleased as Punch.

After tea we arranged to have some cricket on a wide part of the deck. The boundaries were limited, naturally, but quite a large amount of sport was possible. Just before going out, Eileen took hold of my arm.

"I want you to do something for me, Nipper," she said smilingly.

"Anything you like, Miss Eileen," I replied on the instant.

How was it possible to object to any request from Eileen? She was certainly about the most delightful girl anybody could see, and she and I were very old friends. She was engaged to be married to one of the finest chaps I'd ever met—Captain Masters, of the R.A.F., now on special service in America. During his enforced absence from England Eileen had taken advantage of Lord Dorrimore's invitation to herself and her aunt. If the lucky Captain Masters hadn't been abroad Eileen wouldn't have been with us. I don't mean to imply that Captain Masters was lucky because he was abroad, but because he had won the love of such a glorious girl as Eileen.

"You won't grumble, will you?" she asked.

"Oh, that's unkind!" I protested.

"Perhaps it is, Nipper," Eileen smiled. "I just want you to give me half-an-hour of your time when it has become too dark for cricket. I'm ever so interested in the wireless, and Mr. Lee tells me that you know all about it."

"The guv'nor exaggerated," I put in, grinning. "I don't know all about it by long chalks, Miss Eileen, but I can dispatch and receive messages all right, and I know a decent bit about the whole game. But I've got a lot to learn yet."

"Oh, but you know enough to give me a lesson, don't you?" asked Eileen.

"Rather!" I replied promptly.

I should have made just the same reply if I hadn't known a blessed thing. The idea of giving Eileen a lesson was rather ripping. And I felt tremendously flattered because she had made this request of me.

"Thank you ever so much, Nipper," said Eileen brightly. "Suppose we go to the wireless room just after dinner, then? We shall have it all to ourselves, and you can show me how the instrument works."

"But I thought you knew the code—"

"Oh, I can understand a message easily enough," replied Eileen. "I mean, I can read it as it is received or sent off; but I'm afraid I'm a terrible dunce when it comes to the actual manipulation of the instruments."

"Oh, we'll soon alter that," I said briskly. "Thanks tremendously, Miss Eileen, for giving me the chance."

"You silly! I've got to thank you!" laughed Eileen.

She went off to the piano in the lounge, and by the time I got on deck some lovely

music was wafting up through the wide-open skylights.

Dorrie was participating in the cricket, for, after all, he was only a great boy at heart, and enjoyed games as much as anybody. Nelson Lee preferred to lounge in a deck-chair, smoking and looking on.

But that little arrangement with Elleen was to lead to something of a very startling character, which neither of us could possibly have foreseen.

CHAPTER II.

FLOTTERY—THE WIRELESS MESSAGE—EILEEN IS VERY INTERESTED.

SAMUEL ADAMS filled his pipe slowly. "The fact is, Hilton, we've got to be darned careful," he remarked. "Mind you, this Dorrimore chap is a bit of a fool, or he wouldn't allow us to remain on board."

"He couldn't help himself," said Hilton savagely. "You don't suppose he was going to put into port especially to land us, do you? My mouth is still sore from that fight—hang him!"

The two stewards were sitting right up in the bows of the yacht and the dusk was growing deep. Aft, the electric-light was glowing warmly, and now and again the sounds of boyish laughter would echo along the decks. As a matter of fact, we were at dinner, and Adams and Hilton were having a quiet chat.

Owing to their recent activities, they had been relieved of their saloon duties by Captain Burton, who had appointed other men in their places. Adams and Hilton had been given less congenial work.

The half-hour mutiny had mainly been caused by the lying tongues of these two men, and Lord Dorrimore had promptly settled the matter by thrashing them until they could not stand. In addition, their fellow-members of the crew had practically boycotted them, and they were shunned.

Up in the bows they were quite private, and this was highly necessary, for their conversation was of such a nature that they required strict privacy. For Adams and Hilton were not harmless as yet.

To all appearances they were on their best behaviour, and Nelson Lee could certainly see no sign of further villainy. The skipper, too, had warned his officers to keep a sharp eye upon the men.

The actual truth was that Adams and Hilton were still intent upon earning the money which Captain Jelks had paid them. They would not have been so conscientious, perhaps, had it not been for the fact that the other half of their reward would not be paid until the work had been fully accomplished.

This work was to delay the yacht. The mutiny had failed, and therefore other methods would have to be adopted. The rascally Captain Jelks had given them full

instructions, and they knew exactly what to do.

"It's Wednesday to-day," said Adams, lighting his pipe and tossing the spent match overside. "We've got to make our report, Hilton. Jelks will be fairly close to us to-night."

"I don't exactly see how we can do it," said Hilton. "We're being watched, man, and it'll be blamed risky—"

"Rot!" put in Adams. "This isn't a man-o'-war. You seem to forget that a pleasure yacht of this type is about the easiest-going craft on the seas. Everything's lax, and the officers will be enjoying themselves below for the most part. It'll be as safe as houses."

"Can you use the wireless all right?"

"Why, on one ship I was the wireless operator," said Adams. "There's no difficulty there. Jelks told us to get in touch with him at ten o'clock to-night—by hook or by crook. We've got to do it, Hilton—and it'll be easy. Luck's just played into our hands."

Mills, the wireless operator, was in his bunk, suffering from a bad cold, and Adams had every reason to be satisfied. Had things been otherwise, it would have been necessary to get Mills out of the way for half an hour, and that might have been a bit difficult.

Captain Jelks was on an old cargo steamer. He had started out from Bristol twelve hours before the Adventure sailed, and it was reckoned that the yacht would overhaul him some time during Wednesday night. At all events, the two vessels would be in the same latitude, approximately.

Jelks was naturally anxious to know how his agents were progressing—and so he had instructed them to send him a wireless message at ten o'clock. The old cargo steamer was slow, and it was for this reason that Jelks particularly wanted the yacht to be delayed.

Of course, I didn't know all this at the time, but I learned the main facts afterwards, and so I'm now able to set them down in their proper order. As I've explained before, too, I find it necessary to use my own imagination at times—but that's only what they call author's licence.

"There's nothing to stop us that I can see," went on Adams. "Even if we're collared in the wireless room—well, we can say we were just having a look round. They can't do much to us—and don't forget that we've got some more money to draw."

"Hang the money!" growled Hilton. "I'm thinking of getting my own back on that hound of a Dorrimore! By thunder! He knocked three of my teeth out, and he's going to pay for it!"

The two rascals were not merely actuated by desire for further financial gain. They hated Lord Dorrimore, and were only too ready to do anything which would harm his lordship. In truth, the fellows were dangerous, and all the more dangerous because they cleverly concealed their real feelings.

"We won't be seen together any more this evening," remarked Hilton. "It wouldn't

be wise, Sam. In fact, I think you'd better do this thing alone——"

"No, that would be mad," interrupted the other. "While I'm sending the message you've got to stand on guard. We'll meet outside the door of the wireless room at a quarter to ten. See?"

Hilton glanced at his watch.

"That's in an hour's time," he said. "All right, we'll let it go at that."

After a little further talk they went below singly, and took care to remain in different parts of the ship during the next hour. If they had known that Miss Eileen and I were intent upon using the wireless room that evening, they might not have been so enthusiastic.

And Eileen and I, too, were totally unaware of the true state of affairs at the time. The situation was rather interesting.

At half-past nine Lord Dorrimore and Nelson Lee were playing billiards and Handforth and Co. looked on, acting as markers. The other fellows were either reading or chatting together in the saloon.

So, ten minutes later, Eileen and I slipped out according to our arrangement and made our way to the wireless room. Aunt Esther knew all about it, and we urged her to come and take a lesson too. But the worthy old lady preferred to dip deeper into her novel—for she had reached a very intense point.

Nelson Lee promised to come along after he had finished his game with Dorrie, but it was just as well that he wasn't with us to begin with. For his presence would have altered the course of events completely.

The wireless room was a fairly big apartment amidships, for it had originally been an extra stateroom. The door was not locked—there was no reason why it should be—and we entered, laughing merrily.

I switched the light on and closed the door. The knob slipped out of my hand, and the door closed rather forcibly. Anyhow, the single electric incandescent lamp—of the metal filament type—popped out, and left us in darkness.

"Oh, bother!" exclaimed Eileen. "What happened, Nipper?"

I pressed the switch up and down, but nothing happened.

"Looks to me as though the lamp's squiffy, Miss Eileen," I replied.

"Squiffy?"

"I mean it's a dud," I grinned. "The filament's busted, I expect—or it may have been shorted for some time. That little jar just finished it off. Half a tick! I may be able to short it again."

"Will it be all right then?"

"Well, it'll do for to-night, anyhow," I replied.

I switched on my electric torch—a tiny waistcoat-pocket affair—and tapped the obstinate lamp. It positively refused to "short," in spite of all my efforts. I merely wanted to cross the broken filaments so that the circuit would be completed, when the light would appear again. But there was nothing doing.

"I shall have to go and search for another

lamp, Miss Eileen," I said impatiently. "Will you come out on deck and wait until I come back? I don't suppose I shall be gone for many minutes."

By the light from my torch Eileen had found a comfortable chair in a corner of the room, and she was already sitting in it.

"Oh, I'll stay here until you come back, Nipper," she said. "I don't mind being in the dark by myself," she added, with a little laugh.

"Right-ho!" I replied. "I sha'n't be long!"

I hurried away, closing the door after me. It was—a confounded nuisance, that lamp petering out at such a time. But electric lamps often play that trick—and it generally happens at awkward moments.

Eileen sat in the darkness, humming softly to herself. She certainly had no idea that anything startling was to occur. The whole incident was just a mere trifle. But trifles occasionally lead to big things.

About two minutes passed, and then the door-handle turned, and Eileen saw a dim figure outlined against the night sky beyond.

"Oh, you have been quick, Nipper!"

Eileen didn't actually say the words, but they were on her lips. She was prevented from doing so by the sudden realisation that the figure wasn't mine at all. In addition, a second figure had appeared.

"Hurry yourself, man!" came an impatient whisper. "We don't want to be seen coming in here. No, no! Don't put the light on!"

"I wasn't going to!" came another voice. "Do you take me for a blamed fool? We've got to do this thing in the dark, Adams. Make haste, for goodness' sake! Somebody might come along at any minute!"

"Well, you keep a sharp watch!"

Eileen hardly knew what to do. The men hadn't seen her, owing to the complete darkness—they didn't know she was within the wireless room. Her first impulse was to jump to her feet and sharply order the men away.

She knew that they were Adams and Hilton, the two rascally stewards who had been responsible for the attempted mutiny. The girl's detective instinct told her to remain perfectly still. The light wasn't going to be put on, so as long as she remained quiet there was little fear of her presence becoming known to the intruders. She was sitting in a quiet corner, right away from the instruments.

Eileen instinctively knew that the men were there for a shady purpose; and it would be all to the good if she could learn what that purpose was. Adams and Hilton were by no means silenced—they were evidently still actively engaged in work for Captain Jelks.

And so Eileen remained perfectly still.

She showed astonishing presence of mind, for if she had revealed herself the rascals would have made some plausible excuse and we should never have learned the actual truth.

Eileen quickly understood that the men had arranged this affair beforehand, and they had

no idea that the wireless room was already occupied. The girl smiled to herself as she remembered that, but for the chance breaking of the filament lamp, Adams and Hilton would never have come near—for they would have been warned by the light from the window.

"You'll never do it, Sam," muttered Hilton. "Supposing Jelks doesn't pick up your message?"

"Don't be a fool!" snapped Adams. "His ship's within fifty miles of us—"

"But what if the message is received by another ship?"

"That won't make any difference, will it?" said Adams testily. "Nobody else will be able to understand. The message is for the steamer Langland, and I shall be in communication with her in less than three minutes—if you shut up. Keep near the door and listen."

Eileen was more interested than ever. Already she had gained the information that these men were about to send a wireless message to Captain Jelks himself—who was on another ship within fifty miles!

Matters were becoming almost acute.

Eileen's great anxiety now was concerning myself. She fervently hoped that I would not return with the new lamp in the very middle of the entertainment. Eileen needn't have worried. I was grumpily descending to a distant part of the ship with one of the officers at that moment.

The girl heard Adams over at the operating-table, and it was quite obvious to her that Adams was familiar with the different switches and instruments. The reason for this was simple. Adams knew something about wireless telegraphy, having been temporary operator on another ship, and he had persuaded Mills, the Adventure's operator, to allow him the run of the wireless room. Adams was cunning.

Eileen was filled with anxiety. There were so many things that could happen to spoil the whole game. And, moreover, she was half afraid that the message would be sent out in a secret code. She knew the ordinary code, and listened intently. Some sparks from the other side of the room warned her that Adams was getting busy.

And then, a moment later, she knew that the ordinary code was being used.

"S.S. Langland," Adams tapped out.

There was a short wait, and then came the reply:

"Langland speaking. Who are you?"

"Adventure," went on Adams, operating quickly but steadily. "Failed. . . . What further orders?"

There was another pause, and Eileen became more anxious than ever. She fervently hoped that these impudent scoundrels would not be disturbed. The reply buzzed out almost angrily:

"Blunderers!" it came. "Must cause delay to-night. . . . Do anything. . . . Tamper machinery. . . . Cause serious breakage. . . . Jelks."

Adams gave a short, hard laugh.

"Shall do nothing unless promised hundred each," he tapped out.

"Curse you!" came the cheerful reply.

"Go ahead. . . . I promise."

"All right. . . . Will do utmost. . . . Adams."

All this had taken far longer to transmit and receive than it appears in print. But the job was completed successfully, and Adams rose from his chair with another laugh.

"A hundred each, Hilton!" he said. "We'll force Jelks to pay up, or he'll have to pay in another way!"

"What are you talkin' about?" growled Hilton. "I don't understand all that rubbish."

"We've got to tamper with the engines," said Adams softly. "Don't get excited! We can easily do it in the middle of the night. But let's get out of this before we're spotted! Our luck's in, old mate!"

The two men crept to the door and passed silently out on to the deck. Eileen took a deep, deep breath. She understood everything that had passed, and knew the full extent of the fresh plot. The audacity of the thing was startling, but it was comforting to know that the villains could be frustrated.

Adams and Hilton, totally unconscious of the fact that they were treading on very thin ice, went away for'ard, congratulating themselves.

They would sing a different tune before long!

CHAPTER III.

I AM SUSPICIOUS—NELSON LEE TAKES A HAND—THE PLOT FOILED.

I WAS wild.

"I don't know what the dickens Miss Eileen will think," I muttered, as I scooted up the companion stairs. "Never knew such a fuss over a giddy lamp in all my natural!"

I had been away from the wireless room for hours, so it seemed. Actually only a comparatively short time had elapsed. Dorrie hadn't known where I could lay my hands on a new lamp, and he had referred me to Mills—who was also the ship's electrician.

Mills, of course, was in his bunk, suffering from a bad cold. There wasn't much the matter with him except laziness, for I found him reading a novel and looking quite contented. He put me on the track of the electrical stores, and the third officer piloted me down. A fearful fuss over a silly electric lamp!

I had got it at last, however, and was busily framing my apologies for Eileen when I emerged upon the deck. And then I got a bit of a surprise. High up between the yacht's masts I saw one or two faint bluish sparks. I knew in a second that they came from the wireless "aerials."

"Well, I'm blessed!" I muttered. "Is Miss Eileen using the giddy instrument?"

I was very astonished. This wireless installation was of a new type—something different

from the older styles. Dorrie had had the very latest and best instruments installed only a month or two before, and the whole outfit was rather strange to me. The guv'nor had spent an hour with me in the wireless room the previous day, and I was very interested. There were novel features about this new system which I was quite anxious to describe to Eileen.

I hurried forward, very puzzled, and nearly ran headlong into Sessue Yakama, who had been leaning near the rail.

"Hallo! Feeling bad?" I asked cheerily.

"It is with pleasure that I inform you that my feelings are of the most stupendously fine quality," replied the little Japanese junior. "But wait, Bennett—please do not be in the enormous hurry——"

"Can't stop now, Jappy," I cut in, as he tugged at my sleeve.

"Oh, but I will not detain you the minute," said Yakama. "I have just witnessed the surprising happening, and I am filled with the anxiety to inform you of what has occurred——"

"Look here, my son, Miss Eileen's waiting for me in the wireless room," I interrupted him again. "She's sitting there in the dark, so you can tell me about this happening later on. Let go of my arm, there's a good chap!"

Yakama, for all his smallness, had a grip of iron, and he kept a tight hold on my sleeve.

"You have given me the big surprise," he exclaimed, with a curious note in his voice. "Is it the truth you speak when you mention that the glorious Miss Eileen is within the apartment of the wireless?"

"Of course she's there!" I said impatiently.

"Then I urge you to have the wonderful patience, Bennett," said Yakama. "You must listen to what I have to tell. I came up from the saloon to gaze upon the dark waters, and as I passed noiselessly along the deck I observed the figures of two men. They entered the wireless room—they are within that apartment now——"

"What!" I ejaculated, fully interested in a moment.

"It is the truth I have spoken, Bennett."

"Yes, yes. But how long ago was this?" I demanded.

"Scarcely five of the minutes."

"Great Scott!" I gasped, more startled by Yakama's tone than by his actual words. "Then Miss Eileen must be in there as well? Who were these men, Jappy?"

"I cannot say for the positiveness, but I believe they were Adams and Hilton——"

"You're dotty!" I cut in. "They can't be in there, you young ass! Look, there's no light——"

"That is why I was of the suspicious mind," said Yakama calmly. "I, too, perceived that they preferred the darkness. Is it not strange, Bennett?"

It was very strange indeed. The fellows couldn't use the ordinary electric light, of course; but what possible reason could they have for being in the wireless room in the darkness? They had no business there, being

stewards—and stewards are not usually familiar with wireless instruments.

But the thing was fishy, and all my suspicions were aroused. Those sparks, too, plainly indicated that the instrument was being used. This, however, didn't worry me so much as the question of Eileen. Where was she? Could she still be within the wireless room itself?

I became filled with anxiety, and questioned Yakama further. But he knew nothing more, and I was just about to make a bold step when I saw the door of the wireless room open.

"Here, quick!" I whispered.

Yakama and I dodged behind one of the lifeboats, which was suspended from its inward-slung davits. From this place of concealment we distinctly saw Adams and Hilton emerge upon the deck and walk noiselessly forward.

Their manner was stealthy, and I knew that something was gravely amiss. Just as I was about to hurry forward the door opened a second time and, to my relief, Eileen Dare appeared.

"What the dickens has been happening, Miss Eileen?" I asked, pelting to her side.

She took hold of my arm quickly.

"Oh, Nipper, such an adventure!" she whispered softly.

"By jingo! I can tell there's some excitement brewing," I said, knowing that tone of Eileen's well. "Were those chaps sending a message, Miss Eileen? And what about you? Didn't they know you were there——"

"Oh, we must go to Mr. Lee at once—at once!" interrupted the girl quickly.

Yakama, who had been hovering some little distance off—he was a very modest little individual—came over to us as I beckoned him, and we all three made for the saloon.

The Bo'sun and De Valerie and Tommy Watson and Sir Montie Tregellis-West were engaged in a quiet game of whist, and Justin B. Farman was valiantly doing his utmost to show Umlosi how to play chess.

"Where's Mr. Alvington—in the billiard-room?" I asked, touching the Bo'sun's shoulder.

"Yes, I believe so, messmate," replied that cheerful junior. "He was there ten minutes ago—— What was that you played, Watson?"

We passed on, leaving them to their amusement, and found the guv'nor having a chat with Lord Dorrimore in the billiard saloon. Handforth and Co. were trying their prowess at the table.

"Oh, I was just coming up!" remarked Nelson Lee, as he saw us enter. "Surely you haven't finished yet, Miss Dare?"

"Something has happened," said Eileen, speaking quickly. "I'm sure you won't believe me when I explain everything."

"I'm sure we shall!" said Lord Dorrimore promptly.

"I'm afraid you have been too good-natured with those men, Adams and Hilton," said Eileen. "They are still dangerous, Lord

Dorrimore, and they mean to do some mischief this very night!"

"By gad!" said Dorrie. "That's interestin'!"

"They mean to wreck the engines——"

"Oh, is that all?" asked Dorrie. "An' how do they propose to attempt that enter-tainin' experiment? An' you don't mean to tell me, Miss Dare, that the fellows took you into their confidence?"

"Don't fool about now, Dorrie," put in the guv'nor. "This seems to be serious."

It was serious, too. Miss Eileen, without any further ado, told us exactly what she had experienced in the wireless room. We listened in sheer astonishment, and I saw the guv'nor's eyes gleaming rather dangerously.

"And do you mean to say that they didn't know you were in there?" I asked wonderingly. "Well, I'm jiggered! It's a good thing you stayed behind, after all! The awful rotters!"

"Miss Dare's information is of the utmost value," said Nelson Lee. "We must congratulate you, Miss Eileen, upon your wonderful nerve. It was a splendid idea of yours to remain quiet, for we now know the exact nature of this fresh piece of mischief."

"It's comfortin' to learn that Captain Jelks is on a steamer fifty miles away," remarked Lord Dorrimore. "He might have been much nearer, an' that would have been awkward. I've never had the pleasure of meetin' Captain Jelks, but I should say he's quite a hefty fellow. He seems determined to leave us stranded in mid-ocean, doesn't he?"

"The man's absolutely unscrupulous," exclaimed the guv'nor. "I warned you, Dorrie, that Adams and Hilton were merely lying low. But for Miss Eileen's shrewdness this evening Jelks might have succeeded in his evil designs. Those rascals must be made harmless at once."

"But my dear man, we can't pitch them overboard," protested his lordship. "That's the only way of renderin' them harmless that I can think of. We don't happen to have a small edition of Dartmoor on board!"

"Nevertheless, Captain Burton will be fully justified in clapping the pair into irons," said the guv'nor firmly. "They are cunning and determined, and we should be foolish in the extreme if we allowed them to have the run of the ship for another hour. We shall take in coal at a South American port, and the beauties can be landed there."

Lord Dorrimore sighed.

"It's all very disturbin', but I'll leave it to you, old man," he said. "Only, don't expect me to take any part in the arrest. That's your job, you bein' a full-blown detective!"

I gave Dorrie a violent nudge, for Handforth and Co. were listening eagerly, and I saw them exchange a wondering glance at that last statement of Dorrie's. But they only concluded that his lordship was trying to be funny—as usual. But Dorrie was the most thoughtless beggar on the face of the earth.

"I'm ever so glad you didn't come back

quickly, Nipper," whispered Eileen into my private ear. "I was afraid all the time that you would arrive before I had overheard those messages."

"It was just luck, Miss Eileen," I replied. "I was delayed over the lamp, and then Yakama gave me the tip when I came on deck. But just fancy you sitting in there, listening to everything and saying nothing! Oh, it's rich!"

"Those foolish men!" said Eileen. "They deserve to be severely punished, and——"

Eileen paused as Handforth edged over towards us.

"I say, Benny, this is a nice go, ain't it?" he said excitedly. "We should have been in a fix if our engines had been monkeyed with during the night. Those two chaps ought to be made to walk the plank!"

"They deserve it," I said grimly. "But it's Captain Jelks who's the real culprit, don't forget. These fellows are only doing his dirty work for him. I wish we had Jelks himself on board!"

McClure had been sent off for Captain Burton, and the bluff old skipper arrived a minute or two later. He listened with growling indignation as the story was again repeated.

"By ginger! We'll deal with the dogs at once!" he exclaimed. "It wouldn't do to wait until they've started their infernal work. Any big delay now would give Jelks the advantage—and the ruffian appears to be absolutely determined to go to this island of mine. What do you propose, Mr. Alvington?"

"There is only one course to pursue," said Nelson Lee. "You must have a temporary prison prepared, Captain Burton, and we will lock the couple up until we reach port. And after that I will have a word with Captain Jelks," he added grimly.

It was decided that the skipper and Dorrie and the guv'nor should face Adams and Hilton at once. Handforth and Co. badly wanted to accompany the party, but Nelson Lee denied them this pleasure. I naturally went as a matter of course.

The two men were in their sleeping quarters. They were not undressed, but sat smoking and talking, and rose respectfully as the captain appeared. They looked quite innocent, but I noticed that Adams had turned slightly pale.

"You must consider yourselves under arrest," said the skipper bluntly.

"Under arrest, sir?" repeated Hilton, in a tone of surprise.

"You need not adopt that tone, my man," said Captain Burton grimly. "I am well aware of the fact that you have been plotting together, and that you were in wireless communication with Captain Jelks less than half an hour ago. I shall give you no opportunity of tampering with the yacht's machinery!"

Adams and Hilton were staggered.

"I—I don't know what you mean, sir?" panted Adams. "How should we be able

to use the wireless? There—there must be a mistake, sir——”

“Yes, there has been a mistake,” interrupted Captain Burton grimly—“a mistake on my part. You ought to have been placed in irons days ago—that’s the mistake. You infernal traitors! Haven’t you got enough sense to know that——”

“It’s a trumped-up charge!” snarled Hilton desperately. “We’ve done nothing; we don’t know anything about Captain Jelks! Hang you!”

And Hilton, mad with alarm and fury, charged forward like an insane being. He took the skipper rather by surprise, but Captain Burton quickly recovered. There was a wild struggle for a few moments. Nelson Lee and Dorrie took an active part in it, whilst I stood back, looking on with great pleasure.

The two plotting stewards were rendered helpless after a few blows had been exchanged. Several other men were called, and Hilton and Adams were marched off to their temporary prison in charge of Mr. Scott.

“Well, it’s a good thing, perhaps,” remarked Lord Dorrimore, as we walked aft. “I shouldn’t have slept comfortably, by gad, if those merchants had been free. Goodness knows what they would have been up to next, they might even have blown us all up with dynamite.”

“Why, we’ve got no explosives on board,” I grinned.

“That’s all you know, my son,” said Dorrie. “I’ve been in the habit of visitin’ wild spots with this yacht, where the natives are highly educated in the art of murderin’ an’ eatin’ strangers. An’ there’s a special strong room below, choked up with dynamite an’ gun-cotton an’ all sorts of fifth of November stuff.”

“My hat! That’s comforting, anyhow,” I remarked. “If we happen to strike an iceberg we might go sky-high for a change——”

“You young ass!” chuckled Nelson Lee. “It would be decidedly interesting to meet with an iceberg in these seas.”

“Don’t talk about it,” groaned Dorrie. “I’ve been longin’ for icebergs all day. Nothing would please me better than to run across one. But what’s the next move, colonel? Ain’t you going to ring up Jelks? What’s his number?”

“He’s on the Langland, according to Miss Eileen,” replied the guv’nor. “Yes, we’ll go along to the wireless room and get the thing over at once. The crafty Captain Jelks will receive something of a shock, I believe.”

We entered the wireless room, but the light was still out of order. I had left the new lamp behind the lifeboat where Yakama and I crouched. I ran and fetched it, and in less than a minute we were looking round the wireless room with interest.

It was quite easy to understand how Eileen had escaped detection. The chair she had occupied was in one corner, and practically concealed from that portion of the room where Adams and Hilton had stood.

Nelson Lee sat down at the operating table, whilst Dorrie and I stood near by, watching him.

“I used to have one of those old-fashioned wireless affairs on board,” said his lordship. “You know, Nipper, a frightful contrivance. Sparks flyin’ out all over the show yards long. It fairly scared me. I hate monkeyin’ with electricity. This system ain’t so complicated, is it?”

“The other wasn’t, except to nervous chaps like you,” I grinned. “But I’ll admit this outfit is first-rate. It’s as simple as A B C——”

“Dry up you young jabberer,” whispered Dorrie. “The professor’s ringin’ up the exchange. Ain’t all this dot an’ dash business a bally bore?”

Nelson Lee picked the s.s. Langland within two minutes. The reply was prompt and clear, and I judged that Jelks’s ship was only a few miles distant—perhaps only just below the horizon.

“Yes—Langland replying,” tapped out the instrument. “Who are you?”

“Adventure,” replied the guv’nor. “Are you Jelks?”

“Yes.”

“News for you—Adams and Hilton in irons—your rascally plot defeated—advise you give up game, Jelks—too dangerous for you.”

There was a pause before the reply came.

“Who is sending message?”

“Lord Dorrimore,” tapped out Lee, grinning.

“It’s the same thing, anyhow,” he remarked, as we waited for the reply. “Now we shall hear something complimentary I expect, Dorrie.”

“Oh, good!”

The reply came almost at once:

“Am sorry for you—look out for squalls—game not finished yet—Burton may be smart, but Captain Jelks can go one better—we shall meet soon.”

The communication ceased there, and Nelson Lee did not send any further message. He rose from his chair, smiling, and Lord Dorrimore looked disappointed.

“That was the usual code, wasn’t it?” he asked.

“Yes. Why?”

“Well, I’m disappointed,” said his lordship. “Jelks wasn’t even abusive, an’ I was expectin’ such a beautiful flow of choice language, too! Jelks ain’t such a sport as I took him to be. Threats ain’t much, anyhow.”

“I suppose the chap’s nearly knocked over with rage,” I put in. “He must know that his game’s all U P. What do you think, guv’nor?”

Nelson Lee regarded me steadily.

“Well, Nipper, to tell the truth, I have an idea that Jelks isn’t done with yet,” he replied. “From what I have learned of him he is a most determined individual, and, scoundrel though he is, I must acknowledge that I have a certain sneaking admiration——”

"Oh, come!" protested Lord Dorrimore.

"Jelks is by no means a common ruffian," went on the gov'nor. "Within the last ten minutes he has given us proof of that. If he had descended to abuse just now I should have laughed at him. But he didn't; he merely declared that the game is not finished, and asserted that he could go one better than us. Well, there is some pleasure in fighting a man of that sort."

"Well, it certainly adds to the excitement," agreed Dorrimore, yawning. "Let's go down an' tell all the others. The boys, I know, are simply bubblin' with curiosity."

And without delay we went below.

CHAPTER IV.

DORRIE IS RASH—THE S.O.S. MESSAGE—OFF TO THE RESCUE.

BREAKFAST the following morning was enlivened by the blundering thoughtlessness of Lord Dorrimore. There was nothing very surprising in this, for Dorrie was about the clumsiest fellow on the face of the earth. If he wasn't blundering in one way he was putting his foot into something in another.

The weather was beautiful, and the saloon skylights were wide open above us. Needless to say, there was a considerable amount of laughter and talk. Captain Burton sat at one end of the huge dining-table, and Lord Dorrimore at the other. I sat next to the latter, with Nelson Lee opposite. Eileen was by my side, and Sir Montie and Tommy and two or three others occupied the same side of the table. The rest of the guests were facing us.

"Of course, there's no tellin'," remarked Dorrie, speaking on the subject of storms. "We may hit somethin' big, but it doesn't matter if we do. The yacht's capable of sailin' through cyclones by the score. We should only be turned upside down once or twice——"

"Oh, really!" exclaimed Aunt Esther in alarm.

"My dear Miss Gilbey, you mustn't take any notice of Lord Dorrimore," said Nelson Lee with a chuckle. "I have long since learned to ignore all he says."

"Oh, glory!" groaned Dorrie, looking round at the grinning faces. "What a character to give an honest, hard-workin'——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"By gad! Where's the joke?" asked his lordship mildly.

"It doesn't want much finding, Dorrie!" chuckled the gov'nor.

"You don't seem to realise, Lee, old man, that my brain ain't capable of graspin' these subtle points," complained Dorrimore. "That's the worst of havin' a pal like the celebrated Mr. Nelson Lee," added Dorrie, appealing to the company in general. "He's got a brain like—— By gad!"

His lordship paused abruptly and stared

at me. His expression was one of mild astonishment and concern. I had twice kicked his shin, and was now making faces at him to the very best of my ability, and to judge by Dorrie's expression I must have succeeded pretty well.

The truth was, Dorrie had put his foot into it. He completely forgot that Nelson Lee was known as "Mr. Alvington" at St. Frank's, and that the secret was only known to Watson and Tregellis-West and the Bo'sun—all the other fellows in the party had no idea that "Old Alvy" was Nelson Lee and that I was Nipper. And here was our host jawing away as though everything was as usual!

The gov'nor merely sat in his place smiling, but I couldn't contain myself. Handforth and Co. and De Valerie and the others had paused in their eating, and were looking up the table with grinning astonishment.

Lord Dorrimore stared at me blankly.

"Somethin' gone the wrong way, old man?" he asked with concern.

I turned scarlet.

"No—I'm all right!" I gasped. "I—I was only trying to catch your eye, Dorrie."

"What the dooce for?"

"Oh!" I panted. "Ain't you got a memory?"

The position was growing worse. The juniors couldn't understand the affair, of course, but everybody else could. Eileen sat next to me, quite serious, and somehow I felt an awful fool. My private signs had been made public in the most absurd manner.

"A memory?" repeated Dorrie. "Now, when you come to mention it, Nipper, I believe I did have one knockin' about somewhere. Perhaps I left it at St. Frank's, or Umlosi may have pinched it——"

"Wau! Thou art even as the dullard, N'Kose!" rumbled Umlosi.

"Thanks awfully!"

"Hast thou not been warned to keep thy tongue within check?" went on Umlosi. "Even I have remembered Umtagati's wise words. And thou hast even referred to Manzie here, by a name which——"

"Great Scott!" gasped Lord Dorrimore with a start.

He turned pink, and looked at Nelson Lee with an expression of comical alarm which caused the gov'nor to burst out laughing.

"I say, old man," said Dorrie, in a stage whisper, plunging further into the mire in his efforts to extricate himself—for that whisper could have been heard in the fo'c'sle. "I'm awfully sorry, but I forgot what you told me about the kids not bein' in the know. Nipper's a young ass for not clumpin' on my foot harder!"

"Oh, my only hat!" I gasped faintly.

"Begad!" breathed Sir Montie Tregellis-West. "The cat's out of the bag now, dear fellows—it is, really!"

"What cat?" demanded Handforth, from

across the table. "What's all this giddy mystery? Blessed if I can understand!"

"Say, I don't guess it's any concern of ours, anyway," put in Justin B. Farman diplomatically.

But the incident could not be passed off easily. Dorrmore attempted to cover his slip, but only made matters worse.

"The fact is," he said, grinning hugely, "I've got into a silly habit of callin' Mr. Alvin'ton by another name. Of course it's rot. He's a keen sort of chap, an' so I thought Nelson Lee would be a good nickname——"

"No, no, Dorrie; it won't do," interrupted the guv'nor gently. "These boys are quite sharp, believe me, and they won't be put off with that thin yarn. As a matter of fact I was thinking of letting them into the secret, so you have succeeded in opening the subject admirably."

"By Jove! That's comfortin'!" said Dorrie.

"What secret, sir?" asked Handforth, who was bubbling with curiosity.

"By jings!" exclaimed Captain Burton. "I was wondering what you would do, Mr. Lee. It'll be all the better if things are made clear. We're just a big party together, and it doesn't seem right to have any secrets."

"That was my idea exactly, captain," agreed the other. "All these boys are to be trusted, or they would not be with us. And, since we are to be together for several weeks to come, they may as well know that I am not Mr. Alvington."

Handforth and Co. and the others looked blank.

"Not—not Mr. Alvington!" gasped Handforth. "Oh, rot! I—I mean—— I beg your pardon, sir, but it's a bit too thick! Why, how can you be anybody else but Mr. Alvington?"

Nelson Lee smiled.

"I am not impersonating Mr. Alvington, if that is what you imagine, Handforth," he replied. "'Mr. Alvington' is merely a name, just as 'Dick Bennett' is merely a name. I can see that I have puzzled you more than ever," he added, as the fellows looked up the table with open amazement.

"We can't understand at all, sir," said De Valerie.

"Our comprehension is wonderfully fogged, honoured sir," murmured Yakama. "It would be the esteemed favour if you would elucidate the mysterious atmosphere which has surrounded the honourable discussion."

Everybody laughed, and I felt relieved. Upon the whole, it was far better for the juniors to know the actual truth.

"I dare say you have heard of a famous gentleman known as Mr. Nelson Lee?" exclaimed Lord Dorrmore, waving his hand. "He's an energetic fellow, who spends most of his life in huntin' down Johnnies who are runnin' off with other people's property. He's a kind of Scotland Yard all rolled into one man——"

"My dear Dorrie, please let me explain," said Nelson Lee.

"But I'm blessed if I can see any connection, sir!" protested Handforth. "We've all heard of Mr. Nelson Lee, of course. Who the dickens hasn't? Ain't he one of the finest detectives under the sun? And there's Nipper, too—old Lee's ripping young assistant. I've often heard of him, the cheeky young bounder!"

"Compliments are flying," I murmured, chuckling.

"It's a good thing old Lee's good-tempered," said Dorrie, grinning. "Otherwise, Handforth, my beauty, you'd catch several things in the neck. Why, bless my heart, I believe you're as dense as I am! Can't you see that you're looking straight at Mr. Nelson Lee now?"

The fellows stared wonderingly.

"Lord Dorrmore is quite right, boys," said the guv'nor. "I am Nelson Lee, and the boy you have known as 'Bennett' is that 'cheeky young bounder,' Nipper. You are amazed, no doubt, but it is perfectly true."

"Great pip!" gasped McClure.

"A bit of a shock—what?" said De Valerie calmly.

He was the only one who took the revelation coolly; the others forgot all about their breakfast, and sat in their seats, wondering if this was some colossal joke. It took five solid minutes to convince them that it was the actual truth.

Nelson Lee explained exactly why we had abandoned our own identities for the time being; he went into details concerning the events connected with the murderous Chinese society, the Fu Chang Tong. The death-sentence had been passed on us, and it had been highly necessary for us to make ourselves scarce. And so we had sought sanctuary at St. Frank's—and had found it.

The juniors, Handforth and Co. particularly, were tremendously excited. It was quite certain that the news was greatly to their liking. As Handforth remarked to his chums later on, Nelson Lee and Nipper were miles better than Mr. Alvington and Dick Bennett any day. There was something romantic in the whole affair, and the guv'nor and I were great heroes in the Removites' eyes.

"You all realise why the secret has been so carefully kept," said Nelson Lee, in conclusion. "Our very lives depended upon the fact that our identities were concealed. But there is no reason why we should not know one another on board Lord Dorrmore's yacht."

"But—but do you mean to say that you'll always remain Mr. Alvington, sir?" asked Handforth wonderingly.

"That won't be necessary, my boy," replied Lee. "The danger will be practically over by the time we reach England again. But I do not intend to worry myself on that point. We must enjoy ourselves during this holiday."

"Will you become your real self as soon as we get back to St. Frank's, sir?" asked

De Valerie. "An' will Bennett become Nipper?"

"It's quite probable, De Valerie."

"Oh, I say, that's rather rotten, sir."

"Why?"

"Well, sir, it'll mean that you an' Nipper will leave St. Frank's," replied De Valerie.

"An' it would be rotten there without you, sir."

"Oh, rather!"

"Awful, sir."

"It wouldn't be the same place without you, sir."

"Or Benny, either!"

"Oh, you can't be serious, sir!"

Handforth and Co. and De Valerie and Farman spoke all in one voice, and their tone was one of deep concern and dismay. And during the momentary silence which followed Yakama had his say.

"It is with the greatest confidence that I refuse to credit the absurd and preposterous idea that you will leave the noble school, Mr. Alvington," he said stoutly. "It would be the misfortune for everybody, and the august Remove would be in the great dejection over the absence of Bennett."

Nobody was smiling now, and the gov'nor was rather touched by this impulsive exhibition of loyalty on the part of the juniors. And I was rather alarmed myself. I had no wish to leave St. Frank's.

"Begad! You ain't goin'?" asked Sir Montie blankly.

"Tain't likely!" snorted Watson.

"I don't know—it's for the gov'nor to say," I replied.

Nelson Lee was smiling genially.

"Thank you, boys," he said. "I am glad to know that you would notice my absence from St. Frank's—"

"Notice it, sir!" echoed Handforth.

"Why, St. Frank's wouldn't be St. Frank's at all if you went away! You ain't going, are you, sir?"

"Well, not immediately, Handforth—perhaps not for quite a long while," replied Nelson Lee, to my relief. "Whether I return to my own identity or not, I shall continue to conduct the Ancient House at St. Frank's, and Nipper will remain in the Remove. But we need not discuss these school matters now, surely? It will be a long while before we get back to Old England."

And, for the time, the matter was dropped.

But the juniors, after breakfast, collected in a crowd on deck and animatedly discussed the situation. I was called upon to explain matters in full, and I did so several times.

"Just fancy you being Nipper!" said Handforth, staring at me as though I were some antique curiosity. "I didn't mean that about you being a cheeky young bouncer, of course. But you are a bouncer, anyhow! Keeping us in the dark all this giddy time! It's a wonder I didn't jump to it!"

"What were you thinkin' of, Handy boy?" murmured Sir Montie mildly. "It's amazin' that your mighty brain—"

"None of your sarcasm," grunted Hand-

forth. "Now I can understand why Benny was always running to Old Alvy's study. Well, it's jolly queer!"

"Say, it's just great!" remarked Farman. "I guess you kept it good and dark, Bennett— Gee! That ain't right, is it? This is sure some stunt! Nelson Lee and Nipper toting around with us! Why, say, I don't care a doggone cuss about that blamed Jelks; we've got 'tects aboard—the real, gilt-edged, original articles!"

I laughed.

"Well, let's jaw about something else," I said. "I'm fed up with talking about myself. I'm not like Handforth—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Eh? What's that?" demanded Edward Oswald, who was chatting with the Bo'sun. "I heard my name, didn't I?"

"I was only saying that I'm not like you, Handy," I grinned. "I'm a modest sort of chap—"

"Well, ain't I modest?" roared Handforth.

"Oh, yes—about as modest as a Prussian —"

"Are you calling me a rotten Hun?" demanded Handforth warmly. "Look hefe, I ain't standing these insults, although you may be a giddy detective! Help me to chuck this chap overboard, you fellows!"

Church and McClure grinned, and everybody else grinned.

"We ain't at St. Frank's now, Handy," I exclaimed. "You can't throw your weight about just as you like. If you ain't careful, my son, I'll tell old Umlosi to tie you into knots. But that comparison was a bit off-side just now, and I apologise humbly—"

"Oh, well, we won't say any more!" said Handforth, mollified.

"Begad! You don't really mean that, Handy?" asked Sir Montie languidly. "Ain't it surprisin', dear old boys? Handy ain't goin' to say any more— Hallo, Charles Dickens will fall overboard if we ain't careful!"

Box, my new possession, was standing beneath the lower rail on the port side, gazing down into the sea in the most fearless fashion. But he had been on board long enough to know that a swim would be fatal. He came trotting along the deck as I called him. He was as sharp as a needle, and had already learnt his new name.

"Good old boy!" I said, patting him.

For some little time I amused myself and my chums by attempting to teach Box a few tricks. He was a playful little beggar, though, and wouldn't take me seriously. And after that a slight diversion was caused by the sighting of a big passenger liner. We passed quite close, and signals were exchanged.

She was British, and bound for Southampton. Except for this one vessel, we didn't sight any other craft during the whole day, for we were not taking one of the crowded ocean thoroughfares.

The day was hotter than ever, for with



Great masses of smoke rose from the doomed ship's decks, now and then blotting her out from our view as we watched the nearest of her boats approach.—(See page 15.)

very beat of the engines we went further south. The sun beat down pitilessly, and during the afternoon practically everybody lolled about doing nothing.

So far as we could see, the voyage would be uneventful until we arrived at our destination. There wasn't anything to happen, anyhow. Captain Jelks's agents were out of harm's way, and the rest of the crew were staunch.

It was quite exciting, therefore, when the news buzzed round after dinner that evening that a wireless message of distress had been received. Mills was at his post again, and he had sent word to the captain by one of the men.

The skipper at the time was in the lounge with the rest of us, listening to Eileen singing. He took the message with a frown from the steward who brought it, but at once jumped to his feet as he read the brief lines.

"By jings!" he muttered. "Just look at this, Lord Dorrimore."

I looked over at them with some impatience; it was shockingly rude to jaw like that while Eileen was singing. But I knew in a moment, by the expression on Captain Burton's face, that something very unusual was in the wind.

"Gad! The S.O.S.!" I heard Dorrie exclaim, with a whistle.

He and the skipper and Nelson Lee made a hurried excuse and left the lounge. And I am afraid I completely forgot that Eileen was in the midst of a song. I bent over towards Montie and Tommy and imparted the news.

"The S.O.S.!" repeated Watson quickly. "Rats! That's the signal of extreme distress, ain't it?"

"Yes."

"How the dickens can a ship be in distress in weather like this?"

"I suppose you've never heard of derelicts, have you?" I asked. "Derelicts often cause disasters at sea. And there are dozens of reasons for accidents in the most glorious weather. By jingo! I wonder if the skipper will hurry off to the rescue?"

"Is anything the matter, boys?"

It was Eileen who spoke. She had finished her song, and had now swung round on the piano-stool and was regarding us smilingly. Handforth and Co. were glaring.

"Oh, I'm awfully sorry, Miss Eileen," I apologised. "That steward just brought down a wireless message. There's a ship in distress, and it sent out the S.O.S. signal —"

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Aunt Esther, holding up her hands.

"It may not be anything serious, auntie," said Eileen gently. "Oh, but we must know for certain. Shall we go on deck?"

There was an immediate rush, and we were soon on deck. It wasn't dark by any means, but the sun was almost on the horizon, sinking amidst a mass of gloriously tinted, fleecy clouds.

Umlosi grasped my shoulder.

"What is this news, O Manzie?" he asked. "I have heard N'Kose speak of the messages which come through the air as though by magic. It is whispered that another great floating kraal, even as this, is on the point of sinking into the great waters."

"I'm blessed if I know, Umlosi," I replied. "There's a signal of distress been received, I believe. But I don't know any details. Where's Umtagati? Oh, there he is — Hi, guv'nor!"

Nelson Lee had just stepped out of the wireless room with Dorrie and Captain Burton, and they walked briskly along the deck towards us. His lordship and the skipper were looking serious, but Lee's expression was one of thoughtful speculation.

"A false alarm, sir?" I asked.

"No, Nipper," was the guv'nor's reply. "It appears that a French freight steamer is in sore distress about fifteen miles to the south-west. We have just been in communication with her, and she is urgently appealing for help."

"Are we going to the rescue, sir?" asked half a dozen voices.

"Our course is being altered even at this moment," replied Lee. "Now, boys, you needn't get excited. Nothing will happen for over half an hour, at the very earliest."

"Oh, what is wrong with the ship, Mr. Lee?" asked Eileen.

"It appears that she is seriously on fire —"

"Oh, my hat!" I cut in. "Then it is serious!"

"At least, so it seems," said Lee slowly. "The vessel is the Dieppe, of Marseilles, and she is carrying an inflammable cargo, which is well alight in both holds. She has already been abandoned, I believe, and the officers and crew are standing by in the boats."

"What do you mean by 'so it seems,' sir?" I asked keenly.

"Well, to tell the truth, I have been wondering if this is merely another trick of Jelks's," replied the guv'nor quietly. "It certainly does not seem probable, but we cannot be too careful."

"Oh, Mr. Lee, how can it be a trick?" asked Eileen. "It's a French ship, isn't it? We shall know as soon as we come within sight of her whether she is really on fire or not."

Nelson Lee nodded.

"Yes, I think we may safely conclude that this is no further cunning on the part of our crafty enemy," he said. "At the same time, it is just as well to be on our guard. As you say, Miss Eileen, we shall know the actual truth as soon as we sight the distressed vessel."

After that we crowded along the rail for'ard and kept a sharp look-out ahead. Personally, I couldn't see how Jelks could have any hand in this affair. There would be no object in sending out such a wireless, unless it was to cause us delay by taking us out of our course.

But, then, the delay would be trivial — only an hour or two — and the game wouldn't

be worth the candle. In any case, we should find out for certain before darkness came. There was much speculative talk amongst the juniors, and not a little excitement.

"Of course, it's necessary for us to go," I said thoughtfully. "But it'll be a bit awkward with a crowd of Frenchmen on board. What the dickens shall we do with 'em? We can't take 'em with us all the way to South America."

"Why, it's easy, shipmate," said the Bo'sun. "We shall have to transfer the poor chaps on to a homeward-bound ship. We're certain to pass a lot of vessels when we get more to the southward."

"Hallo! What's that cloud over there?" asked Handforth suddenly.

It was merely a cloud in the sky; but Handforth was very eager to catch sight of the distressed ship first. It was the lookout, above, who called down the first word some twenty minutes later.

A column of smoke had appeared, and this certainly proved that the gov'nor's suspicions were wrong. Shortly afterwards we saw the smoke column ourselves. As the dusk deepened, the column grew in size—a great black mass of smoke rising skywards.

A further wait, and then the ill-fated vessel came within sight. So far as we could see, she was a dirty old tramp steamer, and smoke was pouring from her holds in great billowing waves.

No other vessel was in sight, and we bore down upon the Dieppe at full speed.

CHAPTER V.

GENERAL EXCITEMENT—CAPTAIN JELKS SHOWS HIS HAND—TRICKED!

EXCITEMENT reigned on board the Adventure.

It was subdued for the most part; only Handforth and Co. were really bubbling over with it. The crew were too busy carrying out Captain Burton's orders to think of much else. Lifeboats were being swung out on their davits, their covers removed, and everything prepared for immediate launching.

It would probably be unnecessary to lower them all, but it was just as well to be on the safe side. I was leaning over the rail with Montie and Tommy close beside me. Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore were upon the bridge with the skipper.

The blazing ship was only a few hundred yards away from us. At least, she must have been blazing internally, although there was nothing to be seen on the outside. The great masses of smoke which rose from her decks, fore and aft, blotted her out now and again. She lay on the calm water, motionless, helpless, and pitiful to look upon. Although only a rusty old tramp, it was sad to see her in such a plight. The French merchant flag fluttered idly from her mast in the light breeze.

"I expect she's nearly red-hot under the

water-line," I remarked. "I can't say I like the look of the crew much; they seem a pretty rough crowd."

"They ain't French," remarked Watson critically.

"They might be Portuguese or Dutch, but they've probably mixed," I replied. "Just because she's a French ship it doesn't mean to say her crew's French. I've seen British steamers with nobody British on 'em except the officers."

"Begad! That doesn't seem right, Benny," remarked Sir Montie.

"Well, it isn't right—but it's a fact," I replied. "This crowd looks pretty miserable."

"Well, I don't suppose you'd be exactly happy if this yacht caught fire and you had to take to the giddy boats," said Tommy Watson. "Some of 'em have been getting it in the neck, too," he added.

Many of the Dieppe's crew were certainly the worse for wear. Eight or nine men were roughly bandaged about the face and hands. Two officers in the nearest boat were so bandaged, in fact, that their faces were smothered. They looked weak and hatless.

"Poor chaps," said Sir Montie feelingly.

"They must have been trying to get the fire under control," I said. "By the looks of 'em they put up a brave fight. Fires at sea are fearful—"

"But there isn't any fire, you ass!" said Handforth, who was near me. "It's only a lot of beastly black smoke."

"You can't have smoke without fire, you silly cuckoo!" I replied. "And just because we can't see the flames it doesn't mean that there isn't any fire. I expect the holds are red-hot. The cargo must be smouldering."

Handforth snorted.

"Well, it's rotten," he said. "I was expecting to see a ripping blaze—like I've read about in stories. You know, the whole ship blazing from end to end, with the flames leaping sky-high, in livid tongues—"

"Eh?" said McClure.

"In livid tongues," repeated Handforth firmly. "The sparks flying in myriads, and men throwing themselves into the shark-infested water, scorched, and with their clothing on fire in a dozen different places. The sharks snapping their teeth, and swallowing the poor, brave fellows, and with the water turned crimson—"

"You bloodthirsty bounder!" I gasped.

"Did you learn that bit by heart, Handy?" asked McClure.

Handforth turned red.

"Look here!" he roared. "I don't want any of your rot—"

"Oh, all right," said McClure. "Don't make a fuss now. I know what I'm talking about, though. I read that book myself, and I remember all that stuff about flames and burning men and sharks—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth glared helplessly, and was trying to think of a suitable retort, when a shout came from the nearest boat. We

leaned over and listened. The man was speaking in French, of course.

"What's he saying?" asked Handforth.

"You've got ears, haven't you?" I asked.

"And you know French, I suppose?"

"I know decent French," said Handforth gruffly. "How do you expect me to understand this chap's rough lingo?"

"Begad, we don't expect you to understand, Handy boy," murmured Sir Montie.

"We don't expect you to understand any French, you bein' the poorest French scholar in the Remove——"

"What?" roared Handforth.

"Accordin' to M'sieur Leblanc, our respected French master," added Tregellis-West calmly. "It ain't my opinion, Handy. I wouldn't express my opinion of your French—you might feel inclined to fight me, begad!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth, at a loss for words, moved further along the rail with the grinning Church and McClure. And we turned our attention to the proceedings again. The Frenchman had been shouting that we had better lose no time, as there were explosives among the cargo in the forward hold.

"My hat!" said Watson. "That's silly, isn't it? Why haven't the idiots rowed away from the danger? We might be blown up ourselves if that ship suddenly goes sky high——"

"Rot," I interrupted. "We shall be all right. They're coming aboard in about two ticks."

The accommodation-ladder had already been lowered, and the yacht lay motionless upon the calm sea, except for an occasional roll in the steady swell. One by one the Dieppe's boats came alongside and discharged their cargoes of men.

There were three boats, each containing ten men, so that our visitors numbered thirty all told. The fellows stood about the deck, looking round them in a dull, listless kind of way.

"I don't suppose they've had any sleep for days," I remarked. "By jingo! We shall have to do something with 'em; we can't take all this crowd along. They seem too tired to even speak amongst themselves."

"It's queer, Benny," said Sir Montie slowly.

We looked on with interest. It was very nearly dark by this time, for the gloom had settled down rapidly. Sir Montie and Tommy and I were right up forward, and old Umlosi was quite near to us.

"Suppose we go along and have a chat with the survivors?" I suggested. "We seem to have become isolated up here——"

"Nay, Manzie, do thou remain quiet," interrupted Umlosi, laying a huge hand upon my shoulder. "N'Kose will not welcome thy friendly advances just now—neither will he of the great beard, Captain Burton. We are but spectators, and must remain inactive."

"I suppose you're right, Umlosi," I replied. "They're jolly busy amidships, and we don't want to butt in. Let's wait here

until all the excitement's over. That looks like the skipper," I added, nodding.

The last man had just mounted to the deck. I judged that he was the skipper by his uniform; but his face was evidently seriously burned, for the bandages covered his head almost entirely. His hands, too, were swathed in white lint.

"Begad!" murmured Sir Montie suddenly.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"There's somethin'—somethin'——"

"Well?" I said, as Montie paused.

"Oh, nothin', Benny!" exclaimed Tregellis-West calmly.

"First you say there's somethin', and then you say there's nothin'!" I retorted, giving Montie a punch. "Going dotty, you ass?"

Sir Montie smiled at me.

"Dear fellow, I don't want you to think I'm off my rocker—I don't, really," he observed. "But, begad, there's somethin' about that man's figure which seems familiar. I may be wrong—I expect I am wrong—but just look for yourself, old boy."

Montie's tone was quite serious, and I gave the man a look of attention. So far I had only glanced at him, but now I stared. Electric lights were gleaming in the cabins, and the glow streamed out upon the decks brightly. And I could distinctly see the captain's figure.

"Why, there's nothing——" I paused.

"Oh, rot! You can't mean to say that you suspect the fellow of being Captain Jelks, Montie?"

"So you've seen the similarity, too?" asked Montie quietly.

I was rather startled. I should never have dreamed of suspecting the thing but for Montie's warning. His eyes were amazingly keen, in spite of their habitual expression of languor. And he had seen something which I had missed. But it was too absurd!

"The bandages," went on Tregellis-West. "Don't you see the idea, dear old boys? They disguise his face splendidly. Mr. Lee's busy, or he would have noticed it. But a man can't have his eyes everywhere, begad! We're doin' nothin', an' so we can pay attention——"

"Oh, rot, Montie!" I interrupted uneasily. "It can't be true."

But just at that moment something extraordinary happened. The bandaged skipper was talking to Captain Burton—or, at least, he was facing him. To my amazement, he tore his bandages off with one swing of the hand, and then whipped out two enormous revolvers!

"Now, men!" he roared in tremendous tones. "Out with 'em!"

For just one moment there was dead silence on the deck. Then a bellow came from Lord Dorrimore, a furious outburst from Captain Burton, and shouts and yells of all descriptions.

The man was Captain Jelks, after all!

In that one second I knew that we had been tricked—and cleverly tricked, too. The whole thing was a masterpiece of cunning

and ingenuity. This became very apparent after a few more seconds had passed.

"The first man who moves will be shot down like a dog!" roared Captain Jelks. "Mr. Larson, see that your men cover everybody within sight."

"Ay, ay, sir!" came the voice of Bill Larson.

"You infernal scoundrel!" shouted Captain Burton. Do you think——"

"Cut that stuff out, Burton!" said Jelks jeeringly. "If you move, you'll be dead inside five seconds. And if any members of your crew move they'll be dead a sight quicker! We're armed—every man of us. Get that fact rammed home. Resistance won't be healthy. You've just got to surrender!"

And the words of Captain Jelks were absolutely true!

We had to surrender—there was nothing else for it. We had plenty of firearms on board, of course. But only Dorrie and the guv'nor carried revolvers. And to start blazing away with them with thirty armed men on the decks would have been a sheer act of madness. Nelson Lee and Dorrie knew it, and so they stood perfectly still.

"Fell into the trap nicely, didn't you?" went on Jelks. "I was half afraid you'd be too smart for me, but I've been too smart for you. If you've got any firearms knockin' about you'd best play no monkey tricks. If one o' my men gits a bullet you'll be mown down in dozens!"

"You confounded rascal!" roared Captain Burton helplessly. "By the Lord Harry! You'll have to pay for this——"

"Don't you git excited, now!" jeered Jelks. "Every man on board this craft has got to transfer on to that old tank yonder—savvy? An' you'll go first, Cap'n Burton—you an' all the swell passengers!"

"But, I say," protested Lord Dorrimore calmly, "you can't do that, Captain Jelks. You're an awfully smart beggar, an' I must admit that you've properly dished us this time. But, by gad, I have rooted objections to hein' roasted alive!"

Jelks laughed harshly.

"You won't git roasted!" he said. "There ain't no fire aboard that craft—it was jest smoke, so's to trick you. I couldn't ha' done the trick in broad daylight, so I timed it for late evenin'. Smart, ain't I?"

"You are, cap'n—durned smart!" remarked Mr. Larson.

Jelks made a move with one of his revolvers.

"Git busy!" he ordered curtly. "Passengers fust—oh, wait a minute! On second thoughts, I reckon you'd best stay on board, Burton. I may want you later on—there's no tellin'. Here, you scum, take the cap'n below an' lock 'im up."

The order was addressed to two of his own men. Captain Burton seemed about to resist at first, but wisdom came to him in time, and he went quietly below. If there's anything I hate more than another it's surrendering without a fight. But in this instance we

simply couldn't fight. It would have been a massacre, pure and simple.

"Oh, my hat, what a frightful mess!" I muttered despairingly.

"It's shockin', Benny, absolutely shockin'!" breathed Sir Montie. "But what can we do? Just look at those awful revolvers!"

But my attention was elsewhere. I was looking over at the guv'nor. He was talking quietly to Dorrie and Miss Eileen and her aunt. They had taken the situation calmly—which was best. Eight or nine men were standing round them, looking very determined.

Handforth and Co. and some others were jabbering together excitedly and with great alarm. They, too, were closely guarded. And I could not help secretly admiring the completeness of this coup.

We had been tricked by wireless—tricked although we had actually been on the alert. Nelson Lee had even suspected the truth, but had cast the thought aside as too improbable. Oh, it was intensely galling!

And the utter audacity of Captain Jelks's scheme fairly took my breath away. By an act of rank Prussianism he had got all his men on board the yacht. And then at the right moment he had shown his teeth. All the ruffianly pirates were menacing us before we could move a finger.

The whole trick savoured of the Hun. It was similar to countless ruses which the Prussians had played in the past; it only differed in the fact that there had been no bloodshed. After all, Jelks was British, and, although a pretty scoundrel, he drew the line at bloodshed for the mere sake of it.

If we resisted he would throw all scruples aside at once—I knew that. But killing people in a fight is a different matter to killing them in cold blood. And here were we, nearly crying with fury, unable to defeat a rascal. His pirates were all about us, and we were compelled to obey their orders.

At least, this was the case with everybody excepting my chums and myself and old Umlosi. We were right up in the bows, in total darkness now, and Jelks and his men had not seen us. I'm not going to make any boasts, because the whole thing was a pure piece of chance. We had not hidden deliberately—luck had just favoured us. And Umlosi saw the advantage of our position as quickly as I did myself.

"Wau! Is this not the moment for us to act, O keen-witted Manzie?" breathed Umlosi into my ear. "Have we not the better of this position? We are unseen, and mayhap it will be possible for us to turn the tables upon these white men, thine enemies."

"That's just what I was thinking," I muttered.

"Begad! An' so was I!" put in Sir Montie.

"What the dickens can we do?" asked Tommy Watson. "We haven't got so much as a pea-shooter between us!"

"Violence would not assist us at this moment, O white youth," breathed Umlosi. "My brains have been working, and cunning thoughts have come to me. We expose

ourselves, and all will be lost. For shall we not be compelled to obey the bidding of these unclean pigs? Wau! Strong as I am, I could not fight against dozens of fire-arms and survive. I should be mad indeed if I cast my life away for no purpose."

"What's the idea, then?" I asked.

"Let us be wise, Manzie, and conceal ourselves while the chance is ours," replied Umlosi. "Even within four feet from us there is an open hatchway which leads far down into the cellars of this floating kraal. Mayhap we shall not be disturbed, and then much might happen."

"We'll do it, old man," I whispered briskly. "Even if we're collared, our position won't be any worse. So let's get busy straight away; some of those rotters may come up here any minute."

"Wise words, O Manzie," breathed the black giant. "Come!"

He wriggled his way across the intervening space and slid noiselessly through the hatch. We followed him, and managed to get below without being detected. If everybody else was to be transferred to Jelks's own ship we four would remain on board the Adventure!

It was a risky game, but an inspiration. For we were to discover that we should be well paid for our hastily formed decision.

This affair wasn't over yet!

CHAPTER VI.

JELKS GIVES HIS ORDERS—A DISMAL PROSPECT—THE ADVENTURE SETS OFF.

"LOOK alive, you swabs," Captain Ebenezer Jelks shouted roughly. "Do you think I'm going to stay in this latitude all night? Move yourselves, durn you!"

The triumphant skipper could not resist the temptation. He was bullying poor old Dorrie and Miss Eileen and the others in a manner which was calculated to set their blood boiling.

They were at the top of the ladder. Jelks stood there with three other men, and the display of revolvers was formidable. Much as Nelson Lee wanted to crash his fist into Jelks's face, he couldn't attempt the manoeuvre. For the gov'nor knew when he was at a disadvantage. It is only reckless idiots who fight against impossible odds. The wise plan is to keep calm—and wait an opportunity.

Unfortunately, however, it seemed as though no opportunity would occur just now. The yacht's officers and crew had been marshalled on deck, every man jack of them, and were divided into little groups, with an armed guard over each. A sudden break-away was thus impossible.

And Lord Dorrimore and his guests were compelled to walk down the accommodation-ladder into the waiting boat. The other vessel was still close by, looming dimly in the gloom. The smoke had ceased now.

Jelks had not allowed anybody to take even the smallest parcel. Eileen and Aunt Esther were forced to depart for the other

ship without even having paid a visit to their cabins. Nelson Lee and Dorrimore were in the same plight, and the boys, of course, were hustled along more roughly than anybody.

It nearly broke Lord Dorrimore's heart to abandon his sumptuous yacht in this fashion. In fact, but for Nelson Lee's constant urging Dorrie would have "seen red" with a vengeance. He would not have counted the odds.

Both he and Nelson Lee were worried, too. The gov'nor was worried because I hadn't put in an appearance, and Dorrie was worried because there was no sign of Umlosi. Tregellis-West and Watson, too, had not been seen since the commencement of this extraordinary drama.

It was Nelson Lee who half-guessed the truth, and he managed to warn the others to make no mention of us. This was a brain-wave on his part. If Eileen or the Bo'sun or Handforth had started making inquiries Jelks would have heard, and he would have known that we were on board. A quick search, and we should have been pitched overboard with the rest.

As it was, they remained silent, and Jelks was too flushed with his own victory to think of searching the yacht. Two boats were employed, and Mr. Scott, the first officer, boarded the Dieppe first. The men followed, and then Dorrie and his guests were helped up.

The ship was quite deserted, the whole crew having transferred to the yacht at the very beginning of the engagement, so to speak. It was scarcely surprising that Handforth and Co. and the other fellows were in a state of the most abject misery. Poor Dorrie, too, looked worn out.

"It's simply horrible, Lee, old man," he complained miserably. "What the dooce can we do? I've never felt so idiotically helpless in all my life! And where are those fatheaded youngsters? An' where's Umlosi? Oh, glory! My head's singin' with all this worry!"

"Cheer up, old fellow——"

"By gad, there's a thing to say!" protested Lord Dorrimore. "How can I cheer up, Lee? It's askin' too much. I feel like a beastly coward. I feel that I've landed you all in this infernal mess——"

"Oh, you mustn't think that!" put in Eileen gently. "How could you prevent the disaster, Lord Dorrimore? And perhaps we shall be able to defeat this wicked man even yet. We mustn't give up hope."

Dorrie shook himself.

"You're makin' me feel ashamed of myself, Miss Dare!" he said gruffly. "By gad, I've been grumblin' an' growlin', and you come along an' speak with the utmost cheerfulness. I'm awfully sorry!"

"I think we are all sorry," said Nelson Lee quietly. "We were on the alert, Dorrie, but it was impossible to guard against treachery of this nature. I gain some comfort from the knowledge that Nipper and Umlosi are still on board the yacht."

Eileen looked grave.

"Oh, but won't they be in danger, Mr. Lee?" she asked.

"Possibly!" smiled the gov'nor. "But Umlosi thrives on danger; and Nipper, the young rascal, is full of tricks. If it is humanly possible to turn the tables, they will turn them.

"But are we quite helpless?" asked Eileen keenly. "There is a wireless on this ship, isn't there?"

"By gad!" ejaculated Dorrie.

"My dear man, I thought of that five minutes ago," put in the schoolmaster-detective. "But is it likely that Jelks would have left the instrument in working order? I can hardly believe that he would be so obliging. I'm afraid there is no hope in that direction, Miss Eileen."

But Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore hurried off at once. They found the wireless room—a dirty, narrow little apartment. The instruments were completely destroyed, and it was obviously impossible to make use of them.

"I thought as much," remarked Lee. "The only thing we can do, Dorrie, is to get steam up at once—if it is not up already—and make for one of the chief ocean highways. We can then stop a passing ship, and send wireless messages out without delay."

"H'm! Not much hope there," remarked Dorrie gloomily.

"I agree with you, but it is the only thing we can do," replied Lee. "It's no good crying over spilt milk, old man, and we must make the best of a bad job. By a sheer piece of piracy, Jelks has gained the upper hand. Luck has been very much against us."

Dorrie made no comment, which was unusual for him. They passed out on to the deck, and met Mr. Scott.

"I say, you'll have to take command, you know," said Lord Dorrimore. "Captain Burton's being kept a prisoner by those brutes on my yacht. It's up to you, Mr. Scott!"

"I'll do my best, my lord," said the Adventure's first officer. "But of all the tubs I was ever in, this is about the worst. The chief engineer reports that she'll fall to pieces if she's run at any speed."

"Oh, let her!" groaned Lord Dorrimore.

Mr. Scott passed on, and his lordship and Nelson Lee rejoined the group amidships. They didn't know what to do, for there were no adequate cabins for them to go to. This old tramp steamer was, to use Mr. Scott's expression, nothing but a tub. She was rusty and indescribably dirty.

Dorrie was filled with disgust, but he manfully kept his feelings to himself. The blood rose hotly to his head as he gazed across the water and saw the graceful lines of his yacht. She was still lying there, a blaze of twinkling lights from stem to stern. And she was in the hands of pirates!

"I shall burst somethin' in a minute—I know I shall!" muttered Lord Dorrimore, pacing feverishly up and down the littered deck. "An' I wish I knew what old Umlosi was up to."

They stood there, looking across at the yacht. Meanwhile, Mr. Scott had set his crew to work in earnest. He was a man of action, and certain grumbles from the crew had been dealt with at once. The men, however, realised that this predicament was in no way due to their employers, and they soon set to work with a will.

Several cabins were in the process of being scoured out—for it was utterly impossible to use them in their present state. It had been found that the old steamer carried no cargo worth a dump, but was in ballast. And the great volumes of smoke had been caused by clever trickery, and without endangering the ship in the least.

Lord Dorrimore and all the others remained on deck. They had no inclination to go below—until they had seen the last of the yacht, at all events. The night was quite hot, and the stars glowed in the sky brilliantly. At this time, under ordinary circumstances, the whole party would have been lounging carelessly about the Adventure's deck. What a change in such a short space of time!

"Say, I've got a feelin' that every darned thing is upside-down," remarked Justin B. Farman to the other juniors. "Guess we'll wake up just directly, an' find ourselves in our bunks!"

"Souise my maindeck! I wish it was a dream, messmate," said the Bo'sun dolefully. "I don't know what to do—I'm all on edge. My dad's being kept a prisoner by Jelks, and I don't know when I shall see him again. By hokey, I'll go dotty before long!"

"No, you won't!" said De Valerie calmly. "It's a mess, Burton, but things might have been worse. Supposin' we'd been sent away just in the boats—what? That would have been a fix, if you like. But we've got a ship under our feet—"

The Bo'sun snorted.

"A ship!" he ejaculated. "By the Blue Peter! Do you call this a ship? My dad wouldn't be seen dead commanding it!"

"No, I don't suppose he would!" agreed De Valerie drily.

"The misfortune is of the greatest dimensions," put in Yakama, in his soft voice. "We are all the victims of the preposterous Captain Jelks. But we must not be of the despair, my schoolfellows. Something might happen—"

"Gee! Something has happened, I guess!" said Farman. "Say, pards, I'm sure feelin' anxious about them other galoots—Nipper and Umlosi and the others. They'll strike a whole pile of lively trouble on that yacht!"

"Silly asses!" grunted Handforth miserably. "Why couldn't they come with us? Why couldn't we be all together? If my advice had been taken, this rotten business wouldn't have happened! I guessed that Jelks was on this ship—"

"Eh?" said McClure, staring.

"Didn't I mention to you that I had my suspicions?" demanded Handforth.

"No, you jolly well didn't!"

"Look here, you ass—"

"Oh, dry up, Handy!" put in De Valerie.

"We've heard your tales before. It's a pity you don't think of these things before they happen. Why didn't you speak to Mr. Lee, or Captain Burton—"

"They wouldn't have believed me," said Handforth. "I'm not saying that I actually suspected the truth, but there was an idea in the back of my mind that—"

"Oh, ease off, Handy!" said Church gloomily. "The yacht's getting up steam now—she's just off! Good-bye to all the ripping times!"

The yacht was, indeed, just setting off into the night. She gave three derisive blasts of her siren, and turned her stern towards the Dieppe. Lord Dorrimore shook his fist furiously and helplessly into the air.

"I—I— Oh, glory, I'm speechless!" he said chokingly.

And, feeling bound to do something, he paced the deck feverishly. Nelson Lee and Eileen and the others stood by the rail, watching the Adventure steaming away into the night.

Their hearts were aching, and the position was too disastrous for them to express their feelings in words. So they stood there, silent—and hopeless.

But, as I mentioned before, this affair wasn't finished yet. Oh, no, not by long chalks!

CHAPTER VII.

DISCOVERED—UMLOSI WORKS WONDERS—THE TABLES TURNED.

UMLOSI laughed softly.

"It is well, O Manzie!" he breathed.

"As far as it goes," I said, without much enthusiasm. "I expect we shall be routed out of this before long and sent after the others. Jelks isn't a fool, and he will remember that I was on board."

"Thou art giving this white pig credit for being a man of cleverness," whispered Umlosi. "Wau! He is even as the child of tender years; he is flushed with this brief victory, and will forget. This accursed Jelks has no subtlety, Manzie. We shall triumph over him. Fear not."

"Well, it's jolly good to hear you talking like that, Umlosi," I said. "I've noticed that you generally manage to guess things right. I suppose you can't see any visions of gore, or anything like that?"

"Begad!" came from Sir Montie.

"If old Umlosi dreams of gore, you can be pretty certain that there's something lively coming along," I explained. "What's the verdict, Umlosi?"

The Kutana chief chuckled.

"Thou art pleased to be humorous, O my young master," he murmured. "I am wondrously pleased to hear thy jocular words, since it proves that thou art keeping well in spirits. But thou hast inquired about my visions? I have had none, Manzie, but my snake tells me that before the sun has risen

beyond the great waters we shall see Umtagati and N'Kose, my father, once again."

"By jingo, I hope so—"

"Be thou silent, my worthy son!"

He spoke in a hiss, for at that moment footsteps were audible. We had managed to sneak down into a small compartment near the bows, and far below the upper deck. A gentle throbbing throughout the ship, which had just commenced, told us that the Adventure was on the move.

So far we had not been disturbed. Personally, I couldn't imagine how we could take advantage of our position, for we were a mere handful against an army. But Umlosi had some idea working in that cast-iron skull of his.

"Yes, open those doors, an' 'ave a look what's inside," came a gruff order in the voice of Mr. Larson. "Afore we can be absolutely safe, we must search the ship right through. The cap'n ain't so particular, but I am!"

"My hat!" breathed Watson. "It's all U P!"

Umlosi caught his breath in quickly.

"Have no surprise at what you see," he whispered. "Thou wilt wonder, perchance, but do not—"

"Are we going to make a break away?" I hissed.

"Not now, Manzie—not now!"

"But we sha'n't get another chance—"

"I have spoken!" said Umlosi firmly.

The old rascal had taken command of affairs, and he meant to carry them through in his own way. Before I could wonder what he meant by his original remark, the door opened abruptly and a flood of light was admitted.

"Holy pokers!" exclaimed one of the startled sailors.

"What's this 'ere?" shouted Larson curiously. "Some of 'em still aboard, eh? Don't move an inch, my fine fellers!"

He had whipped out a revolver, and while he pointed it at us he shouted for some other men to come along. Umlosi, to my astonishment, was crouching down in an attitude of the most abject terror. His eyes were rolling, and he gabbled out incoherent appeals for mercy.

"Shut your face, you blamed nigger!" snapped Larson curtly, giving Umlosi a vicious kick.

But our black friend seemed more terrified than ever—and we understood. He was acting, of course; he pretended to be mortally afraid. And we, taking the cue, affected fright, too.

"Pretty-lookin' lot, ain't you?" jeered the mate. "Now then, men, shove this scum down into that 'old with Cap'n Burton—they might as well be a 'appy fam'ly together. I shall 'ave to go an' tell the skipper all about it. I s'pose they'll be chucked overboard at the finish!"

And with this cheerful prospect in view we were hustled along the passage, down an iron ladder, and then into a small apartment, which was really a portion of the forward hold.

Captain Burton was there, and he looked at us in astonishment and consternation. I think he was more surprised at Umlosi's obvious funk than anything else.

"Shut the door on 'em!" ordered Larson roughly.

The door, a massive wooden one, was closed with a bang, and locked. There was no prospect of getting out. We had been left in total darkness, and could not see Captain Burton.

"I thought you had been taken to the other ship, boys," said the captain, his voice quivering slightly. "By jings, this is a pretty fix to be in! A prisoner on my own craft! But what of the Bo'sun? Have you seen him, lads?"

"He went with the others, sir," replied Watson.

"Poor boy—poor boy!" muttered the skipper. "I am afraid Jelks has beaten us this time! By the living jingo! I feel like shouting and tearing round madly! I've never been so helpless."

"It may not be so bad, captain," I put in consolingly.

"There's no question of that, Nipper," said the skipper sadly. "It is bad already, and it will become worse. But what's wrong with Umlosi? By jings, I thought he was a man of courage—"

"So he is!" I cut in. "He was only kidding. But I'm blessed if I can understand why! We did have a chance of breaking away two minutes ago, but we're properly diddled now!"

"That's what I was thinkin', begad!" said Sir Montie. "Dear boys, we're in a shockin' mess. But I suppose somethin' will turn up, sooner or later. Somethin' generally does turn up."

"Thou art dull, Manzie—thou with the brains as keen as the razor!" murmured Umlosi reproachfully. "Thy wits are what N'Kose would term gathering the wool. Are we not now all together, in one apartment? It is even as I had hoped."

"But what's the good of it, Umlosi?" I asked. "After all, even counting Captain Burton, there's only five of us. We can't knock a hole out of the side of the ship and escape that way!"

"Wau! I am not suggesting such impossible feats, O my son," said Umlosi, in a calm voice. "We will await for, perchance, fifteen minutes of the clock. By that time these pigs who have seized the great floating kraal will deem themselves safe, and their firearms will have been taken from them."

"I suppose that's true enough," I admitted. "Now that all the excitement's over, Jelks has taken the revolvers from his men, I'll bet. He wouldn't allow that scum to have the run of the ship with a couple of revolvers apiece."

"He takes too much care of his own skin," put in Captain Burton grimly. "It would be risky for Jelks and Larson to go about with the crew in possession of firearms. Those weapons were taken away the instant the party had left the yacht—Jelks doesn't fancy being riddled with bullets by his own men."

They're quite capable of it, the ruffianly crowd!"

"It is even as I have spoken," said Umlosi softly. "Only the leaders of these hogs will remain armed—the rest will be easily handled. Wau! My fingers are itching to commence the work!"

"But we're helpless, you old idiot!"

"Thou art surely mistaken, thou of the polite tongue!" whispered Umlosi. "For we are not so helpless as thou intimate. Ere long we will depart from this hole of blackness and mount to the decks. And then—Wau! Then thou wilt witness a most glorious fight, my masters!"

"I'm shockin'ly rude, I know, but may I ask how this is goin' to be done?" inquired Sir Montie mildly. "This door ain't made of matchboardin', you know, an' we don't happen to have any batterin'-rams knockin' about!"

"Thou wilt see what thou wilt see!" said Umlosi smoothly. "But, nay! I am surely wrong, for thou wilt see nothing in this darkness. But thine ears, O Montie, will hear sounds of wondrous welcome!"

"Begad! I can't understand—I can't, really!" said Tregellis-West.

Umlosi chuckled.

"Thou must have patience," he said. "Is not my idea of the first quality, Manzie? The ship that was burning, and yet was not burning, is even now within sight. Come, we will waste no further time—we will cast these wretches into the deep waters, and thou, Captain Burton, must take command again. We will give N'Kose and Umtagati a surprise ere long."

"It strikes me you'll give us a surprise first," I said, becoming somewhat impatient. "It's all very well to talk like this, Umlosi—"

"Thou art unkind in thy words, O my young master, for thou art implying that I boast," put in Umlosi. "It is the deeds that count, and not the words. Wait! Thou wilt see even yet! For hast thou not a wondrous glowing torch upon thee, which can be lighted by the mere pressing of a button?"

"By jingo, yes!" I said. "I'd forgotten it!"

I pulled out my electric torch and flashed it on. The light fell full upon the grinning features of Umlosi. His eyes were gleaming, and I saw an expression in them which sent a thrill through me.

"It is well!" he rumbled. "Cast thy light upon the door, O Manzie!"

I did so, and Umlosi chuckled.

"A poor thing!" he commented. "Wau! It is easily conquered!"

"What on earth does the man mean?" growled Captain Burton. "Surely he is not suggesting that we can break the door down? It's quite impossible—there's nothing here in the nature of a weapon."

"What's the idea, Umlosi?" I asked.

"Watch—and thou wilt learn!"

Umlosi turned towards the door, but then looked round again.

"Be ready to follow," he whispered.

"Thou, too, Captain Burton, seize this opportunity whilst it is fresh. The attack of surprise is always the one that brings triumph!"

"Yes, but——"

I stopped abruptly, and gasped. Surely it wasn't possible that Umlosi meant to charge the door with his own body? He was as strong as an elephant, but such a feat was not within the power of any human being.

And then, before I could fully collect my thoughts together, Umlosi had charged. His great shoulder struck the door with such enormous force that there was a splintering of wood. At the same second the great door tore from its hinges and deposited Umlosi outside. He had smashed it down with one charge only!

"Wau! It was a matter of ease!" he exclaimed tensely.

I saw, however, that his white drill coat was already stained crimson. Several jagged splinters of wood had evidently torn his skin, and the flesh of his arm must have been bruised terribly as a result of that terrific charge. Such an exhibition fairly made me gasp!

But what now? How had we progressed further? We were still a mere handful against a mob.

"Come!" rumbled Umlosi quickly. "Come, my masters!"

He raced along, and disappeared up an iron ladder like a black streak. We followed as quickly as possible, Captain Burton bringing up the rear. It was a nightmare trip, and how we reached the deck I don't know. But we passed nobody on the way, and when we arrived under the night sky I could distinctly see the twinkling lights of a ship in the far distance.

A yell came from near by. The decks were ablaze with light, for there were many electric lamps dotted about, and all were on. And there was Umlosi, engaged in the most extraordinary fight I have ever witnessed.

"Thou scum!" he bellowed. "I am ready for thee!"

Four men went rushing at Umlosi in a clump, with the obvious intention of hurling him to the deck. As we had surmised, they were not armed now. One man caught Umlosi's fist full in the chest. Something cracked—a couple of ribs, I believe—and the fellow shot backwards with a howl of pain and with such force that he sent another man flying yards.

Then Umlosi let himself go.

He picked up one of the other men as though he had been a feather, whirled him round, and pitched him clean overboard with one mighty swing.

"Good heavens!" I gasped, aghast at this exhibition of strength.

The fourth man had fled, helter skelter. But Umlosi chased him aft with fleet footsteps, and we followed in the rear, hardly knowing what to think or what to do. A terrific scream sounded as Umlosi caught his man. This fellow, too, was thrown overboard

like a match. We heard the splash as his body struck the water.

The yacht was already gliding along with silent engines; for Captain Jelks, on the bridge, had seen the men thrown overboard.

"By ginger!" he bellowed. "Clear away, you fools, let me pot at that nigger with my shooter! Clear away, 'less you want to git hit!"

"He'll be killed!" gasped Sir Montie.

But Umlosi was already rushing at the bridge with amazing speed. He arrived, and gave one terrific leap upwards, ignoring the bridge ladder. His fingers caught the rail, he swung himself up like a monkey, and jerked Captain Jelks's arm up even as that scoundrel was firing.

Crack!

The bullet plugged into the deck harmlessly. Umlosi wrenched the revolver away and flung it down. It fell within a yard of Captain Burton, and the skipper seized it with a bellow of sheer joy.

But Jelks was screaming now. Umlosi had got him, and he rose in the air, kicking and yelling still. Then he, too, plunged into the sea. Larson, who was also on the bridge, vainly attempted to escape. Umlosi caught him, and he squealed like a frightened rabbit.

"Thou, too!" roared the black giant.

And Larson followed his captain overboard. If it hadn't been for the deadly serious nature of the whole business it would have been funny. The way Umlosi threw everybody overboard was absolutely a scream.

With rare forethought Umlosi had torn Larson's revolver from his hip-pocket, and he threw it down to me at once. I caught it neatly, mentally deciding that Umlosi was a careless bounder with firearms.

"Thou art a good shot, Manzie!" shouted Umlosi. "Do not hesitate to use thy weapon to full advantage. Wau! We have defeated the scum! Do thou take command again, Captain Burton?"

"By jings!" roared the skipper. "You're a white man!"

"Thy words are strange-sounding, but N'Kose, my father, has taught me the meaning of that expression," said Umlosi. "It is well!"

By this time I had become clear-witted—for my thoughts had been pretty confused up till this moment, I can tell you. Several men were crouching against the saloon skylight, terrified.

"Down with one of the boats!" I shouted sharply. "Quickly, you rotters!"

"That's right, Nipper—that's right!" said the skipper. "We can't let those brutes drown! Down with that boat, lads—and smartly!"

The men couldn't possibly disobey, and the alacrity with which they rushed to the davits was almost ludicrous. I verily believe that they would have moved just as smartly even if they had been armed themselves. Umlosi's terrific strength had given them the fright of their lives.

The boat was in the water in record time.

Three men went with it, and Captain Burton stated his intention of leaving the boat upon the water. He certainly was not going to risk having Jelks and Larson on board again.

All four men who had been thrown into the sea were picked up by the boat. Having satisfied ourselves upon that point, we didn't care any more. There was no reason why Jelks and Co. should not be put to trouble. The night was calm, and the sea as smooth as a lake. The Dieppe was still within sight, and would remain within sight. So Jelks knew where to make for. There was no danger of the boat drifting into the barren seas.

Captain Burton rang the engine-room telegraph sharply. The yacht at once commenced moving through the water. The engine-room crowd must have known of the change, but they evidently deemed it best to obey orders.

There was something startling and terrifying about the manner in which Umlosi had gained the upper hand. It had all been so quick and so violent.

Such an attack, discussed beforehand, would have been regarded as an act of utter madness. Ninety-nine men out of a hundred would have declared that failure would be certain. And yet we had succeeded!

It was Umlosi's doing. He had struck terror—naked terror—into the hearts of the men, and they were as easy to deal with as a pack of tame squirrels. They obeyed every order with extreme readiness.

Added to the menace of Umlosi, there was also Captain Burton and myself on the bridge with revolvers. In that position we could overlook the whole deck, both for'ard and aft. And any attempt at overpowering us would fail. The men knew this well enough, and without their own leaders they were a mere mob.

Probably the engineer would have shown some resistance if he had not been a sensible man. Refusal to obey the telegraph would have simply led to trouble. He knew this, and was not at all anxious for trouble.

"Umlosi, you're absolutely a wonder!" I exclaimed enthusiastically, slapping him upon the back.

"Begad, he's a marvel!" said Sir Montie, with equal enthusiasm.

"A giddy masterpiece!" declared Tommy Watson.

Umlosi grinned.

"Thou art indeed skilled in the art of flattery, O my young masters. For what have I done of note? Wau! Thou wilt please me by referring not again to this matter. A few wretched cowards cast into the water! Poof! It was a fight scarcely worthy of the name!"

Umlosi wasn't belittling his own performance deliberately. He spoke honestly. It actually was his opinion that the fight had

been a poor business. For Umlosi, the chief of the Kutanas, was a warrior of amazing qualities.

I can't possibly describe our joy as we steered towards the lights of the Dieppe. We were simply bubbling with triumph and delight. We wanted to yell with it—and did so, too!

We had every light switched on, and we hurried across the sea, a blazing torch on the waters. Nelson Lee and those on the old tramp steamer were quite at a loss to account for the return of the yacht.

Our approach caused great excitement, but never for one moment did Dorrie and Eileen and the others dream of the true state of affairs. I routed a megaphone from the charthouse and stood ready. And when we drew near and the engines ceased their beat, I sent a lusty hail. In the clear starlight I could see the Dieppe's deck lined with figures. Practically the entire crew was at the rail as well.

"Dieppe, ahoy!" I roared.

There was no reply.

"It's all serene!" I bellowed through the megaphone, my voice cracking with excitement. "Umlosi's done the trick—we've taken command again! The yacht's ours! Cheer, you bounders—cheer!"

It was some moments before those on the Dieppe realised the truth. And then a cheer went up which could have been heard miles away. Jelks must have heard it in his little boat. And I grinned with delight as I pictured him sitting there, soaked to the skin and utterly defeated.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

The cheers went up again. I had imparted further information, and there was no longer any doubt that everything was indeed "all serene."

Well, that's the end of this episode—and a thundering good end too. Just when defeat had seemed certain, Umlosi had turned the tables in about the neatest manner possible.

The transfer of Jelks's precious crew was quickly accomplished. The whole crowd were dumped back on to the old tramp with scant ceremony. And Nelson Lee and Lord Dorri-more and Eileen Dare and all the others came back on board the Adventure, and found Captain Burton once more in command.

As for Jelks and Larson and the five men with him, we didn't see them again. Nelson Lee decided that we should get hold of Jelks and Larson and take them with us to the nearest port, so that they could be placed safely out of harm's way. But Jelks possibly divined our intentions, for he took care to steer clear of the yacht in the darkness.

It was now full speed for the Pacific and Captain Burton's treasure!

THE END

NEXT WEEK!—(See p. iv of cover.)

In the Grip of the Huns.

A Magnificent Tale of Thrilling Experiences in Germany.

By CLEMENT HALE.

NOTE.—As the title "In the Hands of the Huns" has already been used, we have altered the name of our Serial to the above.

The First Chapters.

GEORGE GRAY, his brother JACK, and WILSON, are three members of the Berlin Rovers, a football Club in Germany. When war breaks out they are interned in a camp at Oberhemmel, but one night they manage to escape. They contrive to reach Berlin, but are again captured and sent to a camp at Ruhleben. When there they enjoy a game of football. One day they are surprised to receive a visit from a German officer whom they knew in Berlin before the war. His name is Hoffmann, and he has been wounded. He sends them some food and helps them when he is able. Amongst the prisoners is a Pole named Levinsky. He is a very poor specimen of a man, and is left much to himself. One day Levinsky sets fire to one of the huts. George goes to the rescue of a German.

(Now read on.)

SAVED!

"WHERE'S George?" gasped Wilson, as soon as his head cleared.

"He's gone into the stables. They say there's a German officer up in the loft still! He's gone to try and save him!"

Wilson swung round on his heels and glanced at the fiery furnace.

"Gone in there!" he muttered. "Then he's gone to his death! Look! The roof will give in soon! We shall never see George alive again!"

He would, with that, have blundered into the burning stables again and shared what he anticipated would be George's fate, had not Sturgess, the full-back, held him forcibly back.

"No! One's enough, old chap!" he muttered, his voice shaking. "Poor old George! He was gone before any of us could prevent him. And to think that he's sacrificed himself to save a dirty Hun, too!"

Ah! George Gray hadn't thought of that. He just knew that there were human lives to be saved, and the thought of a man being

baked to death in that death-trap of a loft was more than he could bear!

He followed close on Wilson's heels as a matter of fact.

The escaping Huns had almost knocked him down as they struggled through the door. He reached the ladder leading up into the loft as one of the officers came down it. He stepped over Wilson and climbed upwards before his friend had lifted Carl from the floor.

Up, up he went, feeling with every step that he must fall.

The suffocating smoke choked him. The heat of the leaping flames scorched him. The dry straw was flaming as only straw can. The noise and whirr of the fire, fanned by the draught, was almost deafening.

George gained the loft, stepped into it, and felt better. Smoke hung there, but nothing like so densely. The relief was immense.

The lamps still burned, and he was able to look about him.

For a moment, as he stepped this way and that within the confines of the space about him, he believed that his effort was wasted, that there was nobody there.

And then he saw a form lying on the floor, not far from the opening against which the ladder was set.

Was it that of a prisoner, or a German soldier or officer?

The figure stirred, staggered up, then stumbled, and George saw a haggard face upturned.

"Help—help me——" gasped a choking voice in German, and the footballer saw that the man was a lieutenant of the hated race. Evidently the smoke had overpowered him, or he had been hurt.

George did not hesitate.

He sprang to the officer's side and raised him up, though his head swam as he did so.

The smoke was thickening, the heat becoming more intense.

Mechanically George swung the officer's arm about his neck, and, lifting him, staggered to the opening.

Here somehow—he knew not how—he managed to go down on his knees, to feel for the ladder until his feet rested on a

(Continued on p. iii of cover.)

run, and to hold his burden tightly at the same time.

Then, with a heart that beat tumultuously, he began to descend, while the flames leapt around him, scorched him, and burnt his clothes, and the smoke deprived him of breath.

That descent seemed to last for ever. He lost count of time.

At last he reeled and fell, carrying his burden with him.

He was but a few feet from the ground, as it happened, and lay unhurt for a brief moment, while he sucked in a breath of life-restoring air.

Then up he got, and, lifting his man with a last expiring effort, fell blindly forward in the direction of the door.

Outside the prisoners stood in their hundreds, staring blankly at the burning stables. In front of them the German guards had cleared a space. All looked awestricken at the dancing flames, for they knew that one of their number was being roasted alive within, a brave man who had plunged into the furnace in the belief that some helpless German enemy was burning there.

And his sacrifice had been made in vain, they thought, for the word had been passed that all save he were safe.

And then out of the smoke there staggered a stalwart figure, with blackened and distorted face, holding a German officer in his arms, whose body lay limp across his shoulder, whose arms and legs drooped ominously.

A few strides George took and then plunged down, while the cheer that greeted him was still echoing loudly on the air.

FREEDOM.

WHEN George Grey came to he found himself lying in a sunlit ward, with many other patients ranged near him.

His head throbbed dully and his body was one big ache.

For a while he was at a loss to know where he might be. Then remembrance returned to him, and, struggling up, he tried to speak, though the effort cost him untold agony.

A woman, a nurse, came to him, and, in not unkindly tones, told him in German to lie quiet.

George obeyed.

A day or so later, when he felt better, George learned that he was lying in a military hospital outside the camp.

He had been there five days. At first his life had been despaired of, but now, happily for him, the danger was passed and his recovery was only a question of time.

The doctor who told him this showed no sign of sympathy or interest in him, but performed his duties ably.

Some days later Carl Hoffmann came to him.

Carl was himself once more, and his face was radiant as he took his friend's hand and sat beside him.

"George," he cried, "it was a grand thing you did, and it will serve you well. You saved Lieutenant Lustendorff's life. The authorities have taken notice of it. I have appealed for you and the others. Soon, I hope, you will be released from the camp and sent to Holland, to remain there till the war is over."

George's face beamed.

"It's not possible, is it?" he asked breathlessly. "It can't be."

"There is great hope," said Carl. "Many of us are busying ourselves in your behalf. Soon, I hope, you will be free."

And so it proved.

It was five weeks ere George was able to get about again.

Soon after he, Wilson and Jack appeared before a tribunal and answered many questions that were put to them, after which Jack and Wilson went back to Ruhleben, while George was driven to the hospital, where for the time being he was called upon to remain.

Three more long weeks passed, and then they were told that their case had been favourably considered. Lieutenant Lustendorff had added his plea to that of others, and they were to be sent across the Dutch frontier, to remain in Holland until the war was over.

George's heart leapt at the news.

That day he visited Jack and Wilson in camp and met again his old friends.

And there he learned that Levinsky, the spy, who had been arrested on a charge of setting fire to the stables, and against whom Jack's evidence was fatal, had been condemned to death and executed.

The Germans allowed him short shifts. Nor could anyone who had ever met him regret his fate. Levinsky, spy, traitor, and vindictive rascal through and through, was hated even by his own interned countrymen, who endorsed the verdict with their approval.

There were many prisoners bound for Holland. George discovered, on the day when he, Jack, and Wilson said good-bye to Ruhleben camp, and departed amid the ringing cheers of their friends who remained behind.

About a hundred and fifty of them assembled on the railway platform under strong guard an hour before the train that was to convey them to the frontier steamed in.

They were paraded, the roll-call was taken, and their names and numbers checked. Then they were ordered aboard, and got into the coaches reserved for them.

Among those who came to see them off were Carl Hoffmann, Lieutenant Lustendorff, the man whose life George had saved, and Wilhelm Beckmann, who had heard of their good fortune and found out the time of their departure.

(Continued overleaf.)

"Good-bye, and good luck, my friends," he said. "And when next we meet I trust it will be in happier times, when there will be no war."

"Good-bye," cried Over-Lieutenant Lustendorff, gripping George by the hand. "We are enemies, but I am grateful to you, and I trust there are some of us who can respect one another."

"Good-bye," cried Carl, his cheeks flaming, his eyes lighting up. "Good-bye, Jorge. Good-bye all. May we soon meet again."

As the train steamed away George leant out of the window and saw Carl waving his sound hand at him.

The other was nearly well. Carl expected to return to the front soon.

George felt the crush of the German officer's iron fingers on his still, and as he waved back at him a mist formed before his eyes, for he wondered if they would ever meet again. He hoped so, for Carl was a white man through and through, and deplored his country's guilt, though he was prepared to lay down his life for her in this cruel and unnecessary war.

He watched the station and the figures on it diminish in size, then vanish from his view, and so he settled himself down upon his comfortable seat and sank into a profound reverie, whilst the train bore him, his brother Jack, and the rest of the lucky ones towards the Dutch frontier and freedom.

THE END.

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