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Read This Week's Fine Story:

U.S.A. AT ST. FRANK'S!

No. 442. EVERY WEDNESDAY. November 24, 1923.

Lee was not prepared for the attack, but he did not fall a victim. In the nick of time, he ducked aside and grappled with his attacker. And the pair were soon rocking and swaying on the slippery deck.

You will all welcome, I know, the appearance at St. Frank's of U.S.A., otherwise Ulysses Spencer Adams, the new boy from New York City, which occurs in this week's story. U.S.A is not only a very clever study of Young America and his outlook on the world in general—a result of the author's recent tour of the States—but it is clear from the lad's history and the subsequent events described in the story that he is destined to be the central figure in an exciting series of adventures in which Nelson Lee will be called upon to take part. The coming of the Night Owl, the sinister head of a dangerous criminal organisation, known as The Alliance of Thirteen, at about the same time in a vessel wrecked off the coast of Caistowe—possibly engineered by the Night Owl—is significant of the thrilling episodes that are to follow. It is to be a struggle for supremacy between two extraordinary personalities—the famous detective, Nelson Lee and the spectral, awesome figure with the mysterious sobriquet of The Night Owl.

My reference last week to a rumour concerning Nipper's latest magazine venture is not without foundation in fact. It is to be called "THE ST. FRANK'S MAGAZINE," and will make its first appearance under the new title in next week's number of this paper. Make a note of it, and tell all your chums about it. More about the Mag. is given on another page.

THE EDITOR.

CHAPTER I.

THE MYSTERY OF THE NIGHT!

NELSON LEE wrenched at the wheel, and the car swerved giddily.

And only in the nick of time, for the hatless man who rushed out of the Ritz Hotel was so excited that he nearly got run over. As the racer came to a halt, with wheels locked, Nelson Lee glared angrily at the stranger. The latter grasped at the side of the car.

"What in the name of——" began Lee.

"A thousand dollars if you overtake that blue limousine!" rapped out the stranger crisply.

Nelson Lee gave the man one look, and sized him up keenly. He was well dressed, very agitated, and very American. And he pointed frantically down Piccadilly in the direction of Hyde Park Corner. Nelson Lee, who had been driving with Sir John Brent from the opposite direction, saw the

blue limousine just worming past a big red General 'bus.

"Jump in!" said the famous detective curtly.

"But, man alive——" protested Sir John.

"Hold tight, Brent—we're going to speed," interrupted Lee.

The stranger took instant advantage of the offer, and fairly scrambled his bulk into the powerful racing car, causing serious inconvenience to the outraged Sir John. But the American gentleman was too excited to notice this.

"You'll do it if you step on the gas!" he panted.

Nelson Lee needed no bidding. He "stepped on the gas" instantly—in other words, he raised the accelerator to such good purpose that the big automobile leapt forward like something alive.

Down Piccadilly, past the sedate clubs on one side and the park on the other—rushing in pursuit of the blue limousine, which had now become swallowed up in the heavy evening traffic of 'buses and taxi-cabs.

Lee knew that if the limousine reached Hyde Park Corner before he sighted it, there was a distinct possibility that it would be lost. For it would be impossible to tell whether it had gone straight on down Knightsbridge, or turned to the left in the direction of Victoria.

So the detective's racer fairly hurtled over the road—much to the interest of various law-abiding citizens who were both walking and riding. Sir John Brent was utterly startled—and not a little scared. He had no objection to a little speed now and again, but to roar through the traffic like this was altogether too much for the elderly baronet's peace of mind. Moreover, it was an undignified position for the Chairman of the St. Frank's College Board of Governors to be in.

If Sir John had been younger his hair would have stood on end. But as he possessed no hair on the top of his head at this late period of life, Sir John did not experience the phenomenon.

The racing car simply flew under Nelson Lee's guiding hand.

And, sure enough, Lee caught a glimpse of the blue limousine as it passed a motor-'bus. The detective was able to slacken the dangerous speed somewhat, and he bent his gaze keenly on the other car.

The stranger said nothing. He was tense and anxious.

It was just like Nelson Lee to promptly invite this perfectly unknown American gentleman into the car, and to go off in chase of the limousine. For all Lee knew, the people in the closed car were justified in speeding away. But the adventure of the affair took Lee's fancy.

He had no idea, of course, of trying for the thousand dollars reward, which the hatless gentleman had so lavishly offered. Apparently he was a person of great wealth, or he would not have suggested such a handsome sum. And it was obvious, too, that his anxiety to overtake the limousine was well-nigh unendurable.

Nelson Lee's only motive for engaging in the chase was purely one of curiosity. Anything out of the ordinary attracted him. He scented a mystery, and all his instincts bade him enter into the adventure.

Possibly the affair would turn out to be trivial—but more than one of the famous criminologist's most remarkable cases had started in circumstances similar to these. And, after all, there was something very thrilling in dashing off in chase of a fugitive car through London.

It was not particularly late—only just after eleven, and the theatre crowds were hurrying home by taxi, 'bus, and private car. Consequently, the roads of the West End were well packed with traffic.

Nelson Lee had had no intention of paying a flying visit to London. It was just one of those sudden journeys which crop up unexpectedly.

Sir John Brent, the Chairman of the Governors, had run down to St. Frank's to have a consultation with Dr. Stafford. The subject was merely in connection with some ambitions alterations which were proposed for the new year. And Sir John, lingering over dinner with the Head, had thoughtlessly left himself insufficient time to get to the station for the last train home.

Dr. Stafford, of course, had pressed Sir John to stay the night at the old school. But it seemed that the baronet had very important business to attend to early in the morning, and had been quite concerned.

Then Nelson Lee—who had also been the Head's guest at dinner—suggested making the run in the car. Sir John had been only too delighted to accept, and the pair had had a most enjoyable trip up to Town in Nelson Lee's powerful racer.

Lee himself had decided to stay the night at Gray's Inn Road—his own place—and return to St. Frank's on the morrow.

They had been passing the Ritz on the way to Sir John's residence.

And then the hatless gentleman, red with excitement and anger, had dashed out into the road, calling upon Lee to stop. The experience was not without its dramatic element. Respectable American citizens don't usually burst out from famous London hotels, offering great sums to total strangers to go in chase of blue limousine.

So, although Lee didn't want the thousand dollars, he certainly wanted to know what all the trouble was about.

The limousine kept straight on, passing Hyde Park Corner, and continuing down the slope of Knightsbridge, and on towards Brompton Road. Lee's car was now two hundred yards behind, and the detective was in no fear of being given the slip.

"You wish me to head off that blue car?" he asked, turning his head.

"By golly! You're a go-getter all right!" said the stranger breathlessly. "Yes, sir! I want you to stop that car as soon as you know how. My son—kidnapped under my very nose!"

"Kidnapped!" jerked out Sir John, in a shocked voice.

"Yes, sir! That young fool has no more sense than a jumping-jack!" said the stranger fiercely. "They pulled over some mushy dope, I guess, and the simp fell for it!"

Sir John nodded vaguely; he didn't exactly grasp the meaning of the other's words. And in any case, this was no place to ask for explanations. For the racer was speeding considerably, and Sir John was half obliterated by the American gentleman's ample figure. Swift racing cars are no passenger carriers.

Instead of keeping along Knightsbridge, the blue limousine sped along Brompton Road, where the traffic was thinner. Nelson Lee kept the racer a convenient distance behind.

And presently the two cars were proceeding down Fulham Road at a greater speed than was exactly wise. But it was fairly evident that those in the limousine were aware of the fact that they were being followed.

Lee was quite enjoying himself.

He had no intention of heading off the fugitive yet. To do so here, in Fulham Road—a much-used thoroughfare—would be to invite unsavoury publicity. Even at this late hour of the evening, a crowd would collect in next to no time. And there was no hurry.

"Any idea where they're making for?" asked Nelson Lee.

"No. Just getting out of town as quick as they know the way, I guess," replied the other. "I'll make these guys pay for this, or my name's not Adams!" he added grimly.

Nelson Lee noticed that the other car was gathering speed. The driver, evidently, was making an attempt to show the followers a clean pair of heels. His optimism was greater than his judgment.

For Lee just touched the accelerator, and the racing car zoomed along with a low, powerful purr which told of unlimited reserve energy. As a matter of fact, Lee was keeping the racer closely throttled down. Both cars were doing about thirty—and the detective's "'bus" was capable of eighty on a good road.

Having passed Walham Green, the limousine found the road comparatively devoid of traffic. Only a few motor-buses lumbered along. And the driver of the fleeing car opened out considerably—until he was shooting along towards Putney at something like forty miles an hour.

He must have been sadly disappointed.

For the pursuers remained in just the same position behind. And the limousine driver must have known that under ordinary circumstances it would be impossible to give them the slip.

Mr. Adams was quite anxious for Lee to shoot ahead and pull up the limousine at once. But Nelson Lee refrained. He was thinking of Sir John Brent. The baronet would not welcome the publicity which such an act would entail.

It was far better to wait until a quieter road was reached.

Arriving at Putney Bridge, the closed car in front attempted a piece of trickery. Just on the other side of the bridge, in Putney High Street, there happened to be a brief jam in the traffic.

For a few moments Lee's racing car was held up. But the detective did not fail to observe that the blue limousine slid artfully out of the High Street, and into the Putney Bridge Road. He did this under cover of a big lorry that was also turning in that direction.

The fugitives, no doubt, believed that Lee would go straight on. And if the racing car had been in the hands of Sir John Brent or Mr. Adams this would certainly have happened.

Mr. Adams was anxious. He had failed to see the tricky move of the limousine's driver, and believed that the other car had swept ahead up the High Street. So Mr. Adams was rather startled when Lee swung round into the quietness of Putney Bridge Road, and opened up to such good purpose that the racer fairly leapt forward.

"Say, what's the game?" asked Mr. Adams sharply.

"They went this way!" rapped out Lee.

He took no notice of two or three other remarks that Mr. Adams made—remarks that were far from complimentary. But the American gentleman felt rather guilty a few seconds later—when he caught a clear glimpse of the blue limousine careering wildly into a right-hand turning.

Lee was hot on the trail, and although the limousine swept round corner after corner, in an attempt to shake off the pursuit, all these little dodges were unavailing.

And when, finally, the runaways swept along Disraeli Road, and then turned sharply to the left in Putney High Street again, Nelson Lee's racer was close behind.

Up the little slope, past the station, across Upper Richmond Road, and straight on up Putney Hill. Nelson Lee thought about bringing the chase to an end here, but changed his mind almost at once.

As they had come so far, it would do no harm to continue on for another mile And there would be far less publicity on the open expanse of Putney Heath—which stretched away in every direction as soon as the top of the hill was reached.

The limousine made a final attempt to escape.

It roared along quite recklessly now that the Heath lay ahead. And Lee, setting his teeth, decided that the moment for action had come. It wouldn't do to let these idiots career about in this fashion.

Lee touched the throttle, and the racer answered in a startling way. Mr. Adams clutched at the car's side, and away they roared at sixty miles an hour. It was one terrific burst of speed.

They overhauled the limousine with supreme ease, and swept past with a roar and a rush that caused the limousine driver to realise that he had stood no chance from the very first.

Once ahead, Lee slowed down, and finally forced the limousine to come to a dead stop. It was either that or a serious crash—and the driver of the fugitive car was not as desperate as all that.

Mr. Adams leapt down, and rushed over to the other automobile.

CHAPTER II.

MR. OTIS SPENCER ADAMS, OF NEW YORK!

SIR JOHN BRENT gave Nelson Lee a sidelong glance. The baronet was immensely relieved that the chase was over. He wasn't a speed lover, and he lay back in his seat, quite breathless. On the other hand, Nelson Lee was perfectly cool, and enjoying the whole affair.

"Infernally queer business!" grunted Sir John.

"Sorry if I upset you at all, Sir John," smiled Lee. "But I simply couldn't resist the temptation to enter the race. Probably it is a trivial affair that will prove of no interest at all."

"Not our concern, anyway!" said Sir John gruffly.

Now that the chase was over, he felt somewhat annoyed, and was rather inclined to reprimand Nelson Lee for being so impulsive. For two facts had Sir John held his tongue. Firstly, he was indebted to Nelson Lee for bringing him up to London; and, secondly, Nelson Lee was not the kind of man to reprimand.

So Sir John gave another grunt, and glared round at the blue limousine. He professed to take no interest in the matter, but actually he was full of curiosity. And Lee wanted to know the truth, too.

Mr. Adams wrenched open the door of the limousine, and peered inside.

"Oh!" he exclaimed grimly. "So you double crossed me, Fletcher? You traitor! Get out of this auto at once—and step lively! You, too, Ulysses!"

Two figures emerged from the car.

The first was a boy of about fifteen. He was calm and cool, and in no way crestfallen. By the expression on his face he seemed to imagine that he had done something quite clever, and was somewhat bored by this interruption. His features were typically American.

The other figure was that of a smallish, superior-looking man, by no means of the crook type. Fletcher, indeed, had every appearance of gentlemanly upbringing, and was hardly the kind of man that Lee had expected to see.

"Gee, pop, you sure burned up the road!" remarked the boy calmly.

"Listen! When I want you to speak, I'll give you a call!" snapped Mr. Adams, glaring fiercely at his son. "You're sure the biggest dumb-bell that ever came out of a cradle!"

"Aw, can you beat that?" said the boy. "Mr. Fletcher just took me for a trip——"

"What the heck did I tell you?" shouted Mr. Adams. "As for you, Fletcher, you'll quit my service to-night! You've pulled this game on me, but you can't get away with it. No, sir! And, say, are you a bonehead? By golly! I'll say you are!"

"Listen, Mr. Adams!" said Fletcher, earnestly. "I couldn't avoid it—I was forced! Mrs. Adams got kind of sore because I objected, and I guess you know how she can pass the bull——"

"I do!" snapped Mr. Adams. "And you fell for it, eh? Gee! If you're not a cheap skate! A hundred bucks, and you got the biting, eh?"

Mr. Fletcher looked indignant.

"Say, pop, you've got Mr. Fletcher wrong!" put in the boy. "He——"

"You'll make things worse by butting in," interrupted his father. "See that car?" he added, pointing to Nelson Lee's racer. "Get in there, and stay in! And show some speed!"

The boy hesitated for a moment, but his father's attitude was so aggressive that he didn't object. Nelson Lee, in the meantime, had been busy. His racing-car was provided with a dickey-seat at the back. There had been no time to utilise this previously.

The boy, who appeared to be blessed with the impressive name of Ulysses, looked at the detective's racer, and his eyes expressed keen approval.

"Gee! Some flivver!" he observed.

"Jump in!" said Lee invitingly.

"You bet!" agreed Ulysses. "Say, the old boy makes me tired! He's a regular feller all right, but he gets kind of excited. Oh, boy, this auto's sure the cat's whiskers!" he added, as he climbed in.

Mr. Adams was talking earnestly to Fletcher, and as he did so, Fletcher grew perceptibly smaller and smaller, shrinking under the blast of anger. Ulysses looked on quite calmly.

"Pretty fierce on poor old Fletcher!" he remarked. "Gee! It won't be long before

the guy passes out! He's got the air all right—and I guess he quits being the old boy's secretary from this minute onwards. What do you know about that?"

The unfortunate Mr. Fletcher was undoubtedly in a bad way. For, almost too weak to make any reply, he crawled into the blue limousine, and the heavy car rolled slowly away.

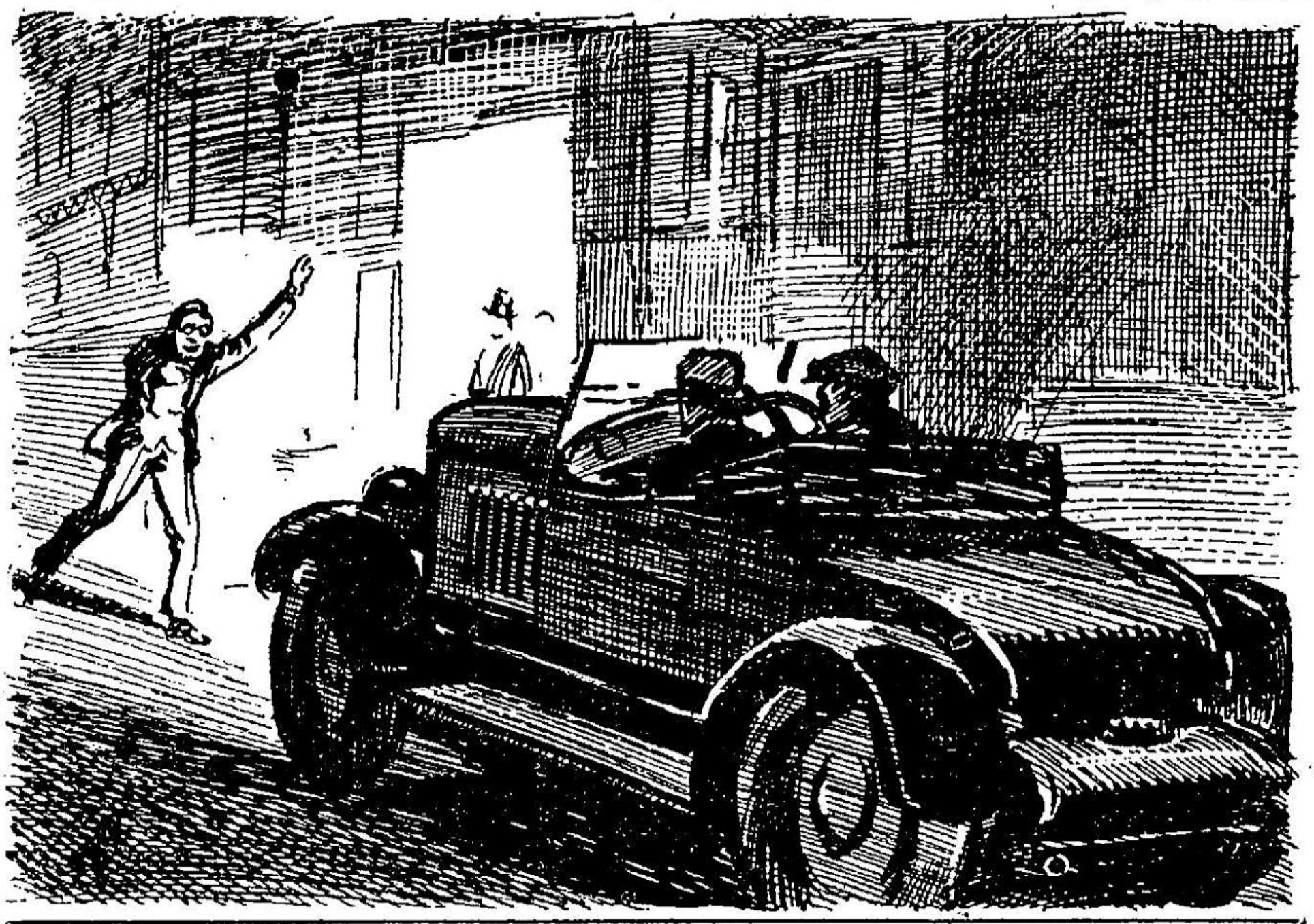
Mr. Adams turned, and gazed at Nelson Lee and Ulysses.

"That bonehead gets my goat!" he said disgustedly. "And this poor fish right here is just about as dumb as a hick! By golly! And he's my son!" he added, with withering contempt.

The American took advantage of Lee's offer, and seated himself in the rear, beside Ulysses. And as the racer turned round in the road, and shot powerfully away towards Putney, the boy made numerous admiring comments on the car's qualities.

But his father soon cut this short, and during the greater part of the ride back, a tense and heated conversation went on behind Nelson Lee and Sir John. The latter clearly showed his feelings by the disgusted expression on his face.

"These Americans!" he grunted sourly. "By gad! If that was a son of mine, I'd teach him not to argue with his elders! But over in the United States a boy of twelve



Nelson Lee wrenched at the wheel, and the car swerved giddily. And only in the nick of time, for the hatless man who rushed out of the Ritz Hotel was so excited that he nearly got run over.

Ulysses turned rather red.

"Aw, gee!" he protested. "Have a heart, pop!"

Mr. Adams didn't deign to answer his son. He came across, and stood by the car next to Nelson Lee.

"I'm mighty obliged to you, stranger, for taking all this trouble," he said earnestly. "Maybe you'll drive us back to the Ritz? You've sure earned that thousand bucks all right."

Nelson Lee laughed.

"We'll leave the thousand dollars until later," he said lightly. "Jump in, Mr. Adams—I'll soon have you back at the Ritz."

or fifteen thinks he's as important as any other member of the community! They need a little more humble spirit, sir! They need a little more humble spirit!"

Sir John repeated his statement fiercely, and glared into Nelson Lee's face at the same time. The detective nodded, and chuckled.

"Things are quite different over in America, Sir John," he remarked.

"I hope to Heaven they'll never get the same in this country!" grunted Sir John. "By gad! Imagine St. Frank's filled with boys like this specimen! The very thought is horrifying!"

By this time the car was passing along

Fulham Road again, back towards the Ritz. And Nelson Lee felt just a little disappointed. The affair had not turned out to be so very dramatic, after all. In fact, by all appearances, it was just a domestic quarrel.

And by this time Nelson Lee was able to "place" the American gentleman. The name Adams had seemed slightly familiar, and now that Nelson Lee's mind was not so occupied, he was able to devote his attention to Mr. Adams.

A few days earlier Lee had seen a small paragraph in one of the London papers, announcing the fact that Mr. Otis Spencer Adams, of New York, was staying in London for a few weeks. Mr. Adams was one of America's latest millionaires, having made a big fortune out of cheese.

Indeed, Mr. Adams was frequently referred to as the Cheese King. He was the President of the Adams Pimento Cheese Company, Inc., of Troy, N.Y. Until a few years ago Mr. Adams had been the proprietor of a mere grocer's shop.

Troy is a fairly large town in New York State comparatively near to Albany, and within a few hours' run of New York City. Mr. Adams, not being content with a "corner grocery" all his life, had made experiments with a popular American delicacy known as pimento cheese.

Mr. Adams succeeded beyond his wildest hopes. In ten short years the fame of his special brand of pimento cheese had spread throughout the length and breadth of the Eastern States—until, indeed, Mr. Adams sold the grocer's shop, and opened up a cheese factory.

By dint of keen business methods and wide publicity, the Adams' Cheese had become so popular that it was in demand in every town and city of note. And, incidentally, Mr. Adams became a millionaire—in dollars. His cheese, at the present moment, was finding its way to the far west of America, to Canada, and was even thinking of making its appearance in England. That, in short, was why Mr. Adams was in London.

Nelson Lee knew the type of man—he had met many similar mushroom millionaires while in America. Bluff and hearty, with any amount of rough and ready talk, Mr. Adams was the sort of man who generally got his own way. He was obviously not a member of America's famed "four hundred." In spite of his riches, he was still one of the masses, and probably displayed indifferent manners at table. But it was obvious that Mr. Adams had hopes of making his son into a more finished product.

But the boy, being a true son of Democracy, was not at all particular in his choice of speech, and used the highly interesting jargon which one can hear on every corner of New York's crowded streets. For although Troy was the youngster's "home town," he had lived since childhood in New York City—where his father had made his headquarters since fame had come to him.

So far as Nelson Lee was concerned, the affair was quite over, and as only an hour had been wasted, the detective was in no way upset. He merely intended to drop Mr. Adams and Master Adams at the Ritz, and then proceed on his way.

But Mr. Adams himself had something to say about this.

The Ritz was reached, and the American millionaire stepped on to the pavement, and commanded his son to follow him. The latter did so, looking quite indifferent, and even bored.

"I'm very much obliged to you, stranger, for helping me," said Mr. Adams, producing a fat pocket-book; "and I'm a man of my word, I guess. A thousand dollars was the sum mentioned——"

"I assure you, Mr. Adams, that if you press the matter, I shall be quite offended," interrupted Nelson Lee smilingly. "If I have been of service to you, I am quite pleased."

Mr. Adams looked astonished.

"But, listen!" he exclaimed. "I can't expect you to——"

"Pardon me, sir; but Mr. Nelson Lee is hardly the kind of gentleman to accept gratuities!" interjected Sir John stiffly.

"By golly! Did you say Mr. Nelson Lee?" asked the American quickly. "Gee! Not Mr. Lee, the detective?"

"Exactly, sir," said Sir John coldly.

"Well, say, this is sure swell!" declared Mr. Adams. "Come right in, gentlemen! I'll be honoured if you'll join me in a cocktail. Come up to my suite, and you're real welcome!"

Sir John looked appealingly at Nelson Lee. He didn't approve of this rough-and-ready American at all. Sir John was one of the old school, and his feelings were very sensitive. But Lee, to the baronet's horror, at once agreed to the American's proposal.

Under the circumstances, there was hardly anything else to be done. And when Mr. Adams found that Lee's companion was Sir John Brent, the Chairman of the Governors of St. Frank's College, he was not only delighted, but very greatly impressed.

"Why, if I had known this before, I should have hesitated about troubling you," he declared. "I hope you'll forgive me, gentlemen, for taking up some of your time. And I'd like to explain a few things, I guess— I don't want you to think that I usually chase my son about in this way!"

"We are by no means curious, sir," said Sir John stiffly.

But Mr. Adams, in spite of this discouragement, carried Nelson Lee and Sir John up to his suite. Ulysses came, too, but disappeared into one of the other rooms almost at once.

Under the soothing influence of a couple of good cocktails, Sir John unbent to a sur-

prising degree, and before long he was chatting amiably with Mr. Adams about conditions in the United States.

"Well, folks, I'd like to explain my reason for chasing my son around," said the millionaire, after a while. "It's a family affair, but the whole world knows about it, I guess, so it don't matter a cent. Junior is sure a peppy young guy. He gives me a heap of trouble."

"Your son, you mean?" asked Sir John.

"You said it!" agreed Mr. Adams, nodding. "Maybe you know that his mother and I didn't exactly hit off together and were divorced last year?"

"I was not aware of that distressing fact," said Sir John.

"Well, there it is, and between you and me, folks, I'm glad it's all over," declared Mr. Adams confidentially. "You see, Mrs. Adams was—well, she had a habit of getting fresh, and when she was real worked up she could shift the furniture around at some speed, I'll tell the world! And if I ever made a wise crack, she got sore. Things got sure bad; and Junior, you understand, was just an honest-to-goodness youngster who wanted to please the pair of us. He sort of clung to his mother. Well, there was a court affair, and we were divorced, and Junior was legally placed in my custody. Say, did Mrs. Adams hit the high notes?"

"By the reports, I understood that she did," said Nelson Lee gravely.

"By golly! That woman handed out a line of dope that had New York calling me every kind of crook!" said Mr. Adams. "Can you imagine that? And I won the suit—and clean, too! That woman hasn't given me a minute's rest since; and what with her and looking after Ulysses, I've been having some little time, believe me! Listen! I came over to Europe to escape that dame, and by heck if she hasn't followed!"

"Cannot you appeal to the law for protection?" asked Sir John.

"The law's nothing!" replied Mr. Adams. "That woman cares no more for the law than she cares for a can of beans. She's after the boy, and Junior isn't particular whether he stays with me or goes over to her. He should worry! She's got a big bank-roll, and shows him a good time all right!"

Nelson Lee was genuinely sorry for the millionaire. Now that his mind was refreshed, he remembered the big "Adams Case." Mrs. Adams was undoubtedly an utterly worthless woman, and the Courts had been just and right in allowing the husband custody of the child. His mother—sad though it was—had had a bad influence on Ulysses.

The boy was too young to fully understand the inner seriousness of the whole situation. Since early childhood he had been brought up with very scant attention from his parents—and this attention had been of the wrong kind.

In short, Ulysses was spoilt—as most American children are spoilt. At the age of six or seven the average American child is practically allowed to have his own way in everything. Many American children are taken strictly in hand after that age, of course, but there are just as many who are not. Ulysses was one of the latter.

And now, at the age of fifteen, he had big ideas of his own importance—not because he was conceited, but simply because he had been brought up in that way. And it was quite immaterial to him whether he remained with his father or his mother.

Both had plenty of money; both lavished every luxury upon him—the mother because she wanted to induce him away, and the father because he was anxious to keep his son. Mr. Adams believed that by granting every one of Ulysses' wishes, the boy would cling to him.

But theories do not always work out in practice. And the simple result was that "Junior" was completely spoilt. He needed a strong hand; but, unfortunately, there was no strong hand available. For at the very first sign of severity from his father, Ulysses would leap to his mother.

Mr. Adams explained these facts in a somewhat pathetic voice. He told Nelson Lee and Sir John of his helplessness. He wanted to keep Ulysses with him, because in later years he had hopes of making the boy his successor.

"And things are just all wrong at this particular time," went on the millionaire. "I've got to quit this country and get back to New York. A rival firm on the other side is pulling over some funny business, and unless I'm on the spot, it'll cost me a whole bunch of money."

"You are leaving England soon?" asked Sir John.

"Saturday!" said Mr. Adams. "I'd go before then if a fast boat was available. And if I take Junior with me there'll be a pile of trouble. The boy wants to stay here—he's taken a fancy to this country, I guess. I've only got to suggest quitting, and he'll give me the air! And that's where his mother will make a grab."

"Your position appears to be somewhat difficult," said Nelson Lee. "I quite agree with you, Mr. Adams, that it would be exceedingly unwise to let the boy get back under his mother's influence. She has no legal right to coerce him in any way——"

"I know it," interrupted the millionaire. "But supposing I go to the Courts, and ask for an injunction against Mrs. Adams to stop this game? By golly! The newspapers will grab at the chance, and hand out a pile of sensational stuff—and get away with it. Get me? The public is sure dumb! They'd turn on me like a pack of wolves, for keeping the boy away from his mother! No,

sir! I guess this thing's got to be done quietly."

"I agree with you," said Nelson Lee. "Publicity would certainly have the effect you indicate. The great majority of the people would take it for granted that Mrs. Adams was being badly treated, and such publicity might seriously jeopardise your business."

"You've got me, Mr. Lee!" declared the American. "Now, if I could leave the boy in England, in safe keeping and away from the clutches of that scheming woman, I'd sure be relieved. Even my own private secretary fell for her bribery! Say, she's as full of graft as a politician!"

rather awkward. He had made the remark about St. Frank's quite innocently, without even suspecting that Mr. Adams would regard it seriously. And as the suggestion had been Sir John's own, it was practically impossible for him to back out of it.

Not that he really desired to, now that he came to argue with himself. After all, Mr. Otis Spencer Adams was something of a rough customer, but there was no question about his sterling integrity. One look at the man was enough to convince anybody that he was a bluff, hearty American of the best type.

And the boy—well, the boy was undoubtedly a precocious youngster. Sir

"What you want to do," said Sir John, "is to send your boy to a big school—a school like St. Frank's College—where he will be entirely under the control of the school authorities, and therefore in safety. Mrs. Adams would have no opportunity of interfering in such an event."

Mr. Adams started.

"Gee! That's a crackerjack of an idea!" he exclaimed excitedly. "Say, gentlemen, do you think that could be fixed? Expense is no object, as you can guess. I'll give you a cheque right now——"

"Dear me!" protested Sir John. "I—I didn't exactly mean——"

He paused, feeling that the situation was

John's lips pursed themselves unconsciously as he thought of the self-satisfied Ulysses. But, after all, he wasn't to blame. He had been pampered and petted ever since he could remember—money had been lavished upon him recklessly. A term at St. Frank's would make all the difference. Two terms would bring about a decided change. A year would alter the boy entirely.

"Sir John's suggestion is quite an excellent one, Mr. Adams," remarked Nelson Lee gently. "It provides a solution to the problem. Mrs. Adams would have no opportunity of getting at her son—for, naturally, the school authorities would not allow her to visit St. Frank's."

"Fine!" said Mr. Adams heartily. "Say, we'll dope this out right now."

The millionaire was enraptured with enthusiasm when he learned that Nelson Lee was permanently resident at the school. And Lee promised that he would look after Ulysses, and see that he came to no harm.

Lee only agreed to this because he knew that Mr. Adams' wife was an utterly unscrupulous woman. She did not want the boy because of any mother love, but simply because she was doing her utmost to vent her spite against her former husband.

As a general rule, Nelson Lee always steered well clear of family disputes. But this was in a different category. It was certainly sad that any mother could be so wicked, but in this world one must face facts. And since Mr. Adams' son and heir was in need of protection, St. Frank's was just the very spot where he would find safety. And, what was still more important, the healthy influence of the famous school would improve him mentally and physically.

All the arrangements were settled. As Chairman of the Governors, Sir John Brent had full power. His word, in a way, was law. But Mr. Adams surprised the baronet by calling Ulysses in to consult.

"By gad!" said Sir John, in an outraged voice. "But this is absurd, Mr. Adams. Surely the boy will do as you say without consulting him?"

"I've got to be mighty careful," replied Mr. Adams grimly. "I'm more afraid of that boy than I am of dynamite! When he gives this scheme the O.K. I'll be sure relieved!"

Ulysses was brought in, and he listened indifferently at first as his father delicately hinted at the idea. But as the scheme became unfolded, Ulysses looked more alert, and a sparkle came into his eyes.

"Hot dog!" he exclaimed enthusiastically.

"I—I beg your pardon," said Sir John, in surprise.

"Say, pop, that's sure the bull-frog's eyebrow!" went on Ulysses. "I guess you guys have been handing out the dope, and getting a line on things! Well, I'll tell the world it's a peach of an idea!"

Mr. Adams gave a glance at Nelson Lee and Sir John which told of his relief. Nelson Lee was wondering how this remarkable youngster would get on in the exceedingly English atmosphere of St. Frank's—and Sir John was vaguely trying to understand what in the world Ulysses had been driving at. The speech of the modern New Yorker was somewhat baffling to a man of Sir John's conventional habits.

U.S.A.—in two senses—was booked for St. Frank's!

CHAPTER III.

U.S.A. FROM U.S.A.!

"NIPPER!"

I turned as I was leaving Study C, in the Remove passage of the Ancient House at St. Frank's, Nelson Lee was just coming along from the direction of his study, and I at once paused.

"Yes, sir?" I said inquiringly.

Lee was looking rather more thoughtful than usual. It was a half-holiday that day, and I was busily preparing for putting some of the fellows through football practice on Little Side.

The November afternoon was crisp and bracing, with a nip in the air that made life worth living. There was a pretty strong breeze, too, which showed every sign of increasing into a stiff gale before night.

"What study space have you got available?" asked Nelson Lee.

"Study space, sir?"

"A new boy is coming into the Remove this afternoon," explained the guv'nor.

"Oh!" I said, interested. "A new chap—eh? First I've heard about it, sir."

"I regret the oversight, Nipper!" said Nelson Lee, with mock gravity. "Whatever could I have been thinking about to neglect such an important matter?"

"Cheese it, sir!" I grinned. "Study space—eh? Well, most of our studies in the Ancient House have got three fellows in them. There's Study G—of course, with only Merrell and Marriott in there. But I don't think of those chaps as study-mates. What's the new fellow like, sir?"

"He is a New York boy."

"My hat!" I said. "So we're getting a real Yankee in the school at last! Farman is a Californian, and he doesn't count much—being a Westerner, he's not a Yankee, and he's been here so long that he's practically the same as any of the other fellows. But a real 'honest-to-goodness' New Yorker! I'll bet he's the son of a millionaire!"

"As a matter of fact, he is."

"And I'll bet the millionaire made his money out of corned-beef, or something like that."

"Cheese, to be exact," smiled Nelson Lee.

"How do they do it, sir?" I asked. "How do these Americans make millions out of a simple thing like cheese?"

"Publicity—energy—and the support of an ever-trusting public," replied Lee. "In America, my lad, they are able to do things on a huge scale, chiefly because of the vast population. And cheese is an item of food which appeals to ninety per cent. of the public. But I did not come here to hold a discourse upon cheese, Nipper. With regard to this study——"

"Well, what about Study M, sir?" I chuckled.

"You think it will be as well to place the new boy with Somerton and De Valerie?"

"Why, not, sir?" I asked, flattered that he should seek my advice. "Somerton's a duke, and it'll be rather good to see how the American chap influences the ducal calm, or how Somerton influences the Yankee pep."

Nelson Lee laughed.

"That is quite a good suggestion, Nipper," he said. "The boy will be here by the afternoon train, and he is coming down quite alone—this, by the way, being his own idea. He decided that he wouldn't have his father bothering about. This gentleman, by the way, is Mr. Otis S. Adams, sometimes referred to as the Cheese King."

"And what's the new chap's name, sir?"

"Ulysses Spencer Adams."

I recovered slowly, and gazed at Nelson Lee through a mist.

"Ulysses!" I said faintly. "My only hat! He'll be ragged to death with a name like that!"

"Curiously enough, the boy's actual home town is Troy, New York State—so it will be quite truthful to say that Ulysses of Troy will soon honour this school with his presence!" chuckled Nelson Lee.

"Ulysses of Troy!" I repeated. "Well, go on, sir. Any more shocks?"

"No, you young duffer!" said Lee. "I will leave it to you whether you will meet the American boy or not. I thought perhaps it would be an act of courtesy to see him out of the train and escort him to the school. If you cannot go yourself, I am sure you will send a suitable deputy."

And Nelson Lee went on his way, leaving me with a vague sense of impending trouble. Any fellow with a name like Ulysses Spencer Adams was simply asking for chaff. Yet the name was typically American, and, indeed, quite unambitious compared to many freak Christian names with which children are burdened in the United States.

I was just moving towards the lobby when Sir Montie Tregellis-West and Tommy Watson appeared in sight. I invited them into Study C, and closed the door.

"What's the mystery about?" asked Watson bluntly.

"No mystery," I replied. "We're going to Bannington."

"But I thought you said something about football——"

"Only practice this afternoon, and the chaps can get along without us," I replied. "There's a new fellow coming into the Remove—a live, red-hot, up-to-the-second product of New York!"

"Begad!" said Sir Montie. "I trust the chap is well connected?"

"His father is a cheese manufacturer," I explained.

Sir Montie sat down limply.

"That's frightful—it is, really!" he murmured. "Not, of course, that a fellow's parents are anythin' against him."

"His name," I went on grimly, "is Ulysses!"

"Great Scott!" said Tommy Watson feebly.

I went into fuller details, and by the time I had finished, my chums had partially regained their former composure. And I explained that the scheme was to meet the London express in Bannington, and travel to Bellton on the local—with Master Ulysses Spencer Adams.

"You see, we'll come upon him quite casually," I explained. "We won't let on that we've come specially to meet him. In this way we shall be able to get an impression of the chap before he actually arrives."

I had a few other ideas, too, and it wasn't long before Reginald Pitt, Jack Grey, Justin B. Farman, and a few others were in close consultation with me. And at the conclusion of this meeting, I set off with my chums.

We went by train to Bannington, arriving twenty minutes before the London express was due. We filled in this space of time quite beneficially. The station refreshment-room was cosy, and the coffee and sandwiches were really excellent.

The London train arrived, and we kept a sharp look-out for our quarry. We needn't have worried much. Only four boys alighted from the train. Three of them belonged to the Bannington Grammar School, and the fourth was obviously a stranger.

And one look at his face was enough.

He was a well set up junior, with fair hair—blonde hair, as they would say in America. His face was of that typically American type which cannot be mistaken. And the very set of his clothing, and his low-heeled shoes, sufficed to convince me of his identity.

"He doesn't look such a bad sort," said Tommy Watson critically.

"Oh, I expect he's all right—no reason why he shouldn't be," I replied. "Good! He's moving across to the local—and he's got his eye on an empty compartment, too."

We were pleased to find that the American boy entered a deserted first-class compartment, and settled himself comfortably down. We came along the train, casually talking, and paused outside the door.

"This one'll do," I said briskly. "Come on!"

I wrenched open the door, and we tumbled in. The newcomer regarded us with frank, open interest.

"We shall just be at St. Frank's in time

for tea," I remarked, addressing my chums. "Lucky thing we caught this train."

"Rather!" said Tommy and Sir Montie.

The American boy looked at us with even greater interest.

"Say, what do you know about that?" he remarked. "You guys are from St. Frank's school, aren't you?"

"Yes—why?" I asked.

"I'm interested, I guess," said the other. "I'm on my way to St. Frank's now. Pleased to meet you. My name's Adams—Ulysses Spencer Adams. Son of Mr. Otis Spencer Adams, the millionaire."

We regarded Ulysses with the correct amount of awe.

"Oh, so you're the American chap, eh?" I asked. "We heard that you were coming to St. Frank's. I'm the captain of the Remove."

"I don't get you," said Ulysses. "What's the Remove? A grade?"

"The Remove is really the Fourth Form," I explained. "In the English public schools we have Forms, and in the Council schools they're called Standards. All the same thing, really. My name's Nipper. Glad to welcome you into the Remove, Adams."

"Nipper?" repeated the American boy. "That's sure a fancy name."

"Oh, it's really a nickname," I explained. "I was christened Dick Hamilton, but I'm always called Nipper. I'm the assistant of Mr. Nelson Lee, the detective—he's our Housemaster."

Ulysses looked interested.

"Can you imagine that!" he said, in his strong New York accent. "I've met Mr. Lee. Say, he's sure a regular feller! I'm glad I met you guys. I'll be able to get a line on things."

"To get what?" asked Tommy Watson.

"You guys will be able to hand me the dope!" explained Ulysses. "Say, I hear that St. Frank's is sure a swell joint. One of these crackerjack, high-tone places, eh?"

"Rather!" said Tommy Watson. "Better than anything you've got over in the States, I'll bet."

"Aw, where do you get that stuff?" demanded Ulysses warmly. "Say, our colleges and universities are sure swell. You made a break that time, kid, I'll tell the world! St. Frank's may be as good as anything you've got over on this side, but you can't pull that bunk on me. This country's sure nifty, but it's kind of old."

"Is America a lot better, then?" I asked innocently.

"Oh, boy! I'll say it is!" replied Adams. "Listen! Columbia University, New York, is as big as two English cities rolled into one. Yep! The buildings are of solid marble, and the library is twenty floors high! And the lawns and grounds are just about the size of your Hyde Park!"

"Begad!" said Sir Montie, startled.

"For the love of Mike! You boneheads don't know a thing!" went on Ulysses, with

He was a well-set-up junior with fair hair—blond hair, as they would say in America. His face was of that typically American type which cannot be mistaken.

a kind of pitying superiority. "I'll sure have to put you wise to a whole bunch of information. Say," he added, fixing his gaze upon Montie's suit. "What's the idea of this fancy dress stuff?"

"Fancy dress stuff?" repeated Tregellis-West stiffly.

"You said it!" nodded Ulysses. "The big, white collar and the funny coat?"

"What are you talking about?" said Watson indignantly. "Funny coat! These are Eton clothes! You'll have to wear a suit like this, too!"

"Aw, gee, that's the bunk!" said the American boy. "Suffering cats! You won't see me around in that coo-coo outfit! I'll sure admit you're snappy dressers all right, but it don't look too good!"

"Oh, you'll get used to it," I laughed. "Hallo! We're starting."

Ulysses glanced out of the window.

"These trains make me tired," he remarked. "Around New York we've got electric railroads that shoot a guy 'way out hundreds of miles in any direction. Listen! Did you ever hear of the New York Subway?"

"A kind of an underground passage, isn't it?" I asked vaguely.

"A—a passage?" said Ulysses.

"Yes, a subway where people walk."

"Geewinnikers! Can you beat that?" said Ulysses, gazing at us as though we were rare curiosities. "Say, you guys ain't dumb—you're just dead! They say the folks in Philadelphia walk around dead, but they're sure peppy compared to you dumbbells!"

"Look here——" began Tommy Watson.

"Aw, don't get sore!" interrupted Ulysses. "I just can't help handing you the air! Say, the New York Subway is an electric railroad with steel trains that burn up the tracks at a hundred miles an hour!"

"The company must need new tracks pretty often," I said sweetly.

"Gee, you're kind of fresh," said Ulysses, frowning. "Those trains on the Subway move along like streaks of lightning! The locals aren't so good, but say, the expresses! Oh, boy! When you're in a Subway Express you can get uptown to Van Cortlandt Park before you're able to grab a strap!"

We all looked tremendously impressed; but inwardly we were delighted and highly amused at the New York boy's "line of bull," as he himself would have termed it.

"Oh, I see!" I said, as though just understanding. "You mean the Underground Railway? We've got one in London, too. I've always thought that the Metropolitan and District Railways were better than the New York Underground——"

"Say, how do you get that way?" interrupted Ulysses tartly. "The N'York Subway has got your London tubes knocked dead cold! And as for these punk small town lines, they get me real sore. Gee! I guess we must be streaking along at 'most ten miles an hour!" he added contemptuously, as he glanced out of the window.

"Oh, you mustn't judge by these local trains!" said Watson.

"Out there, in New York State, our small-town train service is so good that you think you're on the Twentieth Century Limited!"

"I've heard of that," I said, nodding. "A good express train, isn't it?"

"I'll say so," agreed Ulysses. "Listen! The Twentieth Century Limited shoots between Chicago and New York in less than twenty hours—and that's some going, believe me! And you guys don't know a thing yet," he added easily. "Say, you'd sure pass out if you went to the top of Woolworth building."

"Anything to do with the threepenny and sixpenny stores?" I asked.

"You said a mouthful," declared Ulysses. "But we call them five and ten-cent stores over there. Say, the Woolworth building is so high that the tower is most generally above the clouds! It takes half an hour on the express elevator to get to the top. And from way up there New York looks like you were staring down on it from an airplane. Some building, I'll tell the Universe!"

"You're pretty enthusiastic about New York," said Tommy Watson.

"You bet I am," replied the American boy. "I'm sure some little booster! I come from the greatest city in the world, and it makes me tired to hear those poor fish in London praising their foggy old dump!"

"I belong to London," I remarked calmly.

"That so? Glad to see you're not sore at me," smiled Ulysses.

He could see something that didn't exist, for my chums and I were very "sore" indeed. We felt like jumping upon this self-satisfied American youth and squashing him flat.

But a glance from me warned Tommy and Montie to take things calmly. Knowing America as we did, and knowing the average American's mentality, too, we were by no means surprised to hear this kind of talk from Ulysses Spencer Adams.

And, biding our time, we calmly listened during the rest of the journey while Ulysses drew wonderful and entrancing word-pictures of his native country. If a quarter of what he told us had been true, his desire to remain in a decayed old country like England was positively unaccountable.

CHAPTER IV.

LEARNING A FEW THINGS.

"HERE they are!" said Reginald Pitt crisply.

He dodged back through the gateway into the Triangle and raised one of his arms as a signal. And a group of juniors near the gymnasium at once pulled upon a light rope.

The Stars and Stripes ran to the top of a neat flagstaff, unfurled in the strong breeze, and fluttered out bravely. The unfurling of the American flag had been one of my little ideas, and the other juniors had entered into it enthusiastically.

We thought it would be rather a nice compliment to the new boy. And as the flag stood out in the wind, Ulysses Spencer Adams was escorted through the gateway.

He came to an abrupt halt, and his eyes gleamed.

"Gee! Old glory!" he exclaimed proudly. "Some flag!"

There was no question about his pleasure. He forgot all about the story he had been telling us—a story concerning the staggering building operations which were in progress on the Island of Manhattan.

Several times during the last twenty minutes Tommy and Montie and I had only kept ourselves from slaughtering the new boy by sheer force of will. His scathing remarks concerning the sleepy old village

of Bellton had aroused our ire, for Ulysses would have preferred the picturesque little place to be disfigured by glaring "bill-boards," telegraph-poles, corner drug stores, and all the other hideous atrocities which contribute towards the make-up of the average American "small town."

"U—S—A! Welcome to St. Frank's!" chanted the Remove.

"Hurrah!"

Ulysses walked forward, looking more pleased than ever. But, at the same time, there was an air about him which indicated that he was taking a great deal for granted. He seemed to think that all this was quite usual.

Reggie Pitt held out his hand.

"Jolly pleased to meet you!" he said. "Let me introduce Farman—Justin B. Farman, of California."

"Do tell!" said Ulysses. "Gee, I'm sure glad!"

"You bet!" said Farman. "You're an Easterner and I'm a Westerner. We ought to pull together pretty well, I guess. You'll like the crowd here, Adams; they're a bunch of regular fellers!"

"Say, that's swell!" smiled Ulysses. "But suffering cats; ain't they dumb?"

"Dumb?" repeated Farman quickly. "You mean ignorant?"

"Surest thing you know!" said Ulysses. "I met three guys in the train, and they didn't know a thing about the Greatest Country on Earth. Three honest-to-goodness mutts! Say, I handed out a line of bull that knocked 'em cold!"

Farman looked startled.

"My hat!" he said faintly. "But—but——"

Ulysses was gazing at the flagstaff, and he hardly paid any attention to Farman's talk. And a frown appeared upon the New York boy's face. The good old Union Jack was being run up the staff, and it unfurled and fluttered out grandly beside the Stars and Stripes.

"Hurrah!" roared the juniors.

"Three cheers for the red, white and blue!"

"Hip—hip—hurrah!"

Ulysses looked angry and impatient. He had glowed with pride to see "Old Glory." But the Union Jack in no way impressed him.

"Gee, that's the bunk!" he said sourly.

"Eh?" demanded Armstrong.

"You guys are dopey on the punk-looking flag," said Ulysses. "You've spoilt the look of the Stars and Stripes, I guess——"

"Then you'd better guess again," snapped Armstrong hotly. "We did you the honour of running up the American flag and cheering it, and you don't like it when the British flag unfurls. On the top of that you insult the Union Jack by calling it 'punk.' That means rotten in your filthy language!"

Ulysses swallowed hard. Armstrong had let him have it straight from the shoulder—Armstrong being blunt and headstrong. It was just a little example of the curious American way of looking at things. The average American will swell with pride if an English crowd cheers anything American. But if that same British crowd cheers something British—well, there's a difference. And Ulysses was a typical American. He possessed that curious one-sided viewpoint which so characterises his countrymen.

An embarrassing situation was avoided by Farman pulling Ulysses to one side, and taking him over towards the Ancient House, on the pretext of escorting him to Nelson Lee's study.

The other members of the Remove, having performed the "honours" according to plan, dispersed in various directions.

"Say, that was kind of unwise," said Farman diplomatically. "You don't need to get fresh with the British flag. I guess you're in this country, and you'll have to go fifty-fifty with the fellers. You can take it from me, Adams, they're a fine bunch of chaps, on the whole. Real, genuine sportsmen, too. I figure the States could do with some of their sporting spirit."

Ulysses stared.

"For the love of Mike! You'll be taking out your naturalisation papers, I guess," he said. "Listen! Those three guys I came along with are sure a bunch of boneheads. I passed the bull——"

"Wait a minute!" interrupted Farman. "Do you think you fooled those chaps?"

"I sure did!"

"Then you'd better be careful in future," said Justin B. calmly. "Say, you're the feller who's been fooled! Gee whizz! Nipper and his chums must have been bursting themselves while you were handing out that stuff!"

Ulysses Spencer Adams looked startled.

"Say, what's the big idea?" he asked. "I tell you those guys are dumb-bells. I told them about the New York Subway——"

"Great Scott!" yelled Farman. "Why, they know New York as well as you do!"

Adams gulped.

"My land!" he panted. "Did—did I make a break?"

"You bet your life you made a break!" grinned Farman. "Nipper and Watson and lots of the other chaps have been to New York several times. They know all about the Subway and the Woolworth Building and the other skyscrapers, and—and everything. Say, they're just killing themselves laffing right now!"

Ulysses almost choked. To find out that he—he, the great U.S.A., had been spoofed was a terrible blow to him. He had been congratulating himself upon his smartness, too.

I had known what a shock he would get, and that was why I had bade my chums contain themselves. It would be a greater lesson for Ulysses to learn the truth after-

wards. The American boy, in fact, was rapidly discovering that the British youngsters were not such "dumb-bells," in fact.

Nelson Lee appeared before Ulysses could say much, and for half an hour he was engaged. He emerged from the Housemaster's study with everything fixed up. He was passed for the Remove, and would share Study M with the Duke of Somerton and Cecil De Valerie.

Ulysses, with the true spirit of American democracy, was simply dying to make the acquaintance of Somerton. A duke! Ulysses fairly glowed. For if the truth must be told, the average American—man, woman, or child—has an almost awed reverence for any kind of a title. And a duke to share his study! Ulysses was positively excited.

He wanted to find Study M at once; but while he was trying to find his way back to the lobby, he ran into the arms of Handforth and Church and McClure. The famous chums of Study D stopped dead, and Edward Oswald Handforth gave a grunt of satisfaction. He licked his lips, as though he were about to devour this newcomer.

"Oh!" he said aggressively. "So you're the chap, are you?"

Handforth almost seemed to think that it was his especial duty to treat new boys with utter and complete harshness. His idea was simple. He wanted to impress them at once that they were persons of no importance.

"I don't get you!" said Ulysses.

"No; but we've got you!" retorted Handforth. "It was only by a piece of luck that I wasn't out in the Triangle when you arrived. I hear that you're inclined to be cheeky."

"That so?" said the American boy. "Got anything else to ask me?"

"Yes, I have!"

"All right—shoot!"

"Eh?"

"Spill it," said Ulysses.

"I'm just going to tell you that a new chap in this school mustn't have too much to say for himself," went on Handforth frowning. "It strikes me you've got a lot of nerve."

"You don't need to hand out that line of talk," said Adams. "Go away some place and chase yourself!"

"By George!" said Handforth grimly. "Are you telling me to clear off?"

"Aw, gee! You need some speed, I guess," said Ulysses. "I'm wanting to know where Study M is——"

"Never mind Study M," interrupted Handforth. "I'm going to show you round the school. Understand? Being an American chap, you don't know anything about such fine old buildings as these, so I'm going to be your guide."

"We'll show you all the places of interest," put in Church.

"That's wonderful," said Ulysses. "You guys seem to be pretty peppy. And this school is certainly ancient. Say, if we had a place like this over in the States, we'd pull it down and put up something modern!"

"Oh, would you?" said Handforth. "You can't kid me like that, my son! If you had a picturesque old set of buildings like this in America, you'd put a national park round them and run special excursion trains, and print miles of boosting literature."

"We don't have to argue," said Ulysses. "But I'm telling you that this old dump would be two cents over on the other side. Yes, sirree; we've got to hustle over there, and we've got no time for fancy trimmings."

"Well, after you've seen the cloisters and the old chapel and the monastery ruins, perhaps you'll believe that there's something to be said for preserving the old English historical buildings," said Handforth. "Come on! We'll show you the monastery ruins first."

"Fine!" said Ulysses. "But make it snappy!"

Handforth, like most of the other juniors at St. Frank's, was very proud of the magnificent old pile. On numerous occasions he had been heard to refer to the school as a "mouldy old place," and had even knocked fellows down because they uttered words in praise of the architecture.

But that was merely Handforth's little way. He considered that he had a perfect right to run the school down if he wanted to. But when an American junior came along and started the same tactics, it was time to do something. Besides, Handforth really had a very high opinion of the school.

Certainly Church and McClure were somewhat dazed as Edward Oswald grasped Ulysses by the arm and led him off on the tour of inspection. Up till now Handforth had never displayed any interest whatever in scenery and architecture. It just proved that Handforth's soul wasn't quite so dormant as Church and McClure believed.

"Now, look at that!" said Handforth triumphantly.

They had crossed the Triangle, and had passed through the shrubbery, and were now facing the wonderfully picturesque monastery ruins. They stood there, impressive and superb in their rugged beauty. Masses of ivy and other creepers covered the gaunt old stonework, softening the picture exquisitely.

"Wonderful!" said Ulysses, nodding. "Gee! Sure some ruin, I'll say! Kind of makes a guy think about the Middle Ages. I'll hand it to you that this dump is sure the camel's hump!"

"The what?" said Handforth, glaring.

"Aw, what's the use?" said Ulysses. "You don't understand English."

"Great pip!" said Handforth faintly. "If you think you speak English, my lad, you've made a bloomer. Listen to me, and you'll hear the pure, refined English language. And if you start any rot, I'll jolly well biff you on the napper!"

Handforth's pure, refined English was somewhat startling. But he was apparently unaware of this fact.

"Now we'll go and look at the cloisters and the chapel," he went on briskly. "Come on! I'll show you whether this place is a dump!"

Ulysses was duly impressed by the cloisters; but as he walked round from place to place there was an impatient look growing in his eyes.

"Well, it's sure nifty," he remarked at last.

"What do you mean—nifty?"

"Why, it's good—it's sure a wonderful place," replied Ulysses. "But, gee, you're certainly needing some pep around here. This place is kind of dead from the foundations up."

"Dead?" said Handforth aggressively.

"Surest thing you know," replied Ulysses. "You bet it's dead. Why, over in the States we'd put a whole bunch of life into an outfit like this. We'd sure fix it good. But I guess it's just the same with everything over here. You English guys move like you were at a funeral. Listen! In New York we even make the funeral's snappy!"

"We're slow, are we?" demanded Handforth.

"You don't need to get sore," said the American boy. "I've been over on this side for five or six weeks, and I guess I know what I'm talking about. Say, this old country's asleep!"

"Oh, is it?"

"Asleep!" repeated Ulysses. "Listen! If we had your castles, your beach cities, your cathedrals, and your scenery over in the United States, we'd boost them up to the skies. Say, we'd sure tell the world that we'd got something worth looking at. We do things big out there. Say, our railroad companies boost the scenery for all it's worth!"

"Yes, and a lot more than it's worth!" said Handforth sourly.

"Aw, gee, where do you get that stuff?" demanded Ulysses. "Did you ever see our Grand Canyon? Did you ever see the Niagara Falls? Did you ever see the wonderful palms of Los Angeles? Say, there's some city, believe me! Los Angeles is sure the Paradise of the West."

Handforth laughed sarcastically.

"I was in Los Angeles for two weeks," he said bluntly. "I'll admit you've got plenty of palm trees, and plenty of sunshine, too. But the city itself is the noisiest hole I've ever been in! And as for the Grand Canyon and the Niagara Falls; they're due to Nature, and not to American hustle!"

Ulysses looked annoyed.

"Say, you're kind of fresh!" he said tartly.

"If you think we're going to stand your rot, and say nothing in return, you're wrong!" snapped Handforth. "I'll admit that the Americans are fine boosters. They'll build a horrible looking skyscraper—a blot on the landscape—and then tell everybody that it's the most wonderful place on earth! In fact, they're so accustomed to boosting that they do it mechanically. I like America, and I like the Americans; but they think too darned much of themselves! If you want it straight from the shoulder, a good many of you Americans could do with being taken down a peg or two! You all think that the United States is the most marvellous country in the world, but it isn't!"

Edward Oswald Handforth, feeling that he had done much for the betterment of the new boy's mind, stalked away. Ulysses Spencer Adams, red with anger, ran after him.

"Say, I guess you'll apologise!" he said hotly.

"Apologise—what for?"

"You've insulted my country!"

"Rats!" said Handforth. "I just told the truth!"

"Gee! You're no sportsman!" declared Ulysses. "I'm sure going to pass you up after this!"

Handforth and Co. staggered slightly.

Although they had visited America, they were still ignorant of the average American way of looking at things. According to Ulysses, it was quite allowable for him to say what he pleased about England. But if anybody dared to retort by criticising America, he was no sportsman!

CHAPTER V.

THE SIGNAL IN THE STORM.

"OH, here you are!" I made this remark as I approached Ulysses Spencer Adams. He was just entering the Ancient House, —with a cloud on his brow.

"I was looking for you. I want to take you along to Study M," I said. "Anything wrong, old man?"

"Aw, gee, I'm peeved!" said Ulysses gruffly. "I sure feel punk!"

"But, my dear chap——"

"Three guys took me around and sh··d

me the buildings," went on Ulysses. "Say, they got kind of fresh, too, about America ——"

"You ass!" I broke in. "No need to get huffy about that. Did you expect everybody to crawl at your feet because you're the son of a millionaire? In a school like this, my lad, the chaps say just what they think, and sometimes it isn't very pleasant. You'll get used to the Remove bluntness in time. And if you're going to get offended at everything you hear, you're in for a bad time! Cheer up, and look happy!"

Ulysses smiled.

"You're sure right," he agreed. "I guess I'm a dumb-bell for getting riled. But it certainly was fierce."

It was one big point in favour of Ulysses that he didn't remain offended for long. By the time we reached Study M, the American boy was no longer "sore." He had remembered that he was to share the study with a real duke, and the thought bucked him up.

"Here we are," I said briskly, as I opened the door. "Hallo! Nobody at home! Have a look round, Adams, and I'll find Somerton, and send him along. You ought to be quite comfortable here."

"I sure will be," said Ulysses, looking round.

Apparently, it was nearly teatime, for the table was already set, and there were all kinds of delicacies on the white cloth. A cheerful fire burned in the grate, and the air was pleasantly warm. Outside, the rising wind was whistling through the leafless elms and chestnuts.

"Some class!" observed U.S.A., as he walked to the fireplace, and crouched low over the fender. "Gee! I don't know how you guys keep warm! These old-fashioned fireplaces are the bunk!"

I looked at Ulysses squarely.

"Let me give you a bit of advice," I said. "Don't run everything down! No wonder the chaps offended you a little while ago. If you start talking disparagingly against everything at St. Frank's, you can't wonder at them retaliating. And what's wrong with the fireplace, anyhow?"

"There's no heat to it," replied Ulysses. "It's all right just here, in front of the fender; but I guess the other part of the room is like an ice-box!"

"Of course, you're accustomed to steam-heat, aren't you?"

"You bet I am," said Ulysses. "Say, steam-heat's the most wonderful thing—"

"Yes, I know all about that," I interrupted "Steam-heat is universal over in New York, and generally in America. It's all right for those who are used to it. But it's apt to be stuffy and unhygienic. But with an open fire, there's always a current of air through the room, and everything's cheerful."

I left Ulysses making a few clumsy pokes at the fire. To my mind, the study was quite warm and comfortable. But the American junior, having been brought up from childhood in steam-heated houses, thought that the atmosphere was positively chilly.

While he was drawing one of the easy chairs to the fire, the door opened, and the Duke of Somerton strode in. He was in his usual state of untidiness.

The schoolboy duke was never happy unless shabby. He was probably the poorest dressed junior in the whole Remove. His trousers were always baggy, his coat always creased, and for him to appear in a clean and unrumpled collar was well nigh unheard of. His necktie was generally slewed round, and he had a somewhat peculiar preference for string in lieu of brace-buttons.

Ulysses was astonished when he looked up and saw the newcomer. His American mind pictured the youthful Duke of Somerton as an extraordinarily grand young man. Being a Duke, he would obviously wear the latest Bond Street style, and would probably affect the lazy, aristocratic drawl which the Americans ascribe to all British noblemen.

"Hallo, here we are!" said Somerton cheerily. "Just in time for the grub!"

In Ulysses' mind, this settled matters. He took it for granted that the newcomer was Cecil de Valerie—the third member of the study. Ulysses had caught a glimpse of the monocled Archie Glenthorne earlier, and had set Archie down as a duke.

"I was figuring on the duke showing up," said U.S.A. "You're the other guy, of course—De Valerie. Glad to know you. Say, you can give me a line on this aristocratic feller before he gets around."

Somerton smiled.

"Oh, I can give you a line on the duke all right," he replied drily. "Being American, I suppose you gaze with contempt upon all chaps with titles?"

"You've got me wrong," said Ulysses. "Society dames over in the States go kind of nutty over a duke. Gee! A real English duke is some bird when he comes out to the States! But, between you and me, I guess the game's about through!"

"About through?" repeated Somerton vaguely.

"Sure! All this bunk about titles," said Adams, with a sniff. "Over in the States we don't fall for that kind of dope A man's as good as he makes himself, I guess. These aristocrats are a relic of tyranny and oppression. This duke guy is a regular bonehead, eh? A snappy dresser, and wears an eyeglass, and all that kind of foolery?"

"Well, not exactly," said Somerton, enjoying the situation. "In fact, I don't suppose you'd know him for a duke at all. He's an easy going chap, and looks a bit like the son of a bricklayer, and he's rather sorry for himself because he's got a title."

"Can you imagine that!" said Ulysses, in surprise. "Gee you sure surprise me! I pictured this fellow as a regular cissy! A gink with about as much brain as a beetle, and no chin under his teeth!"

"My hat!" said Somerton. "Hang it all, he's not as bad as that!"

The door opened, and Archie Glenthorne looked in.

"Greetings, old scream!" he said, waving a cheery hand to Ulysses. "The jolly old American chappie, what? Dashed priceless to meet you, and so forth! Shove it, so to speak, there!"

Archie lounged elegantly forward, and extended his hand. The American boy took it, and grinned. He was quite charmed with Archie's aristocratic accent.

"Fine!" he said. "Glad to know you!"

"Absolutely!" agreed Archie. "Just about to partake of the old feast, what? Pile in, laddies—don't let me interrupt the festivities. Having done the honours, as it were, I shall now trickle forth——"

"Say, what's the big idea?" interrupted Ulysses. "I figured we were going to all start on the eats together. What's the hurry, Duke?"

"Eh?" said Archie, startled. "I mean to say—— By gad!"

He paused and gazed at Somerton.

"Oh, just a little mistake," said Somerton politely. "I neglected to mention my name to Adams, and he hasn't the faintest idea that I'm an effete member of the British aristocracy."

"Suffering cats! What's your name?" asked Ulysses quickly.

"My name?" repeated the schoolboy duke. "Oh, Somerton."

"Then—then you're the duke?"

"Sorry, but that's not my fault," said Somerton apologetically.

"Kindly allow me to steal quietly away," said Archie Glenthorne. "It's dashed embarrassing for a chappie to be present while two other chappies are chewing the good old rag."

And Glenthorne softly departed from the study, and closed the door.

"For the love of Mike! Why did you pull that stuff on me?" asked Ulysses. "Say, I'm real sorry! I didn't mean to offend you ——"

"Rats!" said Somerton cheerfully. "I thought it would be rather good to hear your straightforward opinion. Yes, I'm the duke—queer, isn't it? I hope I'm not quite such a fathead as you imagined."

"Why, say, you're just the alligator's hips!" said Adams, enthusiastically. "I'm sure learning a few things! Yes, sir! Aw, gee, here's another guy now!"

But this "guy" was only De Valerie and a few minutes later the trio had settled down to a comfortable tea. Ulysses Spencer Adams made himself quite agreeable, and the original owners of Study M were not displeased with their new companion.

Later on, the American boy went down in the common-room, and his education regarding English manners and customs proceeded apace. In the meantime, the wind outside had increased to hurricane violence.

The night proved to be a wild one.

With the roar of the gale came an occasional rain squall, and the moon shed a pale, watery light upon the countryside. Ragged clouds chased hurriedly across the heavens.

By the time the bell rang for bed, the wind was booming round the old building, and the Remove undressed to the accompaniment of the storm. The new junior was impressed.

"You sure get some weather over here," he declared.

"Well, you see, we're not far from the coast," I explained. "We get the gales right off the English Channel."

Ulysses got into bed hurriedly, complaining at the absence of steam-heat.

"The new chap's right!" declared Armstrong. "It's about time the Governors woke up. We need steam heat in a school like this—especially in the dormitories. And it'll be a lot worse after Christmas."

Handforth sniffed.

"You speak as though it were something we'd never heard of," he said sourly. "What is it, after all? Just radiators! Haven't we got 'em in the main hall, and outside in the corridors, and in some of the class-rooms? Steam-heat in the studies would ruin all the cosiness!"

"Hear, hear!" I agreed. "And steam-heat in the dormitories would make us all heavy and listless. We should get up feeling unrefreshed."

"Aw, you make me tired!" said Ulysses. "Over in the States we do things different. Yes, sir! We have our rooms properly heated, and we have running water—hot and cold—in every bed-room."

"Perhaps you do—in the big cities," I said. "But that kind of life didn't make any of the big pioneers. A fellow who's brought up in steam-heated rooms and hot water is generally a weakling. There's nothing like roughing it to make a chap hardy."

The discussion was brought to an abrupt conclusion by the arrival of Morrow, of the Sixth. He found that everything was in order, and turned the lights out. And the Remove settled down for the night.

But sleep did not come at once.

A good few of the fellows continued talking, as was the usual custom after lights-out. And a few complaints were made about the rattling windows. For outside the wind was howling with greater violence than ever forth, at last. "It's a pity they don't fit better windows!"

"I can't stand that racket!" said Handforth. "Over in the States we have storm-proof windows——" began Ulysses.

"Dry up!" snapped Handforth. "These windows are fine!"

"Gee! But you just said——"

"Never mind what I just said," snorted Handforth. "These windows are first-class—only one happens to be a bit loose! It won't

take me long to fix it up! Blow you and your American windows!"

Handforth jumped out of bed, and struggled with the offending object. The lower sash was certainly somewhat loose, and Handforth was attempting to tighten it when his attention was attracted by something outside.

He didn't know exactly what it was; but out of the corner of his eye it appeared to him that a streak of light had appeared in the sky. But when he looked fully out, he saw nothing unusual.

It was not entirely dark.

Ragged clouds were scurrying across the face of the moon, and Handforth could faintly see the outline of the Triangle. The elm trees were swaying in distress, as the buffeting wind came whistling round the angle of the Ancient House.

"Hallo! Why, what—— Great Scott!"

Handforth was rather breathless as he spoke. Far away, right over the horizon, a faint, indistinct trail of fire had shot up into the sky, to burst with a shower of sparkling lights. They slowly disappeared.

"What's the matter?" asked Pitt, staring across at Handforth.

"A rocket!" said Handy.

"What?"

"A rocket!" repeated Handforth excitedly. "My hat! There goes another!"

Half the Remove leapt out of bed, and crowded to the windows. The majority of them were in time to see the rocket bursting. And soon afterwards another one appeared.

"Some people have got queer taste!" grunted Armstrong. "Fancy letting off rockets at this time of night! Fireworks were finished with three or four weeks ago——"

"You ass!" interrupted De Valerie. "That's a distress signal!"

"You—you mean——"

"De Valerie's right—of course!" I put in quickly. "Can't you see they're over on the coast? There must be a ship in distress." Probably driven on to the rocks by the storm."

"My only hat!"

"Great Scott!"

"Those rockets are over by Shingle Head," I went on. "By this time they're getting the lifeboat out, I expect—there's a coastguard station round in the cove. My word! It would be worth something to see the lifeboat going out!"

The Remove was very excited.

All the rest of the fellows had crowded to the windows by now, and were staring out into the moonlight night.

But as we discussed the meaning of those distress signals, we little realised how closely they were to be linked up with general life at St. Frank's in the near future!

CHAPTER VI.

NELSON LEE TO THE RESCUE!

NELSON LEE uttered a slight exclamation as his racing car rose to the crown of the stone bridge which spanned the River Stowe. The detective quickly applied the brakes, and the car came to a standstill.

Just at this point it was possible to see clearly over towards the south-west—in the direction of the sea coast. Through a break in the trees, Nelson Lee clearly saw a rocket rise into the sky and burst.

"H'm! That means only one thing!" he muttered grimly.

It was just about ten o'clock, and Nelson Lee had arrived back from Bannington, where he had been looking into a local forgery case, at the invitation of Inspector Jameson, of the County Police.

Nelson Lee had been somewhat amused at the simplicity of the affair, and was returning in an excellent humour. The wildness of the night did not bother him in the least. On the contrary, he enjoyed it.

There was no rain, but the wind was howling fiercely. And Lee knew at once that that rocket in the sky was a message of distress from some stricken ship near the treacherous rocks off Shingle Head.

For a few minutes Nelson Lee remained sitting at the driving wheel, his engine throbbing gently, and the headlights of the car gleaming out upon the road. He waited. And another rocket appeared.

Nelson Lee knew the perils of Shingle Head. It was one of the most treacherous points on this particular coast. Many small coasting ships had run aground in this neighbourhood.

Nelson Lee did not hesitate.

As that second rocket appeared, he slipped into reverse gear, and in a few moments the car was gathering speed back through the village. It roared away up the lane towards Caistowe.

The detective meant to get to the coast, and to see with his own eyes what the nature of the trouble actually was. He also had an idea in mind that he might be able to give a hand of some kind.

Half way to Caistowe, he turned sharply off the road, and drove his car along a narrow, rutty lane. This, as he was well aware, would lead him directly on to the cliffs which overlooked Shingle Head itself.

It was quite a short ride by motor-car.

And less than fifteen minutes from the time that Lee had first seen the signals, he stood on the edge of the cliff, with the car halted just near by. And Lee gazed down upon a tragic scene.

The moonlight was sufficiently strong for him to see quite clearly.

The rocks of the headland jutted out, black and sinister, with the mighty waves

dashing thunderously over the crags. Masses of foam roared and surged, and the spray was hurtled high into the air.

Out beyond these rocks there were several other crags which jutted out of the sea like the fangs of some great monster. And, caught firmly between two of the mighty rocks, a fair sized steamer was being pounded to shreds by the heavy seas.

The waves broke over her stern with appalling force. And even as Lee watched, a man leapt down from the bridge deck, and plunged into the surf. He had a life-line round his waist, and was making an attempt to get to the shore. The idea, evidently, was to rig up a travelling cradle, in which the members of the ship's company could be brought safely to shore.

But it was a doubtful effort.

The very fact that this man was making such a desperate swim proved that all the vessels boats were useless — probably smashed to atoms by the violent breakers which constantly swept over the stricken ship.

Nelson Lee, watching from the cliff top, tried to keep the swimmer in view. But this was impossible, for the light was not sufficiently strong. The man had vanished in the smother of foam and spume.

Nearer, on the narrow strip of beach, other activities were afoot.

Coastguards and local fishermen were desperately preparing to launch a lifeboat. They knew, even better than Nelson Lee, that the ship would not hold together long if she remained on those rocks.

She was being pounded to wreckage.

And when she slipped off the crags, her doom was even more certain. For the water here was quite deep, even inshore. The ill-fated ship would sink like a stone into the deep water.

But the vessel remained on the rocks, with the waves dashing over her hull.

The sea is a fickle jade, and there was no telling how long the wreck would remain jammed on the rocks. Possibly a few minutes—and possibly two or three hours. There is never any telling with the sea.

Nelson Lee decided that a spectator's role was not good enough for him. Leaving his car standing on the top of the cliff, he quickly made his way down a steep rocky pathway.

And, at length, he arrived down in the little cove.

The lifeboat had just been launched—much to Lee's regret. For he had had an idea of going with it. An old fisherman saw Nelson Lee as he came down the shingle and recognised him at once.

"Ay, this is a bad business, sir," he remarked.

"Yes, I'm afraid the lifeboat will have a hard time of it," agreed Lee.

The old fisherman shook his head.

"I've lived round these parts, man and boy, for sixty-five years!" he said heavily. "An' I ain't never seen such a sea as this

"A rocket!" repeated Hand-forth excitedly. "My hat! There goes another!"

here! Law sakes! They'll never do it, mister!"

"What about the man who was swimming ashore?"

"I ain't seen nothin' of him," replied the fisherman. "He's gone, sure enough. Maddest thing I ever see, sir, jumpin' into that sea; Nothin' better than suicide, I'm tellin' ye!"

Nelson Lee agreed with the old salt.

It had been a forlorn hope for the sailor to attempt to make the shore. But there was no question of the man's bravery. By this time, probably, he had been dashed to death on the cruel rocks.

And the lifeboat was struggling gallantly onwards.

The distance was not very great, but the tide was in a tricky condition, and the giant breakers boomed down with deafening crashes. The lifeboat was tossed up and down like a mere cork.

Overhead, the moon was now shining down out of a clear sky. But the thunder of the surf, and the roar of the wind, made it almost impossible for any other sounds to be heard.

Occasionally, the ship was hidden by flying clouds of spray.

And then, as Nelson Lee watched, he caught his breath in. The lifeboat, for all the efforts of its courageous crew, had slewed round under the influence of an exceptionally big wave.

A moment later the boat was wallowing broadside on. She vanished amid the spume—and did not emerge.

Instead, a battered hulk appeared for a second amid the foam, and struggling

forms appeared for a second or two in the waves.

"Good Heavens!" muttered Lee. "She's capsized!"

"May Heaven have mercy on them!" muttered the old fisherman. "Brave lads, sir—I doubt me if they'll get ashore in this sea! Ay, an' my own son among the crew, too!"

Other local salts were arriving at intervals—having come from Caistowe, and one or two of the near by fishing villages. And it really seemed that no succour could be given to the helpless souls on board the battered steamer.

Now that Lee was nearer, he could see that the vessel was even bigger than he had at first supposed. She was not one of the small coasting freight steamers—but a fairly large vessel of modern type. Lee believed her to be British, probably on her way up Channel from a continental port.

But the detective had no time for such speculations.

There was only one possibility left. The lifeboat was demolished, and although other coastguards were feverishly preparing the life-saving rocket apparatus, there was no guarantee that this would be successful.

Making up his mind on the instant, Lee rapidly stripped off his overcoat, jacket and vest.

"I'll swim out with a line," he said briskly.

"May the Lord preserve you, sir!" exclaimed the old fisherman. "Ye'll never do it. Leave it to yon coastguards, mister—mebbe they'll——"

"If they succeed in getting their apparatus working, all well and good, but I cannot stand here idle," interrupted Lee. "There's not so much danger as you think. A strong swimmer is fairly safe."

But although Nelson Lee said this, the peril was grave, indeed.

Within three minutes he was ready.

And soon, as his intentions had become known, many willing helpers crowded round. A line was prepared, and securely tied to Nelson Lee's waist.

Watching his opportunity, Nelson Lee plunged into the blinding smother of surf. Almost before he knew it he was lifted high, and swept out between two of the great crags.

Those on shore believed that he had gone to his death.

But they didn't know that this tall, wiry gentleman from the big school was one of the strongest swimmers in the country. Lee always made a practice of keeping in condition.

And now his fitness served him in good stead.

The very chill of the water as he plunged in seemed like the grip of some deathly hand. It was icily, freezingly cold. Many men would have become numbed and helpless from the effects.

But, swimming strongly, and using his most powerful stroke, Nelson Lee was able to gain progress. At any moment he expected to catch a glimpse of the steamer sagging back off the rocks—to slip helplessly with her human freight into the deep water.

The tide, while defeating the efforts of the ship's sailor, assisted Nelson Lee. For the current was beating away from the shore. Thus, Nelson Lee was greatly helped in his desperate swim.

On the shore, and on board the ship, his progress was watched with a feverish anxiety which was almost an agony. Only his head was visible, and at times this, too, was hidden by spray and foam.

But every time the detective's head appeared, it was nearer and nearer to his objective.

Lee missed being dashed to pieces on a treacherous rock by mere inches—and by his own skill and strength. From the very first he had feared that he would be driven upon that crag.

But, once this danger point was passed, the rest of his task was not so difficult. A clear stretch of sea lay ahead—comparatively calm sea. For the bulk of the stricken vessel was in front of him. And Lee was now swimming through a kind of calm belt.

It was calm only by comparison with the rest of the smother. Actually, even this stretch of water was tumultuously violent. But swimming was much easier, and Nelson Lee at last came within a few yards of the groaning hull.

Cheers from the shore did not reach his ears. Crowds had collected by now, and when it was seen that Lee was so near the ship, it seemed that success was certain.

Awaiting his opportunity, Nelson Lee stood by for a moment. Even at this period, death would come swiftly. For unless he was cautious, he would be picked up and battered to pulp against the steel plates of the vessel.

Ropes were being held down to him all along the sides of the ship. And, at last, Lee found a comparatively quiet spell. He swam forward strongly, reached the vessel's side, and grasped one of the ropes.

"Haul away!" roared a husky, excited voice.

Nelson Lee felt himself yanked swiftly out of the water. And as he was pulled overside on to the deck, a roaring, throaty cheer rang out from scores of throats.

Nelson Lee had succeeded!

CHAPTER VII.
BREAKING BOUNDS!

"LOOK! There goes another rocket!"

"My hat! Yes!"

"The ship must be piling on the rocks!"

The Remove dormitory at St. Frank's was filled with excited voices. The juniors were crowding

at the windows, staring out across the countryside in the direction of Shingle Head.

"Look here!" said Handforth grimly. "We're going!"

"Going!" gasped Church.

"Yes!"

"But—But——"

"There's a chance that we might be able to help a bit," went on Handforth. "There's all sorts of things to be done at a wreck—launching the lifeboat, for example, sending off rockets, and all that sort of thing."

"Yes, but we should be breaking bounds——"

"Who cares about bounds!" snapped Handforth. "We don't get a wreck every night, do we? And if we can do something to help, we shall be excused. Of course, it's no good asking permission—these masters are too narrow minded! My idea is to take French leave."

"Hear, hear!" shouted half-a-dozen others.

I didn't try to stop them—for, truth to tell, I was just as eager to go to the scene of the wreck as any of the others.

"Gee! I'll sure come along too!" said Ulysses Spencer Adams. "I didn't know you guys had this kind of excitement around the place. We'll sure need to get a hustle on, and step lively. Let's go!"

"I don't know about you, Adams," I said doubtfully. "Being a new chap, you ought to stop in bed——"

"Aw, gee! That's the bunk!" interrupted Ulysses. "I guess I'll go with you fellers. I don't want to stay home."

It was no good arguing. If the rest of the juniors went, Ulysses was perfectly justified in joining them.

And in less than five minutes we were ready.

Of course, a number of fellows preferred to remain in bed. Fullwood & Co., Teddy Long, and quite a few more did not care to face the cold bitterness of the night. Neither did they care to face the consequences of breaking bounds.

We didn't think it wise to leave the school in the ordinary way.

So some improvised ropes were hastily prepared—sheets and blankets being used for the purpose. And with these dangling out of the dormitory windows, we swarmed out of them one after the other, arriving in the Triangle.

We set off at a brisk run down the lane as soon as we had scrambled over the wall. There were nearly twenty of us altogether, and we cared nothing for the consequences.

After all, even if the matter came before the Head himself, he could not be very severe. A wreck does not occur every day, and we were hoping, too, that we might be able to render some assistance.

Bellton was as quiet and still as the grave as we ran through the High Street. Ulysses was inclined to be somewhat surprised.

"For the love of Mike!" he said. "These guys go to bed early, don't they? And, say, how do we get to the beach?"

"Run!" panted Handforth.

"Aw, that's fierce!" said the American boy. "Over in the States, we've got electric trains running to all the beaches——"

"Yes—to Atlantic City and Coney Island, and places like that!" interrupted Pitt. "But Shingle Head happens to be a pretty barren spot, and I don't think it would be very popular as a holiday resort. Over in the States, I suppose, you have special railroads to the scene of every shipwreck, eh?"

The sarcasm was lost upon Ulysses. And Pitt didn't continue the argument. Running at high speed was quite enough exertion without conversing as well.

We took the same road that Nelson Lee had passed along.

The distance from the road to the cliff top was not exceptionally long, but it seemed so to us. Every turn in the road appeared to be a mile ahead. And now there were no further rockets to be seen. The wind roared and buffeted over the hedges and through the straining trees.

"I expect we're too late," said Handforth pessimistically. "I'll bet the ship's sunk by this time. We shall have missed everything!"

"It's either sunk, or the crew's been rescued," I put in. "Perhaps the lifeboat's on the way out——"

"Here we are, thank goodness!" interrupted Tommy Watson.

He dashed through a gateway which stood open at a bend in the lane. And we followed him across a stretch of grass land. Just a short distance ahead lay the edge of the cliff—with a rugged path leading down into the cove. We all knew every stick and stone of the coastline hereabouts.

"Hallo! There's something standing against the cliff, there!" said Handforth, as we ran along. "Why, my goodness! It's a motor-car."

"The guv'nor's!" I ejaculated, as we ran up.

"By jingo, so it is!"

"Mr. Lee must be down on the beach!"

Some of the juniors halted with consternation.

"Better go back!" suggested De Valerie. "If Mr. Lee spots us he'll have us all on the carpet!"

"Rats!" said Handforth. "Do you think I've come all this way for nothing? Don't you worry—I'll take the responsibility! And if Mr. Lee cuts up rusty, he's not the decent chap I think he is!"

Handforth's example was followed after a moment of hesitation. Personally, I was not at all anxious to go back to the school. Knowing the guv'nor as I did, I felt fairly convinced that he would be taking an active part in the rescue operations.

Nelson Lee was not the kind of man to stand idly by, watching. And, as a matter

of fact, I was quite anxious about him. Nothing would have stopped me from hurrying down to the beach to find the exact truth.

But before going down that cliff path, we viewed the scene from above.

And a wild scene it was, too. In the moonlight we could see the stricken ship wedged against the black, ugly rocks. Now and again her bows would rise as an extra big wave surged up. And then the battered wreck would crash down on to the rocks with a sickening lurch.

It could only be a matter of minutes before the ship broke into pieces. Certainly, she would not be able to last an hour.

Scurrying down the cliff path, recklessly and speedily, it was only by good fortune that we arrived on the beach in safety. And down there, in the cove, we found crowds of fishermen and other folks from Caistowe and the near-by villages.

Great activity was afoot.

A line had already been stretched over the tossing sea from the ship, and a travelling cradle was at work—hauling man after man into safety. It was grand and thrilling to watch this rescue work going on.

I looked about in vain for Nelson Lee.

And at last, becoming anxious, I made inquiries. By good luck, I addressed my remarks to the old fisherman whom the guv'nor himself had spoken to.

"Mister Lee?" repeated the old fellow. "Why, yes. He was here."

"I've been trying to find him——"

"I don't reckon he'll be ashore for some time yet," replied the old salt. "Ye see, young master, Mr. Lee be aboard the ship."

"On board the ship!" I exclaimed.

"Ay! He swam out with a life-line."

"He swam out!" I echoed, aghast. "In this terrible sea?"

"About the finest piece of work I ever sced, my lad!" said the fisherman, his voice filled with admiration. "By gum! There ain't a man in the whole of Caistowe who could have done it! Yes, young gent. Mr. Lee swam right out, and took a line on board. There's many a man will have to thank Mister Lee for his life to-night!"

I was thrilled—and horrified at the same time.

I almost felt faint as I realised the danger that Nelson Lee had gone through. I caught my breath in with a gulp as I gazed at that wild stretch of tossing, foam-flecked surf, with the jagged rocks showing demoniacally through the smother.

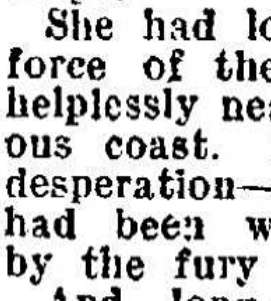
It seemed to me that no human being could possibly have conquered such a deadly stretch of water. And I prayed that Nelson Lee would be brought ashore in safety.

The news went round among the fellows in no time.

And when they all knew that Nelson Lee was on board that battered hulk, their interest in the wreck was trebled. The other lives, no doubt, were just as precious as the guv'nor's, but the very knowledge that Lee was in peril caused the juniors to quake with anxiety.

CHAPTER VIII.

CALEB DROONE, THE NIGHT OWL!



"FEELING better, sir?"

"Yes, thank you—don't worry about me," said Nelson Lee. "How is the work proceeding?"

"Grand! Thanks to your efforts, sir, there's a likely chance that we shall all get ashore in safety," said the third officer of the Islington. "If the old tub lasts another twenty minutes we shall be O.K."

Nelson Lee was standing just abaft the wheelhouse, partially sheltered from the driving spume and the roar of the wind. The rescue work was going on without intermission. The captain of the vessel was in personal charge, working like a demon to save his men.

The Islington, as Nelson Lee had discovered, was a tramp steamer, registered in the Port of London. She had been bound up channel from Lisbon, carrying a general cargo.

She had lost her propellor owing to the force of the storm, and had then drifted helplessly nearer and nearer to the treacherous coast. Rockets had been sent up in desperation—for all the Islington's boats had been washed over-side, or shattered by the fury of the seas.

And, long before any help had arrived, the stricken vessel had crashed upon the rocks, and every man on board had felt himself doomed. The ship was a freighter, pure and simple, but she was carrying two passengers.

Nelson Lee did not know much about these—he had only heard a word mentioned by the third officer. The passengers, it seemed, had been particularly anxious to get from Portugal to London without the formalities that usually attend a trip by a recognised passenger steamer.

Nelson Lee thought nothing more of this matter. He was soaking wet through, and the exposure was not doing him any good. To get into dry things was futile, for one wave would soak him to the skin.

As an alternative, Nelson Lee decided to join in the rescue work. The third officer had dosed him up strongly with a great tot of rum. And the fiery spirit had sent new life through Nelson Lee's veins.

But it was exercise he needed—brisk, heavy action.

The detective struggled out from the sheltered spot, and the spray lashed into his face. And as he was about to walk to the port side, where the rescue operations were in progress, he paused.

The sound of altercation came from a point forward, just where the companion-way led down into the interior of the ship.

Nelson Lee glanced in this direction, and saw his friend, the third officer, barring the way down.

"It's no good, sir—you can't go!" said the officer gruffly.

"But I tell you I must!"

"Man alive, the ship's flooded below!" shouted the sailor. "Even the saloon's half awash. At any minute the whole ship may lurch over, and it would be instant death for anybody below."

"You infernal fool! I've got to get to my cabin!" raved the other. "Do you hear me? I've got to get to my cabin——"

Nelson Lee took the second man to be one of the two passengers—for he was dressed in a thick overcoat—which was drenched through—and a wreck of a soft felt hat which was pulled down low over his head.

"The idiot!" Lee muttered. "Probably wants to salve some of his luggage and personal belongings. Some of these fools don't know when they're lucky!"

Lee decided to calm the man down, if possible, and approached nearer. The altercation was still in progress.

"Don't you understand, sir, that your cabin is absolutely flooded?" shouted the third officer, his voice rising with exasperation and anger. "I've got orders from the skipper that nobody's to go below——"

"Hang the skipper's orders!"

"I don't want to use violence, sir, but if you persist——"

"You insolent hound," snarled the passenger. "If you dare to lay a finger on me, I'll knock you overboard!"

The officer kept his temper with difficulty.

"We shall all be overboard in a few minutes," he said grimly. "The old tub won't last more than another ten minutes, at the most. Then it'll be every man for himself. Why can't you behave sensibly, instead of acting the fool like this?"

But the passenger stormed. His anxiety to get below was well nigh unendurable. But after a short while he calmed down a bit. And with the loss of his excitement, reason returned.

He knew that the third officer was right—that the ship was settling deeper and deeper by the stern every minute, and that the end could not be far distant. Furthermore, the cabins were absolutely flooded.

Nelson Lee stood there, tense and grim.

He had forgotten all about his wet condition, his numbed state of body. For, during the last few seconds, he had caught a clear sight of the passenger's face.

It was, indeed, a striking countenance.

The man himself was tall, wiry and slim. His shoulders were slightly rounded, his head being held forward like the attitude of an owl. And the man's face was strikingly like an owl's, too. He had big, round, flat-looking eyes—eyes that seemed to contain utterly no expression. They were just staring. His nose was thin and sharp, and slightly hooked at the end. And for a mouth he possessed a thin-lipped slit. When opened, there were two rows of yellowish, fang-like teeth exposed. Undoubtedly, the fellow was one of the ugliest customers anybody could meet in a day's march.

And Lee had started at that one glimpse of the stranger's countenance.

"Upon my soul!" murmured Lee softly. "Caleb Droone!"

For the detective having once seen a face, did not forget it. But he had met this man several years earlier—had, in fact, hounded him down until he had been safely lodged in prison.

Nelson Lee stood there, thinking of that case—one of the most difficult he had ever handled. For he had found Caleb Droone to be a master criminal—a genius of crime.

Furthermore, Nelson Lee knew that this man was now at liberty—and that Scotland Yard believed him to be the leader of a new criminal organisation which had been responsible for many daring burglaries and other crimes.

Only a week or so earlier, Lee had discussed Caleb Droone with his old friend, Chief Detective Inspector Lennard, of the C.I.D. Lennard had been full of woe. Try as he would, he had not been able to nab this daring criminal.

According to what the chief inspector had told Lee, Droone was the chief operator in a new confederation of crooks who called themselves the Alliance of Thirteen.

Every job that the Alliance undertook had been done so cleverly, so scientifically, that no clue had been left. Only the figures "13" had been left behind to show the authorship of the crime.

And although the police knew exactly where they could lay their hands upon Caleb Droone, they had not been able to touch him. For not one shred of evidence pointed in his direction. And only a week or so ago, Caleb Droone had mysteriously vanished from his usual haunts.

Lee pondered over the matter. So Caleb Droone had been to Portugal—obviously on some big project. Lee knew that the man was always referred to by his intimates as "The Night Owl." A more striking nickname could not have been discovered.

For Caleb Droone was not only like a night owl in appearance, but so was his attitude and his actions.

He spoke seldom—he generally remained stonily calm—and his eyes never altered their expression of dead flatness. Lee had had experience of the man himself, and had been astonished at his facility for remaining in an unblinking attitude for minutes at a stretch.

These very characteristics of the criminal made it all the more astonishing that he should be so violent and excited now. For such a display of emotion was utterly opposed to his character.

There could be only one explanation.

His cabin contained something of such tremendous importance that it had even deprived him of his pose. The knowledge that the ship was doomed to sink had added to his desperation. For, once at the bottom, it would be practically impossible to salve the "something" which lay in the cabin.

Lee set this "something" down as the proceeds of a big robbery—perhaps some valuable jewellery.

The ship gave an extra violent lurch, and there came a crashing and rending as several other plates were smashed in like paper. A great wave came surging over the decks, and Lee was compelled to grab at anything to save himself being swept away.

In spite of his efforts, he was carried to the port rail. And Caleb Droone, and the third officer, both caught by that heavy sea, swirled near him. The officer was carried further away, but Droone nearly went overside.

In the nick of time, Nelson Lee grabbed at the Night Owl's collar, and yanked him back into safety. The man pulled himself up, and found himself looking straight into the face of Lee.

"An unexpected meeting, eh?" said the detective evenly.

Caleb Doone never blinked an eyelid.

"Nelson Lee!" he said, his voice flat and unemotional. "Oh, so you are the man who brought the line on board?"

Lee nodded.

"Well, it is not safe for me that you should live!" said Caleb Droone.

With one mighty swing of his arm he drove his fist at Nelson Lee's face—intending to knock the detective overboard. The very coolness of the man was startling, considering the circumstances. Also, his callous attempt at deliberate murder was equally as startling.

Lee was not prepared for the attack—but he did not fall a victim.

In the nick of time, he ducked aside, and grappled with his attacker. And the pair were soon rocking and swaying on the slippery deck.

They fought madly—Droone intending to take Nelson Lee's life, and Lee fighting to preserve it.

But, although the Night Owl had failed in his obect at first, the sea came to his assistance. The unkindness of fate was remarkable. It was Lee who had brought succour to this stricken ship, and it was Lee who was victimised by the elements.

For as the detective broke free from the Night Owl's grip, and stood ready to deliver a stunning blow, a great wave came roaring up the ship's side. It caught Lee like a piece of rotten wood, lifted him high, and carried him overboard into the smother of foam and spray.

Nelson Lee was nearly done for.

He hardly knew what happened to him. Half drowned, with his lungs stifled with sea-water, he at length found himself battling feebly for life among the great waves which were racing towards the shore.

Of those on board, nobody knew what had happened except Caleb Droone. And the Night Owl stood on deck, calm and impassive. He had saved himself, and he watched Lee go as a man would witness the death of an ant.

Nelson Lee himself felt certain that his last hour had come. He did not possess the physical strength to battle against the mighty force of the sea. He had performed his outward journey, but the return was impossible.

Half unconscious, and just floating, the detective was tossed about on the sea helplessly. At any moment he might be carried on to one of those jagged rocks, and maimed beyond recognition. And he could do nothing to save himself, for most of his strength had ebbed away.

But Fate was not to be so unkind, after all.

For on the beach I was standing with the other fellows, anxiously watching the proceedings, waiting to catch the first sight of Nelson Lee. And while I was doing this, Tommy Watson grasped at my sleeve.

"Look!" he muttered hoarsely.

He pointed across the tortured water, and I caught a glimpse of something floating not far from the shore and perilously near to the rocks. And even as I watched, the floating obect made some struggling attempts to swim—only to relax again.

"My hat!" I muttered. "It's some poor chap nearly dead with exhaustion!"

"Yes, and he's drifting on to those rocks!" shouted Handforth, who had also seen. "Quick, let's do something!"

"Can't we form a kind of human lifeline?" I suggested quickly. "It'll be well nigh impossible in this tremendous sea, but we can try it."

"Hear, hear!"

To stand there, and to watch the poor fellow drift helplessly on the rocks was more than we could do. If any of the coastguards had seen us they would undoubtedly have put a stop to our efforts. But the coastguards and all the other men were fully occupied.

Tommy Watson, Tregellis-West, Pitt, Grey, Handforth and myself ran down to the shingle, and I led the line into the sea. We did not rely solely upon grasping hands. A line had been grabbed up from the beach, and we roped ourselves hastily together, about ten feet apart.

I plunged into the surf, after locating the position of the floating figure. The others followed. And the icy grip of the water nearly caused my heart to stop beating.

I doubt if any of us would have had the power to go on with the attempted rescue. It did not remain in our own hands. A great wave carried me far out, almost

before I knew it, dragging the others on the line.

And when I had dashed the icy water out of my eyes, I found that I was within seven or eight feet of the feebly struggling figure. And the moonlight enabled me to gain a full view of that face.

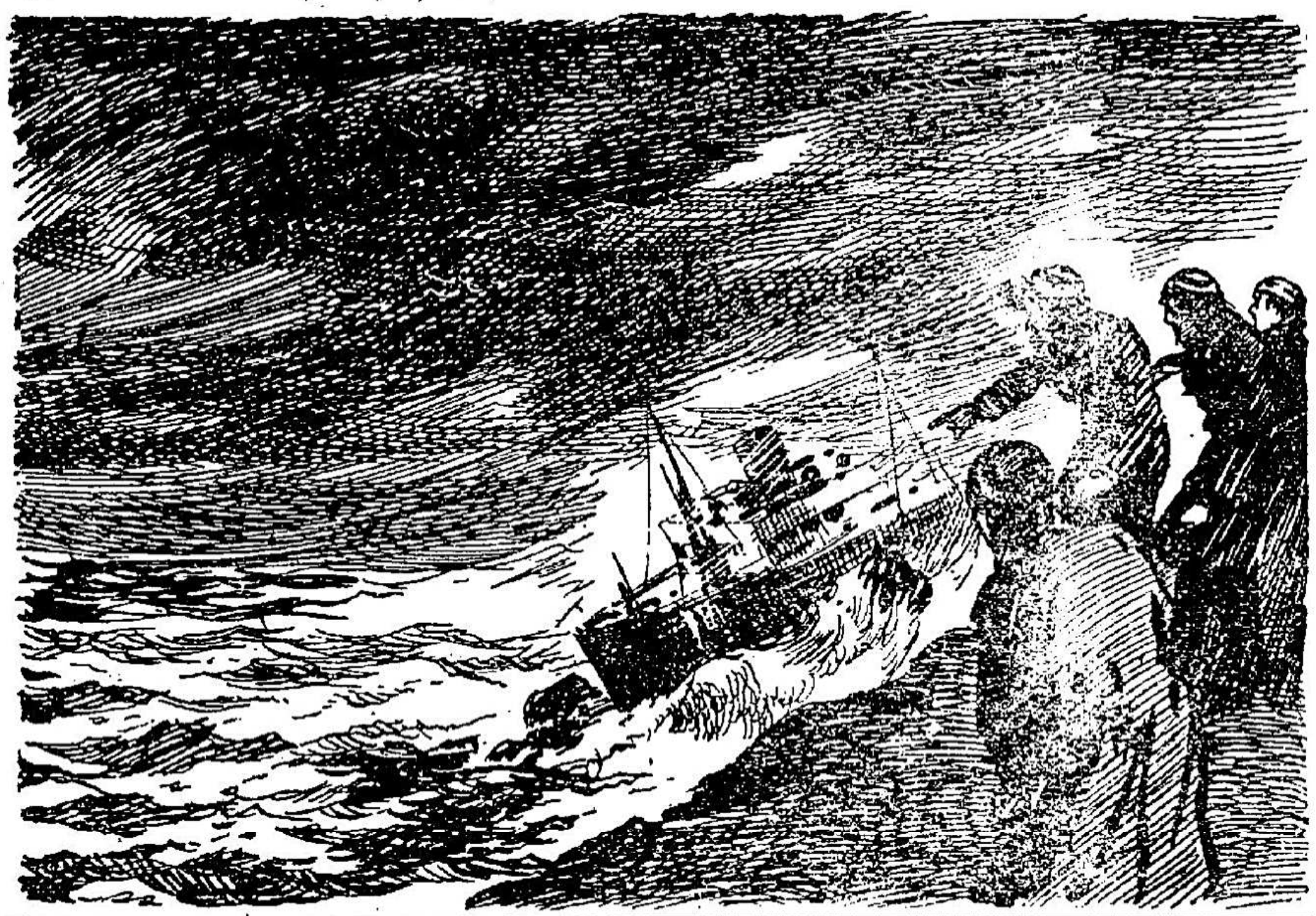
"The guv'nor!" I gasped, horrified.

All my energy seemed to come to my aid. Swimming desperately in the heavy sea, I struck out, and just managed to grasp Nelson Lee's left foot. And then, as I attempted to pull it towards me, another wave came, and we both plunged under.

I emerged, confused, breathless, and so nearly exhausted. It spoke volumes for his unbounded pluck that he had insisted upon this position. For, after all, he was not an expert swimmer.

It is quite likely that we should certainly have been drowned if we had been left entirely to our own devices.

But Reginald Pitt and De Valerie and Grey, who were only half-submerged in the breaking waves, started yelling at the top of their voices as soon as they saw that I had grasped the object of our efforts, and a number of coastguards, attracted by the shout, came dashing along.



In the moonlight we could see the stricken ship wedged against the black, ugly rocks. Now and again her bows would rise as an extra big wave surged up. And then the battered wreck would crash down on to the rocks with a sickening lurch.

numb that I could hardly lift my arm. But my clutch was still firmly fixed upon Nelson Lee's foot. Somehow I managed to drag him nearer, and the guv'nor himself grasped me.

"Good lad!" I heard him mutter in my ear. "But I'm afraid it's too late!"

Nelson Lee believed that we were both doomed—for the rocks were in ghastly proximity.

But what Nelson Lee didn't know was that I was roped securely to the other juniors. Handforth, who was nearest, was

CHAPTER IX.
WHERE IS THE NIGHT OWL?

"HELP!"

"This way—quick!"

"Right here, and make it snappy!" shouted Ulysses.

The coastguards came tearing along, and it did not take them long to find out the urgency for instant action. Two or three of the hardy men dashed into the waves, assisting the exhausted juniors out. Others pulled on the line.

And in less than three minutes we were all on the shingle, and Nelson Lee had been dragged away from certain death.

For once in his life, the famous detective was "all in."

He sank down, his legs utterly unable to sustain the weight of his body. And, without delay, he was rushed forth by the coastguards to a little protected cave at the rear of the tiny bay.

This had been improvised as a first-aid station, to give service to those who were in desperate need. A fire had been got going, and there were any amount of warm, dry blankets. These had been brought from Caistowe, and from the fishermen's cottages.

For these coast folks were only too well accustomed to wrecks, and they knew that dry blankets were the first necessary articles in an emergency.

Nelson Lee was quickly stripped, and rolled in blankets. Brandy was forced down his throat, and the very alacrity of this first-aid work saved him from any serious consequences.

It was the same with the juniors, including myself.

One by one we were rolled into blankets, and stowed away at the back of the cave among all the other survivors. Later on, when all the tense excitement was over, we should be taken home.

As I lay there, with the warmth of my blanket gradually restoring circulation, I felt supremely happy. Our coming to the beach had been providential.

For it seemed certain that if we had not been on the spot, Nelson Lee would have perished. As for the possibility of us being punished for breaking bounds, this was not worth thinking of.

Under the circumstances, there would be no talk of punishments.

And while we were lying in that cave the rescue work proceeded.

One after another the survivors were brought across that frail line, until, indeed, all except three were saved. Of these three one was the skipper himself—who insisted upon being the last to leave the ship.

The onlookers and the coastguards were in the highest possible elation, for it seemed that their efforts would be crowned with complete success. They were further delighted because all the members of the lifeboat's crew had managed to get ashore.

But then, just when the onlookers were beginning to cheer, a series of mighty waves came thundering upon the shore. One after another they lifted the stern of the Islington, until it seemed impossible that she could withstand the strain.

She didn't.

With startling, staggering abruptness, the great hull of the steamer lurched sideways, gave a sickening shudder throughout her entire length, and then slid sideways off the jagged rocks.

It was almost magical.

One moment she was there, a great mass of steel and wood, and the next moment she had gone. For on all sides of those rocks the water was deep. Even at low tide, and in perfectly calm weather, the water just here was several fathoms deep—for the beach shelved down into the sea with amazing steepness.

Those rocks which projected above the surface, while looking stumpy and small, were actually great pinnacles which just managed to show their heads above water.

And the Islington, once off the rocks, slid straight down to a watery grave. Already half full of water, and with her sides stove in like a rotten bucket, floating even for a minute was out of the question. She simply vanished in a sensational dive.

And all save three of her company had been rescued!

It was a matter for general satisfaction that the plucky skipper got ashore. He was washed up long after he had been given up for dead. Severely battered, and with a broken leg, it was believed at first that the captain would succumb. But after being patched up he showed every sign of making a recovery.

A complete roll-call of the entire ship's officers and crew showed that only two were missing. And, startling enough, both the passengers were missing, too—Mr. Thomas Wilkinson and Mr. Robert Burke.

One of these, of course, was Caleb Droone. The other, as Nelson Lee presumed, was one of the Night Owl's confederates. And it was altogether astounding that they should both have perished.

As the captain afterwards explained, he had done his utmost to send the two passengers ashore before any members of the crew. But they had both refused—showing an almost insane desire to remain on board.

The skipper knew nothing of them except that they had applied for passages to London. The ship was registered for the purpose of carrying six passengers, and although it was unusual for the Islington to take any passengers at all, on this occasion these two had been accepted.

Nelson Lee, who knew the identity of the man, remembered that altercation with the third officer. The Night Owl had preferred to remain on board, because he had had a desperate hope that he might be able to get into the cabin.

Now, of course, the ship was at the bottom.

And, being a fairly old vessel, and with a perishable cargo, any salvage operations would be out of the question. Not only was the Islington a total wreck, but she lay in deep water, and was no menace to other shipping. She would certainly be allowed to remain undisturbed in her watery grave.

All efforts to recover the bodies of the two passengers failed.

The bodies of the drowned sailors were washed ashore further down the coast during the next day. It was assumed that the other unfortunate victims had been battered to pieces on the rocks, and that nothing would be found of them.

Of course, it was almost morning before Nelson Lee and the juniors found themselves back at St. Frank's.

And, naturally, it meant a whole day in bed for all of us.

It was not until three days later, in fact, that Handforth and Pitt and the rest of us who had got wet, took our usual places at lessons. By extraordinarily good luck, we had suffered no serious consequences. Just a little stiffness, and a slight chill.

And Nelson Lee's splendid constitution stood him in good stead.

For he recovered even sooner than the juniors, and his first task was to make full inquiries regarding the wreck. He even interviewed the captain and officers—who were all in Caistowe.

But Caleb Droone and the other passenger had not been brought ashore. Nobody knew what had become of them. And, indeed, it seemed absolutely certain that they had both perished.

But was this so?

Somehow, Nelson Lee could not bring himself to believe that the Night Owl was dead.

The very fact that the bodies had not been recovered was significant. Lee had half an idea that Caleb Droone and the other man had somehow escaped, and had preferred to keep this fact a secret. And Nelson Lee also felt that there was some mystery connected with the ship herself.

At all events, he could find out nothing for certain.

At St. Frank's the whole affair was discussed by the school in general for two or three days. And when the juniors were able to take their usual places in the school, they were very important persons, indeed.

"I'm sure handing it to you that this place is more peppy than I thought!" said Ulysses. "Gee! I've got a heap of admiration for Mr. Lee! Say's he's a regular feller all right!"

As far as Nelson Lee was concerned, he took an opportunity to visit London as soon as possible. He went to Scotland Yard, and found out that Caleb Droone had been absent from England for some weeks.

The chief of the Alliance of Thirteen had gone to Spain.

It was thus quite obvious that the man had been returning to England with some valuable prize. And it was just as obvious that this prize was now at the bottom of the sea.

Lee told all he knew to the Scotland Yard authorities, but after a good deal of consultation it was decided to go no further in the matter. There was no object to be gained by commencing salvage operations. For there was nothing, so far as the police knew, to be salved.

And so Nelson Lee returned to St. Frank's rather unsatisfied.

But a little incident occurred just a week later which revived all his interest, and made him keenly determined to remain fully on the alert.

Lee had paid a visit to Caistowe, to have a little talk with the injured captain of the Islington—who was now making a good recovery. Lee had walked over to the seacoast town, and returned at night.

And just as he was leaving the outskirts of Caistowe a big motor-car came turning round a bend. It was going at considerable speed, and Lee leapt quickly into the hedge, to avoid being run down.

He caught one glimpse of the man at the wheel.

He was wearing goggles, his face was bearded, and his cap was pulled far down. But during that one brief glimpse Nelson Lee saw something which sent a thrill through him.

He caught one clear glimpse of the car driver's eyes.

Even through the glass he could see that they were dull, flat in appearance—big, round eyes of a most unusual type.

"By James!" murmured Lee. "Droone himself!"

The detective was certain that he had not been mistaken. The Chief of the Alliance of Thirteen had been disguised, but no power on earth could alter that expression of his eyes. Even the goggles had failed him at the crucial moment.

And there was a reason for this.

The tiny shaft of reflected light from the speed indicator lamp had betrayed Caleb Droone. If that tiny light had not been turned on, Nelson Lee would never have seen through the glass of the goggles.

As it was, the schoolmaster-detective returned to St. Frank's feeling strangely elated.

For he was convinced of two things.

First, Caleb Droone was alive. And, secondly, the master-crook was determined to operate in this neighbourhood—otherwise, he would never have been foolish enough to come here so long after the wreck. The one obvious conclusion was that the Night Owl meant to salve the unknown prize that had gone to the bottom in one of the Islington's cabins.

But even Nelson Lee, as he walked slowly back to St. Frank's, did not have the slightest inkling of the startling—even extraordinary—happenings that were destined to take place so soon.

THE END.

COMING EVENTS!

By NIPPER

WHAT a job it's been!

My hat! It's been simply awful! We've been sitting in here about two hours and nobody's had a single suggestion to make that's worth listening to. After our success last year you'd have thought that things would have been easier. But not a bit of it. That suggestion of Handforth's, for instance, about bananas——

But of course you don't know a bit what I'm talking about. I'm getting as bad as the rest. Jaw, jaw, jaw, and not a bit of sense!

But to begin properly. We've decided to start "Nipper's Weekly" again. (Hear, hear! Topping! Jolly good!)

Thank you!

Then I'll say it in larger print. WE'VE DECIDED TO START THE OLD RAG AGAIN.

And when I say "decided," I mean decided! It will actually come out next week. In case there is any doubt about it, I'll give you my word. And Nipper's word is worth banking upon. So look out for next week's copy of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY and see what's inside it.

But what a job it's been. We held a little meeting in Study C. All last year's contributors were there—and then some! Only the "some" had to stand in the passage!

It was a large and enthusiastic gathering, as they say about political meetings in the daily papers. There was just room for a chair and a small table, and I was made to sit down at it. I rapped on the table with a ruler for silence.

"You chaps," I began. "I wasn't going to say much. Only just going to outline my idea in a few words. I understand that you are in favour of starting our old mag, which was such a success last winter. (Enthusiastic applause.) Well, I think it's a jolly good wheeze. In fact, the sooner we start it the better. (Rather!) But I was going to suggest that this year we throw open its pages not only to the Remove but to the whole school. Make it, in fact, the St. Frank's Magazine."

An animated buzz of conversation broke out, and fellows were evidently arguing the idea amongst themselves. It quieted down a little, and I went on.

"So I suggest that we alter the title. Anyone got any suggestions?"

"The College Gazette."

"The Bannington Budget."

"Handforth's Annual."

A roar of laughter followed the third suggestion. Then Pitt said quietly:

"Why not what Nipper suggested—the St. Frank's Magazine?"

After a little more discussion this title was adopted.

"Right!" I went on. "Then the title's settled. Now about the contents. We want to make it more original, brighter, more topical than last year. It must be better and better in every way. Who can give a suggestion for an article?"

There was absolute silence as I finished speaking. No one said a word. No one seemed to have any ideas. I suppose it was so long since they had written that they had forgotten all about writing. Then as I was about to continue speaking, Handy jumped up.

"I've got it!" he roared. "The very thing!"

"Good!" I said. "What is it?"

"It's a bit of verse. It's a great idea; a perfect brainwave. If I was the editor——"

"Tell us what it is," I expostulated.

"It's 'Yes, we have no bananas'!"

"But—but that's not original."

"You—you silly ass!" yelled Handy. "I didn't say it was; I said it was topical!"

That started the ball rolling. After that, everybody had suggestions to make. But as they all talked at once, it was almost impossible to discover whether their suggestions were any good. After two hours, Watson, Sir Monty, and myself had to turn the chaps forcibly out of our study. I don't know what anybody is going to write about, or whether they will send in anything at all. In fact, it's all a holy muddle! But I can promise you that the St. Frank's Magazine will positively make its first appearance next Wednesday—even if it means we three writing all the stuff ourselves!

STOP PRESS. Two contributions have already come in. One is by Clarence Fellowe, who must have thought over Handy's suggestion, for he has sent in some verses called, "Yes, we——" You know, what Handy said. And the other is actually by Archie. It seems to be a short story about the Wild West. So there we are, then! The old Mag is as good as done. I don't think!

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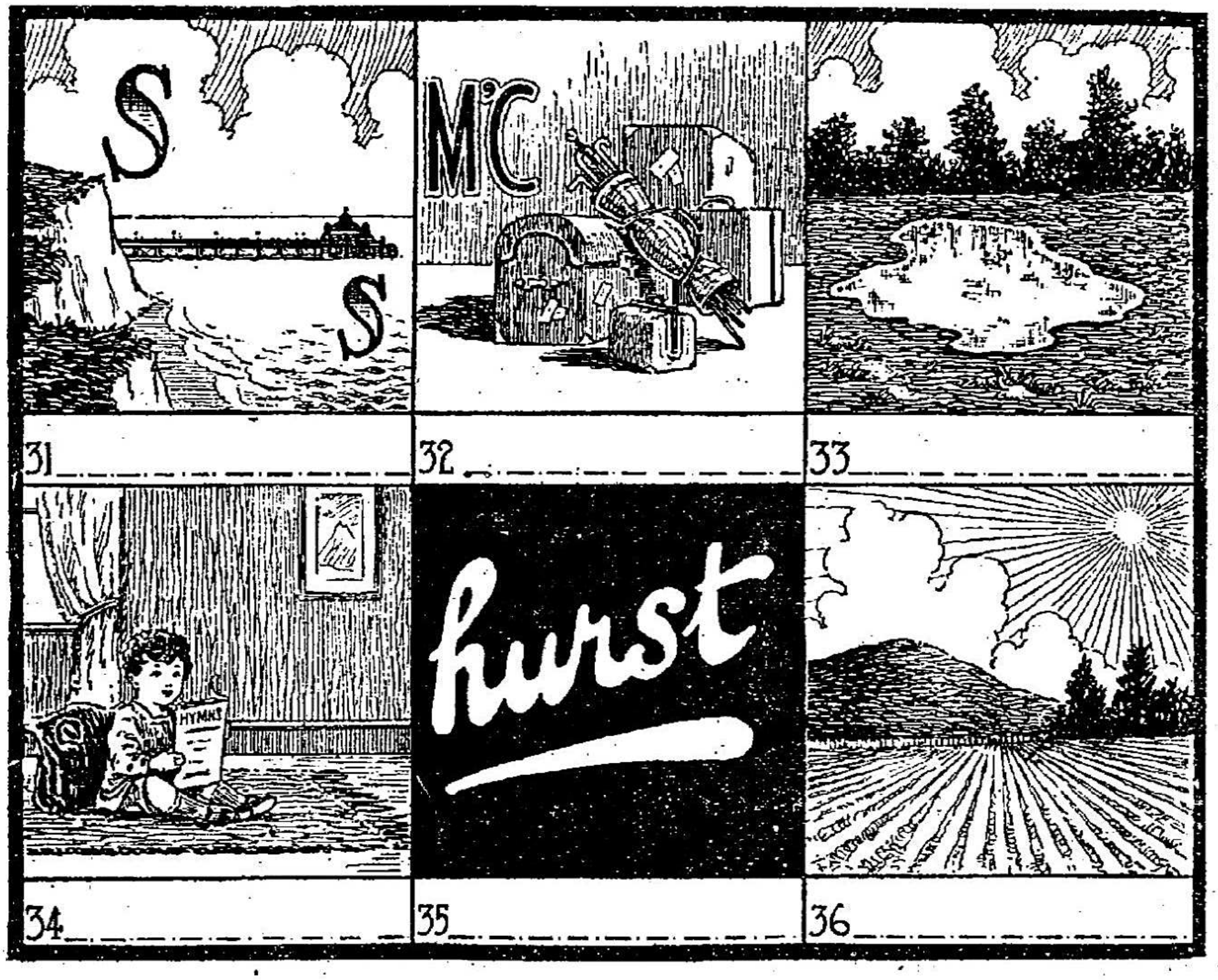

"FOOTBALLERS' NAMES"

Competition Rules and Conditions

Which must be strictly adhered to.

1. The First Prize of £100 will be awarded to the competitor who sends in the correct, or most nearly correct solution of all eight sets of pictures, according to the Editor's official solution.
2. The Second Prize of £50, and the others in the splendid variety of prizes, will be awarded in order of merit.
3. All the prizes will be awarded. If two or more competitors tie, however, the prize or prizes, or their value, will be divided, and the Editor reserves full rights in this respect.
4. No solutions may be sent in until all the sets of the pictures and the necessary coupon have been published. Full directions will then be given.
5. The names under the pictures must be written IN INK.
6. Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete.
7. Entry to this competition is on the full understanding that the Editor's decision is final and legally binding throughout.

Readers of "The Champion," "Boys' Friend," "Union Jack," "Boys' Realm," "Pluck," "Magnet," "Young Britain," "Gem," "The Popular," "The Rocket," and "Boys' Cinema," are also taking part in this Contest, so that additional attempts may be made with the pictures from these allied journals.

ALL YOU HAVE TO DO

is to write IN INK in the allotted space under each of the puzzle-pictures the name of the footballer which you think the picture represents. In previous issues you have had the full list of names used throughout the competition, so that you have only to fit the right name to the right picture. In all, there will be EIGHT SETS OF PICTURES, so keep your solutions until the other sets appear.

DO NOT SEND YOUR ENTRIES YET

Editorial Announcement.

My dear Readers,

There is not much doubt now that the Night Owl is among the few survivors of the wrecked Islington, and that he will make an attempt to salve the treasure is equally certain. Does he suspect Nelson Lee's intentions to frustrate him? If so, he will assuredly lay a trap for the detective, for the Night Owl is as shrewd and calculating a criminal as ever defied the law. Nelson Lee is well aware of this fact, and knows that before long he will have to encounter the head of the notorious Alliance of 13. How these two men, each experts at their own game, come to grips will be told in next week's exciting narrative, "THE SIGN OF 13!"

No. 1 OF THE "ST. FRANK'S MAGAZINE."

Quite one of the big events of the year will be the appearance next week in "The Nelson Lee Library" of the First Number of the "St. Frank's Magazine." A splendid cover has been designed by Mr. Briscoe, showing for the first time in this paper the St. Frank's badge and motto: "Consilio et animis." Among the contributions will be stories by Archie and Handforth, and many other attractive features by St. Frank's celebrities, all of which will be brightly illustrated throughout.

AN INTERVIEW WITH OUR AUTHOR.

Next week I shall be publishing an account of a personal interview I had with the popular author of the famous St. Frank's stories on his recent return from an extensive tour of America. So interesting have been his experiences that I have induced him to write a special series of American impressions for "The Nelson Lee Library." He has also consented to having his real name published with the interview, and has promised to let me have a photo of himself to appear in the paper later on.

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.

THE CAPTAIN OF THE PETREL!——

By L. J. BEESTON

A Stirring Tale of Adventure on Land and Sea.

CHAPTER I.

A FORTUNE AND A FIGHT.

"AM I dreaming? Can it be really true? If it is, I'm rich—immensely rich! And that beast Candlish—my word, I have got my heel on him now, and no mistake!"

No wonder that Tom Gray could scarcely believe the evidence of his senses. A minute ago he was—and felt—the most wretched youngster at Anselm College; at the mercy of Christopher Candlish, his guardian, who grudged every penny piece he spent on him, and the fag and prey of Jim Candlish, his guardian's son, the bully and and the tyrant of the school.

The minutes had passed. It seemed now that Tom Gray was worth a quarter of a million and that Christopher Candlish deserved the inside of a prison, and would be lucky if he—Tom—didn't send him there.

How had this astonishing change come about?

Tom had just received from a strange sailor a package done up in a piece of oil-skin. The sailor had found it in a bottle which he had picked up in a cove off the coast of Labrador. It was addressed to "Tom Gray, Anselm House, Saltmarsh-on-Sea, Sussex, England." The sailor was a Britisher homeward bound, and he brought the message from the sea along with him.

It was a half-holiday. Tom had avoided Jim Candlish, and had retired with his secret to a lonely place on the Downs, by the side of an enormous chalk-pit. After a final apprehensive glance round to see if the dreaded Jim Candlish was about, he had broken open the message. It was as follows:

"My Son,—The brig Petrel, of which I am skipper, is sinking under me as I write these words. We were bound for Nova Scotia from London, and have been disabled by frightful storms in the North Atlantic. We have been blown in our crippled condition fifteen hundred miles out of our course. The ship has started a plank amidships, and the water is coming in at a foot an hour. I have had three of my crew washed overboard, and nothing can now save us. We have passed the sixtieth degree of latitude; there is plenty of loose ice about, so that at any moment we may strike a berg and go down.

"I have something to tell you which is of the utmost importance. On my death, which seems likely to take place at any moment, you will inherit a fortune of a quarter of a million pounds sterling.

"I had not been out on this trip a couple of months when I heard of the death of my old relative Ebenezer Gray, who was immensely rich. He always led me to understand that he would leave his money to me, although while he lived he never gave me a shilling, but made me work for my living. He also desired me not to marry during his lifetime, or not a penny of his money should I touch. I disobeyed him there, for I married Mary Sinclair, your mother, who did not survive your birth. I did not tell my uncle of my marriage, but kept it a profound secret, and no one knows of it except my cousin, Christopher Candlish; no one knows except him that I have a son, and that you are he.

"I trust Christopher. He was one of the witnesses of my marriage, and I have no better friend. I left you in his charge when I sailed, and you could not be in better hands. But since I heard of my Uncle Ebenezer's death, and that he has left me all his property, I have felt a little uneasy lest, if I should not return, Christopher Candlish might yield to a great temptation. You know, Tom, he is, beside you, the only relative I have in the world; and as the law does not know you are my son, he could easily claim this money if he had a mind to.

"No doubt, though, I do him a great wrong to think such a thing, but a quarter of a million is a vast fortune that would make many men sell their souls.

"Anyhow, I should like you to hear from me that you are my son. I shall never see you again, however. The ship is rolling frightfully, with tons of water in her. Good-bye, Tom. Be a brave lad, and think of me sometimes, for my last thought is of you.

"Your father,

"RICHARD GRAY."

That was all. Tears rushed into Tom Gray's eyes as he read this pathetic

message. For three years, however, everyone had given up all hope of the brig Petrel. The letter was dated three years back. Then Tom had the very faintest remembrance of his father, of the bronzed sailor who used to pay him surreptitious visits. So the sad mood could not last long. It soon was entirely lost in growing indignation as Tom realised that Christopher Candlish had proved a false friend. For that gentleman, after the death of the captain of the Petrel, was recognised by law, had laid claim to his untouched thousands, and with perfect success.

Tom Gray was so excited over this extraordinary news that he did not notice a form slinking up behind him.

He gave a whoop of delight, and executed a brief dance perilously near to the brink of the chalk quarry.

"I'm rich—rich!" he shouted. "With this letter I can easily force my guardian's hand, and prove my case to the hilt. Then I'll leave Anselm House, and that bullying, sneaking, brutal, lying, contemptible atom of humanity that calls itself Jim Candlish! I'll——"

"Go on; don't mind me!" said a sarcastic voice.

Tom spun round. His heart leaped to his throat as he saw Jim Candlish standing behind him.

"Don't stop on my account," went on the bully, with ominous sarcasm. "Call me as many nice things as you like, only expect to pay for the privilege—that's all." Then, with a sudden change of tone: "You unspeakable, underfed, obnoxious bluebottle! I've a good mind to wring your arm off. What's that paper you were waving about in your antics? Give it to me!"

Tom Gray turned pale. Quick as thought he thrust the precious communication in a breast-pocket and buttoned his coat over it.

"What, you dare to disobey me?" cried Candlish, his eyes snapping viciously. "Give me that letter or I'll break every bone in your hide!"

"I can't, Candlish," stammered Tom. "It's private."

"Should I want to see it if it wasn't? Come, be quick!"

The other cast a wild look round over the deserted Downs. He was quite alone with his tormentor, and powerless, for Candlish was a huge boy for his age, and immensely strong.

It was a moment of cruel suffering. Tom wished that the earth would open and swallow him—temporarily. His enemy was the last person in the world to whom he would have shown his father's letter.

"Is it a plot to blow up the school?" asked Candlish sarcastically. "If it is, I promise to say nothing. May I ask how much longer you mean to keep me waiting?"

"I can't show it to you, Candlish," was the desperate answer.

"I'll count three, and then look out. One—two——"

Tom Gray clenched his fists.

"Three!"

Candlish leaped forward, only to receive an unexpected blow on the chest that sent him reeling back. For a moment he was stupefied with surprise and passion, then he hurled his big bulk upon Tom, who was thrown to the ground with smashing force.

As Tom lay face downwards, his enemy seized his coat collar in both hands, and with a sudden, fierce wrench, actually tore the garment clean down the back. In an instant he had wrenched it half off, and found the mysterious letter. He opened it and began to read.

Tom had slowly risen to his feet. A trickle of blood ran down his face, which encountered a flint. He stood and watched his enemy, breathing hard.

Over the face of Jim Candlish a grey hue crept. The letter, which showed him that his father was an impostor, threatened with beggary and a prison cell, affected him so much that it shook in his hands. Slowly he rolled his eyes upon Gray, who was watching him keenly.

"Where did you get this from?" he said thickly.

"It was brought to me."

"You know that it's a pack of lies!"

"Is it?"

"You don't mean to say that you believe all the rot that's written down here?"

Tom did not answer.

A cunning, shifty expression had come upon the other's face. He kept glancing about him and at Tom, while he fingered nervously the precious letter in his hands. At last he said:

"Do you know what I am going to do?"

"You are going to return me my property," said Tom firmly.

"No, I'm not. I'm going to tear it into little pieces. You can say what you like afterwards, but even if you get people to believe the rot that's written here you will never be able to prove your claim. But no one will believe you. And, if you take my advice, you won't open your lips on the subject to anyone, or I'll make it so hot for you that you'll wish yourself buried. Now, look!"

Candlish tore the all-important letter into minute fragments, tossing some to the winds, grinding some into the earth with the heel of his boot, flinging some into the chalk quarry. He was deadly white, for he knew he was committing a crime.

And as Tom watched the process, he felt slipping from his grasp a quarter of a million pounds. It was maddening. For a few moments he strove hard to govern the whirl of frantic rage that roared through his brain, then passion got the better of him, and with

a wild cry he rushed at Candlish, and flung himself upon him.

The bully gave back. Tom was neither small nor weak, but his enemy was almost a man in size and strength. Candlish got in one terrible blow that sent his opponent rolling upon the turf; but without a moment's pause, Tom was on his feet again, and charging blindly.

Again he went down, and once more he renewed the attack, without the smallest hesitation. Candlish had not expected this obstinacy. It rather unnerved him. Then he had received such a blow on the nose that he felt sure that useful organ was broken.

In the mad excitement of the combat, neither noticed that they were fighting perilously near to the brink of the quarry, and that a pit which meant death to whoever fell into it yawned almost at their feet.

"Get away, you wasp, you viper!" shouted Candlish, striking out furiously.

There was a note of uncertainty in his voice, and the blows from his whirling arms, though of sledge-hammer force, were no longer delivered from the shoulder, while Tom, perceiving that his adversary was weakening, grew calmer, more deadly. He got in a telling blow.

"You beast! You shall smart for this!" gasped Candlish, and received a second blow in precisely the same place.

He uttered a panting, smothered yell, staggered back a couple of paces, and suddenly felt his right foot go down into nothingness.

Candlish gave a scream of terror.

Tom Gray saw the peril at the same moment. Horror paralysed him for a fraction of a second; then he dashed forward to save his enemy.

He was too late!

With that terrible cry ringing from his lips, Jim Candlish fell into the void—fell with flung-out arms and body slowly turning. There was the sound of a dull splash, as if he had fallen into water at the bottom of the quarry. His agonised cry died away in lingering echoes.

"Good heavens! I have killed him!" panted Tom.

CHAPTER II.

TOM'S BREAK FOR LIBERTY.

HE remained fixed to the spot, overwhelmed with horror. When at last he flung himself downwards on the edge of the pit and looked over, he could not see the body.

The sun was setting, and the depths of the quarry were plunged in gloom.

"Candlish—Jim!" called out Tom hoarsely.

He expected no reply, and none came. Slowly he rose to his feet. There was no one about to whom he could appeal. The nearest inhabited house was the school—Anselm College.

"I must go back and tell them that I have killed Candlish!" muttered Tom Gray.

He shivered. The excitement of the fight was gone, and gone also, for the time being, all recollection of the injury that the bully had done him, and that he had lost a great fortune.

He went back slowly. It seemed a nightmare that he had passed through.

What would they do to him? he kept asking himself. He would be hanged, probably; or else imprisoned for life.

He was utterly unnerved. The events of that afternoon had broken him for the time. A cold perspiration of fear kept breaking upon his forehead.

When at last he reached the school, he had yielded to temptation, and was resolved to say nothing of Candlish's death that night, at any rate.

It was a long half-holiday at Anselm House. The boys were not expected to assemble until half an hour before prayers. Tom Gray found himself alone. What was he to do? Ought he, after all, to go and give himself up?

Suddenly the idea of running away flashed upon him. He jumped at it immediately, but he had no money, and could not hope to get far. The school was only a couple of miles inland, and that distance from a seaport. It might be possible for him that night to smuggle himself on board a vessel.

"But unless there is one leaving the quay in the early morning there will be a search made, and I shall be brought back," groaned Tom.

Still, he resolved to go down to the port and investigate. And for the purpose he would borrow someone's bicycle from the shed; there were always a few available mounts.

The first things that met his eye on entering the very large outhouse where were kept a score of bicycles and all kinds of oddments belonging to the school, were two long and stout chests, one of which was nailed down, the other only closed. Both bore large labels. On one was written "John Farrow, Esq.," and a London address; and on the other, "Walter Farrow, Passenger on the Albatross, King's University, St. John's, Newfoundland."

Tom understood in a moment. Walter Farrow was the science master at Anselm College. He had obtained a much better berth in a Newfoundland university, and was going to sail as passenger on a cargo boat early next morning. This Tom had known, but had forgotten it at the time. So there was a ship—the Albatross—leaving the port at about the time he wanted; but a far more daring idea had now flashed through Tom's brain.

The science master had not many things to get rid of from the school, and was sending quite half of them to the care of his brother, John Farrow, at the London address.

It was Tom Gray's wild notion to substitute himself in place of this luggage; in

other words, to conceal himself in the stout crate and be sent on to London!

"I shall escape from it somehow," he told himself, "on the way, or at the London railway depot. I shall chance my luck for that. And as no one will ever suspect the trick, my track will be effectually covered. But first I must have someone to help me—someone I can trust."

He had no sooner spoken these words, half aloud, when a figure darkened the entrance to the outhouse, and in came Dicky Masterson, and Dicky was Tom's particular friend.

"Hallo!" cried Masterson. "What are you doing in here, looking as white as a ghost?"

"Dicky," said Tom, clutching the other by the shoulder, "I've killed Jim Candlish!"

Masterson did not take his chum quite seriously, for he merely commented:

"Well done! How long did he take in dying?"

"It's true, Dicky! I really have killed him. We fought on the Downs by the chalk quarry—you know. I didn't mean to knock him over, but I did; and he's at the bottom—dead!"

"Oh, my boots!" gasped Masterson, growing white.

"I dare not give myself up; I dare not!" went on Tom. "You tell them when I've got away, if you like. For I'm going to clear, Dicky. Will you help me—will you?"

"Certainly," said Masterson; and he gripped the other's hand. "It was an accident, that's plain. Yes, I'll stand by you, old chap. What do you want me to do?"

"You see this packing-case? It's not nailed down, and it's going to London. A railway-carrier is coming for it this evening, as I happen to know. It's filled with books and a few pictures. I want you to help me clear the lot out. I shall take their place, and chance my luck in escaping."

Dicky's eyes opened wider and wider. He shook his head doubtfully

"It's either that or prison," added Tom desperately.

"Jupiter—that is so!" said Dicky. "All right; we'll get to work at once."

There was a big pile of rubbish and shavings at one corner of the shed, and beneath this the two speedily buried the contents of the big crate.

"You will want to breathe," said Dicky.

There was no denying so palpable a fact. Tom snatched up a large gimlet from a toolbag on a hook, and quickly made three holes—one at the bottom of the case, and one at either end.

"Now, in with you!" Dicky commanded.

The other obeyed without hesitation. It was by no means a tight squeeze.

"I shall nail you down now," said Masterson anxiously. "But for goodness' sake get out as soon as you can: A goods train will take you up to London to-night, I expect. What will you do then?"

"Lever my way out with this big chisel. Somehow or other I'll get clear of the goods depot. It shouldn't be so hard. Nail me in—quick!"

Dicky's heart sank unaccountably.

"Good-bye, Tom!" he cried. "Good luck to you, old man!"

"Good-bye!" answered Gray. "Down with her!"

Masterson began driving home the long nails. He had scarcely finished when he heard footsteps approaching.

"They're coming, Tom!" he cried out hoarsely, and rushed from the shanty.

Two men entered a few moments later. One was the science master, the other the school porter.

Trembling with excitement, Tom Gray heard the first exclaim:

"There they are, Simpson. I'll help you lift them on to the cart. Leave the one with the London address at the railway-station, and then drive on to Seabech and see the the other safe on board the boat. Oh, by the way, I don't think I nailed the first one down, did I?"

"Yes, you did, sir," answered Simpson.

"Are you sure? I don't remember doing so."

"If you didn't, sir, some'un else must 'ave. It's nailed down tight as a coffin-lid."

Tom shivered as he caught this ominous comparison.

"Very strange," murmured Mr. Farrow. "Why, bless my soul! Simpson, what an absurd mistake!"

"Which is wot, sir?"

"I have actually put the wrong direction labels on! This crate marked for London is the one I am taking with me to Canada. I must either be very absent-minded, or extremely stupid."

"Yes, sir," agreed Simpson; "werry absent-minded, sir," he added hastily. "Shall I change 'em, sir?"

"By all means. Hurry up; there is no time to be lost!"

Tom, who had heard every startling word, perspired with an agonised excitement that may be imagined. What should he do? Cry out? That would be fatal, for it would entail a full explanation. No, he could not face such an extremity. Then he must remain in the crate, and be taken on the ship! That would not be so bad; but where would they stow him? Dreadful thoughts of being stowed in the depths of the hold, under a pile of luggage from which he could neither escape nor make himself heard, came to torment him. He must quickly decide.

"I'll stop where I am," said he, setting his teeth.

But his agonies were not yet over.

"Stop, I have forgotten something," exclaimed the science master suddenly. "Simpson, we shall have to open that ship's crate again."

Tom moaned.

"What for, sir?" asked Simpson.

"I meant to place some chemicals in it."

"Would it be safe, sir? S'pose the bottles got broken?"

"Then their contents would shrivel up into cinder anything that happened to be near them."

This time Tom groaned so loud that the science master cried:

"Hark! What was that?"

"Sounded as if summun was dying, sir," answered Simpson. "Seemed to come from this blessed box. 'Ope it's not a bad omen, sir! Are you sure that the Albatross is a good sea-going boat? I had a cousin once who was 'aunted by a groaning afore he sailed, and his ship was captured by cannibals, who tortured and then ate 'im, sir."

"Work quicker and speak less, Simpson!" ordered Mr. Farrow severely. "On second thoughts I shan't bother about re-opening the crate. Have you changed the labels? Come along, then!"

Tom felt himself being lifted up, and borne out of the shed. Every bone and nerve in his body jarred as the crate was heaved into the waiting cart. The other followed.

"Off with you, Simpson!" cried the science master.

The cart moved away rapidly. Little did Tom guess whither he was bound and what extraordinary adventures awaited him.

CHAPTER III.

THE CAPTAIN'S FEAR—LEFT TO PERISH.

CAPTAIN JONAS STARBOTTLE swallowed a glass of Mr. Farrow's brown sherry.

"My opinion, sir," said he impressively, then paused to swallow a second glass—"my opinion, Mr. Farrow, is that rats is at the bottom of it."

He poured out and drank a third glass.

"Rats, sir!" he thundered, banging the empty glass upon the cabin table.

"But I haven't seen such a thing in my cabin. I tell you, captain, it is quite extraordinary how many good things have disappeared from my table since we sailed. To-day half a cold goose was taken. I was only out for a few minutes; when I came back it was gone."

"Rats, sir—only rats! The ship's alive with 'em. We're a perfect rat colony. I guess I'd find 'em if this was my cabin. Now, look at that big box for instance, under your bunk. Shouldn't be surprised if it was packed with the varmin. You've got no idea, sir, how artful rats can be. Now, allow me to lift the top off——"

Captain Starbottle took a step forward, and Tom Gray believed that discovery was now certain. His appetite had been his undoing; grown bold with success, he had ventured to help himself too freely from the good things of Mr. Farrow's cabin table.

But the ex-science master of Anselm College saved the situation.

"Captain Starbottle," cried he, "I have an idea. It is my belief that the men help themselves to anything they can because they do not get enough to eat!"

"Ho!" snorted the skipper angrily. "And who says, pray, that my men don't get enough to eat?"

"They are always grumbling."

"Did you ever know a sailor that didn't?"

"And I think they are getting dangerous—out of hand. It is none of my business, Captain Starbottle," added Mr. Farrow, "except that I'm a passenger on this ship, and don't want to have my throat cut. But the men complain that there are more worms than anything else in their biscuits, that their tea is boiled shavings, that the ship's stores were bought for next to nothing in a dockyard sale of rotten food; while your mate is a brute that will get himself murdered on the first opportunity he gives Borovitch, your mutinous bo'sun."

For a moment the skipper was silent, then his wrath blazed up in a tempest. A shower of terrible oaths fell upon the daring passenger who had ventured to come between the captain and his crew. Mr. Farrow said nothing, but he gazed steadily at Starbottle, while the latter's passion gradually wore itself out. He was aware that Starbottle had been at the bottle, as he nearly always was.

The shock of his own violence sobered the man a little, and becoming rather ashamed of his savage outburst, he turned his impreeations upon the crew.

"The laziest set of hulks that ever robbed ashore and loafed at sea!" he shouted. "What do ye want me to give the pigs—wine-biscuits and liqueurs? If I had my way I'd feed 'em on nothing but burnt burgoo, and 'ud ram it down their throats with a marlinspike. Look here, sir, I'm sorry I showed you the rough side of my tongue, but——"

"Duck, man—duck! Ah, merciful heavens!"

It was Mr. Farrow who shouted the words, but the warning came too late.

The cabin was immediately under the break of the poop, and the window in it commanded a look-out upon the main deck. Happening to glance upward, Mr. Farrow had been horrified to see a livid face staring through the glass. It was the face of Borovitch, the gigantic Pole, and bo'sun of the Albatross. In his right hand he held a pistol which he had just stolen from the skipper's cabin. And levelling it at Starbottle, he fired through the glass.

The captain fell forward, clutching at the cabin table, thence rolling upon the floor.

The science master was not wanting in pluck. With a shout of horror and menace he rushed from the cabin, bounded up the companion, only to receive a terrible blow from Borovitch, who was ready for him with a brass belaying-pin.

The passenger of the Albatross staggered back, reached the cuddy, locked and bolted the door of his cabin, and dropped in a dead faint.

It had been a matter of moments only. On deck the mate had felled three men; they had been stunned and thrown overboard. The second mate had declared for the mutineers, and the ship was in their hands.

When Mr. Farrow opened his eyes he saw something which filled him with such profound astonishment that at first he thought he must be dreaming. A figure was kneeling by his side, binding a couple of handkerchiefs tied together round his throbbing head. And he recognised this figure.

"Gray," he whispered faintly, "it cannot be you?"

"It's no one else, sir," answered Tom, trying to speak cheerfully.

"You have been hiding on this ship?"

"Ever since she sailed."

Mr. Farrow's wits began to wander a little.

"You will write five hundred lines!" he muttered, thinking he was back at the school.

Then, as the truth rushed upon him, he groaned.

"They have murdered the captain," he said huskily.

He spoke truly. Captain Jonas Starbottle had been shot through the heart. Tom had managed to remove the body from the cabin, which he had then proceeded to barricade.

"They have the ship in their hands," went on Mr. Farrow. "You had better go and hide where you came from, Gray; they will never permit us to——"

He was interrupted by a terrific dull thud, which shook every timber in the vessel; then a strange stillness seemed to hold the ship as if she had suddenly lost her way.

"We've struck something," exclaimed Mr. Farrow. "It feels as if we are going down. I must go on deck; they won't notice me in the confusion."

He rose, but reeled back, overcome with weakness.

"Stay where you are, sir. I'll find out the truth!" cried Tom.

On deck it was blackest night. The men were rushing about almost in a state of panic. The voice of the second mate was bawling furiously:

"Port your helm! Let go the port-braces fore and aft!"

A couple of cables' length to leeward Tom could just see an obscure black mass swinging slowly by.

It was a derelict timber ship, waterlogged, and the Albatross had been right into it with every stitch of canvas set. Her jibboom and fore top-gallant mast had been carried away, and the fore topmast looked as if it would crash down at any moment.

The confusion was frightful, for a heavy sea was running, and the wind thundered in the flapping sails.

Dazed by the uproar, and utterly unnoticed in the gloom and confusion, Tom stood by, anxious to hear the worst. Suddenly he heard the mate speaking to Borovitch, and the words made him perspire with a new terror.

"She's started her planking badly in the forepeak. There's three feet of water in her, and it's coming in at a pretty good rate. It means the longboat, Borovitch. Confound it! Nothing worse could have happened. This upsets all our calculations. Now we can only save our lives."

The speakers moved forward, and Tom heard no more. Descending to the cuddy, he informed Mr. Farrow of what he had heard.

"If it be true," said the science master, "we are helpless. They may take us with them, though it is not likely. If they leave us a boat, we must get out of the ship."

"They dare not desert us!" exclaimed Tom, appalled by the idea of being left in a sinking ship with a sick man and a high sea running.

"They have committed murder. If we escape they know their necks will never be safe. Listen! It is very quiet on deck. Possibly they have actually gone."

Again Tom went up to investigate. There was a faint gleam of dawn over the sea. The men were not to be seen. A sudden apprehension turned Tom faint with fear. He ran to the rail, and there, a dozen cables' length to leeward, was the longboat, manned by the mutineers. They had rigged up a stun-sail in the boat, which was rapidly gliding away through the troughs of the sea.

"Deserted! Left to perish, to drown with the rats!"

The agonised cry broke from Tom Gray's lips.

At that instant the ship gave a frightful wallowing lurch. Tom set his teeth and prepared to die.

CHAPTER IV.

THE APPARITION ON THE ICEBERG.

THERE were tons of water in the forepeak, and the dead weight was dragging the ship down by the nose. Yet she righted again slowly from the effects of a tremendous wave which had struck her amidships. It was evident, however, that she must go down within twenty minutes.

As Tom gazed round in despair into the semi-darkness, there came a peculiar icy feeling which struck him to the bones and chilled his blood. He had a sensation that a new peril was close at hand. He groped his way forward along the sloping deck,

and suddenly he saw a spectacle which thrilled him with awe and terror.

Out of the half-gloom was appearing, slowly and majestically, an enormous iceberg. In his wildest dreams of adventure Tom had never looked on anything like this monster fabric of solid ice. It had immense towers and pinnacles of glittering ice, sheer precipices, and deep ravines. It looked like a floating city of ice. And it was bearing down upon the already doomed Albatross!

For three precious moments Tom stood fascinated, then he turned and dashed down the companion into the cuddy.

"The men have gone, and there is an iceberg as big as a cathedral bearing full upon us!" he gasped.

Mr. Farrow acted with great presence of mind.

"A couple of blankets—quick!" he cried.

He himself seized a sheet from his bunk, which he tore into strips.

"Tie one of the blankets round you," he ordered, and set the example by rolling the other about himself, stuffing a brandy-flask into it.

"Come along!" he cried. "We may have to jump for our lives, and if we do, Heaven help us!"

The towering berg could not have come with more fatal directness for the ship if it had been steered by some malevolent power; while the Albatross, rolling fearfully, reeled to meet it. The chill of its presence gave the coldness of death to the air. A shelving beach of ice, thickly strewn with gravel and small boulders, extended from its base. Upon its white cliffs the seas broke with a thunderous outcry, and were repelled as if they had attacked a mountain.

There was no other ship in sight, and the nearest land was the Labrador coast, and that was five hundred miles to windward.

"It will be on us in a couple of minutes!" shouted Mr. Farrow, his voice almost lost in the crash of the seas. "Be ready to jump, for it is our only chance!"

They crouched by the rail to windward. Nor had they long to wait. A rolling sea passed under the ship's counter and hurled her, bowsprit on, upon the berg.

"Jump!" roared Mr. Farrow.

There was a terrible shock. The Albatross, under the force of that furious impact, crumbled like a house of cards. When Tom, who had leaped not a moment too soon, looked back, he saw only fragments of the ship—broken masts, splintered spars—tossing on the water, which was boiling with rage.

It had been a lucky leap for both. They had gained a broad ledge of ice on the berg. Beneath them was a wall of ice forty feet down, for the wave which had hurled the ship to its doom had lifted it that height on the face of the berg.

The science master and Tom exchanged glances.

"We are safe for the present," said the former, "though it looks like a case of out of the frying-pan into the fire."

Tom would have been very glad for both a fire and a frying-pan at that moment, but he had neither, and said so.

"Don't be flippant, Gray," said the other. "We have but prolonged the agony, I fear. We shall certainly either starve on this iceberg or be frozen."

"That will not be long, then," replied Tom; "for I am horribly hungry already, and half dead with cold."

"Or else," continued the science master meditatively, "the berg will turn completely over. I have heard of them doing so."

This sounded cheerful. A display of such knowledge seemed strangely out of place at that time, Tom thought.

"I am inclined to think that this enormous mass of ice is a fragment of a glacier," continued Mr. Farrow thoughtfully. "It has been broken off from the mainland. Look at those stones and earth."

If the speaker had said, "Look at that roast leg of mutton and potatoes," Tom would have evinced a larger interest than he showed.

"However, we will explore the berg," said Mr. Farrow. "We must not lose heart yet."

For many hours they climbed and slipped and descended, but their only success was the finding of a couple of large eggs which evidently belonged to some sort of seafowl. These they devoured. Then the short Arctic day came to a close.

They were alone on a mountain of ice. It was frightfully dark. All round them moaned the sea. Wonderful lights ran up and down the wall of the sky.

They fell asleep.

Tom dreamed he was back again at Anselm College, and that he was engaged in mortal combat with Jim Candlish. He awoke to the terrible truth.

It was a bitter hour. Here he was on an iceberg in the Polar seas, under the stars of the Polar night. Starvation stared him in the face.

"And at home in England," he muttered, "they are looking for me. I wonder if they have found Candlish yet, and if Dicky has felt forced to speak? But even if he has they will look for me in London. It seems like some awful nightmare. I wonder if I shall awake presently and find myself in my dormitory? I wish I could."

Suddenly he got a great shock.

On a ledge of the great berg, about fifty feet from him, he saw something huge and ghostly slowly moving. Tom rubbed his eyes. Surely he was mistaken? No, there it was again—enormous, vague, shadowy!

Tom watched it with starting eyeballs. It was coming nearer! The thing, whatever it was, seemed to be gazing in his direction. He called to his companion in

a loud whisper, but that individual was wrapped in a deep slumber.

Nearer and nearer came this silent phantom of the iceberg.

Tom shook off the lethargy which had bound him and started to his feet. The gigantic apparition stopped, and appeared to increase in height.

Then Tom gasped.

"A bear!" he cried. "A Polar bear!"

He started forward to shake his companion, but at that instant an astonishing thing happened.

A sharp crack awoke a thousand echoes in the ice mountain. The bear replied with a throaty roar, rocked unsteadily on its hind legs, and pitched off the ledge.

There was a sullen splash as the far-down sea received the monster, then only dead and utter silence again.

For a moment Tom was stupefied, then a cry of amazement broke from him.

"That was a gunshot!" he shouted.

Wildly excited, he shook his companion into consciousness.

"There is someone on the berg!" he exclaimed. "I heard a rifle fired."

"So did I. I was dreaming—like you," was the answer.

"I tell you someone fired at a bear! I saw it fall into the sea."

Mr. Farrow looked at Tom sadly.

"Poor boy!" he said softly. "I did not think his reason would go so soon."

It was quite hopeless to make his companion believe his story, and Tom decided to wait for daybreak. It came at last, and there, sure enough, on the ledge where he had seen the bear, were splashes of blood.

"Seeing is believing," said the science master; "and if there is anyone beside ourselves on this iceberg, we will leave our cards before many hours have passed."

For three hours they climbed the precipices and searched the ravines of that enormous bulk of drift-ice. Again and again they sent their voices ringing over the waste, but there was no response.

A feeling of despair came over them. The cold, which was twenty-two degrees below zero, could no longer be fought by exercise without food. Tom was conscious of a terrible feeling of lassitude. He wanted, above all things, to lie down and sleep; but from such a slumber there could be no awakening.

Suddenly his companion gave a gasp of surprise and pointed upwards.

Tom looked. What he saw took his breath away. Twenty feet above them, wedged between two enormous pinnacles of ice, was a three-masted ship!

Mr. Farrow clutched Tom by the shoulder.

"Do you see it?" he cried excitedly, "or am I going mad? Don't tell me that it's an hallucination!"

Tom did not answer. If the other showed astonishment, it was nothing to the sheer stupefaction which seemed to have seized his comrade. With eyes starting from their sockets and mouth agape, Tom Gray stood looking up to the ship towering over their heads. Then a great trembling seized him. Twice he opened his mouth to speak, but could not.

"What's the matter, Gray?" cried the other, alarmed.

"The name! Look at the name!" said Tom huskily.

"I see it—the Petrel. What of it?"

"My father's ship!"

CHAPTER V.

TOUCH AND GO!

TOM gave his companion no time to ask questions. The first shock of astonishment over, he began to climb up towards the ship. In half an hour they were both aboard.

It was deserted. Everywhere were signs that she had suffered terribly. The topmasts were gone; broken spars strewed her decks; ribbon-like fragments of the mainsail fluttered from the gaskets.

"What a frightful sense of loneliness," shuddered the science master.

"It is three years since the ship was given up," said Tom.

He led the way to the companion, descending into the gloomy cuddy. There were six cabins below. The first three into which they looked showed signs of years of disuse, and dust lay thickly everywhere. The science master opened the door of the fourth, only to recoil so abruptly that he upset Tom and himself, so that they rolled upon the floor.

A man's deep voice called out:

"Who in thunder is there?"

A tall figure appeared at the cabin door the next moment, holding a rifle. At sight of the two unexpected visitors he dropped the weapon and rushed forward with extended hands.

"Welcome, whoever you are!" he cried. "I thought it was a bear come on board. For two years I haven't set eyes on the face of a man. How in the name of goodness did you get here? But we won't bother about that yet. Are you an Englishman?"

"Born and bred," said the science master, overwhelmed with astonishment and delight.

"And you?" The man on the ship turned to Tom. "Yes," he said, "you've got an English face, and—and—that's very strange—I—I seem to have seen you before, only—only—no, that's absurd; it can't be."

He had placed his big palms on Tom Gray's shoulders, and was staring at him in a way that made Tom's heart beat like a sledge-hammer.

"What's your name?" he said suddenly.

"Tom Gray," answered the other, shaking all over.

The big man caught his breath hard.

"I had a son of that name," he said

hoarsely, never taking his eyes from Tom's face for an instant.

"And," answered Tom, choking with joy, "I had a father who was skipper of the brig Petrel, which went down off the Labrador coast three years ago. The skipper sealed a letter in a bottle before he went down with his ship, and his son got that letter, and, in a way, it's the reason of his being here."

"You—you!" gasped the other. "Boy, d'ye know what you're saying? I am the skipper of the Petrel!"

"Then you are certainly my father!" said Tom, with shining eyes.

The science master, who had heard every word, went out quietly, shut the cabin door, and, going on deck, knocked his head against the mainmast to assure himself that he was in his senses and not dreaming.

An hour later, over a meal prepared from what was left of the ship's stores, the skipper of the Petrel told his story briefly.

"No," he related, "the ship did not go down, after all. We got driven amongst ice floes, drifted further north, the floes became an ice pack. Day after day it collected, lifting the Petrel higher and higher, so that at last we were on a mountain of ice. Winter came, and we were fixed, latitude seventy, the coast of Greenland a hundred miles off.

"We were like that for a year; then all of my crew, except the cook and myself, tired of the death in life, and resolved to try and reach the mainland over the frozen sea. They went, and I never saw them again.

"Last year the cook died of scurvy. I was alone. No ship came in sight. For an eternity, or what seems like it, I haven't seen a living creature—though last night I shot a bear which must have been on the berg before it broke away from the pack ice. That was a month ago. It has been drifting into warmer waters, and cannot last.

"Fearing that the berg will one day sheer over as its bottom melts, I have been for weeks preparing a raft. It lies in a safe enough place, and on the first real warning——"

"Good heavens! There it is, then!" exclaimed Tom, jumping to his feet, as did the others.

A deep and growing roar sounded in their ears, and the ship trembled violently.

"Outside! For your lives!" bellowed the skipper.

In the twinkling of an eye the trio had swarmed up the companion. A feeling of deadly sickness was experienced by each. The colossal berg beneath their feet was shuddering to its heart, while the sea boiled as if it was alive with monsters.

"My soul! It's going in turn over!"

roared Captain Gray. "Follow me! Don't waste a single second!"

Staggering, slipping, falling a score of times, conscious of that deadly nausea which sapped the strength from muscle and nerves, Tom and Mr. Farrow endeavoured to keep up with the skipper of the Petrel. It was evident that it was going to be a case of touch and go.

"Here we are!" shouted the captain. "We have no time to launch it properly, and must trust to luck. Over with it, then jump!"

The three of them seized the big raft, which lay high and dry in a cave close by the ship. In a moment they had flung it into the sea.

"Over with you!" roared the skipper to the science master.

The latter hesitated. It was a big leap, and below were icy, green seas of fathomless depth. The captain seized him in his strong arms and literally heaved him from the berg. Tom dived an instant after. The captain tossed over a couple of oars and followed them.

All three were on the raft, but would they be in time to escape the fall of the ice mountain?

Like a madman Captain Gray tugged at the stern oar. Slowly the raft crept off.

"Oh, merciful Heaven! It's coming!" cried Mr. Farrow.

It was true. The enormous berg, giving one long, final shiver, careered majestically and fell with the noise of a thousand tempests.

A mountain of foam leaped upward. The raft, caught on the crest of an immense sea, mounted to the skies, then shot down on the farther side of the green wall.

When next they looked in the direction of the berg, they saw that it had turned completely over, and the Petrel was sunk fathoms down.

"A narrow shave," commented the captain, coolly wringing the wet from his clothes. "A few minutes later, and we should have been down there."

"And our sufferings over," grumbled the science master. "As it is, we are alone on a few planks of wood, drenched to the skin, frozen with cold, and not a scrap of provisions or a drop of water. This time, at any rate, there is no escape for us."

"Wrong!" cried Tom in a ringing voice. "Look! Look there!"

They followed the direction of his arm, and saw a long black line floating above the horizon.

It was the smoke from a steamer!

Without a word the captain lashed the two oars together, tied his coat to the topmost one, and held the signal up. Would it be seen? If not, their fate was indeed sealed.

Fifteen minutes of the most terrible suspense crept by.

"She is turning!" said the skipper quietly. "She is coming this way. We are saved!"

Before a couple of hours had passed they had been rescued from the raft, had changed into warm, dry clothes lent by sympathetic passengers on the steamer—which was an English boat, the Vigorous, homeward bound—and were sitting at the captain's table with a few other guests.

Dinner over, the waiter brought port and cigars.

"And now for your story," said the captain of the steamer.

It was told; while all listened in amazement. Suddenly one of the passenger guests leaned forward and regarded Tom with a searching look.

"Your name is Tom Gray?" said he in a queer voice.

"Yes," answered Tom, his heart sinking.

"You were at Anselm College, in Sussex?"

"Yes," replied Tom again, turning pale.

The passenger whistled.

"My name is Masterson," said he. "I've a son at Anselm House. You know Dicky, I believe?"

"Yes." Poor Tom wetted his dry lips with his tongue.

"He told a nice little story about you on being severely pressed. But you ought to be in London, according to Dicky's yarn. Everyone was looking for you there."

This time Tom did not answer. He sipped his wine with a hand that trembled visibly.

The passenger leaned back, and a broad smile broke over his kindly face.

"Well," said he, "I'm glad to tell you that you didn't kill Jim Candlish. He was taken out of the chalk quarry with a sprained ankle and a broken arm, and—— Catch him!"

The cabin and its occupants had suddenly faded from Tom Gray's senses. He fell forward on the table in a dead faint.

Only one thing remains to be told.

When, after a smooth voyage, the Vigorous steamed into port, Captain Gray and Tom went to interview Mr. Christopher Candlish, and to "have it out" with that individual. But he must have got wind of something of the truth, for he had vanished the day previous, taking his son Jim with him, and a matter of five thousand pounds which didn't belong to either.

But what is five thousand pounds out of a quarter of a million? Christopher Candlish had not dared to tamper with the bulk of Captain Gray's fortune. The precious couple never showed their faces again.

THE END.

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