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"SHANGHAIED!"

New Series No. 24.

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The SCHOOLBOY GLIDER!



by
Edwy Searles
Brooks

It's K. K. Parkington's glider, but it's E. O. Handforth who does the gliding—with amazing, and amusing, results!

CHAPTER I.

Really Red-Hot!

"THERE'S something mysterious going on," said Handforth impressively.

He was in a thoughtful mood, and tea in Study D, in the Ancient House at St. Frank's, was progressing erratically. Church and McClure, Handforth's faithful chums, had been watching their leader for some time.

"You're quite right—there is something mysterious going on," agreed Church. "How the dickens you can put strawberry jam on the top of a sardine sandwich, and not taste anything rummy, is mysterious."

"Eh?" ejaculated Handforth, with a start. "Oh, bother the sardines and the jam! I'm thinking—don't interrupt! Parkington has got something up his sleeve! All those Carlton chaps, in fact, are up to something fishy!"

"And you can bet it's against us," said McClure, the Scottish junior. "Don't forget they owe us one or two, Handy! We've put it across them pretty heftily of late, and the honours are well on our side."

"As they should be," said Handforth promptly. "Aren't I the Remove captain?"

"Ahem! Yes."

"What are you coughing for?" demanded Handforth, with a suspicious stare.

"Crumb!" mumbled Mac, coughing again.

"Some of the chaps may not take me seriously as Remove captain, but there's going to be trouble if you two fatheads don't take me seriously," went on Handforth grimly. "And as for that red-headed edition Carnera who calls himself Kirby Keeble Parkington, I don't care this for him!"

He snapped his fingers contemptuously and his chums had some difficulty in suppressing their chuckles.

There had been warfare in the Remove ever since the school had re-opened—ever

since the twelve brawny youngsters from Carlton College had invaded St. Frank's. Parkington was the biggest of them all. He was not only big in muscle and bone, but he was a sizzling volcano of mental activity. He usually spent half his day in planning out stunts to "put it across" the Old-Timers.

His fond dream of supremacy, however, had met with many nasty jolts. For Edward Oswald Handforth was a sizzling volcano, too; and he and the Old-Timers were not only keeping their own end up, but were doing it with ease.

A victory for the "Red-Hots" was overdue. And Handforth had an uncomfortable feeling that something was brewing.

For nearly a week Parkington and his eleven stalwarts had been extraordinarily quiet. The instant they obtained their liberty they vanished; even cricket practice had lost its charms, and they only appeared when absolutely necessary. All rags were off. Life in the Remove had become monotonously tame.

"Those chaps are doing something in the old barn," said Handforth.

"Go hon!" murmured Church.

"I tell you they're doing something——"

"What do you think we are—a couple of blind and deaf lunatics?" broke in Church indignantly. "Haven't we seen—and haven't we heard? Those Red-Hots are in the barn nearly all the time. They practically live there."

"And they guard it night and day," growled Handforth. "I've tried to get near the place a score of times, but there's always half a dozen of those chumps ready to keep me back! Sickening!"

"Well, after all, they're at liberty to do as they like in their spare time," said Mac. "If we chaps press too much we're accused of being inquisitive. But you're right, Handy, old man. There's something in the wind—and it's certain to be against us."

PARKINGTON & CO. were looking tired but happy at calling-over that evening. They had the appearance of strong men who had tackled a difficult task and who had acquitted themselves well and truly. No longer was that feverish excitement apparent.

"They've finished," said Handforth confidentially, later on. "I'm not blind! Whatever they've been up to, they've finished it! Didn't you twig their contented dials? It's the calm before the storm, my sons."

"We'd better be on the look-out to-night," warned Reggie Pitt.

But nothing happened. The ex-Carltonians went to bed as usual, and, what was more, within ten minutes they were all sound asleep. Handforth, who had been on the *qui vive*, was frankly disappointed.

"It's a swindle!" he declared. "There's nothing doing at all."

"Unless they've gone to bed particularly tired, and mean to be up particularly early," suggested Vivian Travers shrewdly. "It

might be a good stunt, dear old fellows, to set our alarm clocks for six a.m. Nothing like being on the safe side. I really hate being caught unawares in the cold, grey, early morning."

"Why not dodge out to the old barn now?" suggested Handforth eagerly. "We might be able to discover——"

"And fall into a booby trap?" asked Jimmy Potts, grinning. "Why, you ass, that may be the very thing they're expecting us to do! They may have prepared a rod in pickle for us, hoping that we should be tempted. No fear! Our safest plan is to keep on ignoring them. We don't want to give them the laugh over us."

Even Handforth had to admit the common-sense of this. He was startled when he realised that all this mysterious work in the old barn might, indeed, be nothing else but a bluff, deliberately undertaken to spoof the Old-Timers.

But, as it happened, it wasn't.

It was of little use for the Old-Timers to set their clocks at six, because their rivals were up at five. The morning wasn't cold and grey, either. As the school clock struck the five strokes, the Red-Hots tumbled out of bed, and they found the sun shining gloriously from a cloudless sky. The sun, having just risen, was sending its golden slanting rays over the tops of the trees of Bellton Wood. The big clock tower, the highest point of St. Frank's, was bathed in the golden brilliance.

The Carlton Gang were looking eager and excited as they approached the barn, at the other end of the school paddock. Birds were twittering in the neighbouring trees, but St. Frank's, as a whole, was silent. These twelve Removites were the only people awake.

Parkington unlocked the padlock on the barn door, and the door itself was swung wide open. The other door followed. And there, in full view, stood the result of the juniors' enthusiastic labour. The Red-Hots were rather awed by the sight of it, and for some moments nobody spoke.

CHAPTER 2.

Another Early Riser!

"**B**Y Jove! I can't believe it!" said Goffin, at last. "I can't believe that we really built her!"

"You never know what you can do until you try," replied Parkington cheerfully. "My sons, she looks a businesslike proposition, doesn't she? Come on! Let's yank her out!"

The object of their admiration was a really beautifully constructed glider. She was of the monoplane type, with a fabric-covered wing. Right in the nose, below the level of the wing, there was a sort of perch—it could hardly be called a seat—for the pilot. There

were one or two controlling levers near at hand.

This glider was not such a home-made affair as one might imagine. The materials were of the best—the Red-Hots had pooled their money to buy the necessary materials—and the glider itself had been built from expert plans.

Most of the young enthusiasts had obtained special remittances from home, and they were graduated according to their "whack." Parkington, who had contributed the most, would take the first flight. The other eleven would have their "goes" in proportion to their proprietary interest.

"It's all very well for you chaps," said Baines, who was always proverbially hard up, and who had only managed to scrape four and tenpence halfpenny together as his share. "I'm last! And by the time it gets to my turn the giddy contraption'll be smashed up!"

"Rats!" said Deeks. "These gliders are as safe as kids' scooters! And, according to all I've read, it's the most glorious sport in the world! Before long it's going to be one of England's greatest pastimes."

"Like Germany," nodded Parkington. "Gliding there is the rage. I saw in the paper the other day that schoolboys and schoolgirls are taking it up from one end of the country to the other. If German schoolboys and schoolgirls can do it, so can English—and St. Frank's will be the pioneer over here!"

They took the glider out. A simple enough task, this, for the graceful little craft was provided with a pair of detachable wheels. Two juniors, alone, could have handled her, and with twelve it was mere child's play.

"All clear!" said Parkington. "Not a soul in sight—not a soul up yet except us. Bring her along to the starting-place."

The glider was handled lovingly, and conveyed round past the back of the barn to a specially-prepared spot. Here the meadows sloped down fairly steeply towards the river. It was a good place for a take-off. Even a modest glide would carry the craft well beyond the river and over the meadows farther away.

Glider are not supposed to start off with a mere push. They generally have a special catapult apparatus, operated by half a dozen or so enthusiasts, which sends the little machine into the air with a terrific impetus. Once up, it is for the pilot to operate his controls so that he extends his glide to its utmost limit. Skilled pilots can do wonders. Providing the air currents are favourable, they can glide for miles, and even attain astonishing height.

The Red-Hots were content to indulge in a few short glides to start with. They had a special catapult arrangement of their own. It was an ingenious device, and after the glider was placed in position the catapult could be wound up in the style of a winch. The release of a lever would do the rest.

UNFORTUNATELY, Parkington had been wrong when he had declared that not a soul was up except themselves.

As ill-luck would have it Mr. Horace Pycraft, the master of the Remove, was awakened shortly after five by a touch of neuralgia—due, no doubt, to a chill on the tennis court the previous evening. And as Mr. Pycraft couldn't sleep any more, he decided to go out for a brisk walk.

Mr. Pycraft without neuralgia was an ill-tempered man. Mr. Pycraft with neuralgia was a person to avoid. He was just in that mood when he wanted to be alone. Everything irritated him, for his nerves were on edge. That "early morning feeling" was accentuated by his face-ache.

"Good gracious me!" ejaculated Mr. Pycraft.

Unexpectedly, he had wandered off the playing fields, intending to make for the river. And there, in full sight, he beheld a crowd of juniors busy with a contraption which looked suspiciously like an aeroplane. Mr. Pycraft broke into a run.

The school clock was chiming six, and the Carlton Gang's preparations were complete. Parkington, in fact, was on the pilot's perch, ready to be shot off on the first adventurous glide. It was a great moment. And Fate decreed that it should be marred by the untimely appearance of Mr. Pycraft.

"Stop!" shouted the Form-master, as he ran up. "Good heavens! What are you boys doing?"

"Let her go!" urged Parkington. "Go on, you chaps! There's still time!"

But the others were flustered, and before Parkington could repeat his injunction Mr. Pycraft was amongst them. He arrived breathless.

"I am amazed!" he ejaculated. "What insanity is this? What arrant madness are you boys attempting? An aeroplane! Never in my life have I—"

"It is not an aeroplane, sir," interrupted Parkington, in a tired voice.

"Not an aeroplane!" shouted Mr. Pycraft. "What do you mean, Parkington? Do you take me for a fool? Don't you think I know an aeroplane when I see one?"

"All right, sir! Have your own way," sighed the junior. "We needn't argue about it, sir. But this is a glider."

"How dare you, Parkington!" snapped Mr. Pycraft. "You impudent fellow! What do you mean by quibbling? A glider and an aeroplane are precisely the same."

"With a difference, sir—a glider hasn't any engine."

"Were you crazy enough to fly off in this—this thing?" went on the master, looking at the glider with excessive disfavour. "Tell me, Parkington, were you actually going to attempt a flight?"

"Yes, of course, sir."

"Then I forbid it," said Mr. Pycraft sternly. "I positively forbid it. Undoubtedly you deserve to break your neck, but I—as

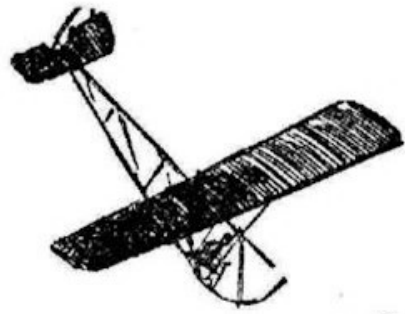
your Form-master—cannot allow you to take any such risk."

"It's as safe as houses, sir!" protested Parkington. "Even if I do crash I shan't come to any harm—only a bruise or two—that's part of the fun."

"Fun?" roared Mr. Pycraft.

"Why, in Germany they've got glider clubs all over the country, sir," put in Deeks. "This is the first St. Frank's Glider Club. Over in Germany they have crashes two or three times a day, but people don't get hurt. The chaps buzz round, make repairs, and then somebody else goes for a glide."

"There will be no 'buzzing round' or gliding here," retorted Mr. Pycraft acidly. "Pray, remember, young man, that we are



In spite of all Handforth's efforts, the glider made direct for the thick belt of trees. A crash seemed inevitable!

not in Germany. I regard this whole thing as so serious that I must take drastic and immediate steps. Have you had any official permission to use this—this deathtrap?"

"We didn't think it was necessary, sir," growled Parkington.

"Oh, didn't you?" said Mr. Pycraft. "Very well! You will all come with me at once to the headmaster's house. Early as the hour is, I feel it my duty to report you to him without a minute's delay. Come!"

The Carlton Gang, fuming, was compelled to go. Never in his life before had Mr. Horace Pycraft been so near to assault and battery.

CHAPTER 3.

Handy the Pioneer!

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH gave an excited yell.

"I knew it!" he ejaculated. "Look Parkington's lot! Didn't I tell you that they were up to something?"

"They seem to have struck a snag," grinned McClure.

A crowd of the Old-Timers were up and about. It was after six, and they were in flannels. Cricket practice was their objective. Now they beheld the sight of the Red-Hots being marched across Little Sid

from the direction of the meadows—and Mr. Horace Pycraft was leading them. The Old-Timers very wisely dodged out of sight. They saw their rivals marshalled into Inner Court, and after that they vanished.

"Pieface is taking them to the Head!" said Reggie Pitt, in wonder. "What the dickens have they been up to?"

"Must be something over in the meadows," said Travers. "That's where they came from, anyhow. Wouldn't it be profitable to have a look? By Samson! What's that I see over there?"

They ran towards the hedge and broke through.

"An aeroplane!" yelled Handforth excitedly.

"No it isn't—it's a glider!" said Harry Gresham. "My only sainted aunt! Now we can understand! Those Red-Hots must have built this glider in the barn! The cat's out of the bag, you chaps!"

"And before they could start operations, Pieface comes along and kyboshes them!" said Travers sadly. "I say, what hard luck! Did you ever know anybody like Pieface? Always butting in when he isn't wanted!"

"Rats!" said Handforth. "Pieface has done us a good turn this morning! He's carted those Carlton idiots off, and we can bag the glider! So this is why they got up so jolly early? By George! Let's have some fun!"

They ran across the meadows, and their admiration was considerable when they stood round the glider, examining it. This craft was a corker.

"Why didn't we think of something like this?" asked Handforth breathlessly. "I've often wanted to glide! By George! What about a go?"

He climbed into the little seat in the nose. There was no actual cockpit—no body at all. Just a sturdy runner for landing purposes, with the pilot's seat below the leading edge of the main 'plane. Handforth gripped the controls lovingly. The breeze was blowing straight into his face, disturbing his unruly hair.

"There seems to be some sort of mechanism," remarked Potts.

He took hold of a lever near the rear of the machine. It wasn't fixed to the machine, but was part and parcel of a heavy wooden contrivance which was clamped to the ground. The lever moved, and suddenly it gave a violent jerk in the schoolboy baronet's hand.

Twang!

There was a loud noise, not unlike the sudden release of rubber. Sir Jimmy gasped, and Handforth let out a wild howl. Three other juniors dropped flat on the ground, more by instinct than anything else. For the glider, with a leap like a huge Jack-in-the-box, had sprung into the air. In short, Jimmy Potts had unwittingly released the catapult!

"Help!" hooted Handforth desperately. "Hi! Let me down!"

It had all happened so suddenly that the juniors could only stare in blank consternation. And Edward Oswald Handforth, as usual, experienced "fools' luck."

Without knowing a thing about gliding, he nevertheless operated the elevator control in the right way. The glider, instead of diving steeply to the ground—as it might well have done—soared aloft with extraordinary grace, getting higher and higher as the breeze lifted her.

"My only hat!" gurgled Church. "How did it happen? Who did it?"

"I pulled this lever!" gasped Potts. "I didn't know—"

"Well, it's all right," interrupted Travers, grinning. "Handy said he wanted a flight—and he's getting one. By the look of it that glider is a success. Upon my Samson! Why didn't I get into that driving seat instead of Handy?"

"I wish you had!" groaned Mac. "Handy's an awful duffer. He's bound to come a cropper within a minute or two! He'll pull the wrong lever, or something. If he doesn't break his neck I shall be surprised!"

But Handforth, at the moment, was perfectly safe. Controlling a glider, he found, was far simpler and easier than he had ever dreamed of. Indeed, it is this supreme ease of control which makes gliding such a safe and popular sport. A well-constructed, well-balanced machine virtually controls itself.

But Handforth—who, it must be admitted, had got the "wind up"—was not content to let his craft control itself. His one idea was to get to the ground, and after he had pulled at the levers, he pushed at them. The dainty aircraft answered obediently. First she went round in a graceful sweeping curve to the right; then she levelled up, and went off to the left.

"Hi! Don't fool about!" shouted Church, running across the meadow. "Bring her down, Handy!"

"I can't!" came a frantic yell from Handforth, a hundred feet above.

The remarkable thing was that he had gained height instead of losing it. But now he was no longer in the upward air current which had so far served him. The machine dipped slightly, and glided earthwards.

"I knew it!" groaned Church, closing his eyes. "He's going straight for the shrubbery!"

It was true. In spite of all Handforth's efforts, the glider was making direct for the thick belt of trees near the school. It seemed that nothing could obviate a crash. Then, when he was only twenty feet away from the tree tops, the glider suddenly and dramatically soared.

Handforth gasped. Up she went, higher and higher, soaring magnificently. Handforth didn't know it, but another powerful upward air current had gripped the machine, and was carrying it to an astounding height. Already Handforth was three or four hundred feet up and still rising!



Handforth hurtled down the chimney and landed in the fireplace amid a cloud of soot. "That's a funny way of paying us a visit!" observed Doris Berkeley.

CHAPTER 4.

A Shock for the Red-Hats!

DR. MORRISON NICHOLLS, the headmaster of St. Frank's, came downstairs with an impatient step. If there was one thing he disliked more than another, it was to be hurried over his morning toilet. He was an early riser, but he liked to take his time.

"Well, Mr. Pycraft, what is it?" he asked coldly.

Mr. Pycraft had sent a frantic message up, insisting that the Head should come at once. It was, apparently, a matter of vital importance.

"These boys, sir," said Mr. Pycraft breathlessly. "I felt it my duty to bring them straight to you. Indeed, but for my timely intervention, I have not the slightest doubt that several of them would now have been dead."

"In that case, Mr. Pycraft, it was just as well that you came," said Dr. Nicholls gravely. "What is it that these boys were about to do that was so dangerous?"

The Carlton Gang were in the Head's hall, and they were becoming more and more impatient. Parkington attempted to speak, but Mr. Pycraft cut him short.

"Silence!" he commanded. "Nothing you can say, Parkington, will minimise the colossal

folly of your intended experiment. These boys, sir, have had the singular audacity to build a glider—an engineless aeroplane—on the school premises. What is more, they were in the act of—"

"We didn't mean any harm, sir!" broke in Parkington, turning to the Head. "It's a proper glider—not a home-made affair. It's built according to all the correct principles, and with the right materials. We weren't going to take any risks."

"Let Mr. Pycraft finish, Parkington," said the Head sternly.

"Yes, sir."

"As I was saying, sir, I found these boys in the act of commencing a flight," said Mr. Pycraft. "Incredible as it may seem, they were foolish enough—"

"One moment, Mr. Pycraft," interrupted the Head. "I would like to know if you saw this glider yourself."

"I did, sir."

"Is it a conventional type of machine?"

"As far as I know, it is, sir," replied Mr. Pycraft. "I do not know much about gliders, but I do know that all such contraptions are hideously dangerous death-traps."

"On the contrary, Mr. Pycraft, a well-built glider is a perfectly safe craft," said Dr. Nicholls tartly. "If this machine is well constructed and of the conventional type, I see no reason why these boys should not experi-

ment with it—providing, of course, they do not take any unnecessary risks by foolishly gliding near trees or buildings. I think it would be as well if I went out at once and inspected this machine. In that way the matter can be quickly settled.”

Mr. Pycraft had nothing to say. All the wind was taken out of his sails. He had fully anticipated that the Head would share his own views, and that the glider would be immediately confiscated, if not destroyed.

They all went outside, Dr. Nicholls leading the way. Shouts could be heard in the distance, and a number of running figures were just discernible beyond an angle of the Ancient House wall.

“It’s all right, you chaps,” came a mysterious voice from somewhere above. “I’ve got the hang of it now. By George! I’d like to know how the dickens you get these things down, though.”

Dr. Nicholls looked round, bewildered.

“Who is that speaking?” he asked sharply.

“Look, sir!” yelled Parkington. “Handforth! Oh, my hat! Those bounders have pinched our glider. This is what comes of Pieface butting in—I—I mean—Dished again! Those Old-Timers whack us every time!”

“Good Heavens!” panted Mr. Pycraft, staring upwards.

He was amazed. Fully five hundred feet up, K.K.’s glider was soaring gracefully over the top of the school.

“And this is the—er—contraption you referred to, Mr. Pycraft?” asked the Head tartly. “As far as I can see, it is a perfectly sound glider, and its very performance proves that it is well constructed. Boys, you may dismiss.”

“Thank you, sir!” yelled the Red-Hots.

They went dashing off, and their expressions were frantic.

“Thank goodness old Pycraft has been squashed—but goodness only knows what’s going to happen to our glider!” said K.K., as he ran. “Handy’s in it—and that means that anything might happen.”

CHAPTER 5.

Handforth Makes an Early Call!

HANDFORTH was far too busy to see the running juniors on the ground below. Over a dozen Old-Timers and all the members of the Carlton Gang were dashing along, keeping pace with the glider. The one thought in their minds was—where would Handy come down?

Practically any other fellow could be relied upon to make a good landing. But Handforth was famous for doing the wrong thing, and if there was one fellow in the whole of St. Frank’s who could kill himself on a stunt like this, that fellow was Edward Oswald Handforth.

The glider was certainly efficient. The keen morning breeze was keeping it well

aloft, and Handforth, doing practically nothing, found that the ground was getting farther and farther away.

His feelings were mixed. He had a sense of keen, joyous exhilaration. There was something in this gliding which stirred his blood and which made his eyes sparkle. It was a truly marvellous sensation. But all this was somewhat marred by the doubts which kept obtruding themselves. Gliding was a tophole sport—but what about coming down? When Handforth looked past his legs, and saw the tree tops far beneath him, he felt positively nervous. He was now well clear of the school, with the open fields below him.

“Handy!” came a voice from somewhere below—a voice which he dimly recognised as Parkington’s. “Can you hear me?”

“Yes!” gasped Handforth. “Here, I say! What do I do? How do I get this thing down?”

“You’re all right now,” came Parkington’s voice. “Push that left-hand lever gently away from you. Don’t jerk it, or you’ll crash. Go easy.”

In the distance Handforth caught sight of the green fairway of the St. Frank’s Golf Links. Right beneath him was a ploughed field, with the lane bordering one side of it. There were trees and hedges there.

“All right!” he sang out. “I’ll make for the links.”

He tried the levers again, and found that his feet did things, too. He pressed on one foot, and the glider suddenly banked round and went into a giddy half-turn. Handforth’s heart seemed to jump a foot. He had a sickening feeling that he was going to topple off the machine. He released the pressure, and the glider immediately assumed a level keel again.

“My only sainted aunt!” gurgled Handforth.

His manœuvre had borne fruit—but not the sort he expected. His direction was completely altered. Instead of being wafted on towards the golf links, he was now descending right on the top of the Moor View School for Girls!

A series of yells sounded. For one moment the juniors believed that the glider was going to clear the top of the Moor View roof and land on the tennis courts beyond. Fortunately, the roof was low just here. It was the old original building—that part of the school which had once been a private house.

Thud!

The shock was only slight, but it was enough. The nose of the glider—that is, the extreme forward end of the runner—jabbed against the great ornamental Elizabethan chimney which was one of the architectural beauties of the Moor View School. The effect was startling.

Handforth, being perched right on the end of the runner, tipped forward head first. He shot down the chimney as cleanly and as neatly as though he had deliberately planned the whole thing. The glider itself, gently

(Continued on page 13.)

Exciting Events Happen At Bangaloola This Week!



The

COWBOY KID & CO.

Unwelcome Visitors!

"WHEN'S this heat wave going to end, Kiki?" asked King Loopy Lane, the Cowboy Kid. Kiki, giving the cord of a punka fan a vicious tug, answered with a grin.

"One month, two month, t'ree month—den de rainy season. Rainy all de day long foh one month, two month, t'ree month."

He snapped his fingers as he counted, and Loopy groaned.

"A poor sort of comforter you are," he observed. "I like a bit of sun, but this sort of thing gets on my nerves. There hasn't been a soul in the city square for over a week."

Kiki, the black boy who acted as interpreter between King Loopy and the black people who had made the Cowboy Kid King of Bangaloola, laughed.

"Mighty gety sunny stroke," he explained.

Loopy looked down at the city square. It was baked iron hard. Heat radiated from it in gas-like waves in the shimmering sun. The thatched huts and bungalows which surrounded it were tinder dry. Even the plumed heads of the palms which towered

Adventure No. 7:

TRICKING THE SLAVE-TRADERS!

Loopy's only a kid, but he's more than a match for the scoundrelly slavers!

above the thatched roofs drooped. Great butterflies fluttered in an airy dance. Mackaws screamed and chattered in the shade. The Cowboy Kid mopped his forehead, then stroked the soft head of the tiger which lay stretched at his feet.

"Even Sheba can't stand it," he muttered. "If only it would rain. Nothing ever happens in this place—nothing."

He spoke too soon, for at that very moment the figure of a native runner raced into the empty square. He came loping along with arms swinging and head thrown back. Foam flecked his lips; Loopy saw him sway, but he steadied himself and came on again until, reaching the steps which led up to the veranda of the royal bungalow, he stopped and threw his lean arms high above his head.

"Achabar! Mouraba. Hon inki belatah!" he shouted in a voice of strange penetrating quality.

His words had reached the ears of the bungalow dwellers, and they came pouring out into the square now, shouting as if they were mad. King Loopy saw Kiki's face

change colour, heard Kiki talk to the runner, and he knew that Kiki was alarmed. There was something wrong.

"What's up, Kiki?" he asked. "Who's this chap? What's he want?"

Kiki's teeth chattered so violently when he attempted to speak that the words would not readily come, but at last he blurted out:

"Quereto, whitey man, come in big sheep—shootey muchee Bangaloola warriors. Marchey on beeg city—take plenty slavey back to sheep. Keel and burn and rob. Quereto muchee bad man. Kiki 'member when he come oncey 'fore plenty longey timey go."

King Loopy forgot all about the heat. Swinging his feet to the floor, he seized his beloved stetson, looped his lasso on the hook of his belt, thrust his revolvers into their holsters and picked up his heavy stock whip.

"You mean a skunk of a dago pirate has come blackbirding, don't you, Kiki?" he cried.

"Samey thing." Kiki's eyes were rolling. "Quereto takey sheep full slavey, killey rest

"Kill them, will he? In that case, Kiki, we may have to kill him. How far is this dago pirate away from the city?"

"'Bout two miles," answered the black boy.

The square was crowded by this time, the blacks herding together like a flock of frightened sheep. The heat was forgotten. Their voices shrilled in terror as they crowded towards the royal bungalow, stretching out their arms and shouting to their king.

Then, from somewhere not far away, came echoing a pop, pop, pop, pop! which made Loopy frown.

"That's a machine gun," he muttered. "I hope the dago pirate and his rascally crew aren't mowing down my subjects."

As one man the crowd flopped down upon their knees and bowed their heads, pouring dust upon their hair and howling.

"Kiki," said Loopy, "tell them it will be all right—say their king won't allow them to be taken away as slaves."

Kiki, screaming at the full stretch of his lungs, managed to make his piping voice heard, and a low murmur of cheering spread among the people.

"Well, I've said I'm going to save them, Kiki," cried Loopy with a grin, "but I don't know how I'm going to keep my promise."

Half an hour later shots were fired just outside the city square. Then the honk of a motor horn echoed loudly, and a moment later a fast car sped into the open space. It contained four men, each of whom was armed with a rifle. Dark bearded faces showed beneath the green-lined brims of their sun helmets. The natives, who had never seen a motor-car before, scattered in panic.

King Loopy, who had dashed inside the bungalow the moment the car appeared, saw the four men jump out of it; he saw one of them—their leader and a giant of a man, Quereto, he supposed—point to the royal bungalow.

"There's the palace," he cried, "if you can call such a dog kennel a palace. We'll find King Wangaloola there, and we'll begin on him."

"Kiki," said Loopy as he dodged for cover, "you go and talk to them. Say there is a white king now. Say I'll see 'em, but keep them talking for a little while. There's a job of work I want to do."

Quereto, the slave trader and pirate, mounted the steps and Kiki, shaking violently, went out to meet him and barred the way.

"I think I've seen you before, you swollen headed nigger," he cried. "Where's Wangaloola? Tell the old rascal I want to see him."

Then Kiki, faithful though terrified, told the slaver that Wangaloola was king no longer, and that a white king ruled over Bangaloola.

For a moment Quereto seemed staggered by the news, but, recovering himself, he laughed.

"White or black, what does it matter? You take me to him," he bellowed, showing a revolver, and Kiki, who saw King Loopy emerge from underneath the bungalow with Sheba, the tiger, walking at his heels, caught the wink Loopy shot back at him.

As Kiki led Quereto and the others into the deserted audience chamber, Loopy raced to the motor-car, threw open the bonnet, snapped his petrol-lighter and touched the flame to the carburettor.

Flames roared ten feet high and enveloped the car from end to end, while Loopy raced for the bungalow, took the steps three at a time, dashed into the big room and, cracking his stock whip, caused Quereto and his three companions to turn round.

With an oath Quereto whipped out a revolver. He gasped as he saw the Cowboy Kid. Then his eyes travelled past Loopy to the flaming car. He bellowed angrily.

He aimed his revolver at Loopy's head; but the bullet he fired went crashing through the roof as the Cowboy Kid beat his hand up with a blow of his stock whip. Then, as Loopy whistled, Sheba hurled Quereto clean off his feet and pinned him to the floor.

"Put those revolvers up," shouted Loopy to the others, "and I'll call my tiger off. If not she'll eat him alive."

The bearded rascals blinked as Loopy Lane covered them with the two revolvers he whipped as quick as lightning from his belt. Then they dropped their arms, and Loopy called Sheba to him.

Quereto the slaver rose to his feet, looking scared. He dropped into the chair the Cowboy Kid pointed out to him.

Loopy Makes a Bargain!

"NOW perhaps," said Loopy, crossing his legs as he sat down, and motioning to Sheba, who yawned as she stretched her lovely striped body at his feet, "you'll tell me what you're doing on my island? What those shots meant a little while ago, and why you threatened to shoot me?"

Loopy had seen some tough guys in his time, but never such a rascal as this slit-eyed, cunning and villainous-looking slaver.

"First of all, tell me who you are," snarled Quereto, scowling at the tiger.

"I'm King of Bangaloola," informed Loopy Lane.

"Oh, you are! Well, King of Bangaloola, get this!" Quereto thrust his face nearer to

"What you keep that tiger around for?" he demanded.

"To deal with pirates like you," answered Loopy.

Quereto growled.

"Who set fire to my car?" he cried as he watched the twisted scrap-iron sink into a glowing heap.

"The sun," said Loopy casually, "is hot out there."

"If you hadn't got that tiger with you I'd plug yer," snapped the slaver.

"But I have got her with me, and if you're not careful I'll plug you."

"If you did, my men—and there's over fifty of 'em, fully armed, and a machine-gun crew—would riddle yer."

The Cowboy Kid got up. An idea had

The Cowboy Kid's stock whip disposed of one slaver, while Sheba hurled herself at another and sent him staggering to the ground.



the Cowboy Kid's. "I've got a ship down in the bay. She's gunned, she's manned, she's waitin' for the cargo of blackbirds I'm gonner take aboard her. I shot down a crowd of blacks when I came ashore just to let 'em see I'm boss. I had to rake a village in the forest with machine-gun fire because the birds were beginning to get troublesome. I've got a thousand slaves all roped and ready to march. I'll get the rest of the shipload to-morrow, and then I'll go, and you can keep your precious island."

Quereto grinned and winked at his companions, who grinned and winked back. And the Cowboy Kid knew as plainly as if they had spoken that they intended to shoot him and his tiger and Kiki before they left, so that they should not live to tell tales.

Quereto glared at Sheba.

telegraphed itself to his brain. Still covering the slavers, he bawled for Kiki, and the black boy crept in from the veranda.

"Kiki," said Loopy, "fetch me my crown." Then, as the black boy darted away, the Cowboy Kid began to bargain with his ugly-looking visitors. "Look here," he cried, "you chaps only go blackbirding because you can make a lotta money out of selling the slaves. Am I right?"

Quereto grinned.

"We're not in the game for the benefit of our health," he shot back.

"All right," said King Loopy, taking the crown which Kiki brought to him and showing it to the slavers. "Now listen. See this crown?"

The slavers saw it right enough, and their eyes widened in wonder. It was a crown

made of beaten gold shaped like a viking's helmet. Two great ivory tusks in jewelled settings branched out from the sides of it, and jewels set in the gold flashed and sparkled blindingly.

"It's worth thousands and thousands!" cried Quereto.

"It's genuine. The stones are real. The gold is a third of an inch thick," said Loopy. "You feel the weight of it."

Quereto seized the crown, weighed it in his hands, passed it to the other slavers, then took it back again. His eyes gleamed murderously as he looked at King Loopy—but there was still the tiger.

"What about the crown?" he asked.

"You say you've taken a thousand black men as slaves?"

"Sure thing! They'll be marched to the beach and taken aboard my ship in the morning. When I've got a full cargo, I'm going."

"Why not let me buy them back from you?" suggested the Cowboy Kid.

Quereto laughed derisively.

"What! Buy them back with this crown? Not likely! What's to prevent me stealing it and taking the slaves as well? What's to prevent my men from riddling you and your tiger with bullets, eh?"

Kiki shot a terrified glance at the Cowboy Kid. Loopy Lane, however, was not scared.

"Only this," drawled the Cowboy Kid, putting his shooters back in their holsters and beginning to play with his stock whip. "I happen to know of a treasure on this island which is worth a hundred cargoes of slaves. Look at that crown; it's worth £100,000—perhaps twice as much; but it's nothing compared with the treasure I know of; and if you let my black men go and leave the island in peace, you shall have the whole lot. What do you say to that?"

Seeing that Loopy Lane was at their mercy now, Quereto levelled his revolver at the boy's head.

"What's to prevent me blowing your brains out now?" he snarled.

"The treasure," answered the Cowboy Kid. "You shoot me and you'll never know where it is. But free the slaves and I'll take you to it. You won't have to do another day's work in all your life."

Quereto dropped his revolver arm.

"Well, you show me the treasure and we'll make a bargain," he growled, "but I've got to see it first."

Suddenly he fired—at the spot where Sheba had lain a second before. But King Loopy had whistled softly, and the tiger had slid away. Quereto's bullet hit the boards. The next moment his revolver was flying in the air and he was dancing in agony, nursing his almost broken wrist, which the Cowboy Kid had slammed heavily with his whip.

"I'll show you the treasure, but you've got to let my tiger alone," said Loopy. "And there's another thing." The Kid himself began to make terms. "I've got to see your fifty men, and your machine-gun

crew, and make sure that you've taken a thousand slaves. I don't move until I do."

Quereto's cruel eyes narrowed cunningly.

"Come and see them, then," he cried.

"And it's a bargain. You produce the treasure and I'll let the slaves go." He hugged the jewelled crown tightly to his white linen jacket. "I suppose I can keep this, can't I?" he asked.

King Loopy waved his hand.

"Do what you like with it," he cried.

"After all, it's part of the treasure."

"Then come on," said the slaver, making for the steps.

The Cowboy Kid followed, with the three slavers closing in on him. Beside him stalked Kiki, and the black boy was shaking like a jelly. Sheba had disappeared.

"Quereto him killer—nasty man!" whispered Kiki. "Keeng, whereum treasure?"

The Cowboy Kid lowered his lips to Kiki's ear.

"Kiki, there isn't any. It's just a bit of bluff," he cried. "But I'm going to beat old Quereto with it—just you wait and see!"

Beating the Blackbirders!

QUERETO soon proved that he had not lied. When the Cowboy Kid saw the wretched black men squatting on the ground without any shelter from the sun, their necks and wrists roped, or else linked together with wooden slave-forks, he shivered. Quereto said he had taken a thousand, but there must have been nearly double that number scattered on the side of the hill. At a little distance away a machine-gun crew sat on the ground, their gun mounted and pointing at the blacks. Farther away were two groups of men, armed with rifles, resting under the palms.

"Well," sneered Quereto as he pointed to the broken-spirited prisoners, who were staring helplessly at their king, "are you satisfied?"

"Yes," said Loopy.

"When, then"—Quereto stuck his bearded face almost into the Kid's—"do we march to find the treasure?"

"Soon as you like," said Loopy.

"In the morning, then. But where is it to be found?"

"Up in the mountains," said the Cowboy Kid. "It's a long trail from here."

They set out in the morning. Quereto, his three companions—all armed—the Cowboy Kid and Kiki, who acted as guide.

When they had marched for four hours and sat down to rest, Loopy whistled. In answer to the call Sheba, who had stalked them all the way, came bounding out of the forest.

All day they marched, and at night they rested. In the darkness Loopy crept among the slavers and, removing every cartridge from their revolvers, replaced them with some of his blanks, the slavers luckily being armed with Smith and Wesson service weapons of the same pattern and bore as his own.

In the morning, after eating, they marched on again. On and on, up and up, climbing, climbing, until the great mountain peak known at Fatma rose sheer above them.

At last Quereto halted suspiciously.

"What's the game? Where's the treasure cave?" he shouted. "Is this a trick?"

"Impatient, aren't you?" said Loopy, pointing to a dark hole in the rock. "We're here. The treasure's in there. Go in——"

Quereto laughed.

"You don't catch me with that trick," he jeered. "You go in—and we'll follow."

"All right. Lend me your torch," said Loopy.

Quereto handed him an electric torch and, signing to Kiki, Loopy ducked his head and vanished inside the cave.

"This is a mighty cave, Kiki!" he cried.

"Look how it goes down, and there's a waterfall there——"

A shot rang out, followed by another. Quereto and his companions dashed into the cave, each with revolver levelled.

"Now!" cried the slaver triumphantly. "I've killed your cursed tiger, and I'll kill you if you don't show me that treasure mighty quick!"

Loopy laughed. His stock whip lashed out. Quereto's revolver crashed deafeningly. The other slavers fired, too. But the Cowboy Kid stood up on his feet, and it was they who

dropped, levelled by his stinging whip. Then Sheba bounded into the cave, unharmed. Pouncing on the terrified slaver, she pinned him down for the second time. It was the Kid who dictated terms.

"You take out your fountain pen and write a letter to the officer in charge of your armed crew and order him to release the slaves and steam the ship away, or I'll tip you and your blackguardly pals down over the waterfall!" he cried.

Quereto howled and cursed and begged and grovelled until the tiger dug her claws half an inch in him. Then he wrote and signed the letter. It took Kiki and the Cowboy Kid three hours to block up the mouth of the cave with huge boulders.

"We'll come up and let you out when the ship steams away," Loopy promised.

By forced marching, he and Kiki reached the slave camp towards dusk the following day. King Loopy marched into camp, with the tiger beside him, flourishing Quereto's letter. And he laughed for sheer joy, for within half an hour he knew all the black slaves would be free!

THE END.

(The Cowboy Kid comes up against the slavers once more next week. Plenty of thrills in this corking yarn, chums.)

GLIDER!

(Continued from page 8.)

falling back, sprawled across the roof and suffered no damage at all.

Handforth found himself shooting down the old-fashioned chimney. Fortunately, it was just large enough to allow him to pass down—and just small enough to break his headlong fall. He felt himself scraping against the sides of the chimney, and it was only by luck that he escaped being jammed half way down. Soot fell in cascades.

He landed in the huge, old-fashioned grate in the big dining-hall. The air was filled with feminine screams. Incidentally, it was also filled with soot. Billowing clouds, bursting out from the fireplace, had heralded Handforth's approach. Irene Manners, Doris Berkeley, and the other Moor View girls, were just on the point of sitting down to an early cup of tea, prior to going out for some tennis practice.

Shrieks arose on all sides, and the girls dashed for safety. Then something rolled out on to the floor, the clouds of soot cleared, and something human sat up.

"Grooooooooooh!" came a choking gurgle.

"Oh, my goodness!" murmured Irene. "I'd know that voice in a thousand! It's Ted Handforth!"

"Well, he's thought of a funny way of

paying an early call!" cried Doris Berkeley indignantly.

"I say!" cried Marjorie Temple. "There are crowds of chaps outside, and some of them are running to the window."

Church and McClure and the rest did not stand upon ceremony. They tumbled through the open windows, dashed at Handforth, and dragged him to his feet.

"Are you hurt, old man?" asked Mac anxiously.

Handforth snorted.

"Idiot!" he said thickly. "It takes more than Parkington's fatheaded glider to hurt me. Didn't I tell you I'd bring the thing down safely?"

FORTUNATELY, Handforth's dramatic landing—and, incidentally, his narrow escape—was hushed up. The girls sportingly offered to clear up the mess, and the juniors succeeded in getting the glider off the roof without disturbing anybody. It was still very early, and Miss Bond and the other mistresses were not yet up. On the whole, the affair had ended luckily.

But Handforth, in spite of his bluster, had had quite enough of gliders to last him for some time!

THE END.

(Another rollicking yarn featuring the cheery Chums of St. Frank's next Wednesday.)



CHAPTER 1.

The Message from Purfleet!

TING-ting—Ting-ting!

"See who it is, Nipper," said Nelson Lee with a sigh.

It was just 10 p.m., and the famous detective was reclining in the easiest chair in his study. The twilight of the summer's evening still lingered, and through the open windows came the hum of traffic.

Nipper impatiently went to the telephone and unhooked the receiver. Nelson Lee had

had a hard day, and only a minute earlier Nipper had been urging him to go to bed.

"Hallo!" he snapped.

"Is Lee about anywhere?" asked a voice.

"No!" retorted Nipper with emphasis.

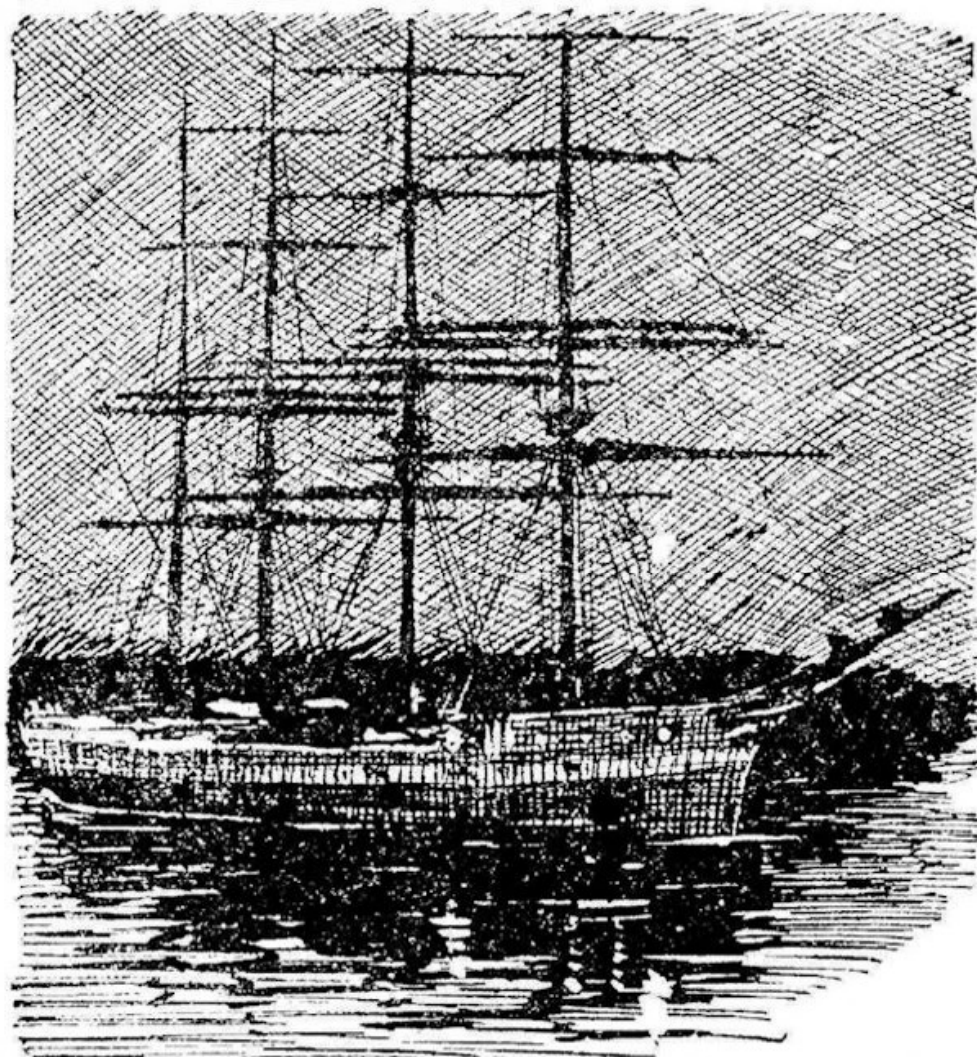
"Sorry, but Mr Lee can't—"

"What's biting you, my son?" broke in the voice. "Why make your feeble excuses to me? If your respected gov'nor is tired, say so."

"Sorry," said Nipper in a different tone. "I didn't recognise your voice at first, Mr. Lennard. But if you're going to drag the gov'nor out somewhere I shan't like you any more."

A chuckle came from the other end, and Nipper could imagine the burly Chief Detective-inspector Lennard lolling back at his desk, at Scotland Yard, with the inevitable pipe sticking out of his mouth.

And His Boy Assistants!



By
S. B. HALSTEAD.

Prisoners on a ship bound for South America—for Nelson Lee and Nipper & Co. the threshold of a new life, fraught with peril, packed with thrilling adventure!

"Friend Lennard, is it, Nipper?" murmured Lee, who had been listening with some amusement. "If he wants to come round for a chat, tell him that he's welcome."

"The guv'nor's here, if you want him," growled Nipper into the telephone. "It's been blazing hot to-day, and he's been out since five o'clock this morning. He's dead tired and nearly asleep in his chair, but he says you're quite welcome to come round if you want a chat."

This time there was a loud laugh.

"Splendid!" chuckled the chief inspector's voice. "A brilliant piece of strategy, young man! Not only have you given me the message, but you have conveyed, with refreshing frankness, the hint that I'm not really wanted. Unfortunately this is a serious matter. I don't want to come round for a chat, and if you're feeling in an obliging mood, I should like you to bring your guv'nor to the 'phone."

"Oh, all right!" growled Nipper. "Wants to speak to you personally, guv'nor," he added, passing the instrument across.

"Sorry to butt in, Lee, but this affair is really urgent," said Lennard.

"Don't apologise—and don't take any notice of Nipper's nonsense," said Nelson Lee. "If I'm really wanted for something important, I'm your man."

"The fact is, I don't know whether it's important or not—but it looks infernally queer," replied Lennard mysteriously. "I'm 'phoning from a public telephone box near

Purfleet. There's something funny happened down here. I'm not saying that I'm stumped, but I'd certainly like your help. I'm whacked at the moment."

"A sorry admission, Lennard," said Nelson Lee ad-

monishingly. "I'll come if you really want me; but what is the nature of this 'funny' happening?"

"It concerns an oil-tanker that's anchored in the river here," replied Lennard. "Yesterday her skipper mysteriously vanished, and his wife informed the police. I don't want to go into any details over the 'phone, but to-day the first officer and the chief engineer have disappeared, too. The whole ship is in a panic. There's talk of supernatural influence, and all that rubbish. They say the ship is haunted. Half the crew is on the point of deserting. But I'm pretty certain that there's a natural explanation, although I can't get hold of a clue yet. If you could come along——"

"To-night?"

"The sooner the better."

"I'll come at once, then," said Lee, to Nipper's disgust. "Where is this ship?"

"She's lying out in the river, but I'll meet you on the road," replied Lennard. "You'll come by car, I suppose? I'll be on the lookout, and I shall easily spot you. Go straight through Purfleet until you're on the quiet road beyond. If I'm not there, I'll have one of my men waiting."

NIPPER fetched the Rolls-Royce Special, and he found Lee waiting at the kerb. The detective slipped into the driving-seat.

"Well, you can get to bed, young 'un," he said. "Don't wait up——"

"Any more jokes, guv'nor?" interrupted Nipper, settling himself in the near-side seat. "I've already told Fenton and the other cubs that we're going out and that we might not be back until the milkman comes."

"Perhaps you'd better come with me, then," said Lee, as he drove off. "I dare say I shall need you. You can stand by to give me a shake every time I fall asleep."

Nipper was relieved. He had more than half-expected that Lee would pitch him neck and crop out of the car. Apparently the great detective did not think that their trip would be a long one. But Chief-inspector Lennard was an old friend, and Nelson Lee liked to oblige him whenever possible.

Lennard had not given many details regarding the case, but what he had said was intriguing. Following his usual principle, however, Lee thrust the matter completely out of his mind. There was nothing to be gained by making idle conjectures.

The village of Purfleet was quiet when the Rolls glided through some time later. Lee kept a sharp look-out on the road beyond. On the right lay the widening river, peaceful and calm. Now and again the hoot of a tug would be heard, and occasionally the riding lights of a ship would glimpse into view.

It was a marshy district, with long stretches of flat, sparsely inhabited ground. Here and there arose great petroleum reservoirs, dotted about in clumps. It was not until Lee's car had driven well beyond these, and was practically in the open country, that he spotted a point of light waving ahead.

"Here's our man, guv'nor," said Nipper.

As they drew nearer they beheld a stumpy, square-shouldered figure by the side of the road. The man was dressed in a soiled double-breasted jacket, and a peaked cap was set at an angle over his weather-beaten face.

"'Old 'ard, mister!" he said as the car pulled up. "Do you 'appen to be Mr. Lee?"

"I do," replied the detective.

"Glad to 'ear it, mister," said the sailor. "Mr. Lennard asked me to wait for you 'ere. Something else 'as 'appened. Them p'lice-men have 'ad to go aboard. Second engineer is missin' now!"

"That's bad," said Lee, getting out of the car.

He had driven the Rolls on to the grass at the side of the road, and he now switched off the headlights. Nipper jumped out, and they went with the sailor along the gloomy road.

Lee was the first to notice a number of dim figures which seemed to materialise out of the surrounding gloom. He halted sharply, and his hand instinctively went towards his revolver.

"Wait!" he snapped. "There's something—"

"Get 'em, boys!" ejaculated the sailor hoarsely.

The dim figures sprang. One of the men whirled a heavy weapon aloft—probably a belaying-pin. It crashed upon Nelson Lee's head, and the detective crumpled up without a sound.

"Guv'nor!" gasped Nipper. "You brute! You—"

Crash!

One of the other men dealt with Nipper as drastically as Nelson Lee had been dealt with. Nipper toppled over.

"Good work!" said the man in the peaked cap. "Sling 'em aboard as quick as you can. Get 'em off the road. It's quiet now, but mebbe some blamed motorist'll come along just when 'e's not wanted. Step lively, you swabs!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" muttered the men.

Swiftly Lee and Nipper were lifted and carried away. A man in a smartly-cut lounge suit and a felt hat joined the ship's officer.

"Well done, Cragg," he said softly.

"There was nothin' to it, mister," said the other. "Them blighters didn't stand a chance. What about this 'ere car?"

"You get back to your ship—I'll take charge of the car," said the smartly-dressed man. "Tell the skipper that everything is going well, and that he'll have the rest of his crew before the end of another hour."

THE man named Cragg walked with a rolling gait along the road. He took a little lane which led at right-angles from the road, and presently he came out upon the river front. It was a very deserted spot. Marshes lay on either hand, and in front the river was dark and mysterious. The swirl of the tide made a whispering murmur as it washed the muddy banks.

A boat was gliding out from the shore towards a squat, ungainly-looking sailing-vessel which lay at anchor some distance out. She was a four-masted brig—a typical wind-jammer of the type which is fast dying out. Her masts and spars stood out clearly against the starlit summer sky. The breeze was humming musically through her rigging. Only one or two lights showed.

"Rum business," muttered the man named Cragg, frowning.

He bit a hunk of tobacco from a black block and stowed it in the side of his mouth. Then, climbing into a small boat, he rowed out to the brig. He arrived some little time after the first boat.

As he drifted round the stern he could see the name of the vessel painted there—Vulture. A fitting name for this disreputable old sailing-ship, the officers of which were engaged upon such shady work.

Mr. Cragg made his boat fast, climbed up the short ladder, and swung himself aboard. He lumbered for'ard, and peered down the fore-castle stairs. A dim light came from a lantern, and there were some shadowy figures in view.

"Well?" asked Cragg gruffly.

"We've roped 'em up, sir, although it ain't necessary," came a rough voice. "They're out—both of 'em. One of 'em got a cracked skull, I b'lieve."

"'E'd better not 'ave!" retorted Mr. Cragg. "We don't want any blamed in-

valids aboard this ship. I'd best come down an' 'ave a look."

He descended the ladder, and went across to the bunk where Nelson Lee and Nipper were both lying, bound hand and foot. The mate of the Vulture made a swift examination—and he was something of an expert at this kind of thing.

"No cracked 'eads' ere," he commented at length. "All the same, I reckon they won't wake up in a 'urry! Good! When I tell the Old Man he'll laugh fit to bust. Boys, we'll 'ave a swell crew this trip."

CHAPTER 2.

A Clean Sweep!

THAT a very clever criminal was at work here was obvious. For not only had he duplicated Chief Detective-inspector Lennard's voice so perfectly that even Nelson Lee was deceived, but he now had the audacity to duplicate Lee's own.

In the privacy of a public 'phone box he gave Nelson Lee's number. Within a minute Fenton answered. The man in the smart lounge suit was cool and calm; he knew precisely what he was doing.

"Hallo!" he called briskly. "Who's that?"

"Fenton, sir," came the reply. "Anything wrong, Chief?"

The stranger smiled. His vocal effort was again passing muster.

"Look here, Fenton, this case has taken an ugly turn," he said in Nelson Lee's crisp tones. "I can't give you any details, but I want you at once."

"Right, sir," said Fenton. "Anybody else?"

"Yes—all of you."

"Some of them are in bed——"

"Never mind that," broke in the stranger. "Get them out, and bring them along here as quickly as you can. You've got a car handy, haven't you?"

"There's Browne's Hornet, sir."

"That'll do."

"Five of us in there will be a squash, but we'll manage," said Fenton. "Where do we come to, Chief——"

"Five!" broke in the voice that sounded like Lee's. "I want every member of the Academy on this job——"

"Well, you've got Nipper with you, sir, and there are only five more of us," replied Fenton in some surprise. "You know that young Willy Handforth and those other two youngsters went back to St. Frank's this week."

"That's right—that's right," broke in the stranger. "I'm worried, Fenton—very worried. The fact is, Nipper has vanished. What you've got to do is to come straight out to Purfleet. Take the East End road, drive through West Ham, Barking, and then on to Rainham, and through Wennington to Purfleet. Drive straight through Purfleet towards West Thurrock. Got that?"

"Yes, sir."

"Nipper has disappeared somewhere on the West Thurrock Marsh, and we've got to make a systematic search," continued the stranger glibly. "And as this case is extremely vital, don't leave any message saying where you are going—and don't tell anybody, either. You'll understand the importance of this when I see you."

"Very good, sir," said Fenton. "We'll start at once."

"I know I can rely upon you, Fenton," came Lee's voice. "Be on the look out for me somewhere beyond Purfleet. Good-bye."

The stranger smiled to himself as he left the telephone box. He lit a cigarette and leisurely climbed into Nelson Lee's Rolls-Royce Special.

"Well, that's that," he murmured. "Nothing like making a clean sweep."

EDGAR FENTON soon hustled out the other cubs

"Something special," he said crisply. "It must be, or the Chief wouldn't want the whole crowd of us to go."

The "crowd" was not a very big one nowadays. So many fellows had gone back to St. Frank's that the personnel of the detective academy had dwindled until it consisted of six members only—Nipper, Watson, Tregellis-West, Browne, Stevens and Fenton. The five cubs now made ready for immediate departure.

Fenton, as the senior cub, was in charge. Not a suspicion had entered his head. That voice over the wires had imitated Nelson Lee's voice perfectly. The unknown criminal was a clever man.

Browne soon had his Wolseley Hornet ready, and although it was a tight fit, the five cubs squeezed in. Then they drove out rapidly through the East End, following the directions that had supposedly been given out by Nelson Lee.

Browne had no difficulty in locating Purfleet, and he drove on at a slower speed, taking the West Thurrock road. Presently a gleaming light appeared in the distance—a waving electric torch. In the glare of the headlights the stocky figure of Mr. Cragg, first mate of the Vulture, hove into view.

"Heave-ho, me hearties!" he said boisterously. "You'll be Mr. Lee's young gents, I take it."

"That's right," said Fenton.

"Well, I want the young feller who's called Fenton—him and one other," said Mr. Cragg. "It don't matter which other. Mr. Lee's orders was to look lively."

Fenton and Stevens were quickly out.

"You other young gents are to stay here until you're wanted," said Mr. Cragg. "Best put the car on the side of the road and turn them searchlights off."

He led the way down the road towards the little side lane.

"I hope nothing's happened to Mr. Lee?" asked Fenton anxiously.

"'Appened?" growled the mate with a gruff laugh. "Not it, mister! Mr. Lee's

one o' them— All right!" he added with a sudden change of note.

They had arrived at the corner where the lane branched off towards the river. Shadowy figures had loomed up, and without a sound they sprang forward, their weapons raised.

"Here, what the——" began Fenton in alarm.

Crash! Crash!

Almost simultaneously the blows fell. Being utterly unprepared—absolutely unsuspecting—the two cubs were felled before they could even realise their danger. They dropped limply, badly hurt.

"Stow 'em aboard!" snapped Mr. Cragg. "No! Wait a bit! We'll deal with these other kids first. Only three more—and smaller than these two."

Browne and Watson and Tregellis-West were fetched in exactly the same way; and in exactly the same way they were dealt with.

Ten minutes later the unfortunate five had joined Nelson Lee and Nipper in the brig's fore-castle. It was a clean sweep. Nelson Lee and all his young assistants were prisoners.

IN the skipper's cabin, the stranger in the lounge suit was sitting down at the little table. Facing him was an elderly, heavily-built man with a coarse, reddened, bloated countenance.

"Don't forget, Angel, my friend, that I'm paying you well for this little job," said the stranger grimly. "And don't forget that other little matter, either. The sooner you up anchor and get out of this river, the better. Understand?"

"I'm not hankering after staying here a minute longer than I can help!" snapped Captain Angel. "What about that money, Mr. Smith? The job's done, and we go down on the tide. A bargain's a bargain."

"Here's your money," said the other, producing a bulky pocket-book and taking out a bundle of one-pound currency notes. "There it is—two hundred pounds. Handsome pay, captain. You're making a good thing out of this."

"Am I?" retorted Captain Angel, pouring himself out a drink. "What about the risks? Here, help yourself! Eh? What about the risks, Mr. Smith? Huh! Mr. Smith, eh?"

"It's a good enough name for you," retorted the stranger sharply. "Well, are you going to count this money or not? And don't forget that I'm in a position to make things mighty unpleasant for you. It's more than your liberty's worth to try any tricks."

"Who's suggesting tricks?" muttered the captain surlily.

"When these new hands of yours come round they'll probably try to bribe you, that's all," said Mr. Smith. "Lee is rich; he'll offer you big money to put him ashore. Well, you know what'll happen if you do that. He and those infernal boys go to Monte Video. Understand? And the longer you can take on this trip, the better."

"All right—all right," grunted the other as he counted. "I'm not a fool. I understand what's wanted of me. And, as far as I can see, our business is finished. You'd best get ashore—Mr. Smith."

Mr. Smith rose to his feet.

"I shan't be sorry," he said, giving the dingy, evil-smelling cabin a glance of repugnance. "Now, Captain Angel, I don't need to repeat what I've already said; but these prisoners of yours——"

The skipper hauled himself up.

"Prisoners?" he repeated thickly. "What prisoners? There's no prisoners aboard my ship, darn ye! Them swabs in the fo'c'sle are my new hands. They're members of this ship's crew."

"Of course," said Mr. Smith smoothly. "Pardon my slip of the tongue, captain. Well, I hope you'll get plenty of work out of them."

"It'll be the fust crew o' mine which didn't work, if I don't," retorted the captain promptly. "Work? By the time they see land again they'll either be half dead or as hard as nails!"

MR. SMITH, alias Mr. Bertram Fleming, drove leisurely towards London in Nelson Lee's Rolls-Royce Special. Some little distance behind, one of his men was at the wheel of Browne's Hornet. No traces were to be left in the neighbourhood of Purfleet.

Mr. Fleming was elated.

It had cost him a considerable sum of money to dispose of Nelson Lee and his cubs, but he was quite satisfied that the job was thoroughly done. For three months, at least, he would be certain that the great Gray's Inn Road detective could not hamper his movements. And Mr. Fleming was very anxious that his movements should not be hampered.

Two days ago he had made a daring escape from Wandsworth Prison; but such were his secret arrangements, so astute were his accomplices, that he had successfully eluded all attempts to recapture him.

It wasn't many months since he had startled England by a series of daring bank raids. As "Sir" Bertram Fleming, he had occupied a great mansion in a southern county, and in the old quarry workings beneath his grounds he had organised a motor-bandit headquarters. He had had armoured cars, fast racers, and special stores of petrol, supplies, and even elaborate workshops.

In one swoop, Nelson Lee had brought ruin upon him. The famous detective and his cubs, by masterly work, had unmasked him and had brought about his arrest. Fleming was at liberty again; he was determined to start another campaign at the earliest possible moment. He did not fear that the police would hinder him, but he was certainly afraid of Nelson Lee. Hence his present activity.

By a comparatively simple ruse he had lured Lee and the cubs to this old sailing-vessel—a disreputable brig, with a still more

Like a human cyclone the first mate burst among the cubs and sent them crashing to the deck.



disreputable skipper, which was on the point of sailing for Monte Video with a mixed cargo. She would take many weeks on the voyage. During those weeks Fleming would "clean up," and by the time Nelson Lee got back, he—Fleming—would probably be safely away with his spoils to a distant part of Europe or the United States.

It was rather unfortunate that all his ambitious plans should be ruined by a trivial chance. Driving through the East End, he was held up for a moment or two by a bulky

steam wagon which had lost a wheel. A man stepped on to the car's running-board and peered at the driver.

"Always running across you somewhere, Lee," said a well-known breezy voice. "Spotted your car instantly, and— Why, hallo! What the—"

By the worst of bad luck, the man on the running-board was Chief Detective-inspector Lennard, of Scotland Yard! And Lennard wasn't so slow or incompetent as Fleming fondly imagined.

"Just a minute, my friend," said the Yard man grimly. "Isn't your name Fleming? You're wanted——"

He broke off as Fleming, panic-stricken, made to tread on the throttle. But it was too late. Lennard had already swung open the door, and with a violent shove he pushed Fleming out of the driving-seat. His whistle sounded, and two police-constables ran up.

Within a minute Mr. Bertram Fleming was handcuffed.

It was satisfactory that he should have been so quickly recaptured; but, unfortunately, this made no difference whatsoever to the plight of Nelson Lee and his cubs. For Fleming steadfastly refused to say how he had come into possession of Nelson Lee's car, and the disappearance of the famous detective and his assistants was destined to become one of the biggest mysteries that had ever baffled Scotland Yard.

CHAPTER 3.

The Awakening!

NELSON LEE opened his eyes—and closed them quickly. It felt exactly as though a pair of hammers, inside his head, had struck his eyes from the rear. The pain was excruciating. For some little time he had been in a semi-wakeful state, only knowing that his head was throbbing with an agony which was well-nigh insufferable. Bewildered and bemused, he had tried to think. His brain seemed out of action. He had opened his eyes, hoping that his vision would help to restore his memory; but the effort startled him. The agony was so great that he uttered a low cry.

He waited for some time, breathing hard. Gradually the intense throbbing subsided. He fancied he heard a lumbering footstep. It seemed that there was the swish of water. Then——

A deluge engulfed him. Cold, salt water drenched over his head and shoulders. The shock was considerable.

"Reckon he's comin' round," said a gruff, coarse voice, as though out of nowhere. "Give 'im another pailful in about five minutes."

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"Any sign o' these blamed boys comin' to life?"

"Two of 'em are gettin' lively, sir, but the rest ain't got a kick between the lot of 'em."

The voices drifted away, and Nelson Lee's bewilderment was increased. But there was one phrase which stuck in his mind. The boys! Were those unknown men referring to Nipper and the other cubs? What could all this mean?

That pailful of cold water had been drastic, but it was certainly effective. Lee's brain was clearer; his head was not throbbing so much. When he opened his eyes the shooting pain was less intense. He saw a grimy

place which he recognised as a windjammer's fore-castle. The air reeked of tar, stale cooking and rank tobacco.

He sat up, his strength increasing. He began to understand. The motion of the ship told him at once that it was at sea. She was dipping and heaving with rhythmic regularity. Now and again she rolled, accompanied by the creak of the ancient timbers. From beyond the fore-castle hatchway came the faint sound of creaking sails and the whistle of wind through the rigging.

"Upon my soul!" muttered Nelson Lee, startled.

His wits were all about him now. In the fo'c'sle of an old sailing-ship! He and the boys! And the ship was at sea! He remembered the old sailor on the road, the sudden attack—— Yes! There was only one explanation of all this. He had been shanghaied!

The shock of it restored his strength rapidly. He placed a hand up to his head, and winced as his fingers touched the ugly swelling. His hair was matted over the spot, proving that the skin had been broken. The only wonder was that his skull had not been cracked.

Sliding out of the bunk, he stood on the dirty boards of the deck. At first he nearly collapsed, for his knees sagged and he swayed; but by a great effort he forced himself to walk.

Within two minutes he knew the full truth.

There were seven other figures lying in the grubby bunks—and six of them belonged to his cub detectives! The other was an indescribably dirty loafer; a man, no doubt, who had also been shanghaied.

Lee's thoughts were no longer centred upon himself. These boys! Perhaps some of them were seriously injured. Lee's first move, as was only natural, was towards Nipper. He gently lifted Nipper round and examined his head. There was a horrid bump, but the skin had not been broken. Nipper stirred slightly and opened his eyes.

"Hallo, guv'nor!" he muttered. "What's the idea? By Jingo! My head's feeling pretty wonky this morning! Why don't you pull the blind up? There's no light in here—— Why, what the——"

"Steady, young 'un," whispered Lee. "No need to get excited."

"Where are we, guv'nor?" gasped Nipper, staring round in amazement.

"A question, brother, I have been asking myself for some considerable time," came a voice from near by. "But unless I am greatly mistaken—and for a Browne to be mistaken is unthinkable—we are up to our necks in the ox-tail."

"If you're awake, Browne, rouse yourself and help me with these other boys," said Nelson Lee, trying to speak briskly. "We're all in a nasty mess here. I don't know how you others got into this affair——"

"I can only assume, Chief, that there has been plotting of the foulest," interrupted Browne as he swayed out of his bunk.

WITHIN twenty minutes all the cubs were awake. Much to Nelson Lee's relief, none had suffered any grave injury, although those blows on the head had been severe—so severe that all of these victims had remained unconscious for several hours.

Tommy Watson and Sterens had fared the worst. They were conscious now, but were still suffering from concussion, and it would be some little time before they became normal. The others, having awakened, rapidly recovered their strength.

"I don't know what it means, young 'uns—but it's an ugly outlook," said Nelson Lee. "We're on an old sailing-ship of sorts, and apparently we're out at sea. Judging by the light, the evening must be fading."

"Phew! That means we've been unconscious for the best part of a night and a day," said Nipper. "But why? Who's done it? And how are we going to get back, guv'nor?"

"There can be little doubt that we have been victimised in this way by an old enemy," replied Nelson Lee. "Revenge, I imagine—or it may be something even deeper. I warn you, however, that things may not go very smoothly. The captain of this ship is absolute master—and it is a certainty that he'll assert his rights."

"Didn't you 'phone to me, Chief?" asked Fenton, puzzled.

"Not I!" replied Lee bitterly. "And I am now certain that it wasn't Chief Inspector Lennard who 'phoned to me."

A shadow fell across the floor space. Glancing up, Lee saw that the hatchway was filled by the burly, broad-shouldered figure of a man. It was Mr. Cragg, first mate of the Vulture.

"Awake, eh?" said Mr. Cragg, as he prepared to descend. "Thought you was showing signs of coming round, me 'earties! Well, well! We'll 'ave a look at you."

There was silence as the man came down. He had obviously been drinking. His gait was unsteady and his eyes were bleary. There was a hideous, repulsive scar running down his left cheek, and his right ear was disfigured.

"A measly, cock-eyed bunch of no-goods!" commented Mr. Cragg contemptuously, as he gazed at the prisoners. "A frowsy lot o' land crabs! But there! I never did 'ave any luck with my watch, so it's no good grumblin'."

"Your watch?" repeated Lee sharply.

"My watch!" snapped Mr. Cragg. "You an' these kids is in my watch—understand? I'm fust mate o' this brig, an' when you speak to me again, blame you, say 'sir.' Savvy? I don't allow no familiarity wi' my men."

"In normal circumstances, I entirely agree with your principles," said Nelson Lee smoothly. "But you know as well as I do, Mr. First Mate, that we are not ordinary sailors. None of these boys has ever sailed before the mast, and none of us signed on—"

"No?" broke in Mr. Cragg sarcastically. "That's a pity! But the skipper ain't a particular man, an' whether you signed on or not don't make a 'ang of difference to 'im."

"I want to see the captain," said Lee impatiently.

"Oh, you do, do you?" nodded Mr. Cragg. "You want to see the captain, and the nasty-tempered mate won't let you! That's too bad, ain't it?"

"Look here, Mr.—"

"Cragg's my name, swab you, an' don't forget to 'sir' me!" roared the mate, leering ferociously at Lee. "Darn my hide! Who do ye think ye are? Get up on deck, an' look lively! Think I'm goin' to argue wi' ye?"

"Just a moment, my friend," said Lee. "You know as well as I do that we have been shanghaied, and I'm not blaming you for that. Your captain is the responsible party—"

"Yes, you've hit it fust time. Mister Smart Gent!" shouted the mate. "You was shanghaied—you an' these half-baked young rats! I'm the man what's got to lick you inter shape, an' make sailors out o' ye—an' by hokey, I'll do it!"

"This is all rot!" said Fenton hotly. "We're not sailors, and don't want to be. You'll have to put us ashore—"

"Stow your lip!" snarled Mr. Cragg, swinging round and bringing the back of his hand across Fenton's cheek with such force that the ex-captain of St. Frank's reeled and nearly fell. "Speak when you're spoke to, you insubordinate swab!"

Fenton's eyes blazed, but Lee quickly stepped in front of him.

"That sort of thing won't help, Mr. Cragg," he snapped. "It may be hard for you to realise that we are not your ordinary type of crew, but the moment you do realise it the better. There's been crooked work here, and I'm going to see your captain without any further delay."

There was something so dominant, so masterly, in Nelson Lee's personality that the mate was cowed.

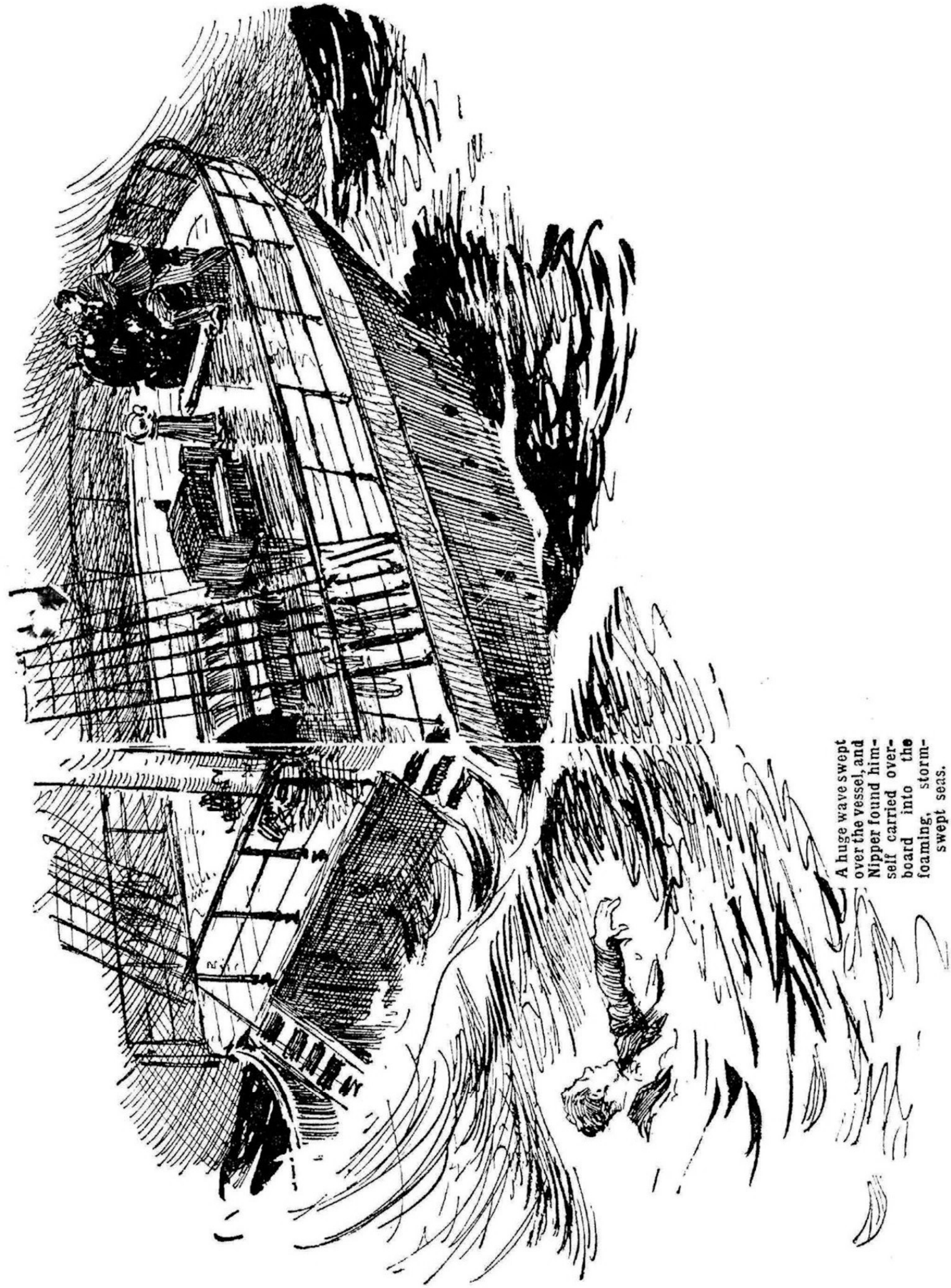
"Cuss your knock-kneed carcass!" bellowed Mr. Cragg, taking refuge in abuse in order to hide his momentary eclipse. "Who do you think you're talkin' to? Obey my orders before I kick the vitals out o' ye!"

He kicked as he spoke, and Nelson Lee staggered back in agony. A great rage came over the famous detective. He recognised this brutal sailor now. Of course, it was the man who had met him and Nipper at Purfleet—who had lured them into that ambush. Until now, although the man's face had been familiar, Lee had not been able to "place" him, for his brain, as a result of the terrific blow upon his head, was still not functioning properly. The detective advanced with bunched fists.

"All right, my friend!" he said curtly.

Crash!

With unerring aim, Lee's clenched right came round, and Mr. Cragg took it on the point of the jaw. In a ship at sea this was



A huge wave swept over the vessel, and Nipper found himself carried overboard into the foaming, storm-swept seas.

mutiny; but Lee did not consider himself under Mr. Cragg's orders, or anybody else's. He put all he knew behind that punch, and Mr. Cragg received an education. Notwithstanding his bulk, he seemed to rise clean off his feet, and he went hurtling over backwards, grunting and howling. He hit the deck with a devastating thud.

"Hold him, young 'uns," said Lee crisply. "See that he doesn't get away till I come back. We've had enough nonsense already."

"O.K., Chief!" chorused the cubs eagerly.

Lee swung himself up the forecastle ladder and emerged on deck.

The first glance verified his earlier fears. No land was in sight, although a hazy dullness astern, far off on the horizon, indicated that land had only recently been left behind.

It was evening, and the slanting rays of the setting sun were flooding the worn, patched, frowzy sails of the old brig. She was wallowing heavily, in spite of the favourable breeze, and could not be making more than five or six knots.

The decks were untidy. Scarcely a man was to be seen. Somebody in a dirty apron appeared for a moment outside the door of the galley, but he soon disappeared. Right aft, on the poop, the helmsman was lounging at the wheel, but there was no evidence of any officer.

"A well-conducted vessel," muttered Lee.

He imagined her to be a craft which plied, perhaps, between British ports and Spain or Portugal. But that didn't matter. His objective now was to interview the captain.

Passing down the well of the ship, he paused under the poop ladder. The man at the wheel was looking at him with a curious stare.

"Where's the captain?" asked Lee bluntly.

"You best not go near captain," replied the man with a foreign accent. "He in

cabin. He not like to be disturbed. You see Mr. Cragg."

"All right," called Nelson Lee.

He took no notice of the Swede, but opened a door and strode through. Lee quickly found the captain's cabin and strode in. He wasn't surprised at the sight he beheld.



A huge wave swept over the vessel, and Nipper found himself carried overboard into the foaming, storm-swept seas.

Captain Blackford Angel was seated at the table engaged in the prosaic task of sewing a button on a pair of trousers. Near him stood an untidy workbox, filled with cotton reels and odds and ends of cloth. A metal

can stood on the table, too, with a half-filled glass next to it. Lee needed no telling what that can contained, for the air of the cabin reeked with foul tobacco smoke and the fumes of rum.

"What the blazes are you doing here?" demanded Captain Angel, thrusting the gar-

Mister Lee, and you're reckoned to be pretty smart as a detective. But aboard my ship you're just a deck 'and, and the sooner you realise it the better!"

"It is just as well that you have told me this," said Lee quietly. "I now know that you haven't been victimised in any way.

You shanghaied me with your eyes open."

"And you ain't the fust," leered the other. "Captain

Blackford Angel—that's me! Go into Charlie's place down at Lime'ouse, an' mention the name o' Captain Blackford Angel. See what 'appens! 'Arf the critturs'll bolt. Go to 'Frisco—go to the River Plate—go to Boston! There ain't a port of any size in the world what don't know of Cap'n Angel. An' sailormen in all the seven seas tremble when they 'ear my name."

"I'm not a sailorman, Captain Angel, and I'm not trembling," replied Nelson Lee steadily, sickened, not only by this man's appearance, but by his insufferable arrogance.

"Somebody bribed you to take me on board your ship, and, knowing the kind of man you are, I'm going to bribe you to put me ashore."

"Oh! Is that so?" said the captain aggressively.

Lee was a keen student of human nature. This man was nothing but a drunken sot, and to attempt any rational reasoning with him would have been a waste of time. The only way to get ashore quickly was to offer money; and although it went against the grain, Lee was prepared to pay.

"Goin' to bribe me, are ye?" went on the skipper. "Get out o' this cabin afore I sling you out, you blamed landlubber! It's like your sauce to come 'ere without no orders! You're before the mast now—"

"I'll give you a hundred pounds, cash down, to land the six boys and myself within twenty-four hours," said Lee. "We can't be far out at sea—"

He was interrupted by a raucous bellow of laughter from the skipper.

"A 'undred quid?" he jeered. "No fear! Don't you b'lieve it, my fine gent! Not two 'undred—not five 'undred! You're stayin' aboard this old tub until she fetches up in



ment aside and swinging round in his chair to face the visitor.

The man was even bigger than Mr. Cragg. He was collarless, his waistcoat was open, revealing a dirty shirt, greasy with the marks of carelessly-eaten food. His chin was unshaven, and, altogether, he presented an unsavoury appearance.

Nelson Lee felt, as he looked at this man's stubborn jaw and evil eyes, that the chances of escape were slim.

CHAPTER 4.

The Brute!

CAPTAIN ANGEL, who was the most unangelic creature imaginable, took a gulp of neat rum and banged the glass down hard.

"Well?" he shouted. "Ain't you got any tongue? I know who you are—so don't try any of your fool games with me. You're

Monte Video—an' that won't be for a couple o' months."

Nelson Lee was startled.

At the worst he had expected that the trip would take a week or two, and that he and the boys would regain their liberty in some Portuguese port. But Monte Video—Uruguay—South America! That meant a long, tedious voyage of over six thousand miles from one side of the Atlantic to the other.

"I want you to realise the seriousness of this situation, Captain Angel," said Nelson Lee earnestly. "I am speaking to you as man to man. You are the master of this ship, and it would be useless for me to brow-beat you or to tell you of the influence that I can wield over the authorities. Here, at sea, you are in supreme control. I realise it, and therefore I desire to come to some amicable arrangement—"

"You can cut it out!" snapped the other. "I know all about you, and I ain't puttin' you ashore. See?"

He suddenly seized a heavy belaying-pin from a locker near at hand, and he beat the table thunderously with it. Almost at once a scared-looking youth appeared in the doorway.

"Go an' fetch Mr. Cragg!" roared the captain. "If you can't find 'im, bring Mr. Adams. Yes, an' three o' the men. Look lively, you young whelp, or I'll break every bone in your body!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" gasped the youth as he fairly bolted.

"What do you intend to do?" asked Nelson Lee, his voice steady.

"You'll find out!" shouted the captain, getting to his feet and advancing. "Now then—outside!"

"I want to tell you—"

"Outside!" thundered the skipper.

He brought his clenched fist round and attempted to strike Lee; but the detective adroitly dodged. Before he could take any further action, however, the door opened and a smartly-dressed young man came in, followed by three hulking deck-hands—all obviously foreign. They were Swedes or Danes of the worst type.

"Oh!" panted the skipper. "So it's you, Mr. Adams, is it?"

"You sent for me, sir," said the second mate, striving hard to hide his disgust.

"Take this man an' rope 'im up to a yard-arm!" ordered the captain. "Afore you do that, strip 'is back bare. I'm goin' to teach 'im a lesson!"

Mr. Adams breathed hard.

"Hadn't you better leave it, sir?" he asked respectfully.

"Sink me for a wall-eyed shark!" fumed the captain. "When I want advice from you, Mr. Adams, I'll ask for it! Take this man an' do as I tell ye! Am I cap'n aboard this rat-ridden hulk or aren't I?"

Mr. Adams compressed his lips, and gave Lee an appealing look.

"I'll go," said Lee quietly.

The three sailors seized him, and he was marched out.

IN this short space of time Nelson Lee had gained a fairly good insight into the personnel of the ship. Both the captain and the first mate were obviously drunken scamps, and a certain number of the crew were ruffians of the lowest type. In sharp contrast, Mr. Adams, the second mate, stood out like a flower on a dustheap. He was a clean-limbed, open-faced youngster, and Lee set him down as an ambitious sailor who, having passed his exams and gained his mate's "ticket," had been eager enough to secure this berth, little realising what he was landing himself in for.

"Sorry, but I'm helpless in this affair," whispered Mr. Adams, when he got an opportunity of having a private word with Lee. "I'll do all I can, but—"

"I understand," murmured Nelson Lee.

Further conversation was impossible. They were on deck now, and the captain himself was giving orders. He no longer appeared bemused. The prospect of some "sport" had completely sobered him.

Nelson Lee was roughly stripped to the waist, his wrists were bound, and he was slung to one of the yards—and in such a way that his feet were only just touching the deck. It was as much as he could do to maintain his balance on tiptoe, and in such a position, any move on his part was impossible.

"That's all, Mr. Adams," said the captain, with relish. "You can get aft. Look after the wheel. Now, my beauty, we're going to knock some discipline into you," went on Captain Angel, turning back to Nelson Lee and seizing a heavy rope with a knotted end. "I allus do this to men who have too much lip. It's old-fashioned, but it's effective."

Slash!

The rope's-end whistled through the air, and the knotted section ripped viciously across Nelson Lee's back. The great detective winced, but no sound escaped his lips—much to the skipper's disappointment.

"One o' those sort, hey?" he jeered. "One o' them 'eroes, ain't you? By hokey! I'll soon make you squeal!"

Mr. Adams, who had turned away to obey his orders, now swung round.

"Is this wise, sir?" he asked bluntly.

"Wise?" ejaculated the Old Man, staring. "Who's askin' you to butt in?"

"I'm thinking about that steamer on the starboard bow, sir," said the second officer. "With telescopes, they could easily see what you're doing—"

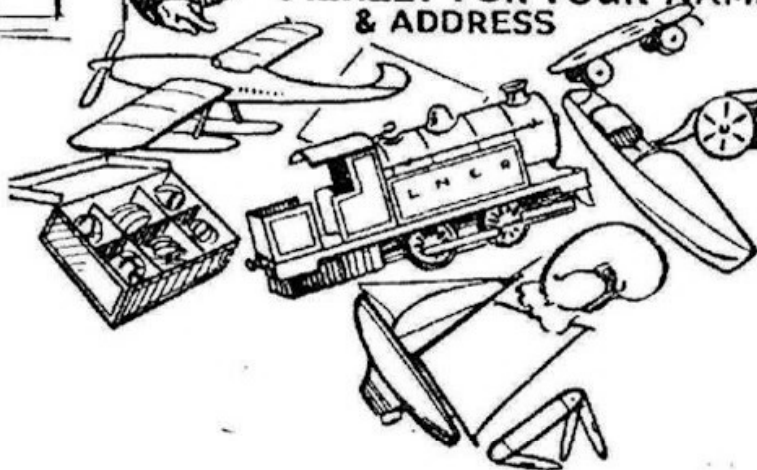
"Let 'em see!" interrupted the captain furiously. "This is my ship, and I'll do as I like—and I won't stand no interference from any blamed steamship! You get aft, Adams, before I lose my temper with ye."

(Continued on page 26.)



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- R. M. Richards, 5, Kirdford Road, ARUNDEL, Sussex.
- C. Ridgway, 44, Chaplin Road, WEMBLEY, Middlesex.
- F. Roberts, 5, Water Street, MOLD.
- O. Rowland, Holt Hall, Castle Street, Holt, near WREXHAM.
- A. W. Seward, 53, Cranbury Road, READING.
- W. E. Shaw, 1, Tay Street, BARROW-IN-FURNESS.
- A. F. J. Skelton, 26, Highworth Rd., Stratton, SWINDON.
- V. Stokes, 5, Chapel Avenue, ADDLESTONE.
- J. Thornes, 16, Mulgrave Terrace, DUNLAOGHAIRE.
- F. Tildesley, Hill View, Watery Lane, WILLENHALL.
- E. P. Townley, 61, Reddings Road, Moseley, BIRMINGHAM.
- G. Tribe, High Street, DORMANSLAND, Surrey.
- C. H. Turnbull, 62a, Stour Street, CANTERBURY.
- E. W. Underwood, 93, Woodlands Rd., Moseley, BIRMINGHAM
- D. Uzzell, 4, Oxley Street, WOLVERHAMPTON.
- R. W. S. Veals, 35, Palatine Road, DOUGLAS, I.O.M.
- A. G. Weedon, 29, Hambrook St., Southsea, PORTSMOUTH.
- H. White, 201, Wortley Road, London, ONT., Canada.
- J. Wilkins, 102, Eastland, YEOVIL.
- L. Wood, 61, Mayfield Road, CHADWELL HEATH, Essex.

CLAIM COUPON—"NELSON LEE" FREE GIFT SCHEME. NO. 10

My name appears in this week's "Nelson Lee" Gift List, and I hereby claim the Free Gift allotted to me.

NAME AGE

ADDRESS

Ask two chums, to whom you have shown your name in this list, to sign in the spaces provided below.

NAME

ADDRESS

AGE

NAME

ADDRESS

AGE

OVERSEAS READERS

Any overseas reader whose name appears in the list, or reader who has since gone abroad, should note that the closing date for Overseas Claims is September 26th.

SHANGHAIED!

(Continued from page 24.)

"I was only thinking, sir——"

"You signed on this ship to work—not to think!" roared the captain. "An' as fer this knock-kneed landlubber, this 'igh an' mighty Mr. Nelson Lee, he'll need patchin' up plenty before I've finished with 'im."

He cracked his rope's-end with vicious force, and turned back to his task.

IN the fore-castle the six excited cubs were anxiously awaiting Nelson Lee's return. Four of them were keeping Mr. Cragg on the floor—and this was becoming an increasingly difficult task. Tommy Watson and Stevens were recovering rapidly.

"I may be at fault, brothers, but I have an inkling that all has not gone well with the Chief," remarked Browne, after a while. "Sundry sounds from the deck indicate trouble. I therefore suggest that some venturesome spirit should run up the ladder and take a squint on deck. I would undertake this task myself, only our dear friend requires all my attention."

"I'll go," said Watson breathlessly.

Browne was sitting on Mr. Cragg's head. Nipper and Stevens and Fenton were sprawling on other portions of Mr. Cragg's anatomy; and it needed the four of them to keep him there.

"I say—quick!" gasped Watson, after he had taken a look through the doorway. "The Chief's in trouble. They've got him slung up, and some brute is flogging him!" Nipper turned pale.

"We've got to clear out of this," he muttered. "We've got to rescue him."

"Stout words—good words!" murmured Browne. "Mutiny on the high seas, brothers, is sometimes justified!"

"Listen!" urged Nipper abruptly.

They heard the captain's raucous voice, and they heard the whistling whine of the lash. It acted like a spur to them. With one accord they dashed at the ladder, leaving Mr. Cragg to pick himself up.

In a flood, the cubs swept down the deck.

CHAPTER 5.

Simmering Mischief!

WILLIAM NAPOLEON BROWNE had an advantage over his companions; his legs were longer. Thus he was the first to arrive on the scene. Captain Blackford Angel had paused in his brutal efforts, gazing open-mouthed at these newcomers.

"Allow me, brother!" said Browne crisply.

With one movement he took the rope out of the burly skipper's hand, and with another movement he sent it whistling round the skipper's legs.



Jokes from readers wanted for this feature! If you know of a good rib tickler send it along now—and win a prize! A handsome watch will be awarded each week to the sender of the best joke; all other readers whose efforts are published will receive a pocket wallet or a penknife. Address your jokes to "Smilers," Nelson Lee Library, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4.

VERY SMALL!

The circus proprietor was engaging a dwarf.

"Are you sure he's a real midget?" asked the showman of the agent.

"Real midget?" exclaimed the agent. "Why, he's so short that every time his feet ache he thinks he's got a headache."

(G. Summerton, 25, Tenby Street, Anfield, Liverpool, has been awarded a handsome watch.)

OUR OFFICE BOY!

Gentleman: "Where can I find the editor, boy?"

Office Boy: "Along there, sir, until you come to a notice 'No admittance,' straight up until you come to a sign 'Keep out,' carry on, and

you'll see a big word 'Silence'—then give him a yell."

(L. W. Piper, 2, Edward Villas, Millmead Road, Margate, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

A NEW STUNT!

"You remember that you sold me a horse last week?" said the cabman angrily to the horse-dealer.

"Yes; what about him?"

"He fell down dead yesterday."

"Well, I never!" said the dealer in surprise. "I told you he had some funny little ways, but, upon my word, I never knew him to do that before!"

(C. Lewis, 43, Steelhouse Lane, Wolverhampton, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

ANOTHER MAN!

1st Tramp: "An' 'ow shall I disguise mys elf?"

2nd Tramp: "Wash your blinking face."

(A. Pearce, 77, Malham Road, Forest Hill, S.E.23, has been awarded a penknife.)

IT DIDN'T WORK!

Farmer: "How d'ye come by that black eye, John?"

John (new to the job): "That old Jersey cow would keep flicking 'er tail in my face when I was milking 'er, so I tied half a brick on to it."

(R. Burton, 45, Salford Road, Streatham Hill, S.W.2, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

Slash! Slash!

"There is an old saying that what is sauce for the goose is also sauce for the gander," declared Browne enthusiastically.

Cursing and screaming, the captain leapt about like a madman as the knotted rope slashed round his body.

"Mr. Cragg!" he howled wildly. "Hi! Take this young rat away! Step lively, you blamed fools!" he added, swinging round upon the other members of the crew. "Drag 'im off!"

The men advanced with a rush. They made to fling themselves at Browne, but the other cubs, seething with rage, tackled them recklessly. In a moment they were all fighting furiously. And then Mr. Cragg burst on the scene like a veritable human cyclone. His face was flushed, his eyes were blazing.

"Where are them young whelps?" he snarled. "They'd knock me down, would they? I'll show 'em! Stand aside there, you vermin!"

He bored his way through the fighters, and with one terrific blow he felled Fenton to the deck. Swinging round, he dealt with Browne just as effectively. Then he proceeded to dispose of the remaining cubs. There was no stopping him. He was like a mad bull. If Captain Angel was a brute, the first mate was an animal.

The fight was over almost as soon as it had started. The deck was strewn with the

plucky but reckless cubs. Nelson Lee, who had known from the first what would happen, looked on with bitterness in his heart.

"Kick these young swabs down into the fo'c'sle," growled Mr. Cragg. "I'll deal with 'em later. Sorry I couldn't come earlier, sir," he added, turning to the captain. "The young rats held me. And this blamed son-of-a-gun knocked me down, too. Mebbe you'll let me take that rope, sir?"

"You can 'ave it arter I've finished," retorted the captain.

NELSON LEE did not fully recover until two days had elapsed, and even then his back was raw and agonising. But for the secret aid of an old Swedish sailor, who shared his bunk, Lee's recovery would have been further prolonged.

The boys were not allowed to go near him. Mostly, they were kept hard at work during every minute of every waking hour. Scrubbing the decks, helping the cook, mending sails, and a hundred and one other tasks, kept them busy. Mr. Cragg was a tyrant.

After the first day Nelson Lee himself was dragged out and forced to work. With his back lacerated, and his strength gone, he was in no condition to resist. Not being a fool, Lee submitted. Far better to let these brutes have their own way—to bide his time.

One thing was certain; neither he nor the cubs would be able to get back to England. They were inevitably committed to this

THE GUID SAMARITAN!

Old Scot: "Dinna cry, ma wee laddie. If ye dinna find yer penny afore dark, here's a match."

(T. Clegg, 24, Sheppard Street, Stoke-on-Trent, has been awarded a penknife.)

A CORKING REPLY!

The doctor smiled as the patient entered the room.

"You look better to-day."

"Yes, I followed the directions on the medicine bottle."

"What were they?"

"Keep the bottle tightly corked."

(A. Kemp, 29, Barclay Road, Fulham, S.W.6, has been awarded a penknife.)

BRAIN SAUCE!

Big Fellow: "Fight yer! I could swaller yer!"

Little Fellow: "I dare say you could; and then you could swank that you'd got more brains in your stomach than in your head."

(W. Johnson, 4, Chalkwell Road, Milton Regis, Sittingbourne, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

HIS ROUTINE!

Lady: "Here's a shilling. You'll close the gate after you, won't you?"



Tramp: "Oh, yes, lady. I 'as a tariff. For a penny or a bit of dry bread I just walks straight out; for sixpence I says 'Thank you' and hall closes the gate: and for a bob I shuts the gate carefully and does a bit of weeding on the way out."

(J. Slattery, 75, Juvenal Dwellings, Juvenal Street, Liverpool, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

BALD!

Father (to little boy crying): "What's the matter?"

Boy: "My brother won't play cowboy and Indians with me."

Father: "Never mind, I will."

Boy: "You ain't no good; you're scalped already."

(A. Baxter, 25, Canterbury Road, Leyton, E.10, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

AGREED!

The inspector, weighing sixteen stone, was giving the class a lecture on birds.

"Now, boys," he said, "can any of you tell me what a canary can do that I can't?"

Sandy put up his hand and said: "Please, sir, hae a bath in a saucer."

(J. McDonald, 45, Glyde Street, North Kensington, South Australia, has been awarded a penknife.)

voyage now. The Vulture was well out into the Atlantic, and favourable winds had carried her farther and farther southward.

On the evening of the third day, while Lee was lying face downwards in his bunk—to adopt any other position was torture—he found the old Swedish sailor whispering in his ear while he tenderly rubbed lotion into Lee's hurts. This old Swede was a friend. His name, Lee gathered, was Olsen, and he was perfectly frank about the way in which he had joined the ship.

"It's the drink," he declared. "I get drunk, and they take me. There's hardly a man aboard who wasn't shanghaied. Couldn't get hands by any other means. Captain Angel is a feller we all avoid. This makes the third time I've sailed with him."

"You ought to have learned better by now," commented Lee.

"I learn better—but when the drink's in me, I forget," replied Olsen innocently. "Crew no good. Blackguards!"

Lee listened idly to the man's chatterings. Other bunks were occupied by the cubs—all of them utterly exhausted.

Lee was satisfied that the boys had come to no real harm. One or two of them had shown signs of cracking up during the second day—and that had been Lee's most anxious time. But now their excellent constitutions were serving them well. The hard work was skinning the hands and straining their muscles, but they were getting the upper hand of it. In the end they would be hardened—and physically, no doubt, they would be stronger and healthier.

"They say that captain kill a man in Rotherhithe," murmured Olsen, in Lee's ear. "Night before we sail. All crew shanghaied, you savvy? All quick. Leave port in hurry. And they say that another man helped. Smart man—well dressed."

"I'm not surprised," whispered Lee.

"This smart man, he get skipper out of pub in Rotherhithe," continued the old Swede. "Get him away in car, you see? Save him from the cops. Take him to his ship. All quick—all hurried. Then they get crew."

Lee did not doubt that these rumours were founded on fact, and it was easy enough for him to put two and two together.

The well-dressed stranger was Nelson Lee's enemy. He had saved Captain Angel and had used him for his own ends—had smuggled him back to his ship and had provided him with a rough-and-ready crew. And he had forced the captain to accept Lee and the boys as hands.

The whole position was plain. Nelson Lee could now understand why the captain had refused to listen to any offer of money. He wouldn't have gone back to a British port for any sum. For he had fled from justice, and in South America he would be comparatively safe. It might be years before he took his brig back into British waters, and by then there would be very little risk.

As Lee dropped off to sleep he mused over the uncertainties of life. Only three days ago he and the boys were engaged in their usual occupations; two or three cases were "on the stocks." Now they were at sea, working before the mast on this rotten-timbered old windjammer.

And so a week passed.

The Vulture, creeping steadily south, taking advantage of favourable winds, ran into stifling hot weather. On the eighth day the wind dropped completely, leaving the vessel wallowing sluggishly on a glassy sea.

With the brig becalmed, there was naturally less work to be done, and the crew mercifully gained a respite from the tyrannical Mr. Cragg. The hot weather always affected him, and instead of attending to his duties he spent most of his time sprawling in a hammock under an awning, accompanied by sundry bottles.

No interference came from Captain Angel.

His bright specimen of a shipmaster was even worse than the mate, and he kept to his cabin and was seldom seen.

Mr. Adams, the second mate, was now virtually in command. He was a decent fellow, efficient, too, and Nelson Lee and the cub detectives got on very well with him. The second mate never took advantage of his superior rank. He was an officer, and Lee was a mere hand—officially—but the mate treated him as his equal. The famous detective also got on well with Olsen and Chips, the ship's cook; but the rest of the crew, ruffians of the worst type, were openly antagonistic.

Thus the ship's company automatically divided itself into two parties. Mr. Adams, Nelson Lee, the boys, and two or three men formed one group. The remainder were ready to stick to Captain Angel and Mr. Cragg—men all of the same breed.

"LOOKS nasty this morning," said Mr. Adams anxiously to Nelson Lee.

Two more days had passed—two days of blistering, sweltering heat. The Vulture still wallowed helplessly in a becalmed sea. The swell caused her to dip to a regular, monotonous motion.

Tempers, on the whole, had shortened. Even Nelson Lee and the boys were beginning to feel irritable. Inactivity, coupled with the stifling heat—to say nothing of the difficulty of sleeping—was having its effect.

Captain Angel had only been seen twice during the past four days. On the first occasion he had come on deck in his pyjamas for no better purpose than to throw a number of empty bottles overboard. On the second occasion he had come on deck because the heat in the cabin had become too much even for him.

Mr. Cragg had distinguished himself mainly by knocking down any member of the crew who happened to be in his way when he reeled out of his hammock to go to the saloon for meals. Of his duties he was entirely indifferent. His watch was auto-

The longboat containing Captain Angel and his scoundrelly crew drifted away. They had deserted the ship—leaving Nelson Lee and his cubs to their fate!



matically taken over by a man named Schwartz, who was supposed to be the bo'sun, but who was nothing but an ignorant, coarse, foul-mouthed loafer.

This morning the sun had a dull look about it; the sky was obscured by a haze.

"How's the glass?" asked Nelson Lee.

"Falling a bit, but not particularly rapidly," said the second mate. "Not that you can take much notice of the instruments on this hulk. Nothing's right aboard! Even the compass is two or three points wrong, I believe. If we ever reach Monte Video I shall be surprised."

He looked up at the idle, flapping sails, and then transferred his attention to the sky.

"No wind yet," he muttered. "But it's coming, though—plenty of it. I tried to have a word with Cragg just now, but I couldn't get any sense out of him."

"It seems to me, Mr. Adams, that we shall have to fend for ourselves before long," said Lee gravely. "There's no discipline aboard this ship at all."

As the day wore on, the haze increased. There was not a breath of wind. The air seemed to quiver with the heat. Work of any kind was difficult, and it was exhausting even to walk about.

For days not a sign of any other ship had been seen. The Vulture, at Captain Angel's orders, was sailing far off the tracks of regular shipping.

Evening came with a sense of impending trouble. The glass was dropping more rapidly now, and towards sunset an occasional puff of wind caused the sails to billow out with sudden force like claps of thunder.

CHAPTER 6.

Nelson Lee Takes Command!

NIPPER pointed towards the southern horizon.

"Clouds," he said briefly.

"And by the look of them, brother, super-clouds at that," remarked William Napoleon Browne. "Ah, well! Life, after all, is one dashed thing after another. Personally, I shan't grumble at a little excitement."

"We're liable to get a lot," said Fenton. "I don't know much about the sea, but I'm jolly certain that all these sails oughtn't to be set. With a storm in the offing, they ought to have been reefed or furled, or whatever they call it, ages ago."

The six cubs were sprawling against the starboard rail, fooling themselves that it was a bit cooler there than elsewhere. Certainly there was an occasional puff of wind, but the wind itself was hotter than the ordinary air. And during the intervals between the gusts, the heaviness and the silence had a brooding, ominous solemnity.

It was getting dark now. Now and again a flash of lightning would appear in the sky. But nobody took much notice. There had been similar flashes at nightfall for days past. This evening, however, they seemed more vivid, and they were nearer.

"Those clouds are coming over this way," said Stevens.

"They may mean nothing," said Nipper. "Anyhow, it's not up to us. All we can do is to wait for things to happen."

Mr. Adams, awakening from a four-hour sleep—which he had more than needed—took a look at the glass before even washing. He was startled. It had gone back a remarkable number of points. There had been no indication of such a tumble when he had turned in. Still in his pyjamas he ran on deck, and Lee was the first man he saw.

"Where's Cragg?" he asked breathlessly, without looking at Lee, but scanning the weather with troubled eyes. "My hat! This looks worse than ever! Glass has simply galloped down during the past few hours."

"I thought as much," replied Lee. "But I couldn't very well disturb you, Mr. Adams—and, after all, it's the first mate's watch."

"Huh!" grunted the young officer. "A fat lot he cares!"

He ran quickly up the poop ladder, and found the mate sprawling inelegantly in his hammock, dead to the world. Adams nearly saw red. To find a responsible officer on the watch in this condition, and with so many signs of trouble in the air, infuriated him.

"Hey!" he shouted, shaking the mate with vigour. "Wake up, Mr. Cragg! We've got to trim the ship! What have you been doing while I've been asleep? There's a big blow coming."

Mr. Cragg opened his eyes.

"Go to the devil!" he said blearily.

"It's serious, sir!" urged Mr. Adams. "The glass has tumbled down, and—"

"Then pick it up again," interrupted the mate with a leer. "Ha, ha! Not a bad joke, that! Pick it up again, you durned fool. Why bother me?"

"Yes, why?" retorted the second.

He couldn't resist the temptation. The bulge in the hammock was so inviting. With all his force he kicked—and he had been one of the best footballers in his schoolboy team.

Mr. Cragg sat up, thoroughly aroused. Cursing, he lurched out of the hammock, took a step or two, and then collapsed. He lay just where he had fallen, once again sinking into a stupor.

Mr. Adams hurried down to the captain's cabin. Rather to his surprise, Angel was sitting at the table, carving a hunk of wood into an ornament of some kind. It was Captain Angel's hobby, this wood carving. The second officer was reminded of Nero fiddling while Rome burned.

"There's a storm coming over, sir," said Mr. Adams sharply.

"What's that?" grunted the captain, leaning back, and looking at his visitor. "Storm? Let it come. Mr. Cragg will take charge."

"Mr. Cragg's drunk, sir."

"Drunk, is he?" fumed the skipper in a befuddled condition. "Like his infernal impudence! I'm the only man who's allowed to get drunk aboard this ship. I'm the captain—yes, an' owner, too! This is my ship—"

"It won't be yours for long, sir, unless you pull yourself together and act like a man," broke in Mr. Adams, stung by this exhibition of incompetence into a hot retort. "She'll be at the bottom, with every soul aboard, before many hours."

"Get out of here!" snarled the captain. "What's this—mutiny? Get on deck and take charge, Mr. Adams! I'll come up later."

"You're needed now, sir," insisted the second.

"Get out!" bellowed Angel.

He seized the belaying-pin he used to call the cabin-boy, and flung it with all his strength. Mr. Adams dodged, but he was a shade too late. The end of the heavy weapon caught him on the forehead, and he crashed over senseless, blood streaming from the wound.

"Serves you right!" growled the skipper, pouring himself out another drink.

NELSON LEE acted decisively when a great gust of wind came booming over the sea to hit the Vulture like a solid blow. Mr. Adams had not returned, and Lee felt certain that something unpleasant had happened to him.

The swell was heavier now. The brig was rolling in an ugly fashion, and the manner in which her masts and spars were creaking and groaning augured ill for the stress that was certain to come.

Hurrying to the captain's cabin, Lee looked in. The skipper was drinking, and

Mr. Adams lay on the floor, just inside the doorway. Lee understood. He picked up the second officer and dragged him out.

"Hey! Who's that?" demanded Angel.

Lee took no notice. He carried Mr. Adams into his cabin and quickly looked at the wound. The bleeding had stopped. Nelson Lee only waited to apply iodine and a wet bandage. Then he raced on deck. Running up the poop-ladder, he stood at the rail, overlooking the well of the ship.

Murmurs came from some members of the crew. They were all on deck, uncertain and uneasy. So far they had received no orders. Yet the dullest of them knew that the sails should have been trimmed hours ago.

"Men, we've got to get to work!" shouted Lee urgently. "There's a storm nearly on us, and the officers are useless."

"What you doing?" demanded one of the crew. "You no officer! Come down and get for'ard, where you belong."

"The captain and the mate are helpless," retorted Lee. "Mr. Adams is injured. Do you want us all to drown? This ship's going to capsize unless we——"

"If the officers can't give orders, I take command," broke in Schwartz, the bo'sun. "You nobody!"

Lee took a flying leap down from the poop and landed almost at the bo'sun's feet.

"I'm nobody, eh?" he snapped. "We'll see about that."

Crash!

His fist smashed into Schwartz's face, and the man reeled back. Cursing, he dashed to the attack. But Lee was in no mood for nonsense. Avoiding the mad rush with ease, he floored the man again.

"Well, are you going to take my orders or not?" he asked curtly. "Get aloft, you dog! You others, too! And look sharp about it! Your own lives depend upon it as much as ours! Move, you fools!"

"We'll go aloft, too, sir!" shouted Fenton.

"Good lads; but you can attend to the lower yards," said Lee. "Let the men go——"

He was interrupted by a crackling, blinding flash of lightning which was instantly followed by a clap of thunder which seemed to burst the heavens asunder. Then came the wind. It was only a prolonged gust, but during those few minutes two of the sails were blown to shreds, and a great deal of tackle came hurtling to the decks, causing the men to scatter in all directions.

At last they realised that Lee was their master. Perhaps, too, they felt that their own lives depended upon their activities. They swarmed aloft in a panic, bent upon doing all they could.

The sea was getting heavier, and overhead the clouds had gathered so thickly that a premature darkness was falling. In the middle of it all, Captain Angel staggered up the companion.

"Step lively, you dogs!" he bellowed. "Put some energy into it! The first man who—— Hey! What's this! What are you doin' aft?"

He lumbered up to Nelson Lee.

"I've taken command of this ship—that's what I'm doing aft!" retorted the detective.

"Mutiny, by hokey!" bellowed the skipper.

"Call it mutiny if you like; but when a ship is left to its fate by its captain and officers, it's up to a member of the crew to do his best," retorted Nelson Lee. "The only officer you had, you've crocked."

Captain Angel breathed hard. That clap of thunder had partially sobered him. Dimly, vaguely, he recalled his duties.

"Blame me for a wall-eyed walrus, but you've got grit!" he said with reluctant admiration. "You a blamed landlubber! Where's that skunk of a Cragg? We've got to get busy!"

"I'm glad that you have aroused yourself to a sense of duty, Captain Angel," said Lee acidly. "You can see what the weather's like, but I'm afraid we shan't get through. We'll never get her in trim in time."

"What the blazes do you know?" roared the captain. "Get aloft, you swab! Look arter them men! I appoint you second officer in Mr. Cragg's place. Now then—get busy!"

Lee did not argue. He was, in fact, pleasantly surprised to find that Captain Angel had at last realised something of his responsibilities. Yet he guessed that the man's present friendliness was caused only by the peril of the situation.

Not that the captain took charge for long. Another burst of hot wind swept over the labouring brig; and in the resultant lurch the skipper was pitched headlong down the poop ladder. He fell on his head, and one look convinced Lee that he would be out of action for twelve hours at least.

"Carry this man into his cabin, you fellows!" said Lee curtly. "He tried hard to make a man of himself, but he was too far gone. We've got to fend for ourselves, after all."

Nipper and Watson and Tregellis-West dragged the captain into his cabin, and it was while they were there that the storm broke in all its fury. Its coming was sudden, dramatic.

"Listen!" gasped Nipper.

They heard a whining, droning roar. The next moment the floor heaved up beneath them, and they went hurtling across the slanting deck, to fetch up with violent crashes against the cabin wall.

The air was filled with the thunder of the wind, the rushing of water, and the splintering crashes of timbers. For a moment they all thought that the vessel was about to turn turtle. Then, with an agonised straining of her battered, aged hull, she slowly righted herself.

"The guv'nor!" muttered Nipper. "I wonder if he's safe?"

He was the first to reach the companion. A flood of water swamped down upon him, but he fought his way up. As he reached the poop he caught a glimpse of Nelson Lee's wiry figure at the wheel.

Nipper ran forward, and at the same moment a huge wave crashed over the rail and swept over him. He struggled madly as he felt himself being drawn towards the side of the vessel. His ears were filled with confused sounds. The next moment he was carried overboard—out into the tumbled waste of foam-flecked seas!

CHAPTER 7.

The Drifting Hulk!

“NIPPER!” screamed Tommy Watson wildly.

Nelson Lee, hearing that cry even above the shrieking of the wind, half-turned his head. His face was set. Every ounce of his strength was required at the wheel. He knew not what had happened to the other cubs or to the men. The helmsman had been washed away, and in the nick of time Lee had grabbed the racing wheel and had saved the ship from disaster.

“He’s gone, Chief—he’s gone!” yelled Watson, clutching at Lee’s arm. “Nipper’s been washed overboard!”

“Heaven help him—for I cannot!” muttered Lee agonisingly.

A smother of flying spume blinded him, and he did not even know in which direction to look. But there were two keen eyes which had seen the incident. William Napoleon Browne, clinging to a lower spar, overhead, where he had been attempting to furl a sail, dropped like a stone. He plunged into the foaming water, and succeeded in grabbing Nipper as the latter rose to the surface.

“Steady, brother!” he urged.

“We can’t do it, Browne!” panted Nipper. “We’ll never get back. Oh, you shouldn’t have done it! It means two lives——”

“A Browne never acts with haste, brother,” interrupted William Napoleon. “Take a hold of this—and hope for the best.”

“A rope!” gasped Nipper.

Browne had secured that rope to himself earlier—in case of emergencies. He and Nipper were now carried by another great wave towards the vessel’s side. It was any odds on their being crushed to pulp; but, by a miracle, they swept over the bulwarks on the very crest of the wave. Swiftly Browne hitched the rope round a stanchion.

“Hold tight!” he yelled.

Instead of being swept back with the water, they clung madly, and the sea was robbed of its prey. They tumbled into a boiling, foaming cauldron of water amidships, and the rest was comparatively easy. Before the next wave could come inboard, they fought their way aft and scrambled up the poop ladder.

Even then they only escaped death by an inch or two, for tons of broken spars and tattered sail and rigging came hurtling down

on the spot they had just vacated. The air was filled with the cracking of masts and spars and the ever-increasing howl of the tempest.

“Nipper!” shouted Watson joyously, as he recognised the drenched figures at the top of the ladder. “Chief! Nipper’s safe!”

“Browne did it, sir!” gasped Nipper, running up to Nelson Lee.

“With Heaven’s aid,” replied Lee gravely. “Boys, you’d better get below. There’s no sense in your remaining on deck now, for you can do nothing. There’s only danger up here.”

“But we want to help, guv’nor——”

“You’ll help by doing as I say,” broke in Lee curtly.

It was enough. All the cubs were on the poop, and Lee’s mind was relieved after they had gone below.

IT was a night the boys were likely to remember for many a year.

Sleep was impossible. It was as much as they could do to sit or stand. The storm was raging with terrific intensity, and the Vulture, virtually dismasted, was only kept before the wind by Nelson Lee’s skill. Towards the dawn even this failed, for he suddenly discovered that the steering-gear had given up the ghost. After that the brig drifted, and the previous nightmare became an inferno.

At every moment it seemed that the wretched craft was about to turn turtle. Undoubtedly she would have done, but for the fact that her masts had crashed overside. One of them was still held to the vessel by the yards of clinging tackle, and this sodden mess was dragging astern and acting as a sea anchor. All very well while it lasted; but if a change came, and that wrecked mass ceased to drag astern, it would batter holes in the Vulture’s hull.

Mr. Adams recovered towards dawn, and without thinking of food he went on deck. He found Lee amidships, valiantly working with some of the crew, and cutting away the drifting wreckage.

“Good heavens!” panted the second as he viewed the havoc.

“Lucky to be still afloat, Mr. Adams,” said Lee. “Two men gone, I think—one killed by falling spars, and the other washed overboard.”

“And the boys?”

“All safe, I think—below.”

“That’s a mercy, anyhow,” said Mr. Adams. “My hat! She’s only a hulk! All her masts are gone. Where’s the helmsman?”

“No need for one—her rudder’s dropped off, I think,” replied Lee with a touch of sarcasm. “Her bottom will fall out next. There’s only one boat left, as far as I can see—and I’ll warrant she isn’t seaworthy.”

“What a mess!” said the second mate, aghast.

(Continued on page 34.)

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SHANGHAIED!

(Continued from page 32.)

SLEEP came to the hapless voyagers towards midday. The storm had abated by now, and the heavy clouds were breaking, revealing signs of the blue sky. The wind was dropping, and on every hand the sea was heaving tumultuously.

Most of the boys slept until the following morning, and they were astonished, when coming on deck, to find the sea comparatively calm. The sun was blazing out of a cloudless sky, and nothing but a long, heavy surface swell remained to remind them of the recent storm.

Some members of the crew had attempted to clear up, acting under the captain's orders—who, by this time, was completely sober. But the *Vulture* was no longer a sailing-ship. Her sails had been blown to shreds by the wind, two of her masts had gone completely, and two others were just jagged sticks, their upper sections gone. Her steering out of action, she drifted.

"This is a fine how-do-you-do!" said Stevens, pulling a wry face. "What on earth will happen next? We're nothing but a derelict!"

"Let's be thankful that we're alive, Brother Horace," said Browne. "By all the laws of average, we should have gone to the bottom twenty-four hours ago. I have no hesitation in saying that we owe our lives to Brother Lee. At the moment of crisis he sprang into the breach."

"Good old gov'nor!" said Nipper enthusiastically.

The boys automatically went for'ard—which, seeing that they were members of the crew, was their rightful place. Nelson Lee was on the poop with Captain Angel. The latter was a much-chastened man.

"I reckon I've got to thank you, mister, for saving us," said the skipper.

"It's a pity we couldn't save the ship," commented Lee briefly.

"My fault. I'm the captain, and I accept the blame," said the Old Man contritely. "Darn my hide! I deserve this. Yes, mister! And when we struggle into port—if ever we do—I'll do all I can to put myself right with you."

Lee looked at him thoughtfully.

"As man to man, Captain Angel, do you really expect to make port," he asked. "Our instruments are useless, and we don't even know our position. If another storm hits us, we're certain to go down. We may have enough food for some weeks, but I doubt it. The sea's got in, and a great deal of stuff is spoilt. As for the water, we're short. That's the blunt truth."

"Mebbe we'll sight another sail before the week's out," said the captain vaguely.

NELSON Lee was convinced that the skipper was insincere. His expressions of regret were false. Something was brewing.

This suspicion became an absolute conviction later on. The captain and the first mate kept to the saloon, and they barred anybody else from entering—save Schwartz and one or two others.

A few members of the crew were loyal to Lee, for they knew that it was he who had saved them. Now that this disaster had befallen the vessel every scrap of discipline had gone. The two parties were more definite than ever. Lee, the boys, Mr. Adams, and a few men; and, on the other side, the captain, the mate, and the remainder of the ruffianly crew.

"There's treachery brewing," said Lee to Mr. Adams that evening. "We'll do well to keep a watch on Messrs Angel & Co., old man."

"But what can they do?" asked the second officer. "I mean, how can they harm us in any way? We're all in the same fix, as far as I can see."

"Nevertheless, Angel means mischief," declared Lee. "I'm certain of it."

It was towards midnight that Nelson Lee obtained definite evidence of his suspicions. Everybody was supposed to be asleep; for there was no sense in keeping the normal watches now. The skipper had personally told every member of the crew to get as much sleep as possible. There was hard work ahead if they were to get the vessel in any degree shipshape.

These orders had struck Lee as being peculiar. So he didn't sleep. While the others slumbered on, he lay in his bunk, listening. He didn't actually expect anything to happen to-night, but he was ready. And, sure enough, unusual sounds came to his ears. The creaking of tackle, an occasional bump, stealthy footsteps.

He crept up the fo'c'sle ladder and peered out, but could see nothing. The night was intensely black. There was no moon, and thin clouds obscured the stars. After a while, Lee fancied he saw movements amidships on the port side.

Grim and puzzled, he stole aft like a cat. If he had been expecting anything, he had expected some sort of attack. That which was really happening had never occurred to him—for, on the face of it, it seemed madness.

The longboat was resting alongside. Captain Angel was just lowering himself into it. Lee, running up, saw Mr. Cragg and at least four other men in the boat. He saw casks and bundles, too.

"What's this?" demanded Lee sharply.

The captain swore.

"Pull away!" he commanded. "Thought you'd interfere with us, eh, my hearty? But we've beat you!"

The longboat drifted off, and a chorus of raucous laughs sounded.

"You're welcome to the old tub," jeered the captain. "When the next blow comes she'll go under—and you haven't got a chance of getting away because there's no other boat. We ain't got much chance,

either—but, by hokey, we've got more than you 'ave!"

Lee felt a surge of fury arise within him, but he checked the hot words which came to his lips. What was the use? Like the curs they were, these men were deserting the ship, and taking the only available boat.

MR. ADAMS and Olsen and the others were not really sorry when they heard the news upon awakening.

"Good riddance!" said the second officer. "They're just plain fools, that's all. We stand more chance on this hulk than they do in that open boat."

And then came the shock.

When the cook went for water, he found none. The ship's casks were empty! The only fresh water in the whole vessel was a

gallon or two in the galley. Then it was that Nelson Lee understood.

"The infernal dogs!" he said tensely. "Don't you understand, Adams? They knew there wasn't enough water to last all of us for more than a week. They've taken the lot—and it means a month's supply for them. That means they've got a chance of sailing into a steamship route. And we're left on this hulk to die of thirst."

It was a ghastly prospect. Yet, had they only known it, these unwilling adventurers were only just on the threshold of the real adventure!

THE END.

(Next week—Nelson Lee and his assistants trapped in the dreaded Sargasso Sea! Look out for this enthralling complete yarn entitled: "The Island of Ships!")

Play up and play the game

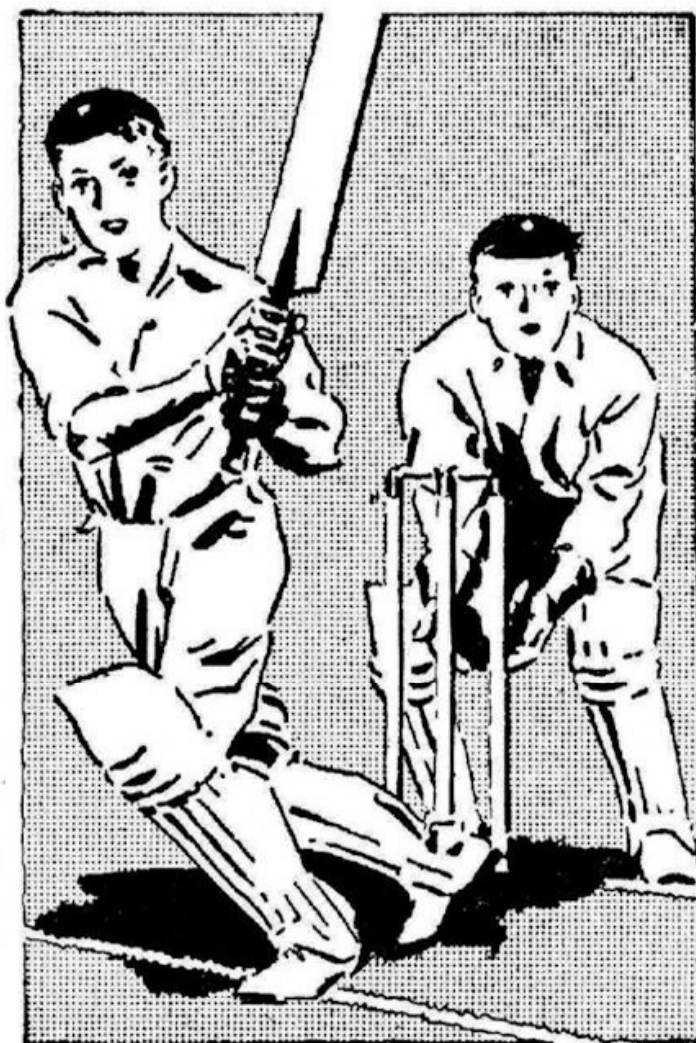
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E.K.46

A SCREAMINGLY FUNNY YARN IN WHICH YOU WILL MEET THE—

THREE "K" BRETHREN!



Like the gallant knights of old, Ern, Earl of Backstreet, and his deadly rival, Dicky Dyke, meet in a grim battle "to the death."

Atta Boy!

DAWN broke silently one splendid July morning to find Ern, Earl of Backstreet, descending the hall stairs on tiptoe. Having trodden on a stair that wasn't there, he completed the journey with more rapidity than dignity, and the powerful voice of Mrs. Drawback shattered the silent on-march of the new-born day.

"Ern, is that you? Wachter doin' of?"

The earl picked himself up from the front-door mat and hoped to escape undetected, but Mrs. D. was quite sure that her ears had not deceived her, and she appeared in person at the top of the stairs.

"Wachter doin' of, Ern?" she demanded again, happily not seeing her son clothed in her husband's lost nightshirt upon which, thanks to Ern's artistic effort and a bottle of red ink, gleamed the Cross of St. George.

"I—I thought I'd get up early, mother, an' dig the garden."

The news came as so great a shock that Mrs. D. limped back to bed, overcome. She couldn't believe her ears, she couldn't, but four hours later she believed her eyes, for the cabbage patch remained undisturbed!

Making exit, Ern threw out his chest, for in the roadway stood Sam, Squire of Gas-house Property—Sam was the second member of the Three "K" Brethren—ready to escort him to the scene of battle, for it will be remembered that the Earl of Backstreet or Dicky Dyke, or both, were to die in the lists that morning.

Ern mounted Micky, the motor-bike, with

a strange misgiving troubling his heart. Sam, trusty squire, had permanently borrowed his father's coal scuttle, which he had converted into a petrol tank, a necessity which the bike lacked the night previously.

Micky, fine steed, was of the push-start variety, mostly push and sometimes a start. Sam, squire and unpaid servant of the noble earl, had sawn down a neighbour's wireless pole, at the end of which he had fixed a spike from Mrs. Drawback's railing, and proudly he presented the lance to his lord and master.

"If I die, good squire and faithful friend," declared the earl, deeply touched, "avenge me! I shall not rest until that vile miscreant rests beneath the earth."

"Righto, mate, but the time's gettin'," remarked the squire, anxious to see the blood flow.

"To norse, to norse!" cried the earl, as he jumped into the saddle, and, poising his lance over the handle-bars, gave the word. Straining every muscle and nerve, the good squire pushed. A promising purr came from the ancient steed, followed by an echoing backfire.

Blanched faces appeared at windows, strong women clutched their young, and brave men cried: "Take cover; air raid!" Ern, Earl of Backstreet, was more surprised

than anyone to find himself on the move, and his squire was unprepared for such spirited activity on the part of the war-horse.

It happened on a sharp bend. Sam found himself on his stomach and his face in a puddle, while Ern felt himself hurtling through the air at about fifty miles p.h. (Greenwich mean time.)

Micky stopped as suddenly as she had started. The earl didn't! He rose through the air and made a bee-line for Mrs. Smith's (not *the* Smiths, you know!) parlour window. The lance penetrated the glass and sent Mrs. S's vase and fern across the room.

Mr. S. protruded his sleepy head from an upper window and polluted the air with his own idea of Esperanto. Hastily rescuing his lance, Ern, Earl of Backstreet, sprang into the saddle, and Sam arrived to set the steed in motion.

She suddenly went, scorching down the street, with the worthy squire dragging in the dust and Mr. S's voice dying in the distance.

The "Meadow of Blood" was reached. It presented a gay scene so early in the morning. Dicky Dyke was there, truly magnificent in armour suit made from a dust-bin bearing the legend "SANITARY." He, too, was mounted upon a motor-bike. His elder brother would be looking for it at six o'clock.

"By my trusted sword," breathed Ern, successfully and surprisingly bringing his steed, and consequently the dragged squire, to a standstill, "the villain is well and truly mounted."

At that moment my Lord of Alleyway arrived, seated in a coach drawn by six thorough-bred rag-tag-and-bob-tail kids, whose mothers did not know they were out. An observant eye would have seen that Mr. Tate (of sugar fame) was the designer and builder of the human-propelled vehicle. My lord, incidentally, was the third member of the Three "K" Brethren.

Stopping close to the knightly Ern, the weighty Lord Lou rose, revealing the fact that his body was clothed in his mother's gaily-patterned tablecloth.

"Garn, swank!" hissed Dicky Dyke.

Fatty Lou had likewise brought his mother's aluminium stewing pan. In the bottom he had cut some slits. He tied it over the face of the earl, who viewed the scene through the gratings.

The hour of battle was at hand. A sleepy-looking bull regarded the preparations with blurry eyes. The spectators, half the youths from the neighbourhood, were thrilled.

The legality of Dicky Dyke's lance was raised by Sam. It was a toasting fork at the end of broomstick. The argument was that, having three points, and Ern's lance only one, it gave him a three-to-one chance.

The earl's voice, muffled, filtered through the stew-pan to the effect that as his lance was seven feet against Dicky Dyke's four, the matter was quits.

Lord Lou, with an eye to business, became a bookmaker. Three chunks of halfpenny toffee (unsampled) and a marble against an orange were his odds.

Flight of the Brave!

SILENCE fell. A minor disaster caused delay. As Dicky Dyke proudly strode towards his steed, the straps holding the dust-bin over his manly bosom broke and it slipped, with the result he was sent head first into a small but smelly pond.

Five minutes later, smelling like a duck-pond out for a stroll, he was ready to do battle, and sat astride his steed regarding his "anniversary," as he called the earl, at the farther extremity of the meadow.

There were tears in the eyes of Lord Lou as his friend and boon companion, the earl, mounted his steed, due to the butt of the earl's lance conking him quite unexpectedly under the nose.

Micky opened fire with a thunderous roar that made the sleepy bull lift his head and bellow in sympathy.

With a jump and a report, Ern, Earl of Backstreet, was off, lance poised over the handle-bars and the stew-pan helmet half-way round the back of his neck owing to the violent vibrations.

Dicky Dyke slammed into gear and scattered dust and stones among his cheering supporters as he roared up the field. The knightly pair crouched even as the knights of old crouched; they charged.

Lord Lou, overcome, sat heavily upon his coach. He was assisted from the wreck by his faithful attendants, with a plank sticking to a certain portion of his anatomy the Latin name for which the author has forgotten.

It promised to be a gory battle. Both gathered speed as they careered down the "Meadow of Blood."

The stew-pan by this time was at the back of the earl's head. A bump nearly shot him off. The spike on the wireless pole went instead, and landed on the head of good

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JUND



King Henry VIII (impersonated by Master George Cabbage). "Henry" said things in modern English, for the spillover of Mrs. Drawback's railing was weighty.

The next few minutes were hectic. Dicky Dyke hardly had time to see the subsequent happenings—but he certainly felt them.

The earl's lance caught Dicky Dyke in the place where, if he lived, he would put his breakfast, and the injured one rose bodily and without effort from the saddle of his steed and rolled in the dust.

The deafening cheers and the groans which arose must have been heard a hundred yards away.

Drunk with victory, the noble earl lost his head. He thundered on, straight for the blurry-eyed bull that watched his swift approach with calm indifference.

My earl's lance caught the animal on the forehead. There came a bellowing roar and down went the bull's head. Veering masterfully four points to the westwards, Ern, Earl of Backstreet, escaped the charge and his heart almost became a chip of ice at the thunder of passing hoofs.

Before the infuriated beast had chance to change gear and reverse, the noble earl was in full flight from the "Meadow of Blood," with the supporters of both parties well ahead.

Dicky Dyke lay on the dewy grass, eyes shut, his still purring steed panting on its side. He opened an eye to see whether he was being acclaimed a dead hero, only to view the approach of the maddened bull.

Dicky Dyke sprang into the saddle and was away, me lads, with the triumphant Earl of Backstreet between him and the bull.

Lord Lou was in full flight, with a plank of Mr. Tate's sugar box still dangling from his anatomy. Sam, trusty squire, expressed a sudden opinion that it was time for him to go to his newspaper round.

Within three minutes from when first the charge was made, the "Meadow of Blood" was empty of human beings, and ditto a bull. The earl took a northerly direction, while Dicky Dyke chose the southern road.

The bellowing bull, with its head down and its eyes gleaming, followed Dicky Dyke.

Knightly Kourage!

THE town was stirring for the activities of another day when a resounding crash echoed along High Street.

A hundred heads appeared at as many windows. They saw a band of strangely garbed youths, with wooden swords and some even in gleaming armour, racing down the High Street.

Lord Lou had caused the crash. A chunk of orange peel plus a hearty desire to keep the pursuing bull in the rear, and caused him to plunge head first into Mr. Thake's window. About fifty saucepans clattered into the street, and the noble lord found himself snowed under by washing powders and soaps.

Into doorways, up lamp-posts, even down

an open manhole, the fleeing bands dispersed, leaving a truly valiant gentleman, Dicky Dyke, to the activities of the maddened bull.

The inhabitants, after the bull had passed, rushed out in garments mostly deemed exclusive to the house. They all said that something must be done. A youth must not be gored to death by a mad bull without something being done first in an attempt to save him.

The men therefore selected such weapons as were at hand and followed.

Mr. Kute, undertaker, recognising Master Dyke, hastened to the mother to secure the job at a cut rate, before his rival in last rites could get there; for death, grim and cold, hovered in the High Street that morning.

Lord Lou emerged from the washing powders and soaps and followed in the tail of the race, a saucepan in his hand.

At Mermaid Avenue the desperate Dicky Dyke endeavoured to take the bend at a cool fifty m.p.h. (Greenwich breakfast time). And didn't. A pillar box, a fire alarm and a water hydrant interfered with his progress, and he ended up in a fruiterer's window.

The fire alarm later brought the engine to the scene, while the torrent escaping from the hydrant changed the avenue into a scene of ancient Venice.

The bull, terrified by the commotion and sounds in his rear, plunged on in a frenzied attempt to escape. Circling two blocks of buildings, it suddenly emerged at the tail end of its less speedy pursuers.

Lord Lou, feeling he was safe from attack, was running at the side of the mayor, explaining how he would deal with the bull if he had the chance.

A bellowing roar in his rear presented the chance. Screwing up his eyes, he swept round the saucepan and smote his worship the mayor an awful konk. The mayor's cries of "Murder!" drew the attention of his fellow townsmen, who, seeing the bull almost on their heels, scattered.

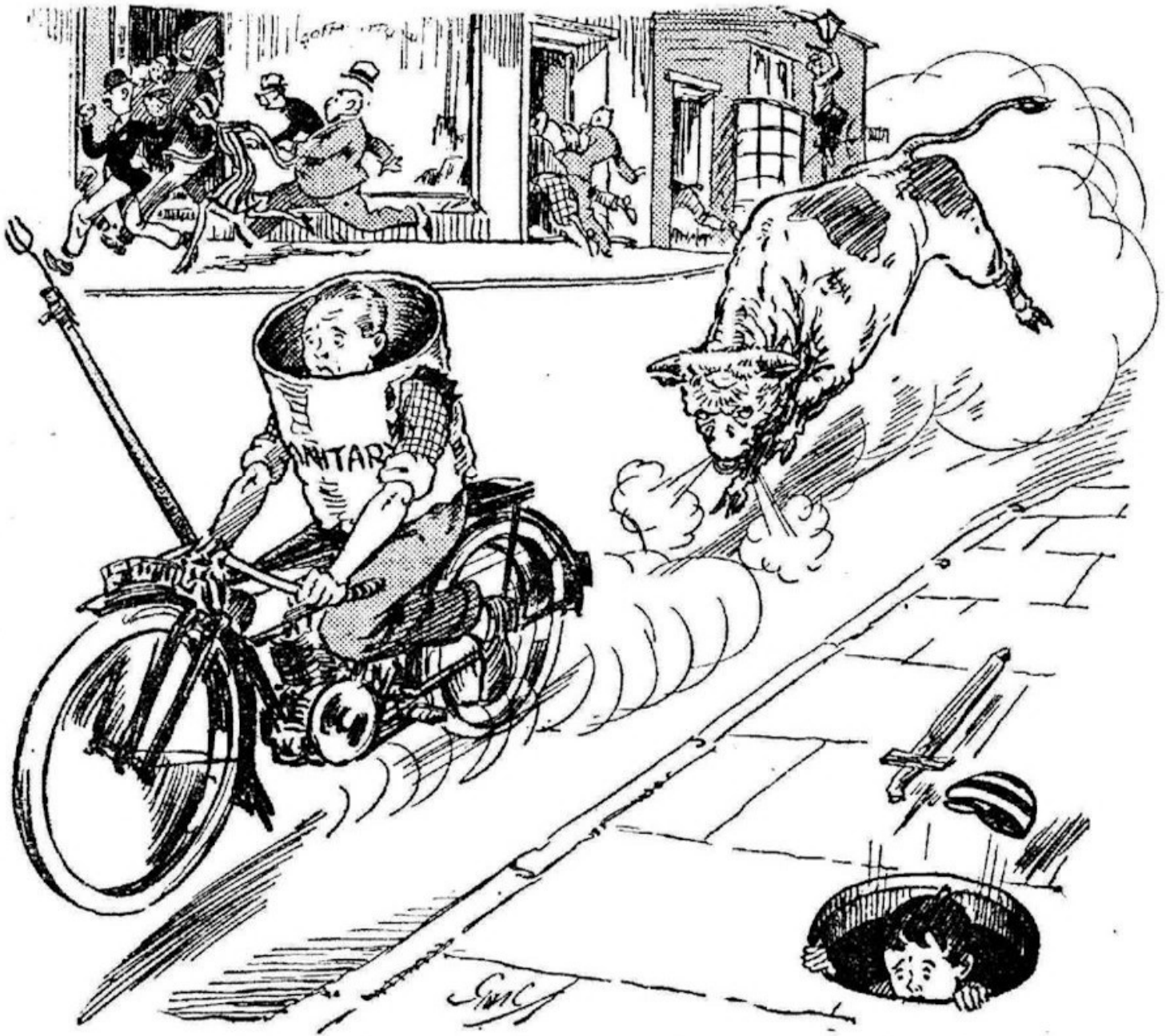
The tablecloth Lord Lou wore as a cloak possessed much vivid red. The optics of the bull observed the fact and felt his blood heat at the insult.

Matters were getting serious. Lord Lou saw a bike which some frantic owner had left in the gutter. He sprang astride and pedalled with all his fifteen stones in the effort.

The wind whistled past, and the bull roared behind. Round and round the square went the affrighted youth, ringing his bell. Round and round the square followed the bull, his fiery eyes fixed upon the tablecloth fluttering in the breeze.

The valiant townsmen, including the mayor, hurled articles from upper windows and from other vantage points. Saucepans, china, glass, fruit and coal sailed through the air, and a large percentage struck the frantic Lord of Alleyway.

"He'll be killed!" screamed a woman.



Everybody dived to safety, leaving Dicky Dyke at the mercy of the maddened bull.

The square was deserted but for the pursued and pursuer. The town councillors hastily assembled round the mayor. Someone produced a shot gun and someone else fired it rather, it is to be feared, excitedly, and someone else, to be sure, won't be able to sit down for days. Half a pound of shot doesn't give one a comfortable feeling.

Meanwhile, Ern, Earl of Backstreet, had stirred the dust of many a pleasant country lane, fully believing the bull was close on his back tyre.

He raced on, his lance poised over the handle-bars, his frightened and bulging eyes fixed on the road ahead.

Time and circumstance brought him back to the town. He came roaring along the High Street. The stew-pan by this time had worked round to his face again.

The brave Earl of Backstreet raced on. He crashed lance, bike and his own head into the fifth rib of the bull. The bull skidded at top speed and collapsed heavily against the lamp standard, which broke and fell on the bull, which will be Bovril this time next week.

The brave earl was turning somersaults in mid-air and landed amid a gaping crowd farther down the street.

Lord Lou, making his 210th circle round the square, smote the corpse of the bull and finally ended up alongside Dicky Dyke, intermingled with fruit and vegetables.

The mayor rushed forward, as soon as the earl landed, and publicly declared he had never seen such courage. The town cheered.

Dicky Dyke heard the sweet words of praise. He saw his rival and hated enemy the pride and admiration of the town. Wriggling himself free from the cage of oranges into which he had landed, he rushed forward, crying:

"'Im an 'ero? Avaunt, he's nothing but a scurvy knave! I'll unmask him. I'll reveal 'im in all 'is true colours!"

Ern, Earl of Backstreet, laughed scornfully.

"Avaunt, vile miscreant!" he cried in the teeth of Dicky Dyke, the envious. "Do your worst. The Three 'K' Brethren is unconquerable!"

But the bold earl knew that Dicky Dyke would bring dishonour upon him if he could!

THE END.

(More about the mirth-making Three "K" Brethren next week, chums—in a corking yarn which has a laugh in every line!)

THIS GRAND SERIAL BY POPULAR DAVID GOODWIN HAS ONLY JUST STARTED!

Knights of the Road!



"I'll Win
Back Fernhall!"

VANE FORRESTER started and changed colour. He snatched up the will.

"Ah!" he cried. "You nearly tricked him into it, did you? But not quite, my lad! This signature is witnessed by that dolt Oxham and yourself, and it is worthless. No one who benefits by a will may sign as witness to it, and that's the law!"

Trembling with rage—for avarice was his one great passion, and he saw himself nearly deprived of a hundred guineas of his spoils—Vane picked up a quill to draw it through the codicil. But he paused. The rest of the will would have to be sworn in Chancery, and it would not do for him to tamper with any part of it.

"What you say may be true," said Dick; "but the courts will not uphold you on those grounds. Oxham witnessed the codicil, and, though you get the estates, the hundred guineas will come to me!"

"Will it? That we shall see!" snarled

*In which young Dick Forrester
makes the acquaintance of Dick
Turpin, highwayman!*

Vane furiously, for he did not feel certain about it himself. "Am I to lose a hundred guineas? I see how it was—there is just that

sum in the strong room, and he thought—"

Vane checked himself; glancing at Dick. "Whether the money comes to me or not," cried the boy fiercely, "I will take nothing at your hands, Uncle Vane! If I must earn my bread I will learn my own trade, and none that you set me to!"

"You will make a pretty figure at earning your bread!" said his uncle mockingly. "What can you do? What did your father teach you to carry you through life?"

"He taught me three things," replied Dick, "and they will carry me farther than all your knavery will carry you."

"And they are?" said Vane darkly.

"To ride straight, shoot straight, and tell the truth!" said Dick.

"Poor meat for an empty stomach," sneered Vane, "and of small use! I am master of Fernhall, yet I can do neither of the two first."

"And the last still less!" returned Dick with a curling lip.

"You young viper!" hissed his uncle. "I have had enough of your poisonous tongue. To-morrow I take you and that brother of yours to Duncansby School, which lies without the borders of Newcastle, and we shall see how soon that breaks your spirit."

Dick turned on his heel and walked out of the room. He picked up one of the rapiers as he went, and Vane winced again, but the boy only laughed scornfully and went his way.

He went down the staircase with a heavy heart, and found Ralph prostrate with grief. He was a gentle, lovable boy, this Ralph Forrester, and as handsome as his brother, but without Dick's iron-hard thews and wild, masterful spirit. The elder boy was sadly troubled how to break the news of their beggary to his brother, for Ralph was little fitted to bear the buffets of the world. But when Dick told the tale, to his joy, he found Ralph bore it well.

"That animal to be master of Fernhall!" exclaimed Ralph, drawing himself up, and his nostrils quivered. "Why, he is but half of our blood, and that half watered with his own base spawn! If he has won the place by trickery and holds it at law, let him have it, but do not let us stay under his roof. Oh, Dick, what a small thing it is now that we have lost our father!"

"Well said, Ralph!" answered Dick. "Stiffen your lip, boy, and bear it like a Forrester. I'll win back Fernhall some day."

"Master Ralph is wanted in the library at once," said a grating, unpleasant voice behind the boys.

Dick turned and saw a weasely, oily-looking man in black, very thin and lank, with a lantern jaw, shifty red eyes, and long, moist hands that played with each other as he spoke. It was Samuel Slink, Vane's confidential body servant, and there was an under-current of insolent triumph in his tones.

"Who gave you leave to come here, you dog?" said Dick, turning on him fiercely. "Out—out into the servants' hall, and stay there!"

Samuel Slink scuttled out hurriedly, throwing an evil glance behind him. Dick urged Ralph to pay no attention to Vane's summons, but the boy preferred to hear what

his uncle had to say, and he went. Dick sat down forlornly by the table, and presently the old steward came in quietly with food.

"Take it away, Oxham!" said Dick wretchedly.

"You must eat, sir," said Oxham softly. "Pray keep your strength up."

"Ay, I shall need it!" said Dick bitterly. "But you serve a new master from now, Oxham. Fernhall is not mine; it goes to Uncle Vane. I leave the place for ever to-morrow."

Job Oxham stared dumbly. The tears rose to his eyes.

"Then I must go, too, sir," he said, "though the Oxhams have served the Forresters for three hundred years. Would you tell me, sir, where you go?"

"I should like greatly to take you with me," said Dick with a weary smile. "But I go to school again, it seems, though I am seventeen, and look older. I think I shall go. Nothing matters now. Duncansby School, near Newcastle, is the place."

"Duncansby, sir?" exclaimed Oxham in horror. "Pray do not think of it! Those northern schools are dreadful places, and are used chiefly by those who have children they wish to lose. They are flogged, ill-treated, starved to death there. And Duncansby is one of the hardest!"

Dick laughed a hard, mirthless laugh. "Like enough," he said. "I shall go, then, if only to see if further misery can harm me. I can feel the devil rising in me, Oxham!"

The Hold-up!

"**C**EASE that snivelling, Ralph! Your case is no worse than Dick's!"

Ralph Forrester started as if he had been stung, and choked himself into silence with an effort. He had been crouching in the corner seat of the coach, and his misery had overcome him and caused him to sob softly, hoping the rattle of the windows would drown the sound. But the angry voice of his uncle checked him, and after that he would have died sooner than show his wretchedness.

"Cheer up, old boy!" whispered Dick. It was cold and comfortless enough in all conscience, and the coach—the private coach of the Forrester's—was unlit within, for Vane chose to save the oil.

THE OPENING CHAPTERS IN BRIEF.

DICK FORRESTER, young and strong, an expert horseman and swordsman, awaited the summons with a heavy heart. It came—and Dick went to look upon his father, John Forrester, Squire of Fernhall, for the last time. For Old John is dying. He springs a bombshell by telling Dick that he is leaving all his vast estates and fortune to

VANE FORRESTER, Dick's rascally uncle, and that the boy will have to go out into the world to learn a trade. This is owing to some family curse; to leave his fortune to Dick, Old John feebly explains, would bring dishonour upon the Forresters. Then, after a dose of a very potent medicine, Old John forgets all about the curse; first he adds a codicil to his will, bequeathing a hundred guineas to Dick, and afterwards makes a new will leaving everything to his son—but before he can sign it he dies. Thus everything passes into the hands of Vane Forrester. Vane tells Dick that he is going to send him to a school in the North, together with the boy's brother,

RALPH FORRESTER. Angrily Dick refuses to be beholden to his uncle. "Give me my hundred guineas," he says, "and I will go out into the world and never darken your doors again—and take Ralph with me!"

(Now read on.)

The rain thrashed and drove on the windows and roof as the equipage rattled along on its way to the North, on the road to Duncansby School. It would take four days to get there; for travelling, in the days of King George II., was not of the quickest.

Vane had decided to take the boys himself, and in the private coach, to keep them under his charge and see that they were lodged in the place he had chosen for them.

Dick had settled into a dull, listless mood, caring little what happened to himself. Vane's rough speech to his brother set him tingling, however, and for a moment he was at the point of flinging himself at his uncle's throat. But he held himself back, for he reflected it might make matters worse for Ralph. Besides, it would do little good, for Vane was a powerful man, and Dick was unarmed.

"Confound this night travelling, and these lonely roads!" muttered Vane, hugging something dark that lay in his lap. "I shall not know a moment's ease till I lodge this in Norwich Bank."

Dick, leaning back in his seat, could just see the anxious gleam in his uncle's eyes, and smiled sardonically. He knew well enough what was in the black leather bag that Vane nursed so carefully. It contained gold, partly Vane's and partly the hundred guineas of John Forrester's which the codicil had willed to Dick, but which Vane had no intention of giving up.

These guineas were Dick's by every law of right and justice. They were all that remained to him out of the great estates he had been deprived of by his uncle's trickery, yet there seemed every chance of the gold also falling to Vane's insatiable greed. Dick was not brooding over their loss, however, or concerning himself about them. He was thinking, with grim amusement, how poor a figure his uncle cut, and, after all, there was nothing to be scared about.

The monotonous rattle of the windows and thresh of the rain gradually lulled Dick into a doze, in which the events of the last two days were mixed up in a strange, uneasy hotch-potch of dreams. The sullen, dogged mood of his race when oppressed or held under, the resolve to bear anything rather than let his conquerer see he was hurt, filled the boy, and the slumbering devil in his blood was kept down.

A sharp voice broke through his dreams, and he felt the coach draw up with a sudden jerk.

"Hold in your cattle, you knave, unless you want a bullet in your skull! Gather up your reins!"

The words came in loud, commanding tones from the outer darkness, and Dick heard the coachman's tones in reply:

"Don't shoot, sir! Pray, don't shoot! I obey! I surrender!"

"A highwayman!" exclaimed Vane, with a frightened oath; and his face grew ghastly white.

He hurriedly stuffed the leathern bag he was nursing into the locker beneath the seat,

and at the same moment the coach window dropped with a crash, and a big horse-pistol, gripped in a neatly-gloved hand, showed itself.

"Good even, gentlemen," said the voice that had spoken before. "It is a plaguy, wild night, and I will not trouble you to come out into the wet. Hand your purses over, and you may continue your journey."

Dick Forrester laughed aloud—a savage, careless laugh.

"And good-even to you, Sir Highwayman!" he said. "You have made a fat haul, for, though my brother and I are on our way to school and without a shilling of pocket-money, this gentleman has a bagful of guineas under the seat!"

"Hold your tongue, you cub!" cried his uncle furiously. "It is false, sir. I have nothing but this purse of silver, and though it cuts me to the heart to part with it, I give it up freely!"

"'Od's blood," said the highwayman. And as he came within the glow of the off-side lamp Dick saw that he was a well-knit man, with a dark, bronzed face, yet not ill-looking, and that he rode a magnificent coal-black mare. "Do you take me for a common wayside ruffler, to be put off with silver? I am he they call Richard Turpin, of Hampstead, and if you do not want that purse rammed down your throat, sir, put it away. I give you ten seconds to hand out the leathern bag I saw you stow under the seat!"

"What!" cried Ralph Forrester, who showed no fear at the intrusion. "Is it Dick Turpin himself? Let me see, Dick!"

He scrambled across to the open window, and looked at the rider with wondering eyes.

"No, no, no!" shrieked Vane. "I cannot give it up! I left it at home; it is not here!"

"Unless you produce it before I have counted ten," said the stranger coolly, "I shall shoot you through the head and take it myself. One—two—three—four—five—six—"

Vane sat trembling, his greed still mastering him, till Dick Turpin had counted seven and then, with a shriek, he dived beneath the seat, snatched out the bag, and thrust it into Turpin's hands.

"Just in time!" said Turpin. "I feared I should have to waste a charge on your miserly carcase." He opened the bag and shook it. "Not so bad," he observed. "Three hundred guineas if there's one, and I'm a judge of coin in the bulk. Ecod, young sir," he added, with a roguish glance at Dick, "your father will be very little beholden to you for telling me of this."

"My father!" cried Dick. "I have no father, or you would have been a dead man by now. That is my uncle who sits whimpering and rocking on the seat; and as for the gold, a hundred guineas of it are mine, but I would rather see it in your hands than his, for he is the bigger rogue of the two."

"Faith!" cried Dick Turpin, laughing heartily. "And how did so young a gentleman come by a hundred guineas?"

In a few words, for the very joy of seeing

The Forrester squirm in his seat, Dick told Turpin the story. The highwayman's smile faded, and he looked mighty scornfully at the boy.

"Od's wounds," he cried, "you have a very dirty knave for an uncle, young sir! There's many a gibbet has been built for me, if I follow my trade in the open and at the pistol's point. Such work as this stinks in my nostrils, and since a hundred of the lines are rightly yours"—he counted them swiftly into a leather wallet he took from his side, and handed it to Dick with a courtly bow—"take them, young sir."

"Faith, and I will," said Dick, bowing with still more grace, "since they are mine; and thank you for your pretty courtesy, sir!"

"Ah, that is well!" cried Vane, starting up and attempting to snatch the wallet. "Give them back to me, Dick!"

"Hands off, Vane Forrester!" said Dick hotly. "I have come by my own, and neither man nor devil shall take it from me now!"

"You young cub!" shrieked his uncle. "The curse of the Forresters' is settling on you. I can see it—see it plain. Give me

that money. You've got the same temper in you as your fool of a father, the old—"

He staggered back into the corner of the coach with a cry, for Dick, his eyes blazing, had dealt him a heavy buffet across the mouth.

"Say but one more word against his memory," said the boy hoarsely, "and I'll horsewhip you. You are not fit to take his name on your lips. I leave you now to go my own road, and if you have any love for your own skin, see that you do not cross my path."

He leaped out of the coach, strapped the wallet to his side, and strode to the coach-horses, which were kicking and plunging with fright. Opening a small sharp knife, he cut loose the off-leader, in spite of the coachman's tearful protests, and leaped on his back, while the highwayman looked on in laughter and amazement.

"Why, my young cockerel," he said, "are you going to join me on the road?"

(Is this Dick's intention—to join forces with the notorious Turpin? Don't fail to read next Wednesday's enthralling instalment, chums.)

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