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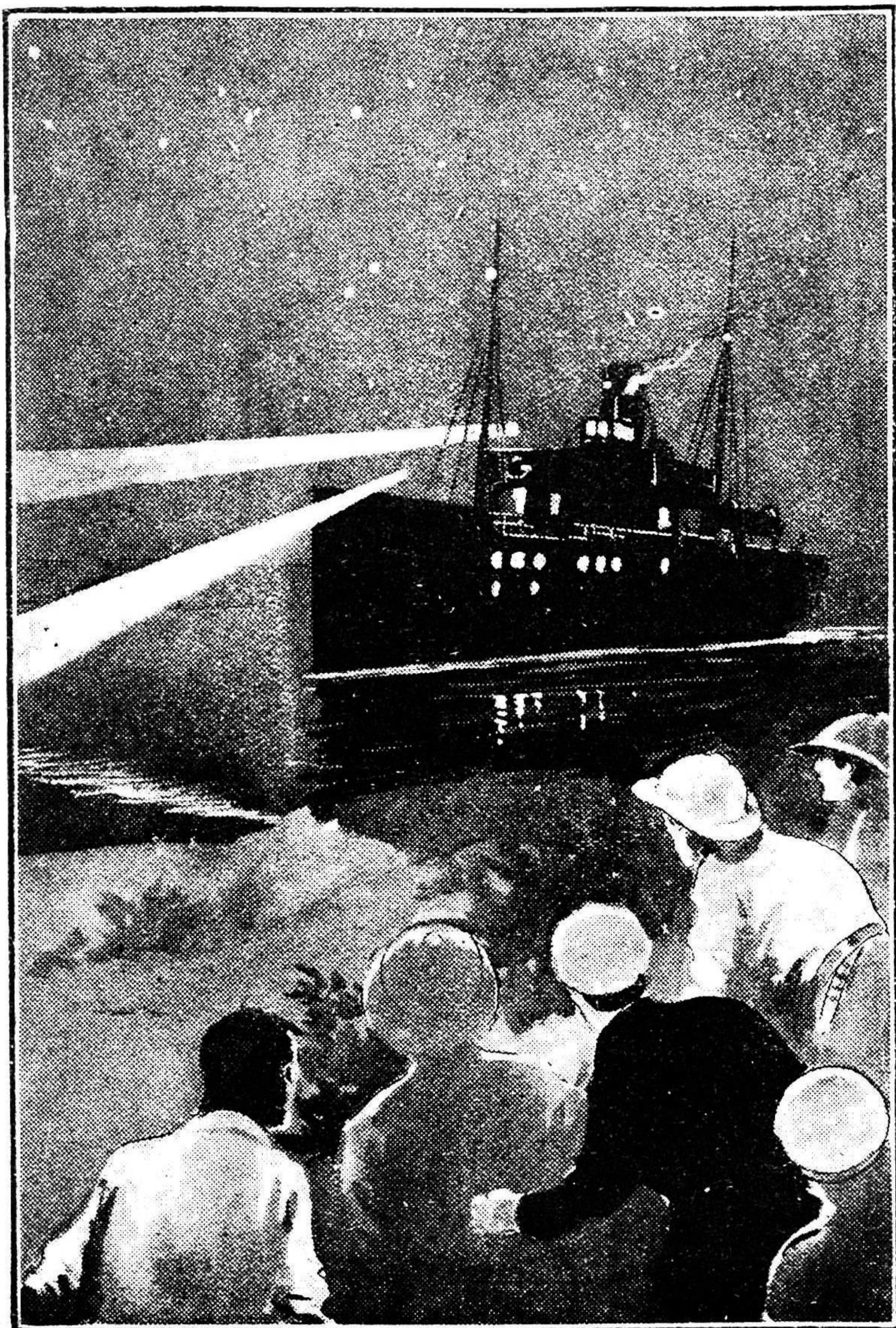
TWO
MAGNIFICENT
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FOOTBALLERS

GIVEN AWAY THIS WEEK.



THE SCHOOLBOY CRUSOES!

BEGIN READING TO-DAY THIS FIRST STORY OF OUR GRAND
HOLIDAY SERIES OF SCHOOLBOY ADVENTURES ABROAD!



The Lotus Lily was near at hand. Soon she would be abreast of us, and then would come the time for action !”

The Schoolboy Crusoes!

The Opening
Story of Our Grand
Holiday Adventure Series.

(RELATED THROUGHOUT
BY NIPPER.)

CHAPTER I.

THE RUMOUR THAT CAME TRUE!

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH grinned.
"What rot!" he exclaimed. "You ass! You don't expect me to believe a yarn like that, I suppose?"

"But it's true!" shouted Church excitedly.

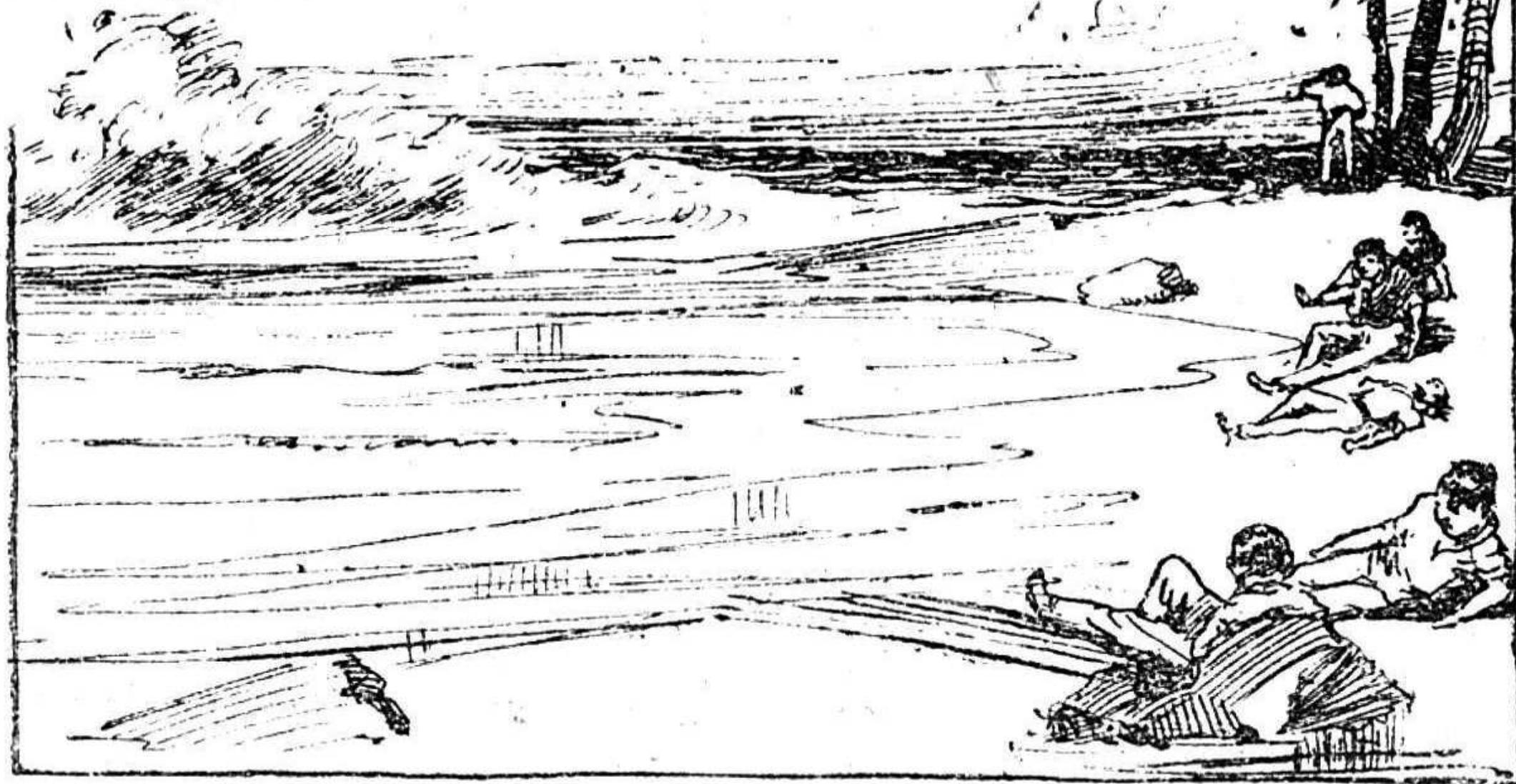
"Rubbish!"

"I tell you——"

"It may be possible to spoof you, my son, but you can't spoof me!" interrupted Handforth. "Somebody's been pulling your leg. That's one thing I pride myself on—nobody can ever pull my leg! I'm too fly!"

Both Church and McClure nearly collapsed on the spot. If there was one thing that Handforth was more susceptible to than another, it was leg-pulling. It was always a matter of supreme ease to spoof Handy up to the neck.

But Handforth himself ridiculed the very idea, and looked upon it as the height of absurdity. If there was one absolutely impossible thing in this world, that one thing was to have his leg pulled.



"Oh, don't be silly!" exclaimed Church. "It's true—every word of it! If you don't believe me, go and ask Nipper—he'll tell you. I've just heard it from him myself, and—"

"I wouldn't be such a fathead as to mention the matter," put in Handforth. "Do you think I want all the fellows grinning at me? A trip to the Pacific and the Solomon Islands! Huh! Starting on Saturday! Huh! Three weeks before the end of the term! Huh! Rot!"

"It seems a bit thick, I know," put in McClure. "But it's true, all the same. Nipper got up especially early this morning—before the rising bell—because he wanted to make arrangements. And, as a matter of fact, he formally invited the three of us to join Lord Dorrimore's party."

Handforth glared.

"Are you going to shut up?" he snapped.

"But, my dear chap, we've got to decide," said Church quickly.

"I've decided already!"

"What?"

"I'm not going," said Handforth. "I wouldn't go if Lord Dorrimore begged of me on his bended knees! Who in thunder wants to go pottering about among the Solomon Islands? Might just as well go to Whitechapel!"

"Whitechapel!" gasped Church.

"Of course!" said Handforth. "I expect there's nothing but Jews there!"

"Jews!" howled McClure.

"Don't yell like that!" exclaimed Handforth, frowning. "Jews—yes! Ain't they called the Solomon Islands? That's Jewish, I suppose? I expect these giddy islands are a Hebrew colony—"

"You—you babbling lunatic!" shouted Church. "The Solomon Islands are a group in the Pacific, near the East Indian Archipelago, and all the inhabitants are blacks—except for the white settlements. And I don't suppose there's one Jew among the whole lot!"

"Then why are they called the Solomon Islands?" demanded Handforth.

"How the dickens do we know why they're called the Solomon Islands!" said Church. "That's dotty! Why is the Hawaiian group called the Sandwich Islands? Because some chap took a lunch basket there, I suppose?"

Handforth was done—he used his usual method of escape from a difficult question. He glared at his chums ferociously.

"Any more rot, and I'll wipe you up!" he roared. "Blow the Solomon Islands! Blow the Sandwich Islands! We're not going there, anyway! I wouldn't go to the Solomon Islands for a pension!"

Church and McClure breathed hard.

"But—you must be off your rocker, Handy!" said Church, trying to keep calm. "This is a genuine invitation. You don't seem to realise that it's absolutely

true, and that we've got to decide at once. To-day's Thursday—"

"Go hon!" sneered Handforth.

"To-day's Thursday!" repeated Church. "And the Wanderer sails on Saturday morning. That means that we've got to hustle terrifically. I'm going straight off to my people after breakfast—by the first train—to ask their permission, and to get ready."

"Same here!" said McClure excitedly.

Handforth laughed sourly.

"You poor fatheads!" he exclaimed. "You deluded maniacs! You hear a silly rumour and you think it's all true. Huh! I can see the Head giving you permission to go to London—on a Thursday! I can see him letting you off weeks and weeks before the term's ended!"

"All right—think what you like!" growled Church, in exasperation. "But it'll be a bit rotten of Clurey and I have to go alone—although I daresay we shall have a bit of peace for a change. There's one thing, it'll be like Heaven on Dorrie's yacht without you!"

Biff!

"Yow—yarcch!" bellowed Church wildly.

"That's for being funny!" said Handforth grimly.

Church staggered back, holding his nose. He had certainly been rather unwise in stating his views so openly. He had thought himself to be out of range, but Handy's fists had a habit of shooting out in the most extraordinary way, and although Church was an expert in the art of dodging those fists, he frequently failed.

"Don't talk about the subject again!" exclaimed Handforth sternly. "I'm fed up with it! It's nearly breakfast time, and I don't feel like doing any more punching. If Nipper was asking chaps to go on this fool trip, why didn't he come to me? Ain't I the leader of Study D?"

"What's that got to do with it?" asked McClure. "Nipper happened to spot Church and I in the passage, and he asked us then and there. He naturally included you—although goodness only knows why!" he added bitterly.

Handforth clenched his fists again.

"If Nipper wants to invite me anywhere—he's got to invite me!" he exclaimed importantly. "Do you think I'm going to be messed about like this? Not likely! Besides, the whole thing's a lot of piffle! Solomon Islands! What rot!"

If ever Church and McClure had felt like slaughtering their leader on the spot, they felt like it now. He had a most exasperating habit of ridiculing anything that didn't meet with his entire approval. And he managed to get a tone into his voice which fairly cut.

"Then I'm to tell Nipper you won't come?" asked Church.

"Yes!" said Handforth. "You babbling idiot! Do you think I believe this tommy-

rot? I know that Lord Dorrimore's here at St. Frank's, but the idea of him starting off on a trip to the South Seas now is potty. He might be going—but he can't take any St. Frank's chaps."

Just then Reginald Pitt came hurrying out of the Ancient House. He was looking flushed and supremely happy, and he clapped Church on the back and gave a ringing laugh—just because he felt he had to do something.

"Been talking to the pater over the 'phone!" he grinned. "It's all serene!"

"What's all serene?" asked Handforth.

"The pater's given me permission to go on the trip!"

"Trip?" said Handforth sharply.

"What trip?"

"Haven't you heard?" said Pitt, in wonder.

"Of course he's heard!" put in McClure.

"But the ass won't believe it. And, anyhow, he says he wouldn't go to the Solomon Islands for a pension! Hates the place like poison!"

Reggie Pitt grinned.

"We couldn't exist without Handy in the party," he said cheerfully. "Where would all the black eyes be? What should we do without the chap who knows everything? How should we get on without—"

"You—you imbecile!" howled Handforth. "What's the idea of this? Are you trying to pull my leg, too?"

"My dear chap, it's real truth—the absolute goods!" declared Pitt solemnly.

"We're leaving England on Saturday. If you don't like to believe it, you can do the other thing. About twenty chaps are going, I think. And for the first two or three weeks we shall have lessons on board."

Handforth grasped at the empty air, and staggered.

"Hon—honour bright?" he panted weakly.

"Yes, honour bright!"

"Great pip!" gasped Handforth. "I—I thought these fatheads were spoofing! Then it's true? The chaps are going to the Abraham Islands?"

"Going where?" grinned Pitt.

"That Jewish place—Solomon Island, I believe," said Handforth. "That's just the very spot I've always longed to visit! By George! You can count me one of the party all right! I'll be there!"

Church and McClure grinned.

"I thought you said you wouldn't go to the Pacific at any price?" asked Church.

"Rats!" snapped Handforth. "I didn't say anything of the kind. Besides, I thought you were spoofing. But—but it seems too good to be true! Oh, my hat! What a lark!"

Handforth proceeded to dash up and down as though he had suddenly become insane. As Church and McClure often said,

he was always hovering somewhere near the border line, and it only required a little touch to set him off. He dashed into the lobby, gave a whoop, and then dashed out again.

As a matter of fact, the news did seem altogether too preposterous to be true.

But it so happened that it was true. The whole school was seething with excitement about it. Handforth, in fact, had been about the only fellow who didn't believe the story. He had ignored his chums from the first. But now he was convinced. And he was wild with enthusiasm.

It was a rather remarkable state of affairs, indeed.

For a large number of junior schoolboys to leave St. Frank's long before the end of term was unprecedented—except in a case of epidemic. These boys were going off on a wonderful yachting trip—a trip which would embrace the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the Pacific.

The whole idea was Lord Dorrimore's. (The famous sporting peer—Nelson Lee's great friend—had arrived at St. Frank's only the previous day. His idea had been to start off as soon as the term finished. But certain circumstances had altered the whole course of things.

For it was necessary to leave England at the earliest possible moment. To begin with, in fact, the yachting trip would be something in the nature of a grim chase—a chase in pursuit of a number of powerful and villainous Chinamen who had succeeded, after many failures, in kidnapping Yung Ching.

Yung Ching was the Chinese boy in the Remove—a perfectly harmless little fellow who had been sent to England by his father. The latter was a Mandarin, and a rich and powerful official in an interior province of China.

Yung Ching's father had had great trouble with a powerful secret society known as the Yen-shan Tong. Members of this world-wide criminal band had been operating near St. Frank's for weeks, but it was only on the previous day that they had succeeded in their plans.

Yung Ching had been kidnapped while bathing at Caistowe. And he had been taken out to sea, and placed on board a private yacht. This yacht was apparently the property of a rich Chinese merchant, and it was about to set sail for Shanghai. And Yung Ching was a concealed prisoner on board.

The aim of the Yen-shan Tong was to get Yung Ching to China, and then they would use him as a hostage to force the boy's father to release many members of the Tong who had been imprisoned by the Mandarin's orders.

That, in brief, was the situation. It need not be supposed that Nelson Lee had let any grass grow under his feet. The

very opposite was the case. At the first minute he had dashed to Portsmouth and the Chinese yacht—which was called the Lotus Lily—was boarded by police and other officials, and searched. The result had been barren. There had been no sign of Yung Ching.

And as the yacht's papers were all in order, it was impossible to detain her. It was equally impossible to have her searched again. And so she had gone, steaming for the East—and Yung Ching was on board.

We did not doubt this for a moment, although the search had been useless. We were fairly sure that Chingy had been cunningly concealed from the search party. And Lord Dorrimore promptly made a daring suggestion.

It was his idea that we should sail at once, and overtake the Lotus Lily somewhere in the Mediterranean, and make an unofficial search. The scheme, in fact, was to take matters entirely into our own hands. Both Nelson Lee and Dorrie believed that this method, although drastic, would be successful.

And so we had planned to start on the Saturday—and it was now Thursday morning. There wasn't much time for preparation. But Lord Dorrimore's yacht, the Wanderer, was in dock in the Thames, and practically ready for departure. The Lotus Lily had three days start, but the advantages were with us. For the Chinamen did not fear pursuit, and did not even anticipate it. They would not have cause to suspect the sporting peer's luxurious craft, and so we should go in chase and come upon the enemy unawares.

As I have said, Handforth could hardly believe the thing to be true. But it was true. And the only reason for such a hasty departure was that every hour was of value. We were leaving England at the first possible minute.

Naturally, a large number of fellows were indignant, and the school fairly rang with excited protests. Why should we be allowed to leave long before the end of term? And if we left, why shouldn't the whole school break up?

Of course, we had expected something of this kind from a good number of chaps. Jealousy is a very common human weakness. So great did the excitement become, indeed, that just after prayers the Head made a public announcement.

He explained to the whole school that the boys who were going with the yacht would not obtain such a privilege as seemed apparent. For Nelson Lee would be there, too—and Nelson Lee was the master of the Ancient House. It would be his duty to take all the schoolboy guests at lessons—regularly and rigidly, until the last day of term arrived—in just the same manner as the boys would work at the school.

Afterwards, of course, Dorrie's guests would have complete freedom. They were only being allowed to depart now because of certain circumstances, which the Head didn't enter into, made Dorrie's immediate departure absolutely essential.

After that the school was a bit quieter, although there was terrific excitement in the Remove as to who would go, and who wouldn't. I had a fairly difficult task, for I wanted to please everybody. The party of fellows would number twenty, and it was therefore necessary for me to invite a few more than this number, for it was fairly certain that some of them would not receive permission from their parents.

I had already secured fifteen for certain, but the other five were rather undecided at the moment. But I may just as well state now that all these difficulties were settled before the end of the day.

And the party, complete, was made up as follows:

Sir Montie Tregellis-West, Tommy Watson, Handforth, Church, McClure, Reginald Pitt, Jack Grey, Armstrong, Griffith, Doyle, Fatty Little, Cecil De Valerie, Dick Goodwin, Archie Glenthorne, Bob Christine, Yorke, Talmadge, Clapson, Oldfield—and, of course, myself.

I had eagerly wanted Somerton and the Hon. Douglas Singleton and Solomon Levi and one or two others to come. But their people wouldn't allow it—much to the disappointment of these fellows. Armstrong and Co. had really been last-minute guests, and they wouldn't have come under ordinary circumstances. Needless to say, however, they were wild with delight—for this was their first trip with Dorrie. And, after all, Armstrong and Griffith and Doyle were quite decent fellows.

Upon the whole the holiday party looked like being a huge success. But even I, who had knocked about the world to an astonishing extent, considering my age, would have been rather staggered if some miraculous power had enabled me to take a peep into the near future!

CHAPTER II.

SOMEWHAT DIFF. AND ALL THAT!



ARCHIBALD WINSTON DEREK GLENTHORNE stood elegantly in

his luxurious study, and surveyed himself in the mirror.

He was evidently quite pleased with what he saw, for he nodded genially to his reflection and smiled.

"Tophole!" he observed. "I mean to say, the chappie's simply indispensable, and all that kind of rot! Phipps, in fact, is as bally necessary as a cove's right hand! Absolutely!"

It was Phipps who had selected Archie's

suit for to-day, and it was undoubtedly the very suit for the occasion. From top to toe, Archie was spick and span, and in spite of the June heat he looked coolness itself.

Archie moved away from the mirror, sat down on the lounge, and stared straight before him.

"I mean to say, this is just the time when a chappie gets a glassy look in his eye!" he observed, addressing the empty air. "Several yards of frightful worry! The fact is, I'm absolutely pipped about the whole dashed thing!"

"Eh? What's that?"

Archie started, and gazed at the door. A head was looking round at him, and the head belonged to Edward Oswald Handforth. Handy had just popped in for a few words, and found Archie conversing already.

"What's the matter?" demanded Handforth.

"Nothing, my dear old tulip—absolutely!" said Archie.

"You were jabbering to yourself!"

"Dash it all!" protested Archie. "Somewhat terse, and all that! I mean to say, deucedly blunt, what? Jabbering? A chappie doesn't jabber, old top. Jabbering is frightfully rude——"

"Well, you were jawing to yourself!" said Handforth, entering the study. "And you look pretty miserable, too. What's wrong?"

"The old bean is somewhat stirred up," said Archie vaguely.

"You mean you've been thinking?"

"Absolutely!"

"And the works won't go properly?"

"Absolutely!" replied Archie. "Amazing how you guess these things, old parsnip!"

Handforth sniffed.

"Not much guesswork about it," he said. "Why, you've got a face as long as a fiddle. Haven't you been invited to join Dorrie's party?"

"I mean to say, yes!"

"Don't you like the idea?"

"Absolutely!" replied Archie. "The scheme, I might say, is a dashed sound one, I mean to say, a perfectly stunning idea. A trip on the old ocean blue, what? Round about the Pacific, and so forth! Tropic skies and yards of sunshine, and all that kind of rot! Absolutely the stuff to give them!"

"Then what are you looking miserable about?"

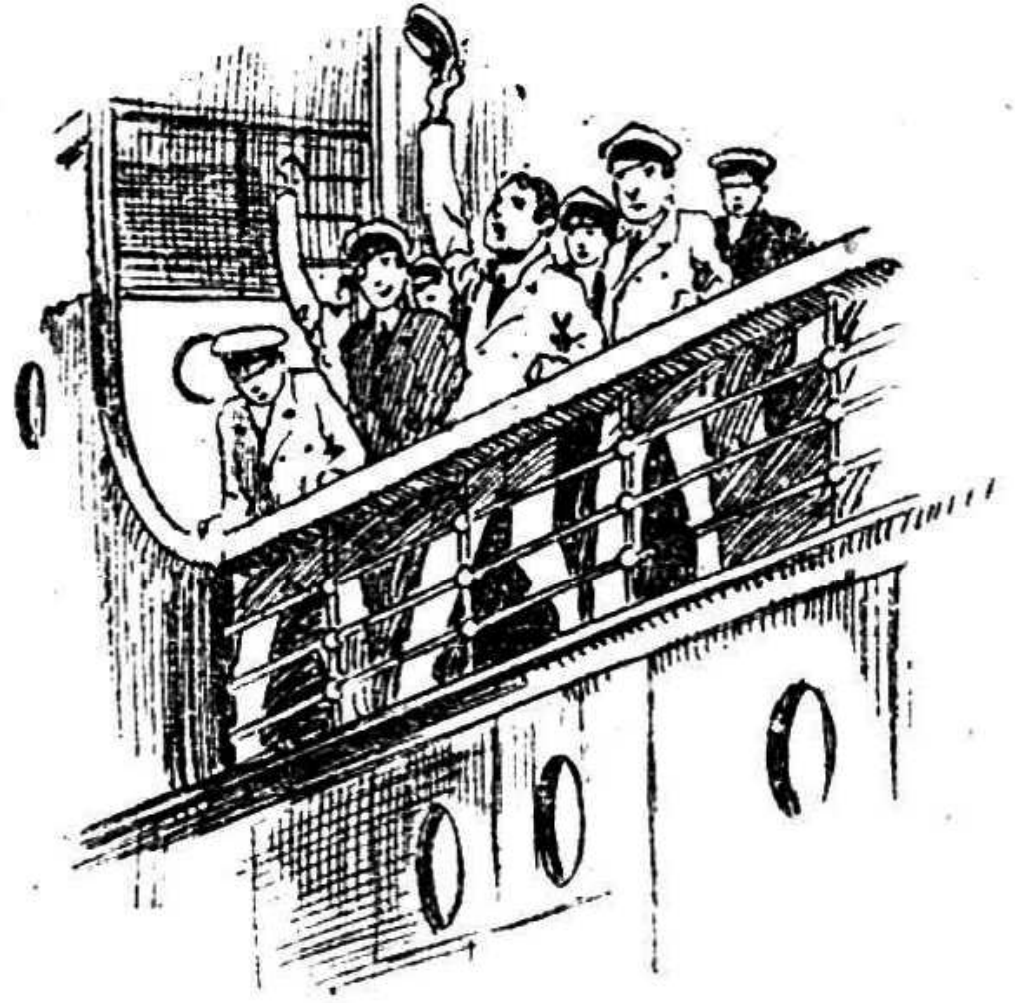
Archie sighed.

"Well, the fact is, old onion, I'm bally well stumped!" he explained. "That is to say, I don't quite know what to do. I'm in a frightful fix. Phipps, don't you know. Absolutely!"

"Phipps?" repeated Handforth.

"To be exact, yes!" went on Archie.

"A chappie doesn't like to grumble.



"Off—off at last!"

"Hurrah!"

Deucedly bad form—especially as he's been invited to trickle on to the old yacht and go off on the Chink chasing stunt. In fact, grumbling is quite impos. I mean to say, not to be even considered. Absolutely not!"

"What the dickens are you jawing about?" roared Handforth.

Archie started.

"Gadzooks!" he gasped. "Foghorns and what not! My dear old laddie, oughtn't you to do something to that? You know what I mean—exercise, or pills, or lotion, or something."

"What do I want pills and lotion for?" demanded Handforth.

"Well, I mean to say, the old vocal music," explained Archie. "Somewhat reminiscent of the bear pit at the Zoo! I wouldn't dream of offending you, old tulip. Absolutely not! But wouldn't it be just as well to——"

"You leave my voice alone!" snapped Handforth. "And as for your worries, you can go and eat coke! I haven't got time to waste on you, you babbling ass! Go and eat coke!"

Having repeated that advice, Handforth stalked out of the room.

"Coke, what?" murmured Archie.

"Dash it all, a chappie needs to be frightfully hungry before he embarks upon such a deucedly dire diet. What? Rather rich, that! A bally tongue twister, don't you know! But the fact remains that the whole outlook is overcast. I mean to say, large assortments of black clouds hovering in the old offing. Absolutely hovering!"

Archie sighed again, lay back in his

chair, and nearly went to sleep. Whenever he was worried, he always found consolation in partaking of a few winks of the old dreamless—as he called it.

But before he could go to sleep on this occasion somebody else marched into his study. And this time it was me. I came in briskly, for the day was getting on, and there was a great deal to be done. According to present arrangements, all Dorrie's guests would be leaving the school by the evening.

"Hallo, Archie! What's this?" I said, frowning. "Going to sleep? Why, you lazy slacker, you ought to be packing—"

"Absolutely!" murmured Archie. "But, you see, old tin of fruit, Phipps is doing that. Phipps, to be exact, is most frightfully busy. The dear laddie is putting in large quantities of overtime on the old packing stuff."

I grinned.

"Well, that's all right," I said. "If possible, I want you to be ready for the second afternoon train. Then we can all go up together."

Archie looked hopelessly downcast.

"Absolutely!" he murmured. "Old lad, it shall be done!"

"Is anything the matter?" I demanded, looking at him curiously. "I thought you'd be pretty bucked at the idea of this trip, Archie. And yet you seem to be as miserable as a cat without a tail."

"I mean to say, the old bean is frightfully concerned!" confessed Archie. "Phipps, don't you know. The laddie who always rallies round a chappie and does things. Phipps, the indispensable! What! about him? That is to say, where, as it were, does Phipps come in?"

"Where does he come in?" I repeated.

"Absolutely!"

"I don't grasp what you're driving at," I said bluntly.

"No?" asked Archie. "You don't gather the old trend? Yet it's fearfully simple, old carrot. Absolutely! I mean to say, the facts are these. I'm staggering off on the old trip. I'm going on board Lord Dorrimore's yacht. But what about Phipps? That's where the rub comes in."

I grinned.

"Oh! Phipps!" I exclaimed. "You mean that you'll be practically lost on board the yacht without Phipps? Is that it?"

"Every bally time, old man," said Archie eagerly. "But lost is hardly the word. I mean to say, I shall be positively at sea—in more than one sense, don't you know. Without Phipps I shall be like a dashed collar without a stud—positively undone!"

"But, my dear fathead, who's suggesting that you should be without Phipps?" I chuckled. "There's no earthly reason why he shouldn't come along too—"

Archie clutched at me.

"Gadzooks!" he panted hoarsely. "You think that Phipps can come on board?"

"Of course he can!"

"But, I mean to say, the cove hasn't been invited!" exclaimed Archie dolefully. "Phipps hasn't received the glad word from his lordship. In fact, there's been absolutely nothing doing in that line."

"Phipps doesn't need an invitation," I explained. "You ought to know that, Archie. Phipps isn't one of the guests. You're invited, and you'll be at liberty to bring your own servant if you want him. Don't you understand? It's quite customary for gentlemen to take their valets on yachting trips!"

"By gad and what not!" gasped Archie. "You're right, old bean. I mean to say, the old brain-box hadn't looked at things in that light. The hovering clouds are somewhat dispersed. In other words, they are fading away. Absolutely! Kindly allow me to grasp the flipper!"

I grinned with amusement, for it seemed to me that there was nothing at all in his worry. He had been putting himself out over a mere trifle. Certainly, it was most unusual for a schoolboy to have a valet—but Archie was an exception, and allowances were made for him.

A little later on I happened to see Dorrie, and I smilingly informed him of Glenthorae's worry. The genial peer grinned all over his clean-shaven, bronzed face. And when Dorrie grinned, everybody in the vicinity had to grin, too. He had the most infectious smile of any man I know.

"That's a bit rich!" he chuckled. "Buzz along to Archie, and inform him with my compliments that it won't worry me if he brings half-a-dozen valets along. He's welcome to 'em! I've had a few valets in my time—an' the chaps are more trouble than they're worth!"

"But Phipps is an exception," I explained. "Phipps is quite a wonderful chap in his way—and he needs to be, too. Archie's as much trouble to look after as ten ordinary masters."

I took the news along to Archie at once, and the genial ass of the Remove was overjoyed. He was nearly on the point of doing a jig in the centre of the study—but this was rather too undignified for him. He contented himself with striding up and down and grinning. Then, after I had gone, he jabbed the bell-push and waited.

In a short time Phipps arrived.

Archie's manservant looked exactly the same as he always did. The most startling kind of news never had any effect on Phipps. He was calm and immobile on all occasions. Phipps was not particularly big; he wore little side whiskers, but was otherwise clean shaven. And he had one of those peaceful faces which made a fellow keep cool.

"You rang, sir?" said Phipps respectfully.

"Absolutely," said Archie, rubbing his hands together. "I mean to say, things have got to be done, Phipps."

"Things sir?"

"Packing, and so forth."

"Your packing is already accomplished, sir."

"Good!" exclaimed Archie. "Amazing how you do these things, Phipps. I mean to say, it leaves a chappie standing still with wonder. The fact is, Phipps, you're a deucedly clever cove, and there's no getting away from it."

"Thank you, sir."

"But to proceed," said Archie. "To continue the old discuss. What about it, Phipps? What, I mean to say, about it. The packing? Have you bunged a few of your own glad rags into a trunk?"

"Yes, sir."

Archie started.

"What?" he shouted, adjusting his monocle. "Dash it all, what?"

"I have already packed, sir."

"Your own things?"

"Yes, sir."

"But—but— Goodness gracious!" gasped Archie. "I mean to say, you're a bally sorcerer, Phipps. A dashed magician, and what not! How the deuce did you know you were coming, too?"

Phipps permitted himself a slight smile.

"I could not conceive of your going on this trip alone sir," he explained. "By what I understand, you are likely to be away from England for two or three months. And it struck me that it would be quite impossible for you to live in comfort for such a period without my assistance."

Archie dropped limply into a chair.

"But—but this is too much, Phipps," he said, in a feeble voice. "I mean to say, it's simply amazing! How in the name of wonder and other things did you guess all that? And you're right, Phipps—positively on the old nail! Everything is rosy, laddie!"

"No doubt we shall have a most enjoyable holiday, sir."

"Oh, rather!" said Archie. "A perfectly gorgeous time, as you might say. The Wanderer is a dashed palace—glittering from stem to stern, and all that kind of rot! You see, Lord Dorrimore's a millionaire—cash rolling about like water in a tub. It doesn't matter tuppence how much leaks! And this yacht is a kind of miniature edition of the Savoy Hotel. Phipps old lad, we shall do well."

And Archie proceeded to give Phipps a tremendously long list of things that would be required for the trip. Considering that Phipps had already packed, these instructions were somewhat late. But as Phipps took absolutely no notice of what Archie said, it made no difference. Phipps always used his own discretion in all matters connected with his young master.

Archie fondly imagined that he was the boss and Phipps was the servant. In nine cases out of ten, however, it was Phipps who had the last word—it was Phipps who ruled the roast. Everybody could see this except Archie, and the result was quite amusing.

Archie and his man were valuable additions to the yachting party—for they were likely to cause much general amusement on board. If Phipps had only known it, his day was soon to come—his own particular day, when he would not only shine, but dazzle forth with unsuspected brilliance.

CHAPTER III.

OFF ON THE GREAT ADVENTURE!



"OFF—off at last!"

"Hurrah!"

"And dead on time too!"

These words were uttered by several juniors as they leaned against the rail on the promenade deck of the steam yacht, Wanderer. The luxurious vessel was spick and span from stem to stern.

Since we had last seen her she had been in the hands of the decorators, and was absolutely brilliant. She looked brand new, indeed, and the very fact of being on her deck made one feel proud.

We were all attired in white, and wore peaked yachting caps. The day was glorious, the sun shining down from a cloudless sky, and the start of the voyage was perfect. Perhaps it was a good sign for the future.

It was Saturday—the day that Dorrie had planned for departure. Unlike many expeditions of this nature, there was no delay. We were leaving at the precise time that had been fixed, although the notice was so short.

There's no need for me to go into any details about how we left St. Frank's, what we did in London, and things of that kind. The St. Frank's fellows who were left behind gave us a generous send off, and wished us luck. Many of them were glum with disappointment, and others were bitter with jealousy. But the majority of the chaps showed none of these signs of human weakness.

And so after a couple of days of rush and tear, and lectures from parents and guardians, the fellows were off. We were all on board, and the Wanderer was creeping down the river towards the open sea.

Rather to our surprise there were no ladies on board. I had half suspected that Dorrie would invite a few girls—such as Tommy Watson's sister, and Christine's sister. But there was really no time. Boys may have got ready in a couple of days, but girls could never have managed it. Moreover, as Dorrie said, there was a

slight element of peril in this trip. He had thoughtlessly omitted to mention this to the Head—now, of course, it was too late.

Nelson Lee had been busy on his own account, for he had been carefully tracing the movements of the Lotus Lily. Mr. Ho Liang, the Chinese merchant who owned the yacht had made no attempts whatever to conceal his movements. Neither did he appear to be in any hurry.

By judicious inquiry, Nelson Lee had found out that the Lotus Lily had reached Oporto, on the coast of Portugal, had stayed there for a short time, and had set sail once more, bound for the Mediterranean.

If Ho Liang knew about the Wanderer's departure from London, he would surely not suspect anything, since it was a common enough occurrence for privately owned yachts to leave English waters.

The Lotus Lily had a good start, but neither Nelson Lee nor Dorrie worried about this handicap. The Wanderer was an exceptionally fast craft for her class, and was capable of overtaking any other yacht of the same tonnage.

And it was a long journey to Shanghai.

The Wanderer would have ample chance to overtake her quarry, and perhaps it would be all the better if the actual conflict was delayed until Eastern Seas were reached.

And it was also a fact that the Wanderer would not be deviating a yard from her course, since she must necessarily pass by way of the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal and the Red Sea in order to reach the East Indian Archipelago.

So the rescue of Yung Ching could be effected at any point along this route. However, Nelson Lee saw no reason why there should be unnecessary delay and he was anxious to press forward with all speed.

Most of the fellows on board did not even know that Yung Ching was being chased, and regarded this trip as a mere holiday adventure. Probably they never would know otherwise; for, if possible, Lee wanted to effect the rescue of Yung Ching in secret.

It is difficult for me to give any idea of the comforts provided on board the Wanderer. Our cabins were luxurious to a degree, and fitted with every latest device and improvement.

Electric lights blazed everywhere at night, and the saloon was a place of glory. There was a swimming bath, a lovely billiard-room, smoking-rooms and lounges; and one of these latter had been converted into a class-room. The juniors regarded this with much disfavour.

And a portion of the deck was so provided with netting that we could enjoy a game of cricket almost as well as though we were on Little Side. Considering the brief time allowed for preparation, the most amazing things had been done for our comfort and enjoyment.

Sunday found us well started, fairly down the Channel, and heading for the open Atlantic. And we were all enjoying ourselves tremendously, for the weather was hot and fine and showed no sign of a change.

At least, this is what most of the fellows said. But I wasn't quite so sure. Towards the afternoon I did not quite like the look of the sky, and shook my head.

"It's my belief that there's some rough weather coming," I said.

"Rough weather?" repeated Handforth. "What rot? Why look at the sky—look at the sun. Not a cloud anywhere! There's going to be no rough weather for weeks! You can't spoof me, my son!"

"I'm not trying to spoof you," I replied. "I'm simply stating my opinion that this fine weather isn't likely to last, and we can't expect it, either. You get all sorts of queer weather mixtures in June."

Archie adjusted his monocle.

"But, my dear old top, I mean to say!" he said. "You surely don't imagine that we're going to have a frightful amount of weather? The old sun is shining like the very deuce! There's no bally wind, and the air frightfully humid! Absolutely!"

"That's the very reason I suspect a change," I said. "The air's a bit too still for my liking, and the sky looks too brazen. That blue look has gone. I haven't had a squint at the glass yet, but I'll guarantee it's dropping."

"You're wrong," said Bob Christine. "There's no rough weather coming."

And just then Nelson Lee strolled along the deck towards us.

"Well, boys, how are you enjoying yourselves?" he asked pleasantly.

"Fine sir!"

"Ripping, sir!"

"Oh, absolutely!" said Archie.

"That's good!" smiled Lee. "Don't forget that lessons commence in the morning. It will be Monday, and you must be in the classroom at nine-thirty, in exactly the same manner as you would be in St. Frank's. Your lessons will be undertaken in just the same way, every day."

Reginald Pitt groaned.

"And I thought it was all spoof about the lessons!" he said disgustedly. "I had an idea that we should forget that once we were on board."

"Same here!" growled Christine. "And now we've got to work just the same as if we were at school! Rotten!"

"Rather!"

"Hard lines!"

Nelson Lee frowned as he heard these murmurs.

"Now, boys!" he said severely. "This won't do, you know. You were only allowed to start this trip so early on condition that you undertook your lessons in pre-

cisely the same manner as you would in the school. If I hear any grumbles I shall be very angry."

"You won't hear any grumbles from me, sir," said Handforth. "I reckon we're jolly lucky to get away like this, on a ripping yacht, and making for the Pacific Islands! The chaps ought to be slaughtered for grumbling!"

"Hear, hear!" said some of the others.

"I'm glad to find there are some chaps here who realise the position!" went on Handforth. "Rely on us, sir; we'll all turn up to lessons on the minute. Of course, it's a bit of a dirty trick really, but that can't be helped."

"Indeed, Handforth!" said Nelson Lee.

"Well, we agreed to these lessons, and we've got to have them!" went on Handforth. "I don't mind saying it's a rotten shame that we've got to peg away over lesson-books while we're on holiday; but I'm not grumbling. I'll do my bit the same as the other chaps. But lessons at a time like this are shameful!"

Some of the other fellows chuckled. Handforth's idea of refraining from grumbling was somewhat novel. And he was quite surprised when Nelson Lee bestowed a very stern gaze upon him.

"I can see, Handforth, that you are extremely discontented!" he exclaimed. "If there is any indication of this during the school time I shall be most annoyed. But I shall say nothing further now. I will wait until you have all proved what you are made of."

And the gov'nor walked off, leaving Handforth highly indignant.

"Well, I'm blessed!" he exclaimed. "Telling me off like that! And I never said a giddy word!"

"Oh, no!" I said sarcastically. "But this ought to show you, my sons, that the gov'nor's not putting up with any tommy-rot. He gave his word to the Head, and he's going to keep it."

"Hallo—hallo! Why the long faces?" inquired Lord Dorrimore, lounging up. "Has anything upset you, my sons?"

"No, not at all, sir," said Pitt. "But we've just been reminded that we've got to do lessons for the first week or two—every morning and afternoon, just as though we were at St. Frank's."

Dorrie nodded sympathetically.

"Of course, that's absolutely horrible!" he said. "You leave it to me, my lads! Trust to Uncle Dorrie! He'll see you through—he'll lighten the burden, an' make life worth livin'!"

"How do you mean, Dorrie?" I grinned.

"Don't ask any questions, an' you won't hear any fibs!" said his lordship mysteriously. "But if there is anything I can do to stop the sufferin', rely on me."

He said no more, but walked off.

"Hold on a minute, Dorrie!" I called. "What's the weather going to be like?"



"Of all the giddy nerve!" said Handforth. "You won't get any baksheesh until we finish the trip."

see page 27.

"Bad!" said Lord Dorrimore grimly. "Just take a squint at the sky! An' don't forget that we shall soon be crossin' the Bay of Biscay! It's a spot that isn't exactly renowned for glassy seas!"

"The weather's going to be bad, sir?" said Christine, in surprise.

"Frightful!" replied Dorrie. "The glass has been falling like the deuce for hours, an' one look at the sky is enough to tell you that we're booked for a nice large quantity of rough stuff. I don't want to put the wind up you, young 'uns, but you can take it from me that there won't be any lessons to-morrow."

"How's that going to put the wind up us, sir?" grinned Pitt.

"Ah!" said Dorrie. "Think it out!"

He lounged off, and I chuckled.

"He means that we shall all be seasick or something pleasant like that!" I said. "The weather's going to be so bad, according to Dorrie, that by the time to-morrow morning comes we shall be ill. Personally, I'd rather have lessons than seasickness! It's about a million times as bad as a bilious attack!"

Handforth grinned triumphantly.

"Fathead!" he said. "Seasickness? What rot! It's a pity you couldn't exercise a little thoughtfulness beforehand. I brought some special stuff along with me—bought it at a chemist's in the West End on Friday!"

"Special stuff?" repeated Church curiously.

"I forget what it's called!" said Handforth. "Skipper Squall's Seasickness Safe-guard, or something like that!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I hope you enjoy it!" grinned Pitt.

"Ass! It's absolutely guaranteed!" said Handforth. "Skipper Squall has used it for twenty years on his own ship!"

"Which is probably a back office at the top of a block in Bloomsbury!" I chuckled.

"And Skipper Squall is quite likely to be an enterprising gentleman who keeps a stall in Petticoat Lane as a side line!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You babbling lunatic!" roared Handforth. "It gives his photograph on the packet—an old chap with whiskers a yard long—something like you see on the sardines! And this stuff of his is guaranteed to prevent seasickness, or you can have your money back!"

"That's a fat lot of consolation!" said Jack Grey. "Personally, I'd rather be without any of the stuff. I shouldn't be surprised if you're the first chap to go under."

Handforth grunted, and walked away.

And, as the day progressed, it was becoming more and more evident that the spell of fine weather was drawing to a close. The sky, already hazy, now became completely overcast, not with ordinary clouds, but with a kind of thickness which gave the sea a leaden hue.

And then, towards the evening, the wind came; in little buffeting squalls at first, and later in greatly increased strength. By tea-time, in fact, the entire aspect of the weather had changed.

The yacht was now rolling somewhat, and it seemed pretty certain that we were in for a heavy night, not that I cared. As a matter of fact, I was rather pleased at the prospect, for I always enjoyed a rough sea. There's something to watch—something to be interested in.

It was always fascinating to watch a sturdy vessel battling triumphantly against the elements. But, of course, I didn't suffer from seasickness, so my case was different from the others, who were not so accustomed to the sea.

Darkness found us heaving considerably. On deck the wind was blowing with great force, and it was cold and cutting, too. The contrast from the morning was surprising—especially when, according to the latitude, the weather ought to have been hotter.

"I mean to say, this is somewhat frightful!" observed Archie, as he clutched at the rail. "The fact is, laddies, we're bally well in the thick of it! Absolutely! Kindly give several yells for Phipps!"

"What do you want Phipps for?" asked Watson.

"Dear old tulip, I'm in need of assistance!" he exclaimed. "The S. O. S. must be sent abroad! That is to say, the old legs are feeling somewhat unstable!"

"As Archie finished speaking he lurched forward wildly, crashing against the rail,

and nearly toppled overside. 'Sir Montie and I hauled him back just in time.

"You'd better go down below, my son," I said. "The deck is no place for you, I can see!"

Archie gazed at me with a sudden wild look.

"Great gadzooks!" he gasped, holding his waistcoat. "Dear old onion, I—I feel most dashed fearful! I mean to say, tea, and what not—Help!"

Archie dashed for the rail, and we discreetly turned our backs. Then, after a "perfectly foul time" Archie crawled below, got as far as the saloon, and collapsed. He feebly sounded the S. O. S. for Phipps.

Phipps came along, and assisted Archie to his own cabin. And nothing more was seen of Archie until the next day, although quite a lot was heard of him.

Handforth was in the big lounge, partaking of ice-cream. Other fellows were there, too, and most of them looked rather greenish in hue. They tried to make out that they felt as right as rain.

Handforth regarded them all with scorn.

"Never saw such a seedy looking set!" he exclaimed, as he took a spoonful of ice-cream. Well, don't blame me if you're seasick! It'll jolly well serve you right—I offered to let you have a dose of my stuff!"

"Boil it!" said Bob Christine huskily.

"You ass, the stuff isn't supposed to be boiled!" said Handforth. "It's pleasant to take, and tastes like wine. I wasn't leaving anything to chance, and so I took three doses straight off!"

"Poor chap!" said Jack Grey sorrowfully.

"What!" said Handforth. "I'm the only fellow who's unaffected by the ship's rolling! Look at me! Absolutely as fit as a fiddle! Never felt better! It just shows you what forethought can do!"

Handforth finished his ice-cream, and rang the table-bell. A steward arrived at once, and Handforth ordered another ice-cream. I happened to come into the saloon just then, and I started as I caught sight of Handy.

"My hat!" I exclaimed blankly.

"What's the matter with you?"

"My dear chap, you look terrible!" I said, with concern. "Your eyes are glassy, and your complexion is absolutely like mud! You're ill!"

Handforth gave a hollow laugh.

"You—you blithering chump!" he said, with a gulp. "I—I'm fine! Never felt—felt better—Oooouch! I—I—Great pip! That—that ice-cream, you know! Oh, my goodness!"

"Ice-cream!" I said, in horror. "You've been eating ice-cream, with the yacht rolling like this? What you need is some nice boiled bacon—with plenty of flabby fat!"

"Shut up!" howled every fellow in the lounge.

"You—you rotter!" gasped Handforth. "Ooooh! Fat bacon!" He clutched his waistcoat wildly. "I—I feel a bit queer, you know—"

"Your imagination!" I said cheerfully. "How can you feel queer? Haven't you been drinking gallons of Skipper Squall's seasickness cure? You're safe now—nothing can hurt you! I'd advise you to have a large dose of cod liver oil, and then some Welsh rarebit—"

"Ow—yow!" roared Handforth.

He gave one leap into the air, grabbed his handkerchief, and rammed it to his mouth. Then he dived head first for the staircase, and staggered up on deck. When he came back he was looking somewhat thinner, his cheeks were pallid, and there was a hopeless look in his eyes.

"Feeling better, Handy?" I asked, with concern.

"Sen—send for the ship's doctor!" moaned Handforth hoarsely.

"There isn't one on board!"

"Oh, my goodness!" wailed Handy. "I'm dying!"

"All right—I'll fetch the guv'nor!" I said. "He's acting as ship's doctor, anyhow. He could have taken medical degrees at any time, if he'd been inclined."

Handforth rolled on one of the lounges, and moaned to himself in utter anguish. And the fact could not be denied that of all the juniors on the sick list, Handy's case was by far the most serious.

About half the fellows were down with seasickness before the end of the day, and in the morning only four chaps were entirely unaffected. Handforth's marvellous cure seemed to have done him a lot more harm than good.

But all things come to an end in time—even bouts of mal-de-mer. While they last they seem interminable, and one's chief anxiety is to die as quickly and quietly as possible.

But afterwards, when the attack is over, one is generally feeling healthier than ever—and it was so with the St. Frank's juniors.

CHAPTER IV.

NELSON LEE TAKES ACTION!



BLUE skies and glorious sunshine.

We were in the Mediterranean, and, indeed, had been sailing in this sunny sea for several days. Everything had been

going splendidly, and by now we were all settled down to live on shipboard as though we were born to it.

We had had a glorious time, and after that spell of seasickness everybody was in the best of health and in the lightest of spirits.

We had paused only a short time at Gibraltar, most of the chaps being greatly impressed by the grandeur of the great Rock. Then we had passed on, the next stop being Malta. Here we had taken in supplies of coal, and had learned that the Lotus Lily was somewhere ahead between Malta and Port Said. The Lotus Lily, however, had not yet reached Port Said.

The distance between the two ports is nearly a thousand miles, and although we had no hope of overtaking our quarry on this side of the Suez Canal, we thought it distinctly likely that our object would be gained either in the Red Sea, or soon after passing Aden.

And now, after a wonderfully pleasant trip, we were getting nearer and nearer to Port Said. Nelson Lee had kept religiously to his word, and the fellows were put through their schooling just as though they had been at St. Frank's.

Indeed, the Wanderer was practically a school at sea in these days, and the juniors soon got accustomed to it, and rather liked it. In any case, it was far better than being at St. Frank's, so there was every reason to be pleased, and no reason whatever to grumble.

And we had heaps of leisure time, too. And when Port Said was growing within a few hours steaming, we were all eager and anxious—and bronzed to such an extent that the rest of the fellows at St. Frank's would hardly have recognised us.

When we finally put into Port Said the juniors were not exactly impressed—although, of course, everything was novel to them. It was not exactly a beauty spot, and when we went ashore on a tour of inspection, we were mostly struck by the large varieties of assorted smells.

If I had space I would like to give a long description of the place, and of everything we saw. But I fear it would be somewhat tedious, and in any case, it would be an inexcusable digression.

The main thing that happened on the very first day of our arrival was the reunion with an old friend. The very first person to come on board was none other than Umlosi, the giant Kutana chief.

Umlosi had been with Nelson Lee and Dorrie and I on many stirring adventures, and he had no intention of being left out of this trip. So he had left his beloved Kutaland, and had travelled north to Port Said in order to join us.

He looked exactly the same as ever.

Big, broad, inky black, with a smiling face and gleaming white teeth. He was attired in a frowsy-looking white duck suit which only fitted where it touched, and a sloppy pair of canvas shoes. He was, in fact, rather a disreputable-looking specimen, and no one would have suspected him of being a king in his own country.

We were on deck waiting for him, and as he came up the accommodation ladder he raised one great hand, and let out a mighty shout,

"Wau! Greetings, my father!" he exclaimed, in his deep, rumbling voice. "This is indeed a day of all days! Thou art surely looking well, N'Kose, and thou, too, Umtagati," he added, turning to Nelson Lee. "Surely this is the most august meeting of all time?"

"You seem to have been havin' a royal time, you black rascal," grinned Dorrie. "By gad, you're fatter than ever! What you need is plenty of excitement—an' plenty of work. You're likely to get it!"

"Wise words, O my master!" said Umlosi. "Excitement! Wau! It is many moons since thou and I were together on a big adventure. I wish for such times again, N'Kose!"

He turned and grabbed my hand.

"And thou, too, Manzie!" he exclaimed heartily. "Thou art here! It is well! Methinks there will be plenty of adventure, since adventure always comes when we are all together! I am of light heart!"

Umlosi was overjoyed to be with us, and he caused amusement with his quaint style of speech. He was taken below by Dorrie and the gov'nor to celebrate

And the fellows, meanwhile, talked about him.

It was soon after that that we went ashore on a sight-seeing expedition. Dorrie came with us, and so did Umlosi, but Nelson Lee went off somewhere by himself. And it was not until tea-time that we saw him again.

We had come on board hot, tired, but greatly interested. And I happened to spot Nelson Lee talking closely with the yacht's skipper—a grizzled, trustworthy old fellow named Captain Bentley. He had been in Lord Dorrimore's service for a very considerable time.

"Anything doing, gov'nor?" I asked, as Nelson Lee turned away. "Any news of the Lotus Lily?"

"Yes, young 'un," said Nelson Lee briskly. "I have been ashore on that business this afternoon—and I have discovered some very interesting news."

"I'll bet it's good, gov'nor," I said. "I can tell by your tone."

"In a way, the news is excellent," said Lee. "The Lotus Lily developed a slight defect in the engine room while on the trip from Malta—and she was, consequently, delayed here for several days."

"Phew!" I whistled. "Then she's here now!"

"No—she left only an hour or two ago—or, to be more exact, just before we arrived," said Lee. "At this present moment Ho Liang's yacht is in the Suez Canal."

"Then she's only a few miles away?" I exclaimed.

"Precisely."

"I say, this is ripping!" I said. "I suppose we'll go straight on, sir—and at that rate we ought to overtake the Lotus Lily somewhere in the Gulf of Suez, or the Red Sea."

"No," said Nelson Lee. "I have broached that matter with the port authorities, and I find that we cannot enter the Canal until to-morrow."

"But why not, sir?" I asked.

"There are certain formalities—I am not quite sure," replied Lee. "In any case, it is impossible for us to enter the Canal to-night. This means that the Lotus Lily will get a good start again—for, of course, it is a very slow business going through the Canal. Ships are only allowed to proceed at a crawl."

"Then—then what's to be done?"

"The situation, Nipper, is extremely favourable," said Nelson Lee smoothly. "I have reckoned things out, and, basing my calculation upon the information I have obtained, it is quite certain that the Lotus Lily will reach Ismailia by nightfall. Ismailia is, approximately, midway between Port Said and Suez—that is, half-way through the Canal."

"But I don't see—"

"Wait," interrupted Lee. "From Port Said the Canal is narrow through Kantara and then on to Ismailia. At that point we come across Lake Timsah, which is a fairly extensive sheet of water—with, of course, a deep channel in the centre. Further on the channel narrows down again until the Bitter Lakes are reached—then, once again the Canal to Suez itself."

"I'm hopelessly mixed, sir," I confessed.

"You won't be in a minute," exclaimed the gov'nor keenly. "Now, look here, a railway runs from Port Said through Kantara and Ismailia to Suez—and this railway practically follows the Canal bank. I have a plan in mind—a somewhat desperate plan, I will admit, but I am convinced that there is a distinct chance of success."

"You—you mean to head the Chinese rotters off?"

"Exactly!"

"But how, sir?" I asked tensely.

"We will go by train to Ismailia—and we shall arrive there, approximately, at about the same time as the Lotus Lily. By then it will be dark. We shall hire some boats, ostensibly to go across the lake. In reality, we shall wait on the barren canal banks, beyond Lake Timsah."

"I don't quite see what good that will be."

"You don't?" asked Lee. "On both banks there are sand dunes, and at night the place is generally utterly deserted," said Nelson Lee. "We shall have our boats ready, and when the Lotus Lily comes along it ought to be a comparatively easy matter to get on board. You see the idea? We shall take these Chinese rascals completely by surprise—in the Canal itself."

"By Jove!" I exclaimed. "I've got the idea now, sir! It's great—absolutely terrific! I suppose I shall come along, too?"

"Yes, you can come if you wish," replied Lee. "We shall also have Dorrie and Umlosi and at least fifteen members of our

crew. With such a raiding party we ought to be successful."

"And I'm pretty sure we shall be, sir," I declared.

"There is no need to tell the other boys about this affair," went on Nelson Lee. "You may simply say that you're going ashore with Dorrie and I, and the other boys can easily look after themselves. The best way, I think, will be to send them ashore in charge of the first officer. They won't get back until late."

"And what about us?"

"Oh, we shall probably not return until to-morrow," said Lee. "For by the time we have finished our work beyond Lake Timsah it will be too late to get a train back. But that is a mere detail. The boys will be safe on board, and when we arrive to-morrow we may have Yung Ching with us—and then, of course, there will be no harm in explaining the matter. On the other hand, if we fail in our venture, we shall simply say that we were delayed in Ismailia and had to wait."

"We haven't got to fail, sir," I said. "We're going on this expedition, and I've got a pretty strong feeling that it will be successful. Of course, we shall all be armed?"

"Fully."

"And what if Ho Liang complains to the authorities at Suez?"

"Let him complain," said Nelson Lee lightly. "But Ho Liang is not likely to do anything so rash as that. For if we rescue Yung Ching, Ho Liang will have a great deal to explain. No, I am pretty certain that he will be only too glad to keep silent."

"And you think this scheme is better than holding up the Lotus Lily on the high seas, sir?"

"Far better—for we shall be able to get on board in the dark, and quite by surprise," said Lee. "By adopting the other method there will be no surprise—and many difficulties."

And so the plan was decided upon.

Lord Dorrimore was quite enthusiastic about it, and Umlosi in the seventh heaven of delight. I was with them a little later, down in the captain's cabin—for the captain was in the secret, of course.

"It's a great scheme," declared Dorrie. "Even if it fails, it won't matter much—we shall have the sport, anyway."

"I'm afraid that's all you think of, old man," smiled Nelson Lee. "From my point of view the sporting prospect is of very small importance. I have undertaken to rescue Yung Ching from the hands of his enemies, and my anxiety is solely concerned with this little Chinese boy. It all depends upon the first move. If we can get on board in force, there is every prospect of success."

"I am of light heart, O Umtagati, thou with the ways of a wizard!" said Umlosi.

"Thy scheme is excellent, and mayhap success will be yours. Wau! It is good to be with thee again. The red mists already gather before my eyes!"

"The deuce they do," said Dorrie. "You're a queer card, Umlosi. When you talk about those red mists it generally means that a large quantity of gore is about to flow. I hope it won't be ours!"

"Even so, N'Kose, there will be much spilling of blood!" said Umlosi. "What matters if we lose a quantity? Is not the fight worth it? I'm a warrior—I am a man of battle! Wau! I am eager to get to this fight!"

It was now evening, and the darkness would soon be at hand. Practically all the juniors were packed off ashore, in charge of Mr. Maitland, the first officer. They had no idea that any special excitement was being prepared.

"Ain't you coming, Nipper," said Handforth.

"No," I replied. "I'm going off somewhere with Dorrie and the gov'nor."

"Fathead!" said Handforth. "We're going ashore to visit the native bazaars, and the shops, and all sorts of things. You'll enjoy yourself a lot more if you'll come with us."

"Thanks all the same—there's nothing doing."

"Oh, all right—be obstinate!" said Handy. "I don't care. Hallo! Where's Church? The fathead was here a minute ago, and—"

Handforth hurried off in search of Church, for he did not want to be separated from his chums. Although they were always quarrelling, Handforth and Co. stuck together like glue.

Archie Glenthorne looked somewhat doubtful.

"Fact is, old boys, I'm not quite certain about this," he remarked. "I mean to say, the whole bally thing is likely to be most dashed fagging. Staggering to and fro, as it were, visiting the old shopping establishments, and what not! In fact, I think I shall remain on board."

"Rats!" said Pitt. "You're coming along with us!"

"But, dash it all!" said Archie. "Just think of the exersh, old lad! Large quantities of the old stamina required. It can't be done, old tulip! Absolutely not! The tissues require a dose of refreshment. In other words, I rather fancy forty of the best!"

"Forty which?"

"The old dreamless, and all that kind of rot!" said Archie.

"So you think you'll stay on board and sleep?" exclaimed Pitt severely. "There's nothing doing, Archie!"

"I mean to say—"

"You sluggard!" said Pitt sternly.

"Gadzooks! Somewhat severe, if I may say so!" protested Archie. "A sluggard, what? One of those frightful chappies who

do absolutely nothing? A slacker, and so forth—what?"

"That's what you are!"

"I must issue a somewhat large protest," said Archie with dignity. "When a cove calls me a sluggard, it's time to get up on the old hind legs and do things! Kindly retract that remark, laddie, or I shall be compelled to send for Phipps!"

"Why send for Phipps?" grinned Pitt.

"Well, I mean to say, advice needed," said Archie. "Phipps will reel forth large assortments of wisdom. A deucedly clever cove—that's Phipps. Always ready to help a chappie out—always ready with the old goods on him."

"Phipps may be all right, but he's not such a magician as you seem to think, Archie," said De Valerie. "Phipps is just a valet—a manservant. But you've got an idea that he's a tin god!"

"Dash it all!" protested Archie. "I mean to say, as it were, dash it all twice! A tin god, what? Not only severe, but frightfully beyond the limit. Absolutely! One of these days, old tulip, Phipps will come out strong. He'll absolutely blossom forth like a bally flower in the full bloom of youth. Mark the old words of wisdom! Phipps is a ripper—a perfectly priceless peach! And it won't be long before he gets busy on the eye-opening stuff!"

The juniors grinned, and said no more. Archie was the only one who had supreme and absolute confidence in Phipps. In Archie's opinion, there was nothing that Phipps couldn't do. He was simply a walking marvel.

Was Archie right? Perhaps time would show. At present, Phipps was just a valet. Archie went ashore, after all. Not because he particularly wanted to, but because he was dragged. And I felt much relieved when all the fellows had left. They were of light heart—bent upon amusement only. But, while they were occupied in this way, there was grim work to be done!

And we set off upon the big adventure shortly afterwards. Nelson Lee and Dorrrie and Umlosi and I went ashore together. Mr. Somerfield, the second officer, had already landed with a dozen men. Nelson Lee considered that this number would be ample. Thus, the party all told, would number seventeen. We all carried revolvers, and had a good supply of ammunition.

One would never have suspected us of hostile intentions as we took our seats in the train. I was greatly interested in the railway, with its somewhat American-looking coaches. They were quite comfortable

and roomy—although stifling hot. The day, in fact, had been very close and humid.

The train soon started, and we looked like ordinary tourists on a sightseeing expedition. There were plenty of these, of course, for it was a favourite jaunt of visitors to go along by train to Ismailia and Lake Timsah.

We arrived in Ismailia without any incident, and by this time it was practically dark. The place was only a village, after all, most picturesque, and exceedingly interesting.

Under ordinary circumstances we should have taken a great interest in going round. But now all our thoughts were upon the work which had to be accomplished. And the time was getting short.

For, soon after leaving the train, we learned that the Lotus Lily was due to pass Ismailia almost at once. But, fortunately for us, she had been somewhat delayed by a huge P. and O. liner which was in advance of her.

We had no difficulty in obtaining some boats, and, in these, we set out from the shores of the lake, and glided down towards the other end, where the wide stretches of water narrowed down to a mere canal once again.

The whole scene was most attractive and beautiful. The twinkling lights on the shore, and the novel surroundings formed a picture which I shall remember for many a day. But, as I have said, my thoughts were constantly upon the great work in hand.

And it was good to know that, so far, our plan was successful. For we were in advance—the Lotus Lily had not yet arrived. By taking the train we had beaten the Chinese yacht with ease—although, to some extent, we had to thank the P. and O. liner, which crawled along at a snail's pace.

Having crossed the lake, we found ourselves in almost total darkness. We selected a spot where the sand dunes lay dark and deserted in our rear. There were no signs of human habitations here. We had the canal bank to ourselves. And, drawing up the boats, we waited.

Lying there, still and grim, we were ready for action when the time arrived. There was something thrilling about the whole business—something which sent my blood coursing rapidly through my veins.

Should we be successful.

CHAPTER V.

THE RAID IN THE DARKNESS.



"I NFERNALLY monotonous—that's what it is!"

Lord Dorrmore made that remark, after yawning prodigiously. And there was something in what he said, for we had been waiting for over an hour, and so far there was no sign of

ANSWERS
EVERY MONDAY—PRICE 2:

the Lotus Lily. The darkness surrounded us, and there was a silence which seemed almost solid.

Just at our feet lay the canal, looking murky and surprisingly insignificant. It seemed impossible that this narrow stretch of water could be the famous Suez Canal.

"Something's comin' along now, anyway," added Dorrie, after a moment or two. "But she looks a bit too big for my likin'. More after the style of the Olympic, by gad!"

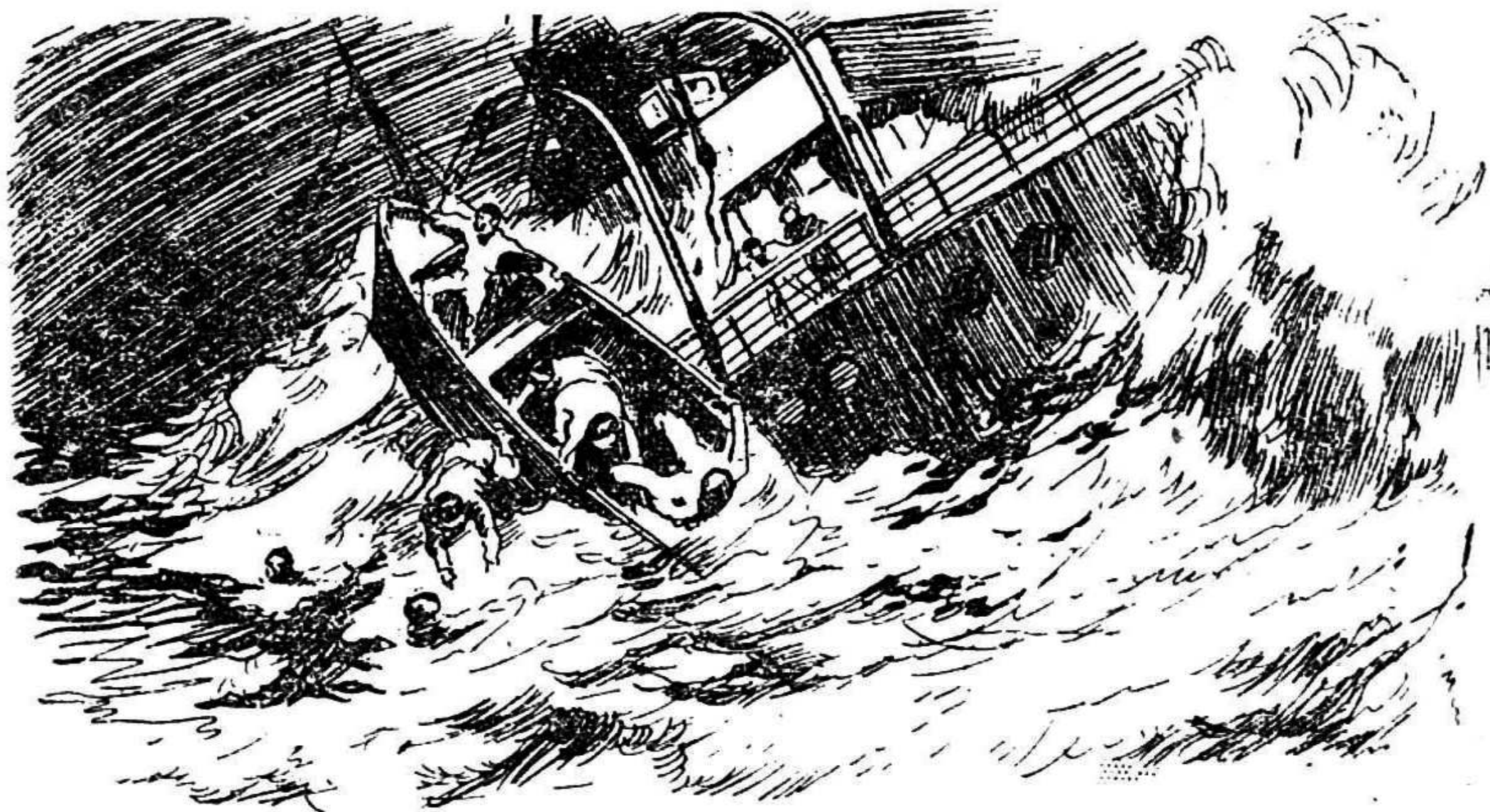
I grinned.

"A ship like the Olympic couldn't come down this canal, Dorrie!" I said. "At

"Thou maketh use of strange terms, my master," said the Kutana chief. "But by scrap thou meanest a fight, no doubt. It is well! I am of the great impatience to begin the battle!"

We watched the progress of the liner with interest. There was something about the whole thing that fascinated us. To see that great liner creeping down the canal, foot by foot, was wonderful.

She carried two great searchlights, and these, I believe, are compulsory in the Suez Canal. If a ship doesn't possess searchlights of her own, she is compelled to take them on board at Port Said. But



Without warning, the lifeboat tipped up like a cockle shell, and I found myself flying headlong towards the tossing sea—see page 36.

least, I don't think it could. This is only about a quarter of the size of the Olympic, and then she's a big un."

The vessel that was approaching was the P. and O. liner that we had already heard of. Perhaps she had stopped near Ismailia for some reason. At all events, this ship had prevented the Lotus Lily making an earlier appearance.

"I wouldn't mind bettin' that that Chinese blighter has pulled up for the night in the middle of the bally lake!" said Dorrie. "We've come here for nothin', my lads. In other words, the whole thing's a wild goose chase."

"Are you trying to cheer us up?" smiled Nelson Lee. If the Lotus Lily fails to appear, Dorrie, then we will go in search of her—and it may be all the better to find her at anchor."

"As long as we get the scrap, I don't mind," said Dorrie. "What do you say, coal-box?" he added, turning to Umlosi.

this, of course, is only necessary when making the Canal trip by night.

The great searchlights flooded the sea with brilliance. And Nelson Lee suddenly became active. So far we were still in darkness, for the liner was not near.

"Just behind there is a dip, with some rough scrub growing," said the gov'nor. "I had overlooked the searchlights for the moment. It would be as well, I think, to conceal ourselves, and the boats as well, if possible. We don't want to cause any comment, and we don't know who might see us. After she has passed, of course, we shall be in darkness again, and can slip alongside unnoticed."

It did not take us long to carry out Nelson Lee's suggestion. And from where we lay concealed we could still see the progress of the liner. And now she crept down towards us until, at length, she glided past like some great ghost-ship. Lights were twinkling and gleaming every-

where, and we could catch the strains of a fox-trot being played in the ballroom. A merry laugh would come to us now and again—light girlish laughter, intermingled with the gruff voices of men. And there was something wonderful about it.

Here was this great mass of metal and woodwork, floating on the water, bound for the East. Away she was going, onward towards India and possibly China. It was so impressive that I could find nothing to say.

And then, soon afterwards, the great vessel had gone. And now, gazing down the canal, we saw the searchlights of another vessel approaching. The Lotus Lily was near at hand. Soon she would be abreast of us! And then would come the time for action—the time for which we were waiting.

"We sha'n't be long now, sir!" murmured Mr. Maitland.

He and his men were all ready, and quite prepared to undertake this task—although they knew it was risky. Every member of Lord Dorrimore's crew was a picked man, and they knew they had to serve on board the Wanderer in a different capacity to ordinary seamen. For it was their duty to hold themselves in readiness for any adventure that might crop up. Furthermore, they would receive extra money for this job, and Dorrie was always liberal.

Nelson Lee gave his final instructions to the men, and then again we waited. This time the period seemed interminable.

But all things must come to an end.

And, at last, the Lotus Lily had passed, looking insignificant by comparison with the great liner. We gazed upon the decks eagerly, and were pleased to find that only one or two figures were visible, a couple of men on the bridge, and one or two right forward. In the stern there were no members of the crew visible. It seemed that our task would be easy.

The yacht slid by, and again we were in darkness.

"Now is the time!" murmured Nelson Lee. "And don't forget, men, as soon as we get alongside get on board by any means available. If there are no ropes hanging down we shall have to adopt different measures. But in an affair of this kind luck is always a big feature."

Further words were unnecessary.

As quickly as possible the boats were hauled down, and launched. Then we got into them, and we rowed swiftly and silently down the canal in the wake of the Lotus Lily.

We had no difficulty in overtaking the yacht, for she was only crawling. That was just where we held the advantage.

In the leading boat Nelson Lee and Dorrie and I were up in the bows, all ready to seize the first opportunity. We

crept nearer and nearer to the yacht's side, our presence unsuspected.

It was a tense period.

At any moment we expected to hear a hail from the deck; we anticipated an alarm, and then, possibly, some shots. For Ho Liang was not the kind of man to adopt gentle measures.

But no hail came. Our boats had not been seen. All the men on the deck of the yacht had had their attention directed ahead. Those on the bridge were too busy to gaze elsewhere. And, in any case, what possible danger could come from the rear—here, in the Suez Canal?

The very daring of our enterprise made success likely.

And then, almost before I realised it, the side of our boat bumped against the Lotus Lily's steel plates.

I have already mentioned luck, and luck was certainly with us now. For there, within reach of Nelson Lee's hand was a rope hanging down. The guv'nor grasped it and hauled himself nimbly up, hand over hand. He reached the rail, and swung himself noiselessly over.

Dorrie was after him in a flash—and then I just managed to grab the rope before our boat was jerked away from the yacht's side. For it must be remembered that the vessel was gliding along under steam, although very slowly, and it required a good bit of manoeuvring to keep the little boat alongside.

Still we were not seen or suspected, for in this part of the deck everything was dark and deserted. One by one the other men came on board, including Umlosi. Nelson Lee and Dorrie had let down other ropes, and this, of course, made the task easier.

Two or three men were left in charge of the boats, and these used their oars to advantage, stealing silently behind in the disturbed waters of the canal. They were almost invisible in the rear darkness.

Altogether, there were a round dozen of us on board. We were armed to the teeth, and there was every prospect of success coming to our mission. For, surely, twelve of us ought to manage the trick.

Nelson Lee had no necessity to give instructions.

There was no confusion—no misunderstandings. For we all knew exactly what to do, we had all been told in advance. Plans had been made by the guv'nor long before we ever set foot on the Lotus Lily.

Accordingly, we silently divided into four parties, and our main object was to get below as soon as possible. Any fights on the deck were to be attended to by the others.

"This way!" murmured Nelson Lee. "And keep your heads!"

"We sha'n't if Ho Liang can help it!" murmured Dorrie. "It's a good thing we're not in China. They're frightfully

keen on loppin' off a chap's head in some parts. Still, we'll hope for the best."

Like shadows we crept forward, more than surprised that no alarm had yet been given. And then, quite suddenly, we saw two figures loom up just ahead. We crouched there, silent and still.

The two figures talked together for a moment or two, and then separated, one diving below. The other man walked straight into our arms. There was a quick, short scuffle, a series of thuds, and the man went down.

Lord Dorrimore shook his knuckles.

"That chap has got teeth like nails!" he grunted. "If they're not loosened, I shall be surprised. He won't take any interest in affairs for another hour. Which way, professor?"

Nelson Lee indicated the direction we should take, and we pushed forward. Then, just as we dived down a stairway which led to the interior of the ship, we became aware of a babel of shouts and yells on the deck.

"That's done it!" I muttered. "What shall we do, guv'nor?"

"Look after our own part of the work," replied Nelson Lee.

We passed down the companion, and found ourselves in an electrically lit passage, with an empty saloon just ahead. The yacht was quite luxurious, although it could not compare in any way with the Wanderer.

The alarm had been given now, so secrecy no longer mattered. Our one and only object was to find Yung Ching, and to find him as quickly as possible. And it would be out of the question to undertake our quest in secret.

Voices came from a cabin just to our left, and Nelson Lee threw open the door without ceremony. A blaze of electric light revealed a well-appointed and cosy apartment.

It contained three men, all of them in spotless yachting clothing, and looking very neat and tidy. They were Chinamen, and one in particular was stout and elderly and somewhat greasy looking. From his very appearance I knew that this man was none other than Ho Liang himself.

"You will kindly put up your hands at once!" said Nelson Lee smoothly. "No, Mr. Liang, I should advise you not to touch that bell. Thank you. You may rest your hands on your heads if you wish, but keep them up!"

The three Chinamen, thoroughly startled, obeyed the order. They thought it distinctly advisable to do so. For not only one revolver was levelled at them, but three. And the faces behind the revolvers were grim and determined.

Ho Liang and his two companions put their hands up, and kept them up.

"Who are you, and how did you get on

board this yacht?" demanded Ho Liang, in excellent English.

"That would be tellin'!" said Dorrie calmly. "But we've come on business."

"Is this—business?" asked Ho Liang, glancing at the revolvers.

"I think, Mr. Liang, you know precisely why we are here!" put in Nelson Lee grimly. "On board this vessel there is a boy of fifteen named Yung Ching, and you are holding him a prisoner—having kidnapped him from the town of Caistowe, in England."

"This talk is madness!" said Ho Liang angrily. "I know nothing of what you say. You have made a big mistake."

"I do not think so!" said Nelson Lee. "The boy is the son of the Mandarin of Ngan-chau-fu. It is quite useless to appear innocent, Mr. Liang!"

"We can tell that you are lyin'!" murmured Dorrie calmly.

The Chinaman's face was like a mask.

"There shall be an explanation of this outrage later," he explained evenly. "At the moment I am helpless. You are evidently assassins, and it would be idle to attempt any resistance. But I have no knowledge of a boy named Yung Ching, and you are wasting your time by looking for him here."

"You refuse to admit that Yung Ching is on board?" asked Lee.

"He is not on board!"

"Dorrie, will you remain here and see that these men—"

Before Nelson Lee could get any further two figures appeared in the doorway. They were a couple of Mr. Somerfield's men, and they were showing a few signs of wear, although they were flushed with victory. One had a long scratch across his cheek, and the other's forearm was lightly bound round with a blood-stained handkerchief.

"Mr. Somerfield sent us down, sir," said one of the men.

"Anything wrong?" inquired Lee.

"No, sir! We've got the whole crowd!" grinned the man. "They didn't put up much of a fight, sir, and they ain't likely to cause much trouble."

"In other words, the yacht's ours?" asked Dorrie.

"Yes, my lord," said the seaman. "There was two parties of us on deck, and we both had a pretty lively scrap. But these Chinks ain't got any more fight than a crowd of urchins. Lor', we wiped 'em up! One of the other lads went down into the engine-room, and there's no trouble there."

"What about the officers in charge?" asked Lee.

"They're bein' looked after all right, sir," grinned the man. "Two of our chaps are on the bridge with guns, and the

(Continued on page 23.)

Brief Notes about Our "FOOTBALLERS"

Being a short account of the careers of the famous footballers whose photographs we are presenting to readers with this number. Specially written for "The Nelson Lee Library" by "Rover."

F. MARRIOTT.

J. BOWIE.

IT is a recognised fact that last season Notts County possessed one of the strongest lines of defence in the second division, and this defence was made up of Albert Iremonger in goal, F. Marriott at left-back, with Ashurst as his partner.

Iremonger, of course, was the most brilliant of this trio; but at back Marriott unquestionably held the honour. From the beginning of the season to the end he played up with consistent brilliancy.

Marriott was born at Sutton-in-Ashfield, and he gained his experience in local football before signing on for the County three seasons ago. His development since then has been remarkable and rapid, especially as he has made the game his hobby as well as his profession. At the offside game Marriott is just as skilful in his way as his more famous contemporary, William McCracken, and many have been the matches he has won for his club in pursuance of these tactics.

Probably Marriott is one of the safest defenders in the country at the present time. However keen the game, he is rarely found wanting, and is eager all the time to take a turn in the thick of the battle. His clearances, too, are delightful to watch, for Marriott does not consider his duty done by just kicking the ball out of touch or clearing over the centre-line, like most other full-backs. His clearances, however wild they may appear to be taken, nearly always drop somewhere where one of his side can avail himself of the ball.

For the last three seasons, except for injuries, he has been rarely absent from the first team's side. Height, 5 ft. 7 in. Weight 11 st. 7 lb.

J. BOWIE is another of those inside forwards who have come to the front mainly during the last few seasons. To-day he is among the foremost forwards in Scotland, and there are many who say that he only missed his cap last season by the cruellest of hard luck. Be that as it may, there is no doubt that Bowie is a genius—an outstanding genius in a side made up of genius. His footwork is brilliant, his control over the ball in any circumstance is a delight to watch, while his cool, go-ahead methods have earned for him the admiration of all who frequent Ibrox Park on match-playing Saturdays. He never seems to get unduly flurried, never carries out any move unless it is all thoughtfully prepared and planned out beforehand, and the frequent openings he gives to his centre-forward have enabled him to score many goals.

His one failing—if it can be described as a failing—is his inability to score goals on his own account. Bowie is always so busy making openings for other people to do the scoring, that it becomes an experience unusual when he finds himself called upon to take a shot, and as a consequence he often misses. Still, this is an easily forgiven fault when the splendid work he performs in other branches of the game is considered.

He has not yet given up hope of getting another cap, and also hopes next season that he will gain another coveted honour which he missed last—a Scottish Cup winner's medal. May he be lucky.

Bowie is a Partick born man, and has twice represented Scotland—against England and Ireland, both times in the season of 1919-20. Height, 5 ft. 7½ in. Weight, 12 st.

Nipper's Magazine

No. 29.

EDITED BY NIPPER.

June 10, 1922.

Editorial Office,
Cabin C,
S.Y. The Wanderer.

My dear Readers,—A rumour was floating about a short while ago to the effect that the good old Mag. was to be put on the shelf during our Summer Holiday Adventures Abroad. In the language of Archie, it was to do the disappearing act, pro tem., from St. Frank's in company with ourselves, the Merry Holiday Crew. Indeed, it looked very much as if we would have to close down. Of course, we could easily publish and print a limited number of copies of the Mag. for ourselves, but what of our many readers we had left behind in dear old England?

A FLASH OF INSPIRATION.

Then came a flash of inspiration—the wonder was that I had not thought of it before. Why not wireless an edition to our friends at home? We had a complete Marconi installation on the ship. So I suggested it to Lord Dorrimore, although I told him I thought it might be rather expensive.

"Blow the expense!" replied his lordship. "Carry on with it, my lad, and let 'em all know what a boatload of land-lubbers I've shipped."

A TRAVELLING EDITION.

And so here we are again, No. 29 of the Mag., all fresh and topical, being none the less acceptable if somewhat more of a travelling edition. Not so bad, considering that it is being temporarily edited in Cabin C, though where our next Editorial Office will be, goodness only knows—perhaps under the shade of a coconut-tree.

A LEADING FEATURE.

As regards authors and artists, most of our original staff happily are with us. Diaries, autograph albums, sketch books, and cameras are everywhere to be seen. As you will notice, I have already commandeered Reginald Pitt, whose Diary is a leading feature in this number. I have also induced Archie and Walter Church to give some of their experiences. Next week, I hope to do better still. Until then,

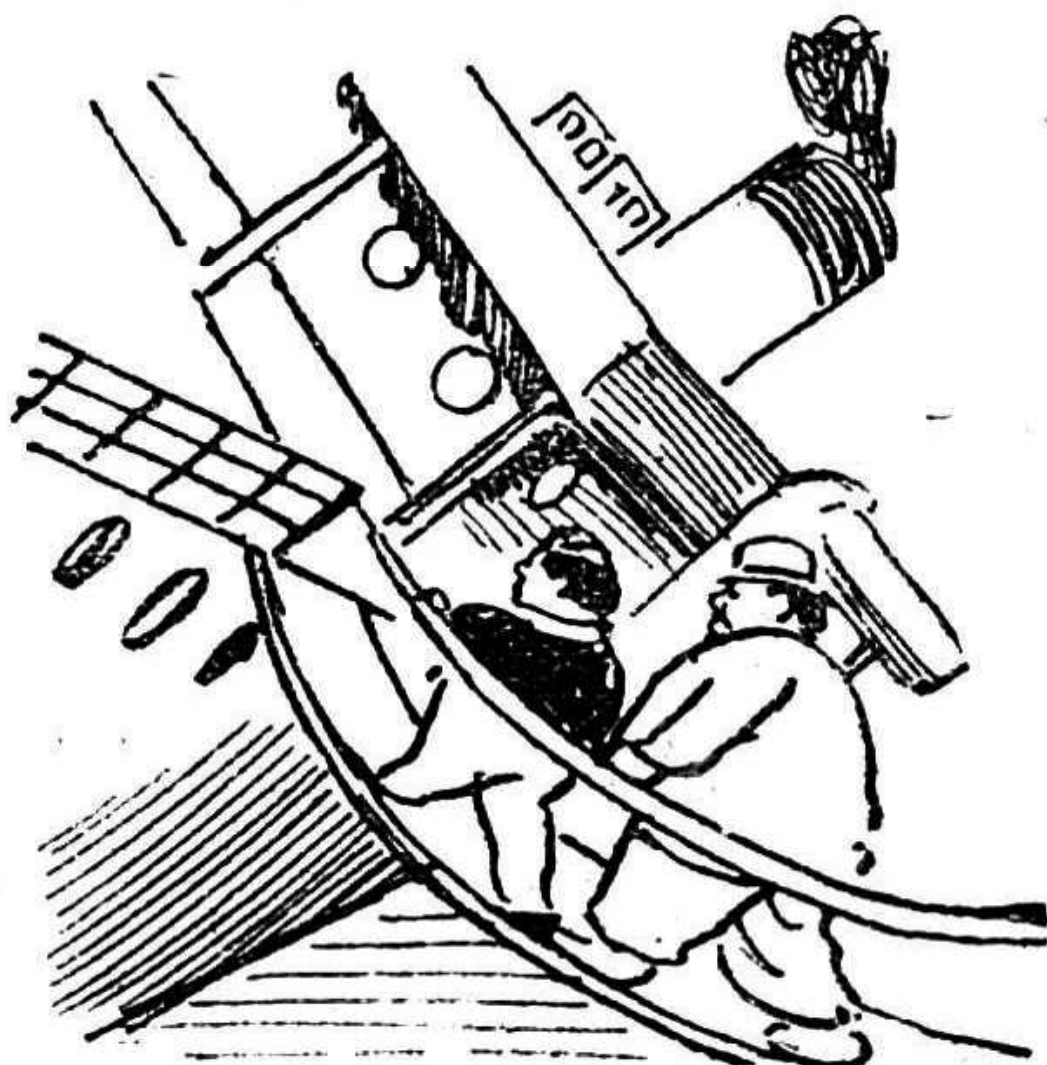
Your affectionate chum,
NIPPER (The Editor).

EXTRACTS FROM MY DIARY

By REGINALD PITT.

SATURDAY. Came on board the Wanderer to-day. Starting off for Mediterranean and the East with crowd of other St. Frank's chaps. Lord Dorrimore a ripping host. Everything O.K. Yacht developed a distinct list to starboard about 3.15 p.m. Thought we'd sprung a leak, until I found that Fatty Little had just come on board with his pater (who's about four Fattys rolled into one). Yacht righted herself when Mr. Little went ashore, but still rolls slightly when Fatty moves about the deck. Terrific commotion about 4.10 p.m. Thought crew were beginning mutiny. But only Handforth & Co. arriving. Church had remarked that the yacht didn't need a fog-horn now that Handy was aboard. Handy got wild. Church recovered an hour later, after

(Continued on page 20.)



(Continued from page 19.)

treatment by chief steward. Off in real earnest in the evening. Yo-ho for the South Seas!

SUNDAY. Bright and sunny in morning. Well down Channel. Archie caused general amusement by having a wrestle with a deck chair. The chair won. Archie knocked out in fifth round. The ass didn't put the bar in the notches, and he sat on the deck with a thud that caused the yacht to stagger. Phipps came to the rescue, and Archie trickled below to restore the tissues. Hazy in afternoon. Glass falling rapidly. Sea becoming rough, and yacht pitching. Many fellows feeling queer. Great stir caused in evening—in our tummies. Glass still falling rapidly. Luncheon and tea rising rapidly. Feel rotten. Can hardly write diary.

MONDAY. Sea rough. Bay of Biscay, ho! Feel ghastly. Hope yacht will sink. Anything better than this. Why did I come? Am dying.

TUESDAY. Out of rough zone. Sunny skies, calm sea. Tummy behaving itself again. Feel nearly fit. Not dying, after all. Fatty perceptibly thinner. Says that the weather has swindled him out of eight full meals. Means to make up for lost time at once. Have advised Dorrie to charter cargo boat to accompany us—filled with grub for Fatty. Fairly quiet day.

AT GIBRALTAR. Lost count of particular day. Doesn't matter. This diary being written in exercise book. Just as good. No need to mess about with days and



dates. Went ashore for an hour or twos and looked round. Fatty searched shop to get some Gibraltar rock! Was chipped unmercifully. Evidently took the place for Margate. Nothing exciting took place—except that Handforth nearly got lost. No such luck, however.

IN MEDITERRANEAN. Sunshine, blue skies, and calm sea. Haying ripping time. Yesterday we had a first-class rag. I suggested the idea, and a lot of fellows dressed up as pirates, and we pretended to take command of the yacht. Did it in proper style. Seized the vessel, and all the rest of it. Captured Archie, and rigged up a plank over-side. Bound Archie's arms, and made him walk the plank! Everything all right, but the silly ass thought he was on a walk to Brighton, or something, and went straight forward, and shot off the edge! Fearful commotion. Archie howled S.O.S. Yacht pulled up. Lifebelts chucked out, and Archie hauled on board, none the worse. Rag fizzled out. Still, we enjoyed it. Archie didn't.

CAIRO. Have had a good time here. Went to the pyramids yesterday, and climbed to the top. Strenuous, but well worth the trouble. Started climb with plenty of spare cash. Got to the top without any—lost it all on the way. Cash, in fact, was transferred to the highway robbers who guided us up. Went to the native quarter of city in the evening. Almost a riot. Handy punched an Arab on the nose for bumping into him, and the next minute we were surrounded. More baksheesh required to smooth the waters. Native quarter picturesque and interesting.



Handy punched an Arab on the nose for bumping into him.

CLIMBING THE JOLLY OLD PYRAMIDS

By ARCHIE GLENTHORNE

I MEAN to say, bally thick, what?

It's all very well for those energetic chappies who absolutely do nothing but gloat over anything strenuous. It's dashed queer, but some coves positively revel in doing considerable quantities of the old exercise stuff. I mean to say, they don't care a dash about the clothing department, and how many pints of the old persp. they exude.

Well, anyhow, the thing had to be done. No getting out of it, although I bally well protested like the deuce. Absolutely chatted away to the chappies on the sub. until the old vocal department went on strike. Nothing doing! The frightful asses hauled me along, and there you are. Archie on the spot—absolutely compelled to climb huge assortments of stone blocks about ten thousand feet high. One glance, I mean to say, was suffish.

Just one turn of the jolly old eyeball, to put it absolutely plainly, was enough to make the heart apparatus pump like the dickens. Well, there you are. I mean to say, absolutely. Just picture the old scene. I ask you—in other words, how the deuce could it be done?

There was I, I mean to say, I was there, on the spot. Absolutely and positively planted on the landscape, with these bally pyramids blotting out the scenery. And the populace gazing on expecting things. Frightful—absolutely. But the thing had to be done, and I'm not the kind of cove to back out. I mean to say, the old red gore of the Glenthornes simply wouldn't let me back out. Blue blood, don't you know, is—well, dash it all, it's blue blood! When a chappie has this kind of stuff trickling all through his vein sections he can't very well show the white feather.

So the dashed thing had to be done.

The pyramids, mark you, are positively poisonous when it comes to staggering up their sides. I mean to say, the mountain we were about to climb was, roughly speaking, about four times as high as Mont

Blanc. Simply towered up like the old Woolworth building, and I was bally surprised not to see snow waltzing around the top. To tell the absolute truth, it was the prospect of finding some snow that induced me to do the climb.

Because the heat, don't you know, was not only torrid, but absolutely ghastly. As I stood there the old tissues were simply oozing away. I mean to say, the fact remains that I was turning into liquid, and the body coverings were somewhat soaked. The honest sweat, to put it plainly, was flowing fairly rapidly.

And this, mark you, before the old climb commenced!

Well, it had to be done. Dash it all, there was no sense in standing there and looking at the thing. It seemed to grow larger, and the sun was so dashed hot that the old optics began to get funny. So I started on the job. Absolutely plucked up the courage section, and went over the top. That is to say, I allowed a couple of frightful ruffians to yank me by the rear, and give me a hoist on to the first ledge. And another frightful ruffian above me seized me

by the first department, and practically dislocated the old shoulder.

Now, I mean to say, what about it? I ask you, could anything be more absolutely poisonous? It's dashed fearful for a chappie to haul himself about over rocks and ledges and what not.

We proceeded about a thousand feet upwards—that is to say, up several of these bally chunks of concrete, or whatever it is. Anyhow, those old Egyptian chappies were as clever as anything to build the thing. Then I selected a shady spot, and indulged in forty of the best and sweetest. I mean to say, there's positively nothing to beat the old dreamless when a chappie is attacked by large quantities of that tired feeling.

But, dash it all, I'd done the trick. I mean to say, Archie wasn't going to be beaten by the bally pyramids! Absolutely not!



The honest sweat, to put it plainly, was flowing fairly rapidly.

HANDFORTH'S CATCH!

By WALTER CHURCH

"Of course!" said Handforth. "Why not?"

"But, my dear chap, you can't catch fish with the yacht going at full speed!" I exclaimed. "Besides, we want you to come down into the common-room. There's no chance of you catching any fish."

But Handforth, as usual, was obstinate. It was evening, and the Wanderer was sailing smoothly in the Mediterranean, en route for Port Said from Malta. The weather was glorious, and the sea calm. But a number of the fellows had arranged to work up a little rag—and Handforth was to be the victim.

One of the big lounges below had been set aside especially for the use of the St. Frank's fellows, and we called it the common-room, as a matter of course. And we badly wanted Handy down there.

But he had made up his mind to do some fishing. And there he was, on deck, with a long line and a hook, and he was preparing to throw it over side. All entreaties were useless.

"But you won't catch anything!" said McClure. "It's hopeless!"

"All right—you wait!" said Handforth. "Look here, as soon as I've caught a decent fish, I'll come down—but not before. I appreciate your anxiety to have my company down in the common-room; but I'm firm."

Handy wouldn't have appreciated our anxiety if he had known the real reason for it. I buzzed below, and told Pitt and De Valerie and the others all about it. They were rather exasperated.

"Isn't that just like the fathead?" said Pitt. "If we didn't want him here he'd be nosing round and making himself a fearful nuisance. And now, when we do want him—for once in a blue moon—he won't come! I've never known such a cantankerous chap in all my life!"

I went on deck again, and, after waiting about half an hour, Handy gave a yell, and hauled his line up. And there, on the

hook, was a fish about four inches long, wriggling helplessly.

"Good!" said McClure. "A catch! You'll come down now, I suppose?"

"Rot!" sniffed Handforth. "You don't call this a catch, do you? Before I come down I'm going to catch one not less than three or four pounds. I'm not going to be dished by these blessed fishes!"

McClure looked at me, and we inwardly groaned. We moved away, and the glares we cast at Handforth's back were terrific.

"The ass!" I snapped. "He's messed the whole thing up!"

"Of course he has!" agreed McClure.

"He'll never catch that four-pounder!"

McClure went away after a bit, after telling Handy that he was fed up. And I remained on deck, and watched Handforth as he fished. I called him all sorts of names, too, and he said a few awful things to me—although he couldn't do much, because he had to hold his line.

Suddenly he gave a wild yell, and commenced hauling in.

"My hat! It's a big 'un this time!" he shouted. "Look! A regular whopper!"

"Phew!" I gasped. "So it is!"



And there, on the hook, was a fish about four inches long.

There was a lovely fish on the end of the line, and Handy eyed it with great pride.

And Handy, full of pride, came below at last, and showed his prize to the other fellows with a tremendous amount of swank. But he couldn't possibly understand the yells of laughter that greeted him.

But McClure and I could. It had been easy. While I engaged Handy in conversation, McClure had nipped below, begged a trout from the chef—who got the fish out of the cold storage—and it had been easy enough to lean out of one of the lower portholes, and haul up Handy's line. He didn't see anything, because I was keeping him engaged.

And Handy didn't hear the last of it for days!

(Continued from page 17.)

officers have got to do just what they're told. The yacht's in our possession, sir."

"Jolly good!" I said, with approval.

"Quick work," commented Dorrie. "I was expectin' all sorts of trouble. Which only shows that it pays to spring a surprise. An', anyway, these yellow rascals haven't got much fight in 'em."

"I am suffering insults, and I am helpless!" exclaimed Ho Liang curtly. "Have you not made this indignity sufficient? I can assure you that the authorities at Suez will have something very strong to say about this matter."

"We will see, Mr. Liang," replied Nelson Lee. "You men have just come in time," he added, turning to the door. "Remain here, and see that these three prisoners do not get away. If they attempt any treachery do not hesitate to shoot."

"Yes, sir."

The men entered the cabin, and held their revolvers prominently in front of them. They looked grim enough, and Ho Liang and his companions were not likely to make any attempt to get away.

Nelson Lee and Dorrie and I lost no time in departing. We kept our revolvers handy, in case we met any other members of the enemy. But we passed down further into the interior of the yacht, and came across no one.

"Of course, a search of this sort is very difficult," said Nelson Lee. "We have no indication as to where the boy may be imprisoned, but I think we can take it for granted that he is not in any of the ordinary cabins. The chances, indeed, are that he is concealed as far below as possible."

"That's what I should think, sir," I agreed.

But it really seemed that our quest was not to be successful. We searched storeroom after storeroom, and we looked in every odd corner we came across. But there was no sign of Yung Ching—no indication that he was on board.

If we failed to find him the consequences would, of course, be serious. For Ho Liang, feeling himself secure, would make a most unearthly din as soon as his yacht arrived at Suez. He would set the authorities in a stir, and large consignments of trouble—as Archie would say—would undoubtedly appear in the offing. And we should all get it in the neck.

Raiding a peaceful pleasure yacht on its way through the Canal! Holding up the crew at the point of the pistol, and generally behaving like pirates! That's the kind of yarn that Ho Liang would tell. And if we couldn't produce Yung Ching, to justify our actions—well, there would be an unholy row.

It was therefore up to us to either find Yung Ching himself, or else obtain positive

evidence that he had been on board the yacht at some period or another.

I don't mind admitting, though, that my hopes began to die down after nearly half-an-hour had elapsed, and we had come to the end of our search—or nearly so. During all this time, of course, the other members of our party were on duty in various parts of the yacht, holding the rightful owners at bay.

"Well, old man, it looks like bein' a frost," remarked Dorrie. "All this infernal way from England and the kid isn't here at all! What do you think about it? Pretty rotten, eh?"

Nelson Lee frowned.

"I have not given up hope yet, Dorrie," he said grimly. "The boy must be here. He must be on board. I have probed every other theory, and have drawn blank. Yung Ching was kidnapped from St. Frank's, and he was brought on board this vessel. Ho Liang has had no opportunity whatever to get rid of his prisoner—and he has certainly had no reason for taking such a course. The boy is here—I'm certain of it."

The guv'nor refused to say more, but we again went on our quest. We traversed some of the same lower corridors, and looked into store-rooms that we had already investigated. And then, suddenly, there came a gleam of hope.

The guv'nor paused abruptly, and stared down at the metal plates of the floor. We were in a part of the yacht that was almost exclusively connected with the culinary department. Just near by there was a cold storage room, and on the opposite side lay a store room filled with tin goods. We had been here before, but had not made any discoveries.

Nelson Lee was staring hard at the floor.

"What's the idea, old man?" asked Dorrie.

"I don't know—but this looks rather significant!" replied Lee.

Dorrie stared at the floor, too—and so did I. At first I saw nothing whatever to arouse any suspicion. Then I detected one or two whitish-looking spots. I gazed closer, and then saw what they were.

"Why, they're little grains of rice, sir!" I said in surprise.

"Nothing surprisin' in that," remarked Dorrie. "Hang it all, this is the store department, an' these beggars practically live on rice. One of the cook's assistants must have spilled some when he came to this store room."

"Rice is not usually stored in a cooked condition," replied Nelson Lee grimly.

"Cooked!" repeated Dorrie blankly.

"Look for yourself!"

Dorrie looked intently—and I followed suit. And there was no doubt that the rice was, indeed, cooked! This, of course, was a peculiar circumstance, and undoubtedly significant.

"Why should cooked rice be brought down here?" asked the guv'nor shrewdly.

"The eating quarters are much higher up in the vessel. This part of the ship is solely intended for storage purposes. It simply means that cooked food is brought down to this passage—and the most obvious assumption, to my mind, is that Yung Ching is near by. One of his attendants happened to spill a little of his last meal.

I caught my breath in quickly.

"Then—then Chingy must be in this cold storage room!" I exclaimed.

"We've looked in there once," put in Dorrie.

"And we'll look again!" declared Nelson Lee.

The door was not locked, and we soon forced it open and strode inside. Although the place was fitted up as a cold storage room, it was obviously not used as such, for the air was close and stifling. The place was quite deserted. But Nelson Lee noticed an iron door at the further end. He had seen it before—and had tried it, but it had not budged. Now he pushed against it with all his strength. On the previous occasion we had not taken much notice of this place because it seemed so unlikely that Ching would be here. However, now, we had received something like a direct clue.

The door still remained firm. It was locked. Without compunction, Lee pulled out his revolver, and fired three times at the lock. There was no danger of his bullets passing through into the inner apartment.

The door opened after a heavy push. We eagerly pressed forward, through the acrid fumes from the revolver. Nelson Lee had produced an electric torch, and he flashed it out—fully into the face of Yung Ching himself!

"By gad!" said Lord Dorrimore.

"Chingy!" I yelled. "Hurrah!"

Yung Ching ran forward, and clutched at me.

"Allee samee Nipper!" he panted joyfully. "Heap plentee good! Me allee lightee now! Muchee glad—oo, heap muchee glad!"

"Poor old Chingy!" I exclaimed softly. "I'll bet you've had a fearful time. Thank goodness we've found you!"

"Me plentee glateful—never folget!" said Yung Ching huskily.

I glanced at Nelson Lee, and found that the gov'nor had an expression of quiet satisfaction in his eyes. Just when it had seemed that failure was to crown our efforts, success had come. It was really splendid.

"You have been ill-treated, Ching?" asked Nelson Lee.

"Me notee see you pproperly," said Yung Ching. "Muchee dazzle. Me notee see light for many, many day. Allee samee, lemain here in darkness. Plentee starvee. No washee. Ugh! Horrible!"

One glance round the Chinese boy's prison was enough. It was hardly better than a mere cupboard, with bad ventilation, and in total darkness. It contained

nothing but a heap of filthy blankets, in one corner, and a couple of empty dishes and a mug. Ho Liang had kept his prisoner alive, but had ill-treated him shamefully.

Yung Ching, however, was fairly well, for he had always been strong and healthy, and this experience had not harmed him much. He was attired in dirty native costume, and looked unkempt and unwashed.

We did not delay long, questioning him, but went up into the other part of the yacht. And a few minutes later we were facing Ho Liang—who changed colour perceptibly as he caught sight of Yung Ching.

"I think, Mr. Liang, that any comment on my part would be superfluous," said Nelson Lee curtly. "I am taking Yung Ching with me, and you are quite at liberty to give any information you choose to the authorities at Suez!"

Just that, and nothing more. It was sufficient. Ho Liang clenched his teeth, but said nothing. He had not one word to say. And when we arrived on deck we found things pretty exciting there.

Some of the Lotus Lily's crew had shown fight, and a fierce battle was raging. We were just in time to join in.

Umlosi seemed to be doing most of the work. He was standing in a clear space on deck, and he was fighting with his bare hands. Men came at him with knives, but he brushed them aside with mighty shouts, and fearsome blows. Even as we appeared one squealing Chinaman was lifted up like a feather and hurled clean overboard.

And our arrival proved the finishing touch.

The rest of the enemy ran squealing for safety. And it was simply a matter of minutes for us to drop overboard, get into our waiting boats, and glide off in the darkness.

One or two shots were fired at us, but they went wide. And our own party had come off without any serious casualties. A flesh wound here and there were the chief troubles.

And we had met with success—we had wrested Yung Ching from the grasp of the enemy!

CHAPTER VI.

A VISIT TO THE PYRAMIDS!



ISMAILIA was our resting place for the night.

And we awoke refreshed, happy, and cheerful. Our adventures the night before had ended up with complete satisfaction. And now we felt a load off our shoulders. We felt that we could proceed on our voyage without worry of any kind.

Nelson Lee was busy with the telegraph wires immediately after we had partaken of an excellent breakfast. And the chief

message was, of course, sent to Mr. Tsen Wang, in London. This gentleman was an attache at the Chinese Embassy, and he was Yung Ching's guardian. He would be overjoyed to hear of Ching's release, and he would know that the boy would now be safe—for no harm would come to him on board the Wanderer.

Other messages were sent by Lee to the Wanderer in Port Said. He gave instructions for all the juniors to be packed off to Cairo—that wonderful Egyptian city which is visited by thousands of tourists. And we, on our part, were going to Cairo straight from Ismailia. The railway ran direct from Ismailia to Zagazig, and thence to Cairo. And Nelson Lee arranged it in such a way that all the St. Frank's chaps would arrive at Zagazig—which was a junction—at the same time as ourselves. We would then proceed to Cairo in a body.

And no time would be wasted by spending a brief spell in wonderful Cairo. For the Wanderer would go through the tiresome business of getting through the Suez Canal. She would re-coal at Suez, and be ready for sea again within two days. Instead of remaining on board through this period, we should spend an enjoyable trip, which would include a visit to the Pyramids.

Thus it came about.

I could write chapters and chapters about the glorious time we spent in Cairo—of the wonderful things we saw, and of the thousand and one delights which attracted us on every hand.

But this is not an account of ordinary travels. I have something of far greater interest to record, and so I sha'n't waste much time now.

As Nelson Lee had anticipated, Ho Liang gave no information whatever to the authorities when the Lotus Lily arrived in Suez. We heard nothing—proving that the rascally Chinaman had deemed it wiser to keep his mouth shut. He had been beaten, and he knew it. Kicking was useless. And complaining to the authorities would make matters ten times worse—for Ho Liang.

Handforth and Co. and all the other fellows found Cairo a place of enchantment and wonder. I had visited Cairo before, but it was as good as new to me. I enjoyed the trip tremendously.

Many of the juniors had expected Cairo to be a native city, almost purely Egyptian, and they were rather staggered at the real thing.

"Why, it's as modern as London!" declared Handforth, as we strolled through the famous Esbekia Gardens, on the evening of our arrival. "Great hotels, with every up-to-date convenience, modern villas, electric light everywhere, and whacking great shops and stores!"

"Did you expect to see nothing but native bazaars?" I grinned.

"Well, I didn't expect this," said Handforth. "Electric trains, too! Whizzing about everywhere!"

"And taxis—and private cars galore!" remarked Church.

"Absolutely!" agreed Archie Glenthorne. "The fact is, dear old cuions, Cairo is a perfectly priceless chunk of the old map, what? I mean to say, a chappie could live here and positively enjoy the scenery, and all that sort of thing. The place is dashed good. Absolutely!"

"Pretty warm, of course," said Bob Christine. "But the atmosphere is so dry that the heat isn't noticed so much."

"It gets hotter after July," I exclaimed. "And you ought to be here during a spell when the khamsin comes along—generally in the spring."

"When the which comes along," asked De Valerie.

"The khamsin."

"One of the native chappies, what?" inquired Archie. "A frightfully big pot, and all that sort of rot?"

I grinned.

"The khamsin, my son, is a hot, sand-laden wind," I explained. "Sometimes it blows for two or three days at a time, and the temperature will rise to about a hundred-and-six."

"I mean to say, deucedly humid, what?" said Archie.

"Well, slightly so," I agreed with a chuckle. "But where the dickens is Dorrie? He was going to meet us here—and we're all going to have a look at the Citadel. It's a wonderful place, you know. Built by Saladin in 1166, it is practically composed of stones brought from the small pyramids at Gizeh."

"I'd rather see an ice-cream shop!" said Fatty Little longingly.

"You glutton!" exclaimed Pitt. "You've been eating ice-cream all day, and consuming gallons and gallons of lime juice and lemonade."

"This heat makes a chap thirsty!" declared Fatty. "As soon as you drink anything you absorb it like a sponge, and then you want some more! I reckon Egypt's a wonderful country, you know. It gives a chap a lovely thirst, and a glorious appetite!"

"Any country would give you an appetite!" said Pitt.

And just then Dorrie came along, and we all went off to have a look at the wonders of the Citadel. We explored other parts, too, and later on had a look at the native quarter of the city.

The contrast was striking.

The modern portion of Cairo is known as Ismailia, the same as the railway junction on the bank of Lake Timsah, and it is built on the lines of a European city, with magnificent hotels, wide streets, etc. But the native quarter is just the opposite, with tortuous and narrow streets, and overhanging houses. The quaint bazaars are very attractive to the English visitor; but he finds it somewhat difficult to grow accustomed to the all-pervading smells. It

is something of a relief to get back to the region of the Ezbekia Gardens.

Hotel life in Cairo is very much the same as hotel life anywhere else, and there was no novelty in this respect. And after a good night's rest we all set out on the trip to the pyramids of Gizeh.

We were a merry party, and when we finally arrived, the native guides, whose task it was to assist tourists to the summit of the Great Pyramid, were evidently well pleased with themselves, for they could see much "baksheesh" in view.

The Great Pyramid of Cheops is usually the one to be climbed, and the ascent is generally made at the northeast corner. And one glance up at the formidable pile was a clear indication that the task was no light one. Fatty Little decided on the spot that he would prefer to remain on level ground.

"I'm blessed if I'm climbing that giddy mountain!" he declared. "Help or no help, I'm not going to ooze my strength away for nothing."

"Lazy sluggard!" said Handforth gruffly. "Why, it's nothing climbing up this giddy Pyramid! I'll bet I'll do it without any assistance from these natives! But if you come, Fatty, the whole Pyramid will cave in!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Archie looked at me almost pitifully.

"I mean to say, not—not absolutely really?" he asked plaintively.

"Eh?"

"The bally old Pyramid!" explained Archie. "Somewhat dashed formidable, and all that rot! In other words, old bean, nothing doing, what? Archie remains on the old sand dunes and so forth!"

"Archie doesn't!" I said firmly. "Archie's coming up with us!"

"Gadzooks!" gasped the Genial Ass. "But, really, old tulip! I mean to say, dash it all! Observe, darling! Just cast the old optic upwards and gaze upon it! Absolutely imposs.!! Beyond the old endurance, what?"

"It'll take a bit of time, but no slackers allowed. We can excuse Fatty, because the natives themselves would jib at hoisting him up. You needn't worry, Archie—you'll have three men to help you."

Archie brightened considerably.

"Well, as it were, the outlook brightens somewhat!" he observed. "At the same time, old fruit, I'm dashed worried. Absolutely! I mean to say, being mauled about by these dusky chappies, what? Hauled hither and thither, so to speak, until the old persp. flows in lib. quantities! Most frightful outlook! Absolutely! The old brain reels!"

"Be careful it doesn't reel when you're at the top!" I said. "We shouldn't care to see you tumble down the whole four hundred and eighty feet."

"My sainted aunt!" gasped Archie. "Great gadzooks and so forth! Tumble

down, what? But, my dear old lad, you've put me all in a dither! I mean to say, the old pins are becoming deucedly unstable. With your permish., laddie, I think I'll leg it while I'm safe!"

"No permish, allowed!" I replied grimly.

And so Archie, much to his dismay, was compelled to climb the Great Pyramid with the rest of us. And this, speaking frankly, was no easy matter. Climbing a pyramid is a very arduous task, although one is ably assisted. With the heat of the sun pouring down, and the atmosphere hovering in the region of a hundred degrees in the shade one is apt to become overheated.

Still, the whole adventure was glorious, and we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. On all sides stretched the desert, and the scene itself was most attractive. Comparatively close to the Great Pyramid were the Second and Third Pyramids, and three very small ones could be seen, too; these latter irregular and in a state of semi-ruin. And there was the Sphinx, standing in a hollow of the sand, and looking quite insignificant in size compared to one's imagined conception of it. And the blue sky above, and the yellow sands stretching away into the vast desert.

One may imagine, by looking at a photograph of the Pyramids that climbing one of them is a simple matter. But at close quarters the proposition is very different. Each step is formidable, and sometimes higher than a man. To climb up unaided is almost impossible.

The Great Pyramid is four hundred and eighty-one feet high with a base line of seven hundred and seventy-five feet, and it has been estimated that the weight of masonry in the whole structure is something like six million, eight hundred and forty thousand tons. And there are well over two million blocks of stone, and each block averages two and a half tons. How were these great stones lifted into position by those Ancient Egyptians, thousands of years ago? What wonderful machinery did they possess to perform such a miraculous feat of engineering?

At close quarters—actually climbing the Pyramid itself—one was forcibly reminded of this amazing fact. And the mind almost reeled when it realised that these vast edifices had been constructed to be used as tombs, and were practically solid.

Our progress was fairly slow, for there was not much need to hurry, and the heat was not calculated to make a chap hasten himself. Our guides hauled us up in a business-like fashion.

Two men were above, and each one grasped a hand. At the rear there was another man who gave a vigorous hoist at the right moment. And in this way, block by block, we progressed towards the summit.

As was only to be expected, Handforth:

caused some trouble. It was rather surprising that he reached the half-way mark before anything happened. But Handy was so interested that he forgot to argue.

He and Church and McClure, were separated and this, no doubt, was the chief cause of the peace.

Handforth was rather higher up than his chums, and he had apparently forgotten all about his intention to climb the Pyramid unaided. He was assisted, like the rest of us, by the natives.

About half-way up, however, there was a pause for a breather, and the guides looked at Handforth with broad smiles.

his own. At least, so he intended. But he suddenly discovered that the guides were not exactly foolish. They had chosen a spot which left their victim in a kind of trap. Without assistance he couldn't possibly mount higher. The next block was of such size and construction that it would require years of practice to overcome the difficulties. Any one of the guides could have negotiated the block with ease, for this was their business. But it was too much for Handy. He glared at the men ferociously.

"I'm not going to be dished!" he snapped. "I'll jolly well go down again!"



And, at last, Nelson Lee himself sank down, utterly spent from exhaustion.

"Baksheesh!" said one of them pleasantly.

"What?" asked Handforth, mopping his brow.

"The effendi will give baksheesh?" asked the guide.

"Baksheesh!" repeated Handforth. "I suppose you mean money?"

"Yes, effendi—baksheesh!"

"Rot!" snapped Handforth. "Of all the giddy nerve! You won't jolly well get any baksheesh until we finish the trip! I'm not going to pay you anything until I'm at the top!"

"The effendi will not reach the top if no baksheesh!" said the native, with perfect composure. "We not go further."

"You—you blackmailers!" roared Handforth. "So you're going to leave me stuck here? All right—go and eat coke! Do you think I care? I'll jolly well finish the climb on my own!"

Handforth was highly indignant, and several of the other fellows a little higher up or a little lower down, were grinning. Handforth was not going to be treated in this way—not likely!

He proceeded to continue the climb on

I'm not mean, but I'm blessed if I'll stand this kind of thing!"

The guides remained supremely indifferent. Handforth walked to the edge of the block, and then started. Without assistance, he couldn't even get down! He could, of course, have jumped, but the scheme did not exactly appeal to him. It was a nasty distance, and the block immediately below was narrow and uneven. It would mean a crash, a jerk forward, and then a serious fall right down. In fact, even Handforth, rash as he was, pulled up. He didn't want to be buried in Egypt. The idea didn't appeal to him.

"You—you cunning rotters!" he shouted, exasperated. "So this is what you do, is it?"

"You give us baksheesh, effendi?" asked one of the guides smoothly.

"I'll give you this!" shouted Handforth. Biff.

His fist shot out, caught the fellow in the face, and he nearly tumbled headlong over the edge. He gave one wild howl, scrambled to his feet, and flashed out an ugly-looking knife. The other guides had changed their attitude, too.

"The effendi turned nasty, eh?" hissed the man who had been hit. "You give baksheesh now—yes?"

He held the knife suggestively forward.

"M—my only topper!" gasped Handforth. "You robbers! I'll jolly well report you when we get down, and see that you're shoved in chokey!"

He forked out some silver, and handed it over. The guides smiled again, the knife was put away, and the climb proceeded. Most of the other fellows met with a similar experience, but they knew it was coming, and were prepared with money, and took it all as a matter of course.

And when Handy arrived at the top he found numbers of other juniors there, and he proceeded to air his woes. But when he attempted to point out the guides who had fleeced him, the task was beyond his powers.

There were other natives there, and Handforth pointed out the first three at random. They protested their innocence, and all the others followed suit. Handforth looked helpless.

"Well I'm jiggered!" he exclaimed indignantly. "All the bounders look alike! I can't tell 'em now!"

"Better let it drop!" suggested Pitt. "Just gaze at the view!"

The view was, indeed, a superb one. Gazing out across the desert we could see Cairo sparkling and glinting in the sun. And there was the great River Nile, flowing away on its course towards the sea. It was a glorious spectacle, and one that most of the fellows would remember for many a day.

The only junior who took little interest in his surroundings was Archie. He was so fagged after the climb that his one desire was to get down again. But, of course, he put a lot of this on. He was really as interested as everybody else.

Our trip to the Pyramids had been a great success, and by the time we returned to our hotel in Cairo we were tired out but satisfied. And on the next morning we were due to take the train for Suez. The Wanderer was already there, re-coaled, and ready for sailing at any moment.

And, as I have said, worry was now at an end. For Yung Ching was with us. He had formed a member of our party to the Pyramids, in fact, although he had not attempted the climb.

The next phase of our voyage was to proceed onwards towards the East Indian Archipelago, and so on to the Solomon Islands. This was Dorrie's plan. He meant to make a long trip of it, and to show us all sorts of wonders.

And so we went to bed that night with delightful anticipations for the future.

Little did not know what Fate had in store!

CHAPTER VII.

THE STORM OF DESTINY.



"WELL, we're off again at last!" exclaimed Lord Dorrimore cheerfully.

We were leaning against the glittering rail on the port side of the Wanderer's promenade deck, and the yacht was gliding peacefully down the Gulf of Suez. The day was glorious, and the heat somewhat intense.

"What's the next move, sir?" asked Pitt.

"The next move?" repeated Dorrie. "Well, the idea is to pay an afternoon call at Aden, an' then buzz straight on to Ceylon. We can spend a fine time in Colombo. I've got all sorts of plans for you youngsters. Colombo is a lovely place, an' we can take a week off when we arrive."

"And what shall we do after that, sir?" put in De Valerie.

"After that?" repeated Dorrie. "Well, we'll cross the line—that is to say, the equator—an' have a look at Java. I know quite a few people in Batavia, an' we ought to enjoy ourselves. From Batavia we'll dodge about among the islands, have a look at New Guinea, an' then it'll only be a stone's throw to the Solomons. I can tell you, my lads, there's a good time in store."

And it certainly did seem like it.

All went well for a good many days, and before we started off on the voyage from Aden to Colombo—after passing through the Red Sea—our period of lessons was over.

And now it would be all holiday, with no worries, and no trials. I think the guv'nor was as pleased as anybody else, for this schooling had been a big tie to him. The fellows were overjoyed. For the rest of the trip they would have absolutely a free hand.

I won't say much regarding our voyage from Aden to Colombo. Or, to be more exact, our voyage to a spot not far removed from Colombo.

As it happened we did not land at Colombo.

For Fate took matters in hand, and decreed otherwise. We had had fine weather continuously—until we had come to regard it as a certainty. It really seemed impossible that there could be any bad weather in such a delightful place as this. The sea was blue-green and as clear as crystal. The sky was like the purest sapphire, and the breezes were cooling and refreshing. And only a few faint, puffy clouds appeared now and again.

But towards evening, one day, the air became oppressive and humid. It was so hot that it was an absolute effort to walk across the deck. We were perspiring freely, and only kept alive by constant doses of iced limejuice. The sea lay like a pond on every side, smooth, glassy, and—sinister.

The heat had caused a haze on the horizon. And it was almost impossible to distinguish the meeting between sea and sky. The effect

was most peculiar, and I noticed that Captain Bentley had been in consultation with Mr. Maitland, the first officer, upon two or three occasions. And Nelson Lee and Dorrie talked together seriously, glancing out across the sea in the meantime.

"There's something coming, my sons," I declared, sitting forward in my deck-chair.

"Eh?" said Tommy Watson, languidly. "A ship?"

"I don't mean that," I replied. "We're in for a storm, by the look of it. And, judging by the signs, it won't be merely a light blow. We're going to have a regular tropical cyclone."

"Oh, don't be silly!" growled Tommy. "There's nothing coming! Why, the sea's as calm as a mill-pond! There's not a breath of wind, and it's as hot as an oven. No sign of bad weather at all!"

"That's just where you're wrong," I said. "There's every sign!"

We got up and walked to the rail. The sun beat down with fierce heat—but it hung there in a leaden sky like a great disc of molten copper. Old Sol's natural brilliance had gone, and, as I remarked to Watson, he was looking very angry. He knew, probably, that he would soon be shut out, and he was just showing us a bit of his temper.

"Unless I'm mistaken, we shall be in the thick of a terrific storm before to-morrow morning!" I declared. "It will probably come on during the night—and then we shall know all about it."

"What rot!" said Handforth, who had joined us. "Storm? Why, you ass, there's every indication of fine weather. This haze is nothing; it will blow over by the evening. Just wait and see."

I pointed down the deck.

"Is that an indication of fine weather?" I asked.

The others looked. Several sailors were busily engaged in taking down a deck-awning. Others were removing all loose articles, and stowing them below. Every heavy object which was not fixed was being lashed to the deck with strong, stout ropes.

"Fine weather?" I repeated significantly.

"Oh, you're dotty, and so are they!" said Handforth. "I'll bet that to-morrow will dawn as clear and bright as the dickens. No need to get the wind up."

"The weather's got the wind up," I replied.

Nelson Lee approached, and his expression was serious.

"Of course, you boys can easily tell what is coming?" he said. "The barometer has been tumbling in the most extraordinary manner for the past two or three hours. The mercury is quite bewitched, by all appearances, and there can be no doubt that a very severe storm is coming."

Handforth looked surprised.

"But—but everything's so calm, sir," he exclaimed.

"There is an old saying, Handforth, that a calm generally precedes a storm," said

Nelson Lee. "And in the Tropics there is nothing truer. I only hope this weather disturbance won't be as serious as indications promise."

"Well, I'm blessed!" said Handforth, turning to us. "Of course, I knew all along that a storm was somewhere about, but I thought perhaps we should miss it. It's more than likely we shall. I'm not worrying, anyhow."

"A bally old storm—what?" observed Archie, a little later. "I mean to say, dashed welcome, if you follow me. Just the very thing we require—what?"

"I don't want it!" said Fatty Little. "Storms take a chap's appetite away!"

"But the heat, old tulip!" exclaimed Archie. "That is to say, the torrid stuff, and all that. A dashed storm would be somewhat calculated to cool the old atmosphere, don't you know?"

"Ever been in a tropical storm?" I asked.

"Never, old walnut!"

"Then you'd better wait a bit!" I said grimly. "You won't relish it!"

Archie looked after me as I walked away. He adjusted his monocle, and then turned to the other fellows.

"I mean to say, rather signif.—what?" he remarked.

"He was only trying to scare you!" grinned Armstrong.

"Scare me!" repeated Archie. "Gad-zooks! Dash it all! Rather the limit—what? Skating near the old edge, if you grasp my meaning! I shall have to tell the chappie off when he staggers into the scene again!"

It was growing more humid than ever. Evening was approaching, and the sky became absolutely dead-looking, with the sun hovering in the midst of it like a painted thing. The effect was most peculiar.

Even the most sceptical fellows could not ignore these sinister signs of Nature. Something of an exceptionally big description was brewing; that was certain. Even the skipper was concerned.

"Looks like somethin' special—eh?" inquired Dorrie.

"Yes, my lord, it does!" agreed Captain Bentley, frowning, and glancing at his instruments. "I don't like the look of things at all. I've sailed in these seas for thirty years, and I don't mind admitting that I've never seen anything like this before."

They were on the bridge, and from this elevated position the sea looked like a sheet of greasy glass. It was flat and dull, with an oily appearance, and very little colour.

"Looks like a hurricane and a cyclone and a typhoon all rolled into one!" said Dorrie. "In other words, captain, we're in for a bit of a lively spell. But the old tub's sound enough, so there's no need to worry."

"I'm not exactly worrying, my lord," said Captain Bentley. "I've been in all sorts of storms, and I've had a few adventures in these seas. It doesn't do for a captain to worry."

But his looks belied his words. It was the uncertainty that was so upsetting. There was every sign of foul weather coming, but yet it did not come. The evening advanced, and the dead calm remained.

Now and again other ships were sighted on the horizon, looking like ghost vessels in the thick haze. And the wireless was at work; Captain Bentley was anxious to discover if the storm was near.

But there was no result, except in one solitary instance, and this was rather significant. The wireless operator reported that he had received a reply from one vessel, about a hundred miles distant, which reported that a fierce storm was in progress. And then, in the middle, the message was abruptly cut off, and the operator attempted in vain to re-establish communications.

What was the reason for this sudden stoppage? What hidden tragedy of the sea did it portend? Or was it merely carelessness on the part of the unknown ship's operator?

We were not destined to know; but we could easily guess, judging by our own experience.

There were still three or four hours of daylight left, and, under normal circumstances, the sun would have been shining from a clear blue sky upon a sea of sparkling, transparent green.

But, instead, the leaden appearance of the sea increased. And then an extraordinary phenomenon took place. With amazing rapidity a change came about. There were no clouds in view—only the thick haze. But the sun was becoming blotted out! The blackness came over like a pall, and so dark did the whole seascape become, that the horizon vanished, and we seemed to be shut in. The air was so heavy that it seemed an effort to breathe. The atmosphere was moist and terribly humid.

"It's coming along pretty quick now," said Pitt. "My only hat! At this rate we'll soon be in the thick of it. But, in the thick of what? I'm blessed if I can imagine what's coming!"

And then, very soon afterwards, somebody noticed a dense, inky-black line coming up from the north-west. The sky was not yet dark, and this black ridge could just be seen through the haze. It looked like an irregular mountain range, only it was growing larger and larger.

"Clouds!" I said grimly. "And, by Jove, thick clouds, too! There's going to be pandemonium in less than an hour!"

"Listen!" exclaimed Tommy Watson quickly. "What's that?"

"What's what?"

"Can't—can't you hear something?"

We all stood perfectly still and strained our ears. And, sure enough, an extraordinary sound came to us. It was almost indescribable—a kind of low moaning sound, rising and falling in a mysterious way. And it was accompanied, too, by something that seemed to be a dull, booming roar, only so

subdued that it only came to our ears now and again.

The juniors looked at one another with almost scared faces. And indeed, this mysterious sound was enough to make those of the strongest nerve feel frightened at the hidden forces of nature.

It was some little time after this that Mr. Somerfield, up on the bridge, let out a sudden hail.

"There's a white wave coming along from the north-west, sir," he exclaimed quickly. "It looks like a tidal wave!"

We heard the words, but could see nothing, for we were not only lower down, but we had no glasses. However, the chief steward came hurrying along towards us.

"I've got orders that everybody must go below, young gentlemen," he said urgently. "Nobody allowed on deck!"

"But I want to stop up here!" exclaimed Handforth. "It's likely I'm going below! If there's anything to see, I'm going to see it!"

"Must obey orders, sir," said the steward. And then Nelson Lee appeared, his face calm, but alight with anxiety. He quietly told the fellows that under no circumstances could they remain on deck. I knew that I could stay if I wished—but that would only cause jealousy among the others. So I went below with all the rest.

And then we waited, crowding at the tightly-closed saloon windows. Outside, all seemed inky dark, for the electric lights were blazing. And throughout the ship there was a feeling of subdued excitement.

What was coming?

We were soon to know! For that whining sound increased as though by magic. It rose to a shrieking wail, accompanied by booming, shattering reports. And the inky darkness was abruptly split by blinding flashes of lightning. The storm was upon us almost before we knew it.

One moment the yacht was so steady that we felt as though we were on solid ground. Then an earthquake seemed to happen. The Wanderer staggered, shook from stem to stern, and heeled right over.

It was surely the end of all things.

"We're turning turtle!" shouted Grey hoarsely.

It seemed like a nightmare. The juniors slithered down the floor of the saloon. It was as steep as the side of a house, and the fellows found it impossible to keep their feet.

Ornaments, crockery, glasses and other articles were swept away and sent crashing to the floor. Chairs toppled about this way and that. I clung desperately to the window.

Then, at last, after a horrible lurch, the Wanderer swung over again, still quivering in every plate, and groaning under the frightful strain. On deck the scene was appalling.

The sea, so calm a minute before, was like a boiling cauldron.

Dashing waves swept the decks, and the spume came surging almost over the bridge itself. Men were lifted up like toys and swept off their feet by the flood. It was miraculous that nobody was killed.

Captain Bentley was roaring out orders, and those below in the engine-room and stoke-holds thought that the yacht was about to founder. But she was an amazingly seaworthy craft—and she weathered the first shock.

The hurricane was dreadful.

The wind howled, the sea rose in gigantic billows, and rain hissed down like something solid. And constantly flashes of lightning lit up the inkiness. It was like an inferno.

The Wanderer was now in hand, and the skipper was at the wheel himself. All his skill was necessary. The barometer was still falling, and this indicated that the cyclone was likely to get worse.

It did.

As the evening advanced the storm increased in violence. This had seemed impossible. The yacht was tossed about, now diving nose-first into the foam, with her screw racing madly—now wallowing back with her stern under water and her bows pointing skywards.

And she rolled in an appalling way.

It was only natural that most of the juniors were feeling bad. The violent motion affected them, and, although they were not actually seasick, they looked pale and shaken and ill. And they were just a little scared, too.

Nelson Lee came below after a while, dripping wet, but smiling.

"Well, boys, you've had a taste of a tropical storm," he said cheerfully. "How do you like it?"

"Dash it all, sir!" exclaimed Archie. "I mean to say, what? Like it, you know? Absolutely not! A most poisonous experience, old-tulip! That is to say, the weather is somewhat foul, and so forth!"

"Shall—shall we be safe, sir?" asked Griffith huskily.

"Oh, yes," replied Lee. "There is no reason to fear—Dear me! That was a severe lurch! There is no reason to fear that we shall be in danger, Griffith. The Wanderer has weathered many a violent storm."

"But—but this is a special kind of brand, sir," said Armstrong.

"It certainly is," agreed Nelson Lee, as the yacht heeled over. "But by the time it has passed we shall be near Colombo; and if we suffer any damage, it can be repaired while we are in port."

Umlosi appeared, his face rather muddy-looking.

"Wau! What thinkest thou of this, my father?" he rumbled. "It is ever so when I venture upon the Great Waters. The kraal that floats is like unto a feather that is wafted by the wind. I like it not, Umtagati!"

"Nobody exactly likes it, Umlosi," smiled Nelson Lee. "But, you see, we cannot order the weather to our own liking. We must take it as it comes—and this time it seems to have come with a vengeance."

"Even as thou sayest, O, my master!" exclaimed Umlosi. "I have strange pains within me. Methinks an evil spirit is loose within my insides. Wau! The Great Waters are surely tagati! They are bewitched!"

And the Kutana chief went off to his cabin to lie down.

"I'd like to go on deck, sir—" I began.

"No, Nipper, I cannot allow it!" interrupted the gov'nor. "The sea is terribly rough, and the decks are constantly swept by masses of water. You must remain below. Dinner, I am afraid, will be something of a farce this evening—not that many will want to eat."

Nelson Lee left the saloon and went on deck. But before he had taken a couple of strides the Wanderer staggered. A deafening crash sounded as an appalling wave struck her broadside. She reeled over, and Lee clutched at a doorpost.

The lightning blazed out, revealing the furious sea for a moment. Then came the booming, rattling thunder. And at the same time there was a different kind of crash.

It seemed to be at the stern, and the whole vessel shivered. Nelson Lee became aware of hoarse shouts from the bridge, sounding far away and unreal amid all the commotion of the hurricane.

The Wanderer lurched, swung round, and lay helpless.

Then Mr. Somerfield, the second officer, came dashing up. His face was white, and he was clenching his teeth. Nelson Lee grasped his arm.

"Anything wrong?" he asked quickly.

"We hit something just now!" gasped the second officer. "A piece of wreckage, the skipper thinks—"

"Yes, but the damage—"

"The steering gear's out of action!" shouted Mr. Somerfield, above the roar. "We're as helpless as a log of wood—and the storm's driving us before it into destruction!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CORAL REEF!



NELSON LEE stood there, still and grim.

Mr. Somerfield had dashed on—evidently sent on some urgent errand by the captain. And the Wanderer was already showing

distinct signs that she was out of hand. She no longer kept her head to the wind, but swung round like a hulk, shaking and shivering as the seas struck and broke over her sides.

One huge wave drenched Nelson Lee, but he took no notice.

And then, through the darkness and the flying spume, a figure approached. It was Lord Dorrimore. He saw Nelson Lee, and halted. The pair were close together, but it was necessary to shout in order to make themselves heard.

"Heard the cheery news?" roared Dorrie.

"Yes!"

"Looks like bein' a bit of a beano, eh?" said his lordship.

"It is impossible for you to be serious, old man!" replied Nelson Lee. "I am thinking of the boys. What will happen to them if we founder? We might be able to look after ourselves, but——"

"Don't worry," shouted Dorrie. "We'll keep afloat somehow!"

"You are a confirmed optimist, Dorrie," said Lee. "But this disaster is more appalling than you seem to imagine. The yacht is unmanageable! Her steering gear has failed——"

"Don't you libel the Wanderer!" interjected Dorrie. "The steering gear didn't fail, old man! The old tub fouled some wreckage of some sort, and the whole bally steering outfit was yanked away. We're minus a rudder! But there's no need to get alarmed."

"Man alive, do you think I care for myself?" shouted Nelson Lee. "It is the boys I am concerned about! Isn't the captain doing anything? He ought to drop a sea-

anchor as soon as possible. That would steady the vessel——"

"The men are makin' a sea-anchor now!" interrupted his lordship. "Bentley's goin' to chuck it overside as soon as it's ready. The old ship will soon steady herself when she feels the anchor at work. An' we'll career cheerfully on until the storm blows itself out."

"We shall be taken an enormous distance out of our course," said Nelson Lee. "This cyclone is travelling at great speed, and in a southerly direction. We shall find ourselves down below the Line before the storm subsides."

Dorrie grinned.

"Time's no object!" he said. "It's all in the day's work, professor!"

But Nelson Lee was not such an optimist as the sporting peer. He knew that the Wanderer's plight was worse than Dorrie believed. A sea-anchor would certainly steady the vessel—but the danger was ever constant. Peril stalked by the yacht's side.

Nelson Lee did not overlook the fact that the Wanderer, helpless as she was, might get in among one of the groups of tiny islands which were dotted about in these tropical seas.

Without steering gear, the yacht's engines were useless. It was of very little use running the engines at all. The matter was in

(Continued on next page.)

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(Continued from page 32)

the hands of fate now. The destination of the vessel was in the lap of the gods.

There is always a feeling of utter helplessness when one knows that a ship is running before a storm, absolutely unable to steer a course for herself. No matter what obstacle barred the way, it would be impossible to lift a finger to help the drifting craft.

And the storm raged with ever-increasing fury.

Both Nelson Lee and Dorrie were anxious that the boys should not know of the disaster to the yacht's steering gear. But the news leaked out somehow—I believe one of the stewards let a remark pass. At all events, all the fellows knew the truth soon after the accident had happened.

Captain Bentley's anxiety was increased by the uncertainty of the whole situation. He knew that the rudder was out of action—for the simple reason that it wouldn't work. But had any other damage been caused? That was the question. The captain sent men below to examine the yacht's plates, for he was afraid that she might be taking in water.

"This is a pretty kettle of fish, if you like!" exclaimed Reginald Pitt, down in the saloon. "Being driven before a fearful storm, and the rudder smashed up! There's no telling what will happen to us now!"

"It's serious!" said Jack Grey. "These storms are awfully violent, you know—and ships are always being lost in these tropic typhoons. I wonder if we've got any chance?"

"Heaps of chance," I replied promptly. "My dear chaps, there's nothing to worry about. Everything is all right if you only keep your heads. Things may seem a bit bad at present, but——"

"My goodness!" gasped Watson. "That was a lurch!"

Crash—crash!

The Wanderer had heeled right over, and several objects in the saloon toppled over and smashed to bits. Fatty Little clutched at the sideboard, the sideboard smashed, and Fatty rolled away down the slope, upsetting five or six fellows in his progress. They all landed in a heap.

"Great bloaters!" gasped Fatty, sitting up. "We—we've struck a rock!"

"A rock, or a chunk of iron!" growled Griffith, rubbing his head.

They sorted themselves out, but almost as soon as they got on their feet again there came another terrific lurch. It is almost impossible to describe the terrible motion of the helpless yacht.

The fellows were scared—scared white—but they would not admit it, even to themselves. At any moment it seemed likely that the Wanderer would go into one of those deep dives, and plunge down—down into the depths of the sea. Then, at other times she reeled over so far that recovery

seemed impossible. The only result would be turning turtle—and then death for all.

But, somehow, these things didn't happen. Every fresh dip and lurch came, and the Wanderer always recovered. But a great deal of damage was being done to her superstructure.

Minor crashes told of deck rails being torn away, bridge supports being smashed, and accidents of a similar nature. The wireless apparatus was already smashed beyond repair. The aerials had not only been carried away, but the wireless house itself—which stood snugly on deck—had been splintered almost to atoms by a gigantic wave.

And the yacht careered on through the blackness and the pouring rain. She was making extraordinarily rapid progress, but none knew whither she was going. The instruments in the chart-house were all at sixes and sevens, owing to the peculiar electrical disturbances in the atmosphere.

Lightning blazed out constantly, and the thunder boomed and crashed at regular intervals.

We were, in fact, travelling with the storm—thus it was always with us. It was not just a case of passing through the cyclone, and then getting into calmer waters. We were with the storm all the time, and went just where Fate took us. It was only known that our course was a southerly one.

A little later on Nelson Lee came down and advised all the boys to get into their cabins, and to go to sleep as usual. He assured them that there was no danger, and that sleep was the best possible thing.

"But we'd rather be here, sir," said Pitt. "We—we shall feel sort of hemmed in down in the cabins."

"We'd rather stay, sir!" agreed the others.

But Nelson Lee shook his head.

"No, boys—I must insist," he declared. "It will serve no good purpose for you to sit up here, and you all look rather groggy and pale. Sleep is what you need, and you must turn in. This storm will probably last until morning, and it is quite absurd for you to think of remaining in the saloons throughout the night. Now trot along!"

The fellows didn't like it, but Nelson Lee's suggestion amounted practically to a command. And so, without many grumbles, all the juniors retired to their cabins, undressed and got to bed. I went with them—because I didn't want to be any different to the others. Besides, I wasn't feeling very grand.

But sleep was a difficult matter. With the yacht rolling and tossing, and leaping up in the most alarming way, it was difficult to keep in bed at all.

But quite a number of juniors did manage to sleep.

Sometimes the Wanderer would plunge down with such a sickening sensation that my heart nearly came into my mouth. And

I was amazed that the vessel held her own against these gigantic forces of Nature.

Hours passed and the night advanced.

Even Captain Bentley was astonished. He had expected us to get out of the storm zone, but the wind howled as hard as ever, the rain hissed down with even greater force, and the thunder and lightning was almost terrifying.

Blinding flashes revealed the raging sea for brief instants. But the driving rain concealed all distant objects—even supposing that such objects were visible. But it was clear to Captain Bentley by now that we had been driven very far out of the track of ordinary shipping, and there was a very remote chance of us sighting another vessel.

And so we drove on—helpless—alone in all this raging mass of water. And not long afterwards the rain ceased to a great extent, although the thunder and lightning was as fierce as ever.

There came one bewildering, brilliant blaze of light from overhead. Mr. Maitland, the first officer, was on the bridge, staring straight before him into the blackness. And, as that lightning flash came, he clutched at the rail, and caught his breath in with a quick, sharp sob.

"Did—did you see, sir?" he shouted hoarsely.

"See what, man?" demanded the captain.

"Straight ahead, sir—masses of white foam!" declared Mr. Maitland. "And I thought I saw hills beyond—land!"

Captain Bentley clutched at the rail, too.

"Land!" he shouted anxiously. "Nonsense, man! Your eyes played a trick with you! It is impossible! There can be no land here——"

"Look, sir—look!" shouted the second officer.

He pointed, for at that second the lightning soared down again. And in that momentary vision of brilliance, Captain Bentley saw a line of white foam in the near distance, and directly ahead of the helpless yacht. Yes, and he saw a brief indication of waving trees, and hills beyond. It was like some mirage—some extraordinary trick of the vision. And then, with just the same abruptness, the darkness shut down, blotting out everything.

"Great heavens!" shouted Captain Bentley. "You were right, Mr. Maitland—there's land ahead! A reef upon which we shall crash to atoms! And we can do nothing—absolutely nothing!"

For just a moment or two the two men were struck almost dumb by the terrible prospect. It was impossible to divert the yacht from her present course. And she was going straight on, towards that death trap!

Captain Bentley knew well enough what it meant.

A tiny island—a mere speck in the great tropical ocean, and probably uninhabited. A deadly coral reef with a lagoon beyond.

In calm seas, a place of beauty and enchantment and tropical wonder.

But now a place of death and destruction. That coral reef on the outer edge of the lagoon—so picturesque and glorious on a calm day—now like the fangs of some monstrous demon, waiting to receive its prey. The foaming jaw was ready to engulf all that came within reach.

A mere islet—one similar to thousands of others in these unknown waters. A spot that might never have been visited by white men, and which was hundreds and hundreds of miles beyond the zone of shipping.

Captain Bentley kept his head—but did not disguise from himself the fact that he probably had only a few minutes to live. There was absolutely no time to take action even if such action could have been possible. But with the yacht helpless and unmanageable, nothing could be done.

That terrible reef was just ahead. And even now, above the howl of the storm, the captain could hear the crashing and booming of the breakers. It was a sound which sent a chill to his very marrow.

He bellowed out orders, and in less than a minute a sailor in glistening, dripping oilskins burst into the smoking room. Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore were there, smoking and playing a game of chess as calmly as though they were on land—but they were compelled to use a travelling chess set, with notches so that the men would not shift from their positions.

"Land ahead, sir!" exclaimed the sailor huskily. "Cap'n ordered me to come and tell you! We're driving straight down on to the rocks——"

And then, before either Nelson Lee or Dorrie could move, the yacht staggered in her stride.

Cra—a—sh.

Lee and Dorrie were hurled from one side of the smoking room to the other. The Wanderer struck the coral reef with a crash which seemed to rip the very keel from her base. And then she remained absolutely still.

The vessel was on the reef—jammed tight!

CHAPTER IX.

THE FIGHT FOR LIFE!



LORD DORRIMORE scrambled to his feet.

"By gad! That was a nasty jar!" he gasped. "It's all up this time, Lee, old man! You were right—we've hit somethin' pretty big, by the sound of it!"

But Lee did not listen. He took no notice, and dashed out of the smoking room, up the companion, and on to the

deck. Here it seemed that pandemonium was in full charge of affairs.

The noise was deafening. Gigantic waves broke with great, crashing roars upon the coral reef. Foam hissed everywhere, and the air was full of flying spindrift. Men were running about in confusion. For at any second the yacht was likely to topple back, and crash to atoms in the terrible seas.

Waves came crashing right over the yacht's decks, and it was a perilous thing to move even a yard in an exposed quarter. Captain Bentley was still on the bridge, but he had little hope of living.

As Lee arrived in the open another blinding flash came. And that flash revealed much to the famous detective. He saw the yacht wedged there, on the reef, apparently fixed, for there was now no perceptible motion—only the shivering and quivering as the waves struck her.

And, straight ahead, lay a patch of storm-tossed waters with a sandy beach beyond—palms, swept low by the gale, and forest land further on. In the other direction lay the open sea—so violent that no boat could hope to live.

Nelson Lee knew that towards the beach was the lagoon. The sea, in this enclosed space was rough enough, but a boat might possibly live if well handled. It was a time for quick action.

Down below, I had been pitched clean out of bed as the vessel struck. I picked myself up from the floor, dazed and bewildered. But I knew that something dreadful must have happened. Attired just as I was, in my pyjamas, I dashed out, and found practically all the other juniors crowding towards the saloon. They, too were nothing but their pyjamas.

"What's wrong—what's happened?" gasped Tommy Watson.

"Goodness knows!" shouted Pitt. "I think we've struck some rocks!"

"Dash it all!" exclaimed Archie. "Rocks, what? I mean to say, that's most frightfully putrid, don't you know! Just as I was engaged in the old dreamless, too! Dashed inconsiderately, and what not!"

"Accidents at sea generally come at the most unexpected time, Archie," said De Valerie. "And this seems to be pretty serious, too—"

"Boys—boys!" shouted Nelson Lee, appearing at that moment. "Are you all here? Every one of you?"

"Yes, sir."

Nelson Lee swiftly ran his eye over the crowd.

"Listen!" he exclaimed tensely. "It would be madness to conceal the true nature of the position from you. We have struck the reef of what is apparently a desert isle. There is imminent danger of the yacht falling back and being battered to matchwood."

"Oh, sir!"

"Shall—shall we get ashore, sir?"



And so, at length we were all there, crouching under that sheltering cliff, waiting for the dawn to come.

"There is every hope that you boys will be saved," replied Nelson Lee. "You must come up at once, and get into a lifeboat that is being prepared at this moment. We trust to Heaven that you will be delivered from this terrible danger. I urge you to keep calm and—"

"Trust us, sir," said Reggie Pitt quietly.

"We'll be all right, sir!"

"Absolutely!" declared Archie. "I mean to say, what? Danger, and so forth? That's right, old top! There's nothing doing in the panic line—absolutely not. We're ready to pull for the bally old shore, and all that rot!"

"Splendid!" said Nelson Lee. "Then come at once!"

"Dash it all!" gasped Archie. "I mean to say, hardly the thing, old tulip! The old pyjamas are distinctly airy, and all that! Kindly allow me half-an-hour to get into the old glad rags. Phipps will do things —"

"It is impossible, Glenthorne!" interrupted Lee sharply. "There is no time for dressing! Come at once!"

"Gadzooks!" panted Archie. "But, really—I mean, dash it all—that is to say, I—I—"

He was not allowed to say any more, for Pitt and De Valerie grasped him and forced him up the staircase, and then on deck. Here everything was in a state of confusion. At least, so it seemed at first. Actually, the yacht's crew were busily occupied, and there was no disorder.

And one of the Wanderer's big lifeboats was already hanging overside, suspended from the out-swung davits. If carefully handled, the boat would drop into the comparatively calm waters of the lagoon.

On the other side of the vessel the sea was breaking in great, formidable waves—waves which surged up and crashed against

the vessel's side with fearful fury. The damage was already considerable.

Phipps ran into us just as we got on deck. Archie's man was cool and collected, but he was pale. He could easily guess that there was very little chance of our boat reaching the shore in safety.

Archie clutched at Phipps' arm.

"Just the very cove, what!" he exclaimed. "Phipps, laddie, I need you! I mean to say, don't desert me now—don't trickle away! Kindly dive below into the old sleeping department, and yank up an assortment of wearing apparel!"

"Yes, sir," said Phipps calmly. "Won't be a minute, sir!"

He hurried off, and I had time to be amazed at the man's matter-of-fact coolness in this desperate situation. Without question—without hesitation—Phipps had gone below to obey his young master's order.

The lightning blazed, the thunder roared, and the surf beat down upon the reef with a deafening commotion. And even as we were hustled across the deck to the waiting boat, the yacht gave a quiver, which ran through her from stem to stern. She would not last long.

"This way, boys—this way!"

It was Dorrie who was shouting. He yelled with all his might, but only a faint whisper of his voice came to us. I caught a glimpse of old Umlosi, clutching to the rail. He was expecting death—but he did not flinch. Umlosi had always distrusted the "Great Waters."

I had already made up my mind that I should stay behind—unless the gov'nor came into the boat, too. I had no intention of being separated. If Nelson Lee was going to be left on board—so should I.

But, somehow or other, I found myself pushed into the boat, after all the others had crowded in. I peered eagerly through the darkness to catch a glimpse of the gov'nor. But he had vanished into the gloom and the spray.

The boat was rocking, and by the sound of the sea beneath, it did not seem likely that we should take the water in safety. I was fully expecting the boat to be crushed to matchwood against the Wanderer's side.

"Gov'nor!" I yelled anxiously.

A figure came into view. But it was only Phipps. He scrambled into the boat and handed Archie a big bundle. Then Phipps attempted to get back to the yacht's deck.

But it was not to be.

For just then, at that very moment, an appalling, gigantic wave struck the yacht broadside on. She literally jolted on her rocky perch, and gave a sickening dip forward. The spray was blinding, and three or four men only saved themselves from being swept overboard in the nick of time.

And at the same moment something happened to the davit ropes which supported the lifeboat. We never knew

actually what did take place, owing to the terrible noise and smother.

But, without warning, the lifeboat tipped up like a cockle shell, and I found myself flying headlong towards the tossing sea. Other juniors were with me—falling on every hand.

Then I struck the water, and went right down—to come to the surface gasping and struggling. I can remember feeling slightly surprised that the water was by no means cold.

Although violently rough, the sea was almost pleasant to be in. The air itself, I might add, was still very mild, and although we were only attired in pyjamas, we had not felt at all chilly.

It seemed providential, now, that the fellows were not wearing their full clothing. For they had freedom of movement—their pyjamas were scarcely heavier than an ordinary bathing costume.

We were all pitched out—every St. Frank's fellow, including myself. And Phipps was with us. He fell overboard with the others.

On deck, Nelson Lee saw the disaster and gave a gasp of horror. He dashed to the side, and then a flash of lightning revealed the juniors struggling below, in the foaming sea. They were shouting, gasping, and fighting for life. And then Lord Dorri-more came up to Lee's side.

"Good heavens, old man, what's happened?" he asked hoarsely.

Lee turned to him in a flash.

"I've got to help these boys to get ashore!" he shouted, above the howl of the wind. "Good-bye, Dorrie—may Heaven be merciful to us all!"

He gave his lordship's fist one tight clasp, and then dived cleanly overboard. Nelson Lee struck out with vigorous, powerful strokes. In a few moments he was carried right in amongst the swimming juniors. And he had come because he wanted to give them the support and help they needed.

He remembered hearing a shout from Dorrie at the last second—Dorrie had said something about coming over himself, to lend a hand. But Nelson Lee knew that every second was of value.

"It's all right, boys—keep swimming!" shouted Lee. "This way—this way! It's not far to the shore—we'll do it all right."

Nelson Lee's very presence made the juniors buck up. They felt better—they felt that there was no reason to despair.

Somehow, it seemed to Lee that he heard a crunching kind of crash behind him. But it may have been a trick of the imagination. And, anyhow, he could see nothing. The darkness had shut down like a solid pall.

The water was rough—tremendously rough. And swimming was difficult. I was striking out side by side with Pitt and Tommy Watson and Archie. They were all good swimmers, and kept up the pace with comparative ease. I felt sure that they would make the sands in safety.

"You all right, Archie?" I panted, as I swam.

"Absolutely, dear old lad!" replied Archie. "Frightfully wet, but a chappie musn't grumble when things are so dashed awk!"

In spite of the peril, Archie was as long winded as ever—just himself. I spoke to one or two of the other fellows, and urged them to do their best.

But some of them were not strong swimmers—and I felt keenly anxious on their behalf.

Nelson Lee, a little further away, was wondering why there had been no signs of activity from the yacht. He had expected rockets to be sent up—starshells, so that this black scene would be illuminated. A few starshells would have illuminated the whole lagoon, and made it a great deal easier for us to find the shore. But no rockets were sent up.

The blackness remained.

No boats were lowered—in fact, no sounds of any sort came from the direction of the reef except the crash and roar of the breakers and the surf. What was the meaning of this? What had happened to the Wanderer?

But, although anxious in this respect, Lee knew that his only task was to see the juniors safely on dry ground. And the occasional flashes of lightning—they were getting less frequent now—allowed him to see the fellows as they swam.

At least eight or nine were holding out well, and making good progress. But Griffith and Doyle and Yorke and one or two others were in sore straits. Without assistance they would have met with a swift and terrible death.

I was comparatively near to Yorke when I saw him flapping his arms weakly, and he was gasping in desperation.

"All right—hold up!" I panted. "I've got you, old man!"

Two strokes took me to his side, and in spite of the buffetting of the sea, I grasped him, and kept him afloat.

Nobody will ever know what superhuman efforts were performed that night. Somehow or other I scrambled ashore. I felt solid sand beneath my feet, and then staggered up on to the gently sloping beach. I found several other fellows there—most of them sprawled out, exhausted.

But there were seven or eight others still in the water—perhaps for all time. And Nelson Lee was working like the true hero he was. He didn't care a hang for himself—for his own hurts.

For Lee was hurt—he had been badly bruised and battered on a clump of rocks near the shore which he had run into in the darkness. A great wave had sent him crashing on to the cruel stones.

But the guv'nor worked on and on. Again and again he went out into the lagoon, and every time he brought back a

junior. Some were unconscious—some nearly dead from exhaustion.

And, at last, Nelson Lee himself reached the sands again, and sank down. I had not seen him until now, for I had landed hundreds of yards away on the other side of a curving bay. I rushed to the guv'nor's side, and found that he was done—utterly spent. And I was shocked—horrified.

We were all ashore—but what of the others?

CHAPTER X.

THE SCHOOLBOY CRUSOES!



"Oh, guv'nor!" I panted. "You're hurt—you're badly smashed about!"

"Are they all right, Nipper—are they safe?" whispered Nelson Lee. "The

boys—count them up and see if they are all here. I did my best, young 'un—I—I did my best!"

His voice trailed away, and just then a searing flash of lightning split the sky. It enabled me to see Nelson Lee clearly, and what I saw made my heart leap in my breast.

For the guv'nor's face was gashed and bleeding, his shirt was open at the neck, and revealed ugly bruises which were puffed and awful. Blood was pouring down his left arm, and forming a pool in the wet and sodden sand. And I could see that his hands were cut and gashed in a terrible manner.

"Guv'nor!" I shouted. "Oh, guv'nor!" I fell over him, and seized his head, and propped it on my knee. But he was limp and inanimate. And the truth came to my fevered mind. He had swooned from sheer exhaustion.

Or was it possible that—that—

I thrust the horrible thought aside, and felt for Nelson Lee's heart. It was beating regularly, and my fears were subdued. But for a man of the guv'nor's stamina to become unconscious through exhaustion was astounding. It proved that he was absolutely done—that he had used the last ounce of his strength.

For a minute or two I think I went nearly off my head. But then I calmed down. I realised how mad it would be to give way to panic. I ought to be thankful that we were alive—and on solid ground.

And the storm raged on with a fury which seemed incredible. The wind tore across the surface of the lagoon, whipping the spray into a fine rain which hissed into our faces with stinging effect. And that thunderous roar came from the reef all the time. But there was no sign of the Wanderer—no lights—no indication. She was swallowed up in the murk.

I suddenly gripped hold of myself, and forced myself to become calm. I peered through the gloom, and saw two figures

lurching towards me. They came closer, and proved to belong to Reginald Pitt and Jack Grey. They had just found one another, and were nearly hysterical with joy.

"Pitt—Pitt!" I gasped. "Quick! Help me to carry the guv'nor up the beach! We've got to find some shelter of some kind. He's fainted! He may be dying! We must have some water!"

"Good heavens!" said Pitt hoarsely.

Between the three of us we managed to lift Nelson Lee up. Then, with a sudden start, I paused.

"Wait!" I shouted.

There seemed to be something queer about Nelson Lee's left arm. Carefully, tenderly, I felt it. Then I gently laid the arm down again, in such a way that it rested upon his chest.

"What's the matter?" asked Grey.

"The guv'nor's arm's broken!" I replied, a catch in my throat. "That's—that's why it's bleeding so much. It must be a horrible fracture, between the elbow and the shoulder."

The other juniors were too startled to say much. And then, gently, we took Nelson Lee up the beach, and more by accident than anything else we found a great hollow cup in the sands—a kind of pool. But it was far beyond the reach of the sea, and I quickly plunged my head into the pool and drank.

"Fresh water!" I gasped thankfully. "Oh, I had hardly hoped for this!"

And, quite near by there was a low, overhanging cliff, with palms waving and lashing about in the wind above. Beneath this cliff we found shelter, where we were comparatively dry and protected.

I was accustomed to the gloom by now, and I could see that Pitt and Grey were wearing hardly anything. Their pyjama jackets had vanished. They had nothing on but their trousers, and these were ripped and torn.

Without delay we took water to Nelson Lee and bathed his head, and gently removed his shirt, and tried to examine his arm. But it was almost impossible in the blackness.

However, we succeeded in making him a little more comfortable. And my next task was to hold a roll call. I wanted to see how many fellows were with us—how many were lost. For all had tumbled into the lagoon when the boat capsized.

It was a long, difficult task.

We found some of the fellows lying in a state of utter exhaustion. Others were crawling on the beach, sobbing for water. But one fact filled me with amazement and almost hysterical joy. They were all here! Every one! Not a single junior had perished in the raging sea.

And, what was more, they were not much harmed. Thoroughly whacked, of course, but a good sleep and a good meal would set them right. Within twenty-four hours they would probably be as lively and as active as ever.

Handforth had been smashed about a good bit, for he had crashed into the same rocks which had injured Nelson Lee. But he bore his hurts with his usual stoicism. And he helped ably in getting the other fellows together.

And, so at length we were all there, crouching under that sheltering cliff. And we waited for the dawn to come. We waited for the daylight to show us where we were, and what kind of haven this was.

We thanked Heaven that we had been spared, and that Nelson Lee was with us. But we were all listless and half dead. Then a figure loomed up in the gloom, and we were startled at first.

The figure turned out to be Phipps, much to Archie's joy. Phipps had been washed ashore right on the other side of the bay, and had only found us because he heard voices. He knew nothing of the others.

What had become of them? What fate had they gone to?

Dorrie—Umlosi—Captain Bentley and his crew? Were they still on the yacht? But this was surely impossible, for the vessel could never have withstood the fury of the storm. At times we shouted, and we gazed constantly towards the thundering, booming reef.

We could see nothing, the darkness concealed all.

What dreadful thing had happened? We didn't know, we couldn't know until the daylight came to reveal the truth. And the storm still continued its furious song accompanied by torrents of rain.

There was one thing certain—one fact positive.

We were marooned—cast ashore on a desert island, hundreds of miles out of the track of shipping. We were like Robinson Crusoe—alone.

THE END.

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CHAPTER LXIII.

The Fate of Moore and Powner.

"**W**HAT'S the matter with you?" asked Jerry, as he gathered his legs up, preparatory to getting out of bed.

"Get me something to eat," replied Powner with feeble ferocity.

"I'll try," said Jerry. "But I think the meat-safe is locked up."

"Anything, anything!" moaned Powner. "I'm like a drum, empty."

Wooden Jerry slipped out of the room and hastened to the kitchen.

The safe was not locked up, and, having filled a large plate with sundry pieces of meat and bread, Jerry hurried back.

As he was leaving the kitchen he upset a chair, and in the stillness of the night the noise of its fall was increased tenfold.

Jerry stood still for a few moments, listening for any sound of moving above. Hearing nothing he returned to this room.

"Here you are," he said to Powner. "Eat it up quick, and get away."

Powner fell upon the food like a wild beast.

"Get me some drink," he said with his mouth full.

"I can't do that," replied Jerry. "Mister Wrasper keeps the key of it."

"Water—anything," said Powner.

Jerry had it in his room, and poured out a glassful. So Powner went on eating and drinking until he had emptied the plate.

"What's to-day?" he asked abruptly.

"Thursday," replied Jerry.

"I've been buried alive for days an' days," said Powner. "I thought I'd found a safe hole in one o' them chalk-pits near the lime-kilns. I lay low there, creepin' out for an hour or two in the early mornin', to find swedes to eat, and to get a drink o' water from the pond."

"But one mornin' the roof o' the cave began to fall in, and, when I clawed some o' the chalk away, a lot more tumbled down, and

I found I couldn't get out. That was on Monday, and I've bin clawin' away at the chalk off and on ever since, until a couple of hours ago I managed to claw my way out.

"How I've kept alive all the time, I don't know. I couldn't ha' stood it without water. I got all I wanted o' that, for it drained through the roof. Down it come—drip—drip—and there I'd lay with my mouth open wide, and let it drop in.

"Yes, if it hadn't ha' been for that water, I'd ha' gone mad!"

Wooden Jerry was by no means sure that Powner had emerged from his terrible ordeal perfectly sane, for there was a wild, weird expression in the poacher's eyes that was somewhat alarming to contemplate.

"I'd rather hang," went on Powner, "than go through it again! I——"

He stopped short and turned his face to the door.

"What's that outside?" he asked.

"I don't know," softly replied Wooden Jerry.

The poacher blew out the candle and quietly crept to the door.

He could open it more easily from the inside, and he did so without a sound.

Jerry knew when the door was open by the rush of cold air into the room.

Somebody was moving about in a quiet manner, and the faint whispering of voices floated down. The quick ears of the poacher, educated to listening for any sounds that might show the presence of a foe, had not deceived him.

Jerry felt now all indeed was lost.

He had no desire to renew his acquaintance with his old associates, and only a few hours before had congratulated himself on having done with them for ever.

What would become of him if the poacher should be discovered in his room?

He stood in breathless terror for a minute or so, and then a faint light came into the hall from above.

It gathered strength until he could see the outline of the doorway of his bedroom.

It was clear of the form of the poacher.

Posh Powner had stolen away.

Jerry, more dead than alive, staggered into the hall and made his way to the staircase.

"Is it you, sir?" he faintly asked.

"Yes, it is me," replied Mr. Wrasper from above. "What noise was that I heard just now?"

"Please come downstairs, sir!" gasped Jerry.

As Mr. Wrasper was coming down, the voice of Tom Tartar was heard.

"Anything the matter, sir?"

"Nothing much, that I know of," replied Mr. Wrasper. "Go back to your bed."

"I can't sleep," returned Tom. "Please tell me if anything is wrong."

"Only a noise below."

"Then I was right, I *did* see somebody running away from the house a minute ago, and it was Powner."

Tom, as Jerry judged by the sounds, then came out of the room, and he and Mr. Wrasper descended the stairs together.

Both were half-dressed, and the schoolmaster carried a stick in his hand.

Wooden Jerry made up his mind to make a clean breast of it, mainly because he was sure it would be found out.

"Powner's been here, sir," he said, "and as soon as I could get away from him, I was coming to tell you of it."

"Who let him in?" asked Mr. Wrasper sternly.

"He got in, I suppose," replied Wooden Jerry dismally.

A search of the lower part of the house showed that Powner had forced a weak window in the scullery, and entered and departed the same way.

All the other windows, and the doors also, were fast.

"He ought not to be allowed to get away," said Tom.

"He shall not," replied Mr. Wrasper. "We must raise an alarm."

"The police are on the watch for Foster Moore," said Tom, "down by Powner's cottage."

"That is news to me, Tartar."

"I will tell you about it by and by, sir. Shall I go to them? Better make certain of one of the scoundrels than lose both."

"I will go with you," said Mr. Wrasper. "Jerry, get me a coat and a pair of boots."

Tom hurried upstairs, and slipped on his jacket and boots. All the other boys were asleep, and he took care not to disturb them.

On returning below, he found Mr. Wrasper awaiting him. The schoolmaster had armed himself with a stout cudgel, and Tom, having been furnished with a similar weapon, they departed from the school by the back way.

Through the village they went, seeing nobody, and themselves unseen. It would not take them long now to reach Powner's cottage.

They knew that police constables would be posted in places convenient to assist in the capture of Foster Moore. Mr. Wrasper's object now was to find the nearest officer, and inform him of Powner's visit to the school. From him they could then learn what had better be done.

Suddenly a dark form loomed up in the roadway before them. It was a policeman.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

"It's all right, officer. I am Mr. Wrasper. Powner has been to the school-house, and only left it half an hour or so ago."

"I'd better report that to Mr. Clark at once, sir. Wait here a bit. Stand back from the middle of the road—under that tree, where you won't be seen."

They drew back, and the constable, who was wearing "silent" boots, glided away.

In dead silence Mr. Wrasper and Tom stood waiting under the tree. There was not a breath of wind, and the rustle of the foliage was scarcely perceptible.

Slowly the minutes dragged on, and the intense quietude was getting oppressive, when it was suddenly broken by a cry from some distance down the road.

Then followed shouts and various noises indicative of a fierce struggle between men, and coming from the direction of the poacher's cottage.

"Shall we go on, sir?" whispered Tom eagerly.

"No, no," replied Mr. Wrasper. "We had better wait here until—Ha! Somebody is coming this way!"

Sounds of running feet were plainly to be heard. Nearer and nearer they came.

At that moment the waning moon sailed out from behind a bank of cloud, and lit up the road.

"Look!" whispered Tom. "They'll be here in a few moments."

There were several persons coming along the road—two of them in advance of the others—and neither Mr. Wrasper nor Tom could make out who they were until they had come quite close.

Then Tom recognised the two as Foster Moore and Posh Powner.

He sprang forward to intercept them; but Powner dashed him aside, and the two fugitives sped madly on.

"Stop them!" yelled Detective Clark.

He was almost breathless from the struggle in which he had just been engaged, and was hardly in a condition to pursue.

On went Foster Moore and Powner, the latter a few yards ahead. Presently he dashed through a fence, and sped across the fields. Moore endeavoured to keep up with him, but was unable to do so. He dropped farther and farther behind.

"Wait for me, Powner!" he panted. "Let us stand or fall together!"

* * * * *

Half-way up a hill, Powner turned savagely on the other.

"What are you stickin' on to me for?" he demanded. "I want to be alone. Clear off! I owe all the misery I'm in to you!"

"Perhaps I owe some of mine to you!" retorted Moore in a dull, hopeless tone. "Anyway, we don't part company yet!"

"But what's the use of our keepin' together?"

"It's my whim that we should do so—that's all!"

Powner muttered something between his teeth, and plodded on. He was bent on reach-

(Continued on page 111 of cover.)

(Continued from page 40.)

ing a good hiding-place—or what he thought was one—on the other side of the precipitous hill.

Presently he turned on Moore again.

"Hark ye," he said in a tone of passion, "if you had been a true pal I would not mind your being with me, even if it led us to the rope together. But you ain't; you are a traitor and a cur!"

"Very well," returned Moore. "I don't deny it."

"It was you who murdered Diggles," said Powner.

"Yes, I did. He was going to peach," returned Moore. "Are your hands clean? Do you remember your son?"

"No more o' that!" said Powner, raising his clenched hand. "What I've done to mine isn't any business of yours."

"You tried to murder Sir Claude Freshley."

"I meant to do more; I'd carry it out now, if I could."

"You are a pretty fellow to preach," said Foster Moore.

"It isn't because you settled Diggles that I want to part with you," said Powner. "You tried to put it on me. You dropped an old button of my coat near the body, and you put with it a knife that belonged to young Tartar. Just as if anybody would think he even dreamt of such a crime! If taken—that is alive—you will swing for it."

"Go on," said Moore; "there is no time to spare in this idle talk."

"I'll not go on," said Powner. "I'll——"

He stopped and uttered a fierce exclamation.

Foster Moore saw that his eyes were fixed on the lower ground, and turned his face in the same direction.

Then he saw a sight that drove all the colour engendered by excitement from his cheeks.

Across the level ground, just beyond the entrance to the quarries, a body of men were hurrying.

No need for Foster Moore to ask who they were.

Their pursuers were on the trail.

Nay, more—they had espied them, and were hurrying forward, each eager to out-distance the other.

With a fierce cry, Posh Powner hurried on. Moore sped on after him.

The steepness of the ascent was met by the fierce energy fear gave to both.

Up—up—at a run they went.

The summit was reached, and another cry burst from Posh Powner's lips.

On the other side the great hill sloped easily down to a broad, level plain below.

Advancing up the slope were a dozen men on horseback.

Mounted police!

They rode about fifty yards apart from each other, and any attempt to escape through them would be futile.

A few strides of their horses would put a cordon round the two men, and make their capture sure.

"We're done—it's all over!" cried Powner.

They were standing on the edge of a rocky precipice, with a sheer descent of three hundred feet, and a mass of broken rocks below.

Not even a mountain goat could have made the descent in safety.

"Moore," cried the poacher, "it's all over, I say!"

"Is there no escape?" cried Moore, wild-eyed as a hunted animal.

"None, unless it is this way," said Powner, pointing down the precipice.

"No man could get down there!" exclaimed Foster Moore, shuddering.

"I'm going," said Powner; "and since you are so fond of me we'll go together."

"I won't!" shrieked Moore. "Stand off!"

"Together!" yelled Powner, with the exultation of a fiend—"together!"

He sprang upon the terrified and almost helpless Foster Moore, claspings him round the waist with his arms.

"Together!" he yelled again.

The pursuers on either side saw what he was about to do, and stopped short, breathless with horror.

Foster Moore, in broken, feeble tones, begged for his life.

"Powner, it's something to have to live only a few days more," he gasped. "I can't die!"

"You wouldn't leave me!" was the answer.

"Together, I say!"

He dragged his companion to the edge of the precipice, closed his eyes, and leaped over.

A cry, never to be forgotten by those who heard it, sprang from Foster Moore's lips, and then, with a mighty rush, the pair went down.

Powner held on, and, linked together in death, as they had been in crime in life, they struck the rocks below.

THE END.

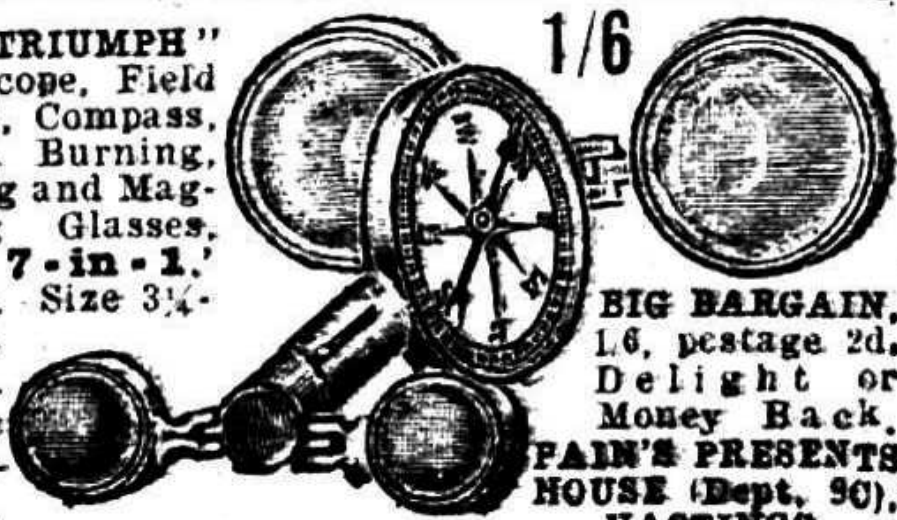
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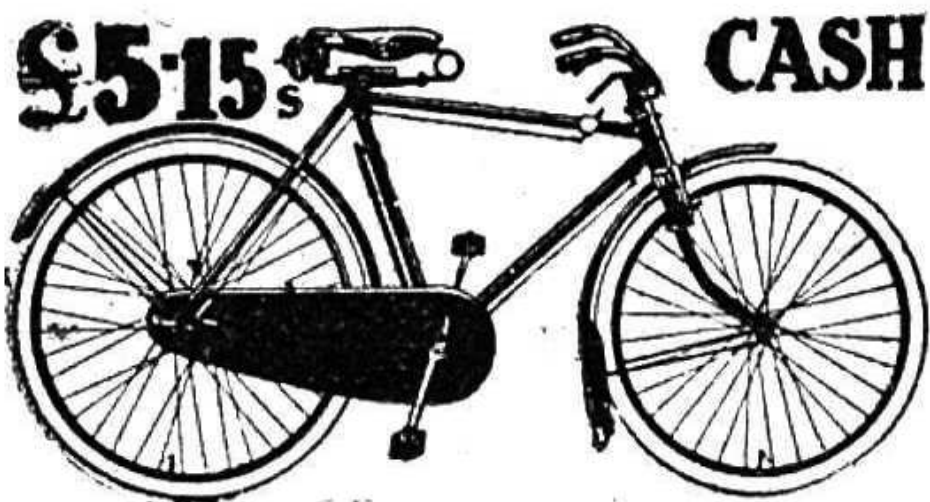
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