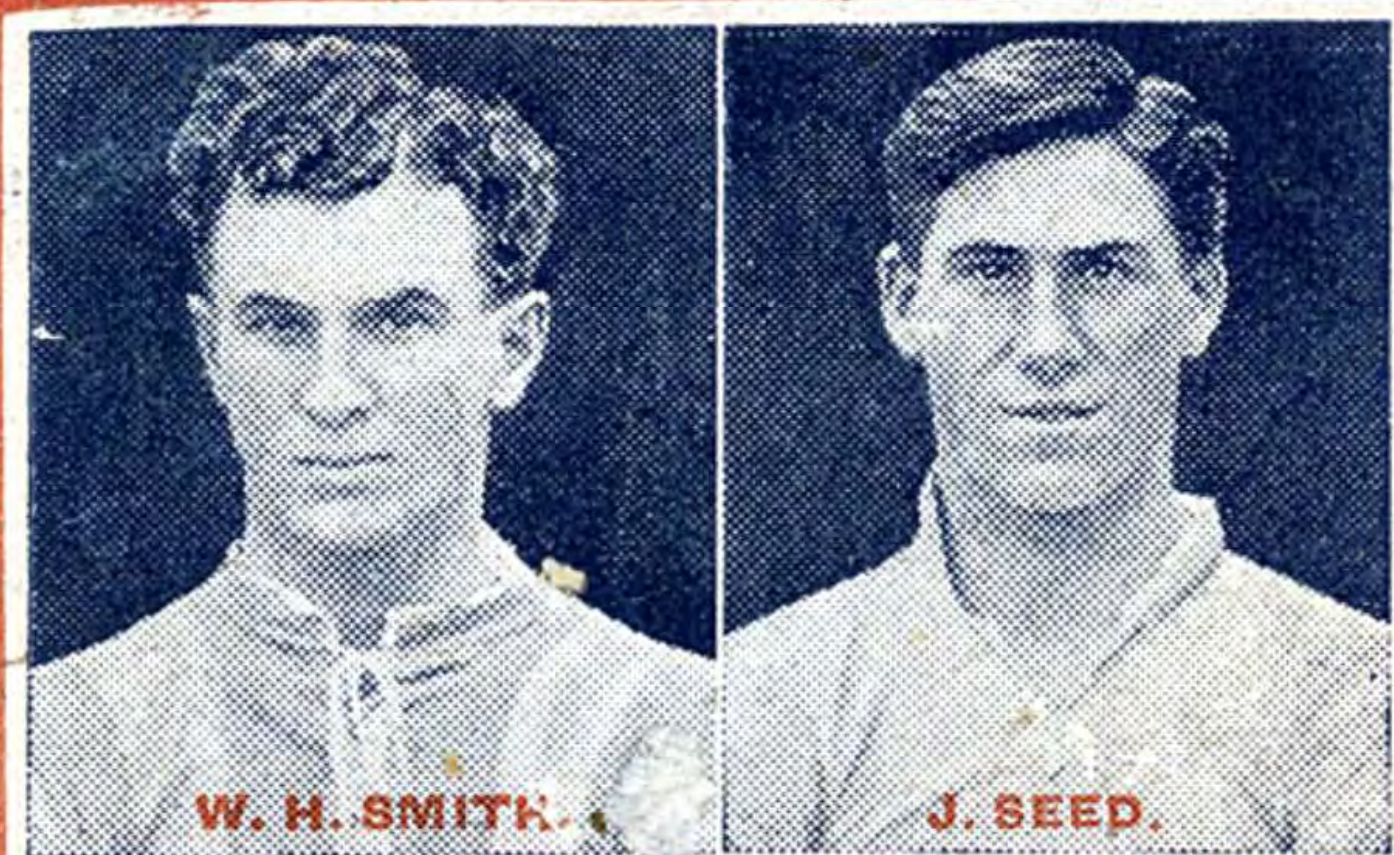


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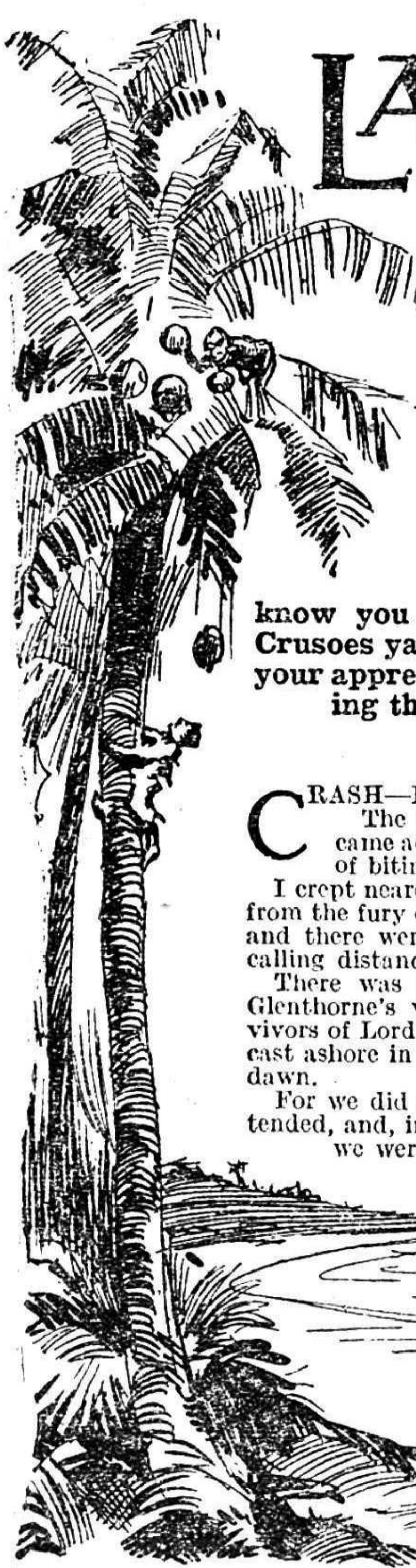


LAGOON ISLAND

ANOTHER GRAND COMPLETE STORY OF SCHOOLBOY
: : ADVENTURE ON A SOUTH SEA ISLAND. : :



"Light?" I said. "What light?"
Handforth pointed. There, beyond those rock crags, a curious flickering light appeared against the sky.

A detailed black and white illustration of a tropical beach scene. On the left, a large palm tree dominates the foreground, with several people climbing or standing near its trunk. In the background, more palm trees and a small group of people are visible on the beach. The ocean is depicted with simple horizontal lines representing waves. In the bottom right corner, three men are standing on the shore, looking out towards the water.

LAGOON ISLAND!

I venture to predict, and not without good reason, that the Schoolboy Crusoe series, of which "LAGOON ISLAND" is the second story, will rank among the finest schoolboy adventure tales that have ever been produced. I would not say this unless I meant it, or you would never believe me again. After all, the real test of a story is in the reading of it, and as I know you will endorse my opinion of the Schoolboy Crusoes yarns, I ask you, as a special favour, to show your appreciation of these fine stories by recommending them to all your friends.—THE EDITOR.

CHAPTER I.—SHIPWRECKED.

CRASH—BO-OOM!

The surf roared and thundered on the reef, and the wind came across the lagoon in great gusts, carrying with it quantities of biting spray. And the darkness of night concealed all.

I crept nearer to the kindly little cliff which formed a partial shelter from the fury of the tropical cyclone. Nelson Lee lay just by my side, and there were numbers of fellows—twenty including myself within calling distance.

There was just one other person here with us—Phipps, Archie Glenthorne's valet. And we twenty-two souls represented the survivors of Lord Dorrimore's steam yacht, the Wanderer. We had been cast ashore in the darkness of the night, and we were waiting for the dawn.

For we did not know what this island was, how many miles it extended, and, in fact, we were in total ignorance of anything save that we were alive.

As for the Wanderer, we feared the worst. What a merry party we had been!

What glorious times we had had on board Dorrie's luxurious yacht—at Port Said—at Cairo—at the Pyramids—at other places along the route. A merry party, laughing, gay, and as light-hearted as only schoolboys can be.

And we had been bound for Colombo—for Ceylon, and then southward across the Line to Sumatra, Java, and through the Torres Straits to New Guinea and all the thousand and one coral islands of the Pacific. That had been the programme which Lord Dorrimore had mapped out for us! A glorious summer holiday in the South Seas.

But the unexpected intervened.

The scheme was not to be. For, while approaching Colombo we had been seized in the grip of one of those terrible tropical typhoons, a devastating hurricane that had hurled the yacht helplessly into the unknown.

Under ordinary circumstances, the Wanderer would have been capable of defying the elements, even a cyclone of this sort, but Fate had been against her in the shape of a piece of floating wreckage, possibly a derelict, but who could tell? We only knew that the yacht had struck something amidst all that smother and foam. And her steering gear was broken to smithereens and she was rendered as helpless as a drifting log.

And then had come the dreadful news that land lay directly ahead. Land—and a great barrier reef of coral, upon which the mighty rollers of the Pacific thundered and crashed with a devastating roar. At least, I am assuming that they were the rollers of the Pacific, and shall continue to do so. Because we did not know exactly where we were, for the cyclone had carried us at an incredible speed, and we were an enormous distance from our original course.

There's no need for me to go into any details. The disaster was inevitable. The Wanderer struck the reef, and remained wedged there for an appreciable time. Just beyond the reef lay the lagoon, usually so placid and calm, but now churned up into an angry mass of foam.

Nelson Lee's first thought had been for the safety of all the members of the holiday party. And a lifeboat had been swung out on the davits, and all the boys were crowded into it, including myself.

And then, just as Phipps had stepped into the boat in order to attend to some want of his young master, and before the lifeboat was ready to be lowered, a sudden lurch had upset all the plans of the sailors at work.

The boat, in fact, had toppled over, pitching all the fellows into the lagoon—Phipps included.

The only thing was to strike out for the beach, blindly and almost hopelessly. But

for the fact that Nelson Lee dived overboard on the instant, several juniors would have perished.

But the gov'nor acted like the true hero he is. Without commotion, without any fuss, he saved fellow after fellow. In the dark smother he assisted those who were failing. And the miracle of the whole affair was that Nelson Lee escaped alive.

Time after time he was dashed against the cruel stones, and just as he had brought the last fellow ashore, he met with the worst mishap of all. For a great wave had pitched him down with such force that his left arm was shattered. And I, coming on the scene shortly afterwards, discovered the gov'nor lying there, just awash on the beach, mutilated and battered.

He was bleeding profusely from minor wounds, he was almost unconscious with agony, and utterly incapable of lifting another finger.

Tenderly I carried the gov'nor up the beach, assisted by Reginald Pitt and two or three others, until we had gained the shelter of a tiny overhanging cliff. And here we were now—waiting.

We were waiting for the glorious light to come, so that we could see where we were, and so that we could do something. At present we were helpless. The darkness, with the tropical storm, rendered action almost impossible. It was only by the kindness of Providence that we were all together now.

The dawn could not be far distant, of that I was certain. And the storm was decreasing in violence with every minute that passed. But the fact which sent a cold grip round my heart was that the Wanderer had vanished. There was no sign of her out there upon the reef. There was no sound save the thundering of the surf.

I suppose we were really in a pitiable condition. Few castaways could have been thrown upon an unknown shore with less reminders of civilisation. Among the lot of us there was not one suit of clothes. Nelson Lee, indeed, was the only person who wore anything like a suit. He was attired in socks, trousers and shirt. The rest of us had been wearing pyjamas, and half the fellows had lost these garments during the swim. To all intents and purposes we were naked. We did not possess a pocket-knife, an axe or any single implement that would come in useful to a party of shipwrecked unfortunates.

There had been no voices for so long that I had almost begun to believe that I was alone. In the intense gloom it was impossible to see others, although they were so near.

But now, with a little start, I came to myself.

I recognised the voice of Tommy Watson. He was quite near, and as I turned my head he reached out an arm, and touched my bare knee.

"Hallo!" I said. "You all right?"

"Yes—as right as the others, I suppose," replied Watson. "But look there—straight up! I saw a star just now! That means that the storm's going, doesn't it? The sky's clearing!"

I looked up, and although the sky was partially obscured by wildly waving coconut palms, I could see the racing clouds—dimly and strangely. And there, in one or two spots, were little hazy points of light.

"By Jove, yes!" I exclaimed thankfully. "The sky will soon be clear now."

"I wish it would get light!" put in Reggie Pitt, from the other side. "I'm tremendously anxious to see where we are—and where the Wanderer is. It's a queer thing we're not cold, wearing practically nothing like this."

"My dear chap, we're right in the tropics," I said—"probably near the Line itself. It never gets cold here."

"What about the winter-time?" asked Watson.

"There is no winter," I said. "It's only a rainy season, with hardly any difference in the temperature. Sudden bursts of torrential rain, and then sunshine. But I don't want to talk about that now."

We continued to watch the sky, and Pitt and Watson ceased talking. There was complete silence, except for the growl and thunder of the reef. Other stars twinkled, and, somehow, I was pulled into a sense of drowsiness.

Everybody else was sleeping already, exhausted and weary. Even Phipps had found it impossible to keep awake. I was resolved to wait for the dawn. I made up my mind not to drop off.

But nature asserted herself.

I don't exactly know how it happened, but—well, I don't remember anything more at that period. I must have slept like the rest.

And the surf continued to pound ceaselessly on the barrier of coral.

CHAPTER II.

THE ISLAND OF DELIGHT.



LAZILY, I stretched out an arm and turned on my back.

I was feeling comfortable and indolent. Whether it was imagination or not, I couldn't be sure,

but there seemed to be a droning sound in the air, and, in addition, a curious thundering noise, the latter sounding far away and unreal. And I became conscious that my limbs were exceedingly warm.

And wakefulness came to me.

I opened my eyes, blinked dazedly, and sat up. For a few seconds I was utterly bewildered, without any idea regarding my whereabouts. I had been dreaming of St.

Frank's on a hot summer's afternoon on Little Side, and I had been playing cricket.

And now, as I sat up, I imagined myself to be on the promenade deck of the Wanderer. I must have fallen asleep in a deck chair—No! That couldn't be because I felt sand under my fingers.

Sand!

I opened my eyes again, after rubbing them. And I was dazzled.

The sun was shining with full, intense tropical glory. The heat was considerable, and my limbs were half scorched, for I had been lying in the full glare, and I suddenly saw, to my amazement, that I was practically bare. I wore nothing but half a ragged pyjama coat, and a pair of torn pyjama trousers. Nothing else whatever!

I knew why I had been dreaming about heat and sunshine. And just then full realisation and remembrance came to me. The cyclone—the barrier reef—the lagoon—the island!

It all came back vividly and clearly.

I remembered the crash as the Wanderer jammed herself upon the coral reef, the swim through the lagoon, and the nightmare-like search in the darkness for the other fellows. Yes, that was right! And then I remembered that Nelson Lee was badly hurt, and I had resolved to wait by his side until the dawn came. We were crouching just under that little overhanging cliff, and the storm was raging. Rain was descending in torrents, the wind was howling, and we were all cast upon this piece of desolate, sinister-looking land.

What miracle had happened?

What staggering piece of transformation had taken place? As though by the wave of a magician's wand, the whole scene had changed completely and utterly, and I was in Fairyland.

I have been surprised on many an occasion, but never so dumbfounded as I was at this moment. It was incredible—unbelievable. It could not be real, and I pinched myself, believing that I was in a dream.

But no—a glance round assured me that the fellows were there; all of them fast asleep, sprawling on the sands. Some were lying in the shade, some were in the full glare of the sun. And they looked an extraordinary lot! Attired in nothing but a few rags of pyjamas.

I felt that I wanted to awaken them, and to drop by Nelson Lee's side to see how he was getting on. I was sitting next to him, and it only required a half turn on my part to enable me to bend over him. But some influence made me leap to my feet and run along the sandy beach to a point where I could see everything with greater distinctness.

For the beauty of this scene had gripped me.

And the sun was shining with such brilliance that the scene was dazzling, and the various colours stood out in all their loveli-

ness. The sky was so blue that it seemed almost unreal. And a gentle breeze came off the sea, refreshing and invigorating. Of the recent black storm there was not the slightest sign. It had passed completely during the last three or four hours.

For I knew that I must have been asleep. I had dropped off before the dawn had arrived, and now this amazing transformation had taken place. I had pictured the spot as a barren, desolate wilderness, with possibly a few shrubs and trees, and black, ugly crags.

And what was the reality?

A vision of Paradise itself!

There lay the lagoon, a great sweep of waving blue-water. It was practically as calm as a lake, and of varying colours. Over to the left the tints were of pure ultramarine—a deep, glorious blue. And yet only a short distance away, the water showed like pure, sparkling sapphire, delicate and beautiful. And so clear was the water that had I been in a boat I should have seen the bottom, fathoms below, with the wonderful formations of coral, branching here and there in the most intricate designs.

I was standing on the beach of pure white sands. Such sands as one never sees except in an island of the South Seas. And, in my rear there were cocoanut palms hundreds and hundreds of them, some so close to the water that they bent practically over it, and their reflections were outlined.

"Glorious!" I gasped, as I stood there. "Oh, glorious!"

It was the only word I could utter, for I was so enchanted. Gazing out over the lagoon I could see the barrier reef, perhaps half-a-mile distant. The water on the beach here lapped the sands in tiny, sparkling wavelets. But out there, on the reef, the great rollers roared and crashed amid a thunder of foam and spray—the legacy of the recent storm. But here only the faintest echo of the disturbance reached the sands.

And the light over beyond the reef was dazzling. It was a waste of sea and air, without a sail or whisp of smoke.

But, nearer, everything was different. There lay the reef, with the snow-white foam marking its position, and the spray, glistening like diamonds in the sunlight. And the intense green of the palms, the white of the coral, and, predominating all, the blue of the lagoon. It was a scene that any painter would have raved madly about.

Overhead a number of gulls were wheeling in stately fashion. I allowed my gaze to wander somewhat. One part of the reef over to my left was higher and more rugged than the rest. And on this hillock of gleaming coral, far out there with sea on either side, grew a clump of palms—three stately monarchs who nodded their

waving heads towards the island. It was very picturesque.

I wondered how it was that the lagoon had been so rough during the night—for surely this lovely lake of salt water could not be violent? It seemed incredible. I knew that the storm outside must have been of extraordinary violence to cause the lagoon to whip itself into such a state of fury.

But all anger had died away now, and the island was in its normal state of calm and beauty. For I was becoming more and more convinced that this place was one of the thousand-and-one islets which were dotted about in these tropic seas. We had not been cast upon the mainland, but on a mere speck in the vast ocean. Possibly it was uninhabited, save for ourselves.

Turning round, I gazed inland. There was the little cliff—which I had pictured as being gloomy and forbidding. Now, viewed in the crystal sunlight, that cliff was a mere insignificant bank of sand, with palm-trees growing along the edge, and casting their shade below.

The cliff was only six or seven feet high, and formed just a little stretch on the upper part of the beach. Beyond lay the dense woods, with the ubiquitous cocoanut palm dominating all. It would be a rare delight to explore those woods. What lay beyond? What dazzling glories should we find in the interior? It was a delight in store.

By what I could judge, the coral reef extended all the way round the island, at some parts half a mile from the shore, and others much nearer. There were two headlands within view, and comparatively near, for I was standing in the centre of a sweeping bay. Thus my field of observation was fairly restricted. I longed to go to the end of the bay to see what lay beyond.

But just then full realisation came to me. The magic of this tropic scene lost its grip to a certain extent. I turned back, and saw the sprawling juniors. And there was something rather pitiful in their aspect—so helpless—so utterly destitute of all civilised needs. And then I thought of the Wanderer—and I gazed out sorrowfully towards the reef.

It was at this moment that I heard a slight sound. And then I saw that one of the juniors was sitting up and yawning. The junior was Edward Oswald Handforth. Having finished his yawn, he punched vigorously at the nearest fellow—not because he had any grudge against him, but because he couldn't see why others should sleep while he was awake.

"Wake up, you fathead!" he exclaimed drowsily. "My hat! The sun seems pretty warm this morning. I wonder where the dickens— Why, what the— Well, I'm jiggered!"

Handforth broke off abruptly, and stared about him with a look of wonder. Then he leapt to his feet, and tripped over Church and McClure—effectively waking those two juniors up. Reginald Pitt, a yard or so

away, was also aroused. The other fellows slept on soundly.

Handforth saw me, and came over the sands in my direction. In spite of the fears and doubts in my heart, I could not restrain a smile. For the famous leader of Study D presented a peculiar spectacle.

He was wearing nothing but a pair of pyjama trousers. One leg of these was torn up to the knee, and there was a huge rent at the rear. Handforth's upper portions were bare.

"Nipper! I say!" shouted Handy. "Where the dickens are we? Oh, my hat, ain't the heat awful? Well, it's a good thing that storm's gone! Things seem to be a bit better."

He joined me, and stared out across the lagoon.

"So that's the reef?" he went on. "That's where the yacht bashed against? These rocks are always jolly treacherous!"

Church and McClure and Pitt were coming to join us. Pitt had only a light cotton pyjama jacket to cover him—he had kicked the trousers off on his way ashore. McClure was fortunate enough to possess a complete pyjama suit—but Church was absolutely naked.

"I say!" he gasped. "I—I can't walk about like this, you know! There might be people looking on! Lend me something, for goodness' sake!"

"Better have my coat!" said McClure.

He took it off, and Church placed it round his waist, so as to form a kind of skirt, securing it by the simple means of tying the sleeves into a knot at the rear. Pitt was looking round with wonder and admiration.

"Isn't it glorious?" he asked breathlessly.

"Eh?" said Handforth.

"The whole scene!" exclaimed Pitt.

"The lagoon—the sparkling foam on the reef! And the palm trees and the sands—and—everything! Did you ever see anything so absolutely gorgeous?"

Handforth looked round.

"Huh! Not so bad!" he said critically.

"Now I come to look at it, it does seem a bit pretty—although I'm blessed if I'd rave about it! Nothing special, that I can see."

I looked at Handforth almost sorrowfully.

"That's the worst of being a materialist," I said. "You never could appreciate beauty, Handforth. I've seen a few tropical scenes in my time—but this is positively the most lovely spot under the sun. I don't think there can be anything so gorgeous as this!"

"Rot!" said Handforth. "Why, I saw something a lot better at the Drury Lane Theatre once! Lovely trees and sky and—"

But I walked away, feeling somewhat faint. Here was a fellow who compared the glorious beauties of nature to the artificial glamour of a stage scene produced by electric lights and paint and canvas! Clever though the latter may be, it is a



Under ordinary circumstances, Nelson Lee's case was one for hospital treatment

mere sham and a fakery compared to the actual reality.

It was, however, just like Handforth.

Pitt and Church and McClure were filled with delight and wonder. There was something in the atmosphere of this spot which made death and disaster seem impossible. It was a haven of peace—a glorious wonderland.

"I've never seen anything like it—never!" said Church, in a voice that was rather hushed. "Oh, isn't it beautiful? Look at the lagoon—the colours! I've never seen water so sparkling and blue! It's—it's like something unreal! And the sky—and the palms—"

"Which reminds me, I'm hungry!" said Handforth bluntly.

"Hungry!" said Church dreamily. "How can anybody be hungry here? I'd like to stop here all the rest of my life! Just wandering about this bay, lolling in the sands, enjoying the sunshine, and—"

"Oh, you're dotty!" said Handforth. "I expect you've got sunstroke!"

"That's not at all improbable!" I put in. "I don't mean that Church has really got sunstroke, but there's a danger of it unless we cover our heads. The sun's tremendously powerful in these regions."

And so, before we did anything else, we picked up numbers of big leaves from the sands—leaves which had been torn from the trees during the storm of the night. And

it was a simple task to fashion a rough-and-ready headgear.

"We needn't wake the others up just yet," I said. "I'm tremendously anxious about the gov'nor—but five or ten minutes won't make any difference. I want to look round—and see where we are."

"Good idea," agreed Handforth. "I'll bet anything you like that the Wanderer is just round that giddy bend," he added, pointing. "And Dorrie and Umlosi, and all the rest, are probably camping on the beach."

"Of course," said McClure. "It's impossible to think that they're drowned—it couldn't be! We'll find 'em all right—and then we can get in some proper clothes, and have some decent breakfast."

Church shook his head.

"But shall we find the yacht?" he asked. "We mustn't be too sure!"

I had an idea that Handforth and McClure spoke as they did in order to cheer themselves up. It was possible, of course, that we should find the Wanderer round the headland. It was certain that the yacht lay somewhere comparatively near—for she could never have escaped into the open sea after striking the reef.

Again and again I had looked out upon barrier, where the surf thundered and foamed. And there was no sign. The yacht had vanished as though some giant hand had crushed her out of existence.

There was one possibility—and it had occurred to Handforth. I had thought of it long before, but he had put my thoughts into words. Should we find the yacht round the bay? If so, she would be battered and wrecked—that was certain. But what mattered about the Wanderer herself? I was thinking of Dorrie, of Umlosi, of Captain Bentley, and Mr. Maitland, and all the good fellows who formed the yacht's crew. If they were alive nothing else would matter much. And the wreck would certainly be accessible now that the storm was over. We could bring stores ashore—clothing—cooking utensils—everything, in fact, that was needed for our comfort and use. And the wireless apparatus could be set to rights at leisure, and appeals for assistance sent out.

But what if the Wanderer was lost?

I did not care to think of the possibility. I was sure that we should find the vessel somewhere near—but now hidden by the limitations of the bay. And it was in order to drive this haunting doubt out of my mind that I determined to investigate at once—before any of the others were awakened.

"Come on!" I said briskly. "No need to stay here looking at the scenery. We can let the chaps sleep for a bit—they're all right there. They're in the shade, and it's a lot better for we four to be on our own just now."

"Rather," agreed Pitt. "We want to know for certain how things are—and think how lovely it'll be if we can bring back good news. And there's something else. We need help for Mr. Lee."

"I was thinking of the same thing," I said quietly. "We've got nothing here—not even a proper bandage. I don't want to touch the gov'nor unless I'm compelled to. It'll be far better to find the Wanderer at once."

"We'll go to the left to begin with—it's nearer," said Pitt.

And so, without discussing the subject any further, we strode off barefooted across the hot sands towards the headland. It was a jutting portion of beach which formed the end of the bay. The cocoanut palms extended to the extreme end, and leaned over, as though viewing their reflections in the lagoon. It's strange how cocoanut palms always lean from the perpendicular. A straight palm tree is almost unknown.

The land itself was not very high at this point—just a jutting portion of wooded country which shut out the scene beyond. The reef at the outer edge of the lagoon lay all the way round, in an unbroken line, with the rollers pounding their fury away on the coral.

The distance was less than a quarter of a mile, and it did not take us long to cover the ground. Somehow, although the temperature was high, the atmosphere was so dry and clear that we didn't feel the heat. It was just lovely walking in the sunshine, with the lapping waters at our feet. Occasionally we paddled through the tiny waves.

"Of course, the best thing would be to get on high ground, towards the centre of the island," I remarked. "Then we might be able to look over the whole place, and see every scrap of the shore. But it's hardly likely that the Wanderer could be anywhere else but close by."

Our feelings as we drew nearer the corner of the bay were curious. What should we find when we rounded those graceful cocoanut palms? What lay beyond? The uncertainty was thrilling—our anxiety was great. We tried to appear less concerned than we really were. But Handforth couldn't contain himself—and when we were within a hundred yards, he let out a whop and started running. I was glad, for I wanted to run, too. And we pelted across the white sand at the double, and then—we arrived at the extremity of the bay.

Beyond lay—another vision of wonder and beauty.

A straight stretch of glittering sands, with a continuation of the sapphire lagoon, and the reef smothered with foam to seaward. For a mile the beach lay all straight, and the ground was rising slightly towards the far end. And there was a headland—a rocky prominence which jutted out right into the lagoon itself, and ending with a cliff, sheer for perhaps a hundred feet. On the top of the cliff grew a solitary, majestic cocoanut palm.

But the beach was barren—the lagoon was empty—the reef one unbroken line of gleaming coral, with the foam beyond.

"Oh, my hat!" groaned McClure. "Nothing—not a sign!"

My heart was like lead, and I saw that the other fellows were looking at one another with drawn expressions. Our hopes had not been realised. There was no sign of the Wanderer. Not the faintest trace—not even a scrap of wreckage upon the beach.

"Well, we've drawn blank!" I said grimly. "She's not here, and it's impossible for her to have gone ashore further round. There's just one chance left—a faint hope. She may be round the other side of the bay."

"That's what I was thinking," said Pitt.

Without waiting longer, we turned round and retraced our steps until we came to the spot where the others were sleeping. I glanced at Nelson Lee as I passed, and saw that he was breathing evenly.

The others showed no sign of awakening.

The bay was rather bigger than we had imagined, and the other headland was further away. It was very similar to the side we had already visited, except for the fact that a wonderfully marked mass of coral stood out here, with no palm trees in the immediate vicinity.

We did not speak as we walked along.

The same thought was in our minds. If we saw no sign of the Wanderer round this headland, then there could be only one explanation. The yacht had gone to the bottom with every soul on board.

But we could not bring ourselves to believe this horrible thing. The yacht must be there.

At last we arrived on the coral, which rose up in extraordinary formations. At any other time I should have paused and looked at it, and wondered at the marvels of nature.

But now I hardly gave the coral a glance.

We climbed the rugged slope, with the lagoon lying placid and blue on our left. And we gazed round upon another bay. It was shallower than our own particular bay, and lined in the same fashion with cocoanut palms. In the centre was a kind of depression. This, no doubt, in the height of the rainy season was the bed of a rushing stream, which emptied itself into the lagoon. But now it was quite dry.

The coral reef lay in just the same manner—foam-smothered, with the surf roaring and hissing to seaward. And between the reef and the beach there was a stretch of crystal water, with a little island in the centre. The island was a tiny affair, no bigger than twenty feet round. And in the centre of it grew two palm trees.

Just this—and nothing more.

No Wanderer—no wreckage—no indication of human life. The gulls, and the island birds, and the insects. A paradise of tropical beauty—but by our expressions it might have been a fever-stricken swamp.

"They've gone!" muttered Pitt brokenly. "Gone to the bottom!"

"Oh, it's impossible!" said Church. "It—it can't be! Why can't we find any wreckage? If the yacht had gone down, we should have seen the wreck sticking out of the water——"

"No, I don't think so!" I interrupted. "It's quite likely that the water just beyond the reef is very deep—so deep that the Wanderer would be completely submerged. And as for wreckage—well, it would stay on the other side of the lagoon. We can't find out anything for certain until we go to the reef itself."

"Fathead!" growled Handforth. "How can we get to the reef?"

"We might swim it," suggested McClure. I shook my head.

"Too dangerous," I said.

"Dangerous!" repeated Handforth, with a sniff. "Why, it's not much of a swim——"

"Perhaps not—but there'll probably be sharks," I explained.

"Sharks!" said Church, startled. "In this lovely lagoon?"

"Things in the tropics are not always as lovely as they look," I replied. "And this water may be deceptive. But still, we needn't talk about that. We can't find any sign of the Wanderer—and we're in a hopeless position."

With flagging steps we made our way back to the little cliff, going along the beach with our feet paddling in the tiny waves which broke on the white sands. We all felt utterly depressed and horrified.

"Look here," said Pitt suddenly. "I've been thinking about it a good deal. What happened after the boat collapsed last night? We were all thrown into the sea, and we swam ashore. The Wanderer was left perched on the reef. What happened to her?"

"Well, that's fairly obvious," I replied dully. "I was afraid of the worst all the time—but I hoped against hope. Do you remember hearing a kind of crash in the midst of the storm, while we were swimming?"

"I only heard the thunder, and the roar of the surf!" said Pitt.

"Well, I thought I heard something different," I went on. "I believe the yacht slipped back off the reef—into deep water."

"And sank?" asked Handforth.

"What else could have happened?" I said. "There was just a bare chance that she might have drifted round to another part of the reef, but a very slim chance. It wouldn't be possible for the ship to get out into the open again and drift away. Besides, she was probably fatally holed when she first struck. And that would make her sink like a stone."

"And everybody went down in her!" said Pitt miserably. "I don't suppose they had a chance. They were sucked to the bottom when the yacht went down, or else smashed to bits on the outer edge of the reef. Oh,

It's too awful to think about! It's too horrible to imagine!"

He shivered slightly, in spite of the heat, and we felt too dumb to make any comment. For the truth was only too obvious. Either the Wanderer had sunk like a stone into deep water, or she had been battered to bits on the coral reef. And everybody on board, including Lord Dorrimore and Umlosi, had perished.

"Dear old Dorrie!" I muttered, half to myself. "He would have revelled in this island. He always said he'd end up suddenly, and he reckoned it would be somewhere in the tropics!"

We tried to shake off the feeling, and when we got back to the others we proceeded to wake them up without any further ado. It was impossible to bring assistance to Nelson Lee from the yacht. Whatever was done must be done by ourselves. And the sooner the better.

One by one we awakened the juniors. And after they had expressed amazement at their surroundings, we told them the truth. They were almost thunderstruck. And, certainly, it was impossible for them to realise the full enormity of this disaster. At the moment it seemed terrible enough, but what would it seem like afterwards? How should we feel when we had been alone on the island for a week? What then?

It was a question that we couldn't answer.

But there was no doubt that we were marooned—utterly cut off from the world!

CHAPTER III.

PHIPPS TO THE FORE.



SIR MONTIE TREGEL-
LIS-WEST looked
about him with mild
amazement.

"Begad!" he exclaimed.

"Dear old boys, this place is gorgeous, it is, really! How frightfully rippin' to bathe in that lagoon! It's really the loveliest piece of scenery I have ever come across!"

"Rather!" agreed Tommy Watson.

Other juniors were staring about them, too. Armstrong and Co., and Fatty Little, and De Valerie and Christine, and all the rest. They were just beginning to get a little grasp of the truth.

By wonderful good fortune, all the fellows were fit. Several had bruises and scratches, but what are such things to a boy? They hardly took any notice of minor injuries like these, and practically forgot them.

As for the rest, the sleep had done them a world of good. Utterly exhausted by their battle against the storm and the angry sea, they had sunk upon the beach and had slept. Now they were refreshed. They

were full of activity—full of energy, and ready for anything.

And, like boys all the world over, they did not carry responsibilities on their shoulders. They could hardly realise that the yacht had gone, with all its attendant luxuries. It seemed ridiculous to suppose that breakfast would not be in the usual manner.

Yet there would be no eggs, no sizzling bacon, no coffee or tea. There would be none of these reminders of civilisation and home. Would there be any breakfast at all? That, indeed, was the question.

What food was there to be had?

At the moment we were not thinking of such things as this. Even Fatty Little, the prize eater of the Remove had not mentioned anything about food. He was overawed by his surroundings, and, curiously enough he possessed a sense of appreciation. He could see the beauty in all this scenery.

"Great frying pancakes!" he exclaimed. "It's lovely, it's absolutely top-hole! I've never seen such glorious sea and sky in all my life! And—and just look at the palm trees and the sands!"

"Ripping!" said Bob Christine, with gleaming eyes.

"And—and those other poor souls haven't even seen it!" said Tommy Watson. "They've all gone down, you chaps! Oh, what horrible cruelty! What a rotten trick of nature to destroy 'em all like that, in a single night! But thank goodness we're saved."

"Saved, yes!" agreed De Valerie. "But we're stuck here, on what seems to be a desert island. We're probably a thousand miles out of the usual track of shipping. It might be years and years before we see any sign of a sail!"

"No, that's very improbable," I put in. "Whaling ships cruise about in these waters at different times in the year, and they put into these small islands for water. It'll be peculiar if we don't see one of them sooner or later. Besides, we might not be so far from the track of shipping, after all. Anyhow, there's no sense in making conjectures."

"Of course not!" agreed Pitt. "If we go on at that rate we shall lose our sense of proportion. This island might be inhabited on the other side—we can't tell until we explore it."

"That's right," said Jack Grey. "But—but I keep thinking of poor old Dorrie. And Umlosi, you know. And we shall never see them any more! Isn't it terrible to think about it?"

"And what about Yung Ching?" said De Valerie. "He's the only St. Frank's chap who wasn't with us. He was left on the yacht with the others, and went to the bottom at the same time, I suppose."

"Yes, and we came out from England on purpose to rescue Yung Ching from those Chinese enemies of his," said Tommy

Watson bitterly. "We got him, too, and everything was going gloriously. Then—then this storm comes along and messes up the whole plan."

"It's no good fighting against Fate," said Pitt. "We human beings make all sorts of arrangements, but we are absolutely helpless where Nature steps in and changes everything."

"How many of us are there here?" put in Griffiths. "How many saved?"

"Twenty-two," replied Pitt. "That is, twenty of us chaps, and Mr. Lee and Phipps. Nobody else at all."

Handforth sniffed.

"Phipps!" he exclaimed. "There's a nerve, if you like!"

"A nerve?"

"Of course," said Handforth. "What the

of his body, And I was pretty certain that he had received a bad crack on the head—a crack which had resulted in concussion of the brain.

Indeed, under ordinary circumstances, Nelson Lee's case would have been one for any hospital.

And yet we were here, on this island, without a bandage, without a scrap of ointment or liniment, or anything that was necessary. What could we hope to accomplish? How could we aid the guv'nor as he needed aiding? A skilled surgeon was required.

I selected Pitt as the best chap to help me. I secured a pyjama jacket from one of the fellows who possessed a complete suit, there were only about three such fortunates among the whole crowd of us, and tore it up into strips. This material, at all events,



"Let's creep close to those bushes and peep over them!" said Handforth. "We'll soon see how many of the beggars there are."

dickens does Phipps mean by getting ashore? Why couldn't it have been Dorrie instead? Dorrie's a fine chap, and we should have been all serene with him here. But what's the good of Phipps? A blessed valet, who knows nothing!"

And this, as a matter of fact, was the general opinion regarding Archie Glen-thorn's man. But he was one of the saved, and had as much right to consideration as any of us. So it was no good talking.

I was very anxious about Nelson Lee, and while these juniors were discussing matters, I was by the guv'nor's side. He looked pale and haggard, and I could tell that he was slightly feverish. For Nelson Lee had been rather severely injured during the night.

His words were serious.

One arm was broken—an ugly fracture. He was bruised, he was battered, and there were several nasty gashes on various parts

was excellent for binding purposes, as it was so soft.

"What we've got to do is to bathe the guv'nor's arm thoroughly, and then we shall have to try our best to set the bone," I said grimly. "It'll be an awful job, Reggie, but we must do our best. I wish to Heaven he'd come to himself!"

"Is he in danger, do you think?" asked Pitt.

We were bending over Nelson Lee and speaking in low voices. The guv'nor was lying still and quiet. His eyes were closed, and his breathing fairly regular. But one glance at him was enough to show us that he was no longer the strong, vigorous reliable man who had always taken charge of things.

Nelson Lee was crocked—hopelessly crocked.

It was almost pitiful to see him lying

there in the sand, in the shade of the tall palm trees. He was wearing a shirt, opened at the neck, and a pair of light flannel trousers. Nothing else at all, except for some socks. And when I spoke to him there was no response. When I lifted his head it was limp. He was unconscious.

"What shall we do to start with?" asked Pitt. "Look—look here! I didn't notice this before."

He was bending down low, and gazing at the back of Nelson Lee's head as I held it up. The guv'nor's hair was matted in one point, and when I examined the spot I felt my heart give a jump.

The scalp was torn, and had been bleeding. Without a doubt this wound was the cause of Nelson Lee's unconsciousness. He had caught his head a crash against one of the rocks, and this, no doubt, had nearly driven him senseless. Only his iron will had kept him going until he reached the shore. Then he collapsed, and had been unconscious ever since.

"I don't think the bone is fractured," I said, as I gently felt the spot. "It's only a bad knock. With proper attention he ought to come to himself within three or four hours. Well, we shall have to do our best. Oh, Reggie, I wish we had some ointment of some kind, anything to take down the inflammation. His arm's in a terrible state."

We had no great skill in attending to an injured man. But we knew a little about first aid, and we proceeded to do everything possible for the patient. And we could not help realising our terrible helplessness.

Out of all the souls on board the yacht, just twenty juniors had been saved, and two men. One was helpless and laid low. The other was Phipps. What good would he be? Even Archie had no use for Phipps here, for Phipps' only qualification consisted of pressing clothes and preparing other articles of apparel. He was a valet, about the most useless man one could imagine on a desert island.

While we were looking after the guv'nor, preparing the bandages and getting ready for the awful task of setting the broken arm, Phipps was with Archie, a little distance away.

Archie had only just awakened, about five minutes earlier, and he had not said much so far. He had been drinking in the scene, and had been gazing about him with wonder and admiration.

"I mean to say, this old spot is positively the one place!" he observed. "What, Phipps? Don't you agree, laddie?"

"The scenery is certainly entrancing, sir," said Phipps.

"Oh, absolutely," agreed Archie.

"I should like you to realise, sir, that things are in a very bad way," went on Phipps. "It appears that the yacht has been lost, and we are cast upon this desert island, devoid of all the necessities of life."

"Gadzooks!" said Archie. "Dash it all!

Not really, Phipps? I mean to say, what about the old breakfast, what? Kindly trickle away, old fruit, and prepare the young master a cooling drink of iced lime-juice!"

"I'm afraid that's impossible, sir."

"Imposs?" asked Archie. "But look here, Phipps—"

"Quite impossible, sir," repeated Phipps firmly. "I am convinced, sir, that you are still in ignorance as to the true position. The yacht having gone to the bottom, we have no food—"

"What? I mean, what?" said Archie, rather blankly. "None of the old eating material? Bread and eggs and meat, and all that sort of rot? Surely you've made a frightful bloomer, Phipps? However, we will leave such matters for the nonce. A somewhat high-sounding word, Phipps. Kindly remember it for future use. The nonce—what? Dashed good!"

"Quite so, sir," said Phipps, as serious as a judge.

"And now, laddie, produce the old flannels!" said Archie, adjusting his monocle, and regarding Phipps languidly. "I think it's frightfully lucky I brought the old window along, what?"

"Very lucky indeed, sir," agreed Phipps.

"Absolutely," said Archie. "I had the bally cord round my neck, don't you know, and why the old lens wasn't cracked up rather beats me. I mean to say, dashed lucky, and so forth. You see, Phipps, the right eye is somewhat decrepit. That is, the two optics are not exactly even, what? I can see the old landscape in a perfectly priceless way through the left eye, but when it comes to the right there's a most dashed blur. Hence the window!"

"I quite understand, sir," said Phipps. "You have explained this to me on other occasions, if I may venture to say so."

"Oh, rather," said Archie. "No offence, old lad. But the old memory overlooked the fact. Absolutely! I mean to say, some chappies have an idea that I am a bally swanker and what not. A Piccadilly window and so forth. Absolutely not! The old glass is most nass. to aid the vish. That is to say the old seeing department. Now, Phipps, proceed to yank out the flannels!"

Phipps shook his head.

"There are no flannels, sir," he said.

"What?"

"I'm afraid, sir, that you must be content with your present wearing apparel."

Archie gazed down at himself in dismay. He was at the moment wearing a pair of gaudily striped silken pyjama trousers, which were slit and torn in a dozen places—and precisely nothing else.

"Prepos!" he gasped. "I mean to say, I'm not decent, Phipps! Just gaze upon the young master, and observe. The manly chest, if I might say so, is positively exposed! Archie, in fact, is nearly nude! Things are in a shocking condition, Phipps. Absolutely!"

"I quite agree, sir, but nothing can be done."

"It is up to me to do a somewhat severe amount of ticking off," observed Archie, frigidly. "A most hateful biz, and so forth, but there you are. There, in fact, it is! These things have got to be done! I pay you, Phipps, to do the necessary clothing arrangements. And now—gadzooks—you calmly turn round and say that there's no —"

"You appear to overlook the fact, sir, that we are on a desert island, and that we have been cast ashore without any luggage!" interrupted Phipps firmly. "Some of the young gentlemen possess even less wearing apparel than you, yourself. And I am not exactly thickly clothed, sir."

Archie regarded Phipps critically.

"Well, no!" he agreed. "A pyjama jacket—what? Somewhat airy about the legs, Phipps. In fact, now I come to look at you, you appear dashed awful. I mean to say, you're enough to make a chappie feel somewhat faint. I presume, Phipps, that the curious formations in the base are your legs?"

"Yes, sir," said Phipps.

"They should be covered!" said Archie. "A chappie with legs like that is positively indecent. And now to dispense with all this priceless rot. Stagger about, Phipps, and do things. Get busy, and what not!"

"Yes, sir," said Phipps.

He walked away, and Archie looked after him in rather a forlorn fashion. He had half believed that Phipps was going to make some magical passes in the air and produce a suit of flannels. But Phipps was an ordinary man, not a magician. The impossible was not within his scope.

Archie's man came near to the spot where Pitt and I were bending over Nelson Lee. I glanced up and happened to see him.

"Can I do anything, sir?" he asked politely.

"I don't think so, Phipps," I said.

"Very good, sir; but I was hoping that I might be of some use," said Phipps. "May I inquire if Mr. Lee is badly hurt?"

"Very badly indeed!" I replied. "He's got a broken arm, and a terrible gash on the back of the head, and cuts and bruises all over him. And we haven't got an atom of antiseptic lint, or anything!" I added, between my teeth. "It's terrible, Phipps—absolutely terrible!"

"It certainly appears to be very grave, sir," said Phipps. "Might I venture to suggest that I set Mr. Lee's broken arm?"

Pitt and I stared at him rather angrily.

"No, you may not suggest it!" I replied.

"You had better go back to Archie, and look after him! He's your charge, Phipps. You can't do anything here—and you're only hindering us."

Phipps did not move a muscle. He was an exceedingly well-trained valet, and rarely showed any sign of emotion. Indeed, he was

just the same now as he had been at St. Frank's—quiet, calm, and soft-voiced. When he walked he seemed to glide. He had a habit—as Archie had often said—of simply appearing as though from nowhere. And in spite of his extraordinary dress—or lack of dress—he was just the same.

"I am sorry if I have annoyed you, Master Nipper," he said quietly. "Only, realising the serious nature of Mr. Lee's injuries, I had a slight idea that my surgical knowledge would come in useful. However, since you have no use for me, I will—"

"Surgical knowledge?" I repeated quickly.

"Yes, sir."

"What do you mean?" I asked. "I—I talked bluntly just now, Phipps, I'm sorry if I offended you. But I'm almost wild with anxiety about the gov'nor."

"Pray don't mention it, sir—I fully understood that at the time," said Phipps. "I should have kept to my own place, perhaps, and not pushed forward. But I am anxious about Mr. Lee, too."

"What did you mean about surgical knowledge?" I asked.

"I served for five years, sir, in the Red Cross," said Phipps quietly.

I jumped up, excited.

"In the Red Cross!" I repeated, staring.

"You!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Do you mean during the war?"

"Exactly, sir," said Phipps. "I joined up in 1914, and served eighteen months on the Western Front, six months in Gallipoli, and then went to Palestine and Egypt."

"Well I'm hanged!" exclaimed Pitt.

"You never told us this before, Phipps."

"There was no necessity, sir," replied Phipps.

"But didn't Archie know?"

"I never mentioned the matter to Master Archibald, sir."

"My hat! You're a queer chap!" I exclaimed. "Look here, Phipps—did you ever set any bones while you were in the Red Cross?"

"Several dozen, sir," replied Phipps imperturbably. "I was in several big battles, and rendered first aid on many an occasion. I do not wish to boast, sir, but my commanding officer commended me once or twice."

I looked at Phipps with new interest.

"Were you ever decorated?" I asked bluntly.

"I was honoured by His Majesty with the M.M., sir."

I looked at Phipps squarely. For one fleeting second I wondered if he was lying. Then I cast the thought aside as unworthy. The very bearing of the man was enough to tell me that he was speaking the truth. I was beginning to find out things about Phipps that I had never suspected.

"Look here, Phipps!" I said promptly.

"I give this job into your hands. You take

command and I'll obey orders. So will Pitt."

Phipps was like a changed man.

"Right, sir!" he said briskly. "I want bandages—water and several pieces of stick, about a foot long, to use as splints."

The change in him was astonishing. He was down on his knees, examining Nelson Lee with the eye of an expert. Gone was that calm air—and in its place there was a keen, active interest. Until Phipps got the word he had been impassive. But now he was like another man.

And, under his skilful manipulation, the task of attending to the gov'nor was made light. Phipps did wonders. We soon had some straight pieces of stick for him, and then he gently and cautiously felt Nelson Lee's broken arm.

"Well?" I asked anxiously.

"A nasty fracture, sir, but I think we can manage it," replied Phipps. "Providing there are no complications, the bones ought to set perfectly straight and with no after effects. Now, sir, please!"

With the skill of a surgeon, Phipps set the two bones, and then carefully and tenderly bandaged the arm, and placed the splints in position. By the time he had finished he was looking calm and satisfied.

"I venture to think, young gentlemen, that I have been entirely successful," he said. "It is a great pity we have no antiseptic, but possibly that defect will be remedied before long."

"What do you mean?" asked Pitt.

"There are many trees on the island, sir," replied Phipps vaguely.

It was a curious remark—and we were not to learn the real meaning of it until later. Nelson Lee's other injuries were bathed and bandaged with equal care. And it could be seen at once that the gov'nor was more comfortable. There was a healthier colour in his cheeks, and he looked far better.

"Do you think he'll recover consciousness soon?" I asked.

"Roughly speaking, sir, I should say within three or four hours," replied Phipps.

"And I do not think there is any necessity to worry. Mr. Lee will pull round, sir. I will see to that."

I grabbed Phipps' hand.

"Good man!" I said heartily. "You're a wonder."

"Thank you, sir," said Phipps. "Not at all!"

Having completed his task, he moved away and returned to Archie—who was wandering about in an aimless kind of fashion. The beach was strewn with juniors—who were exploring on their own account. Some had ventured to the far end of the bay.

But before long they gathered together again, and discussed the whole situation. They all realised that the yacht had gone, and that there was very little chance of seeing her again.

But this appalling tragedy didn't weigh heavily on the shoulders of the juniors. For they had many troubles of their own—so many, indeed, that even now it was impossible to realise the true position.

They did not think of the future—most of their thoughts were for the immediate present. And, in this paradise, horror was out of place. It seemed impossible to have dull spirits and gloomy faces amid such beautiful surroundings.

And spirits were recovered, and the call of Nature became insistent. In other words, the fellows discovered that they all possessed extremely healthy appetites. And they suddenly realised that there was no breakfast—no coffee and bread and butter, and all the rest of it. Food, indeed, was entirely absent. Nothing whatever had been brought from the yacht.

"But we must have something to eat!" exclaimed Handforth, looking round. "We can't starve! And even if there's no bread, or butter, or eggs, or meat—we'll find some fruit. On an island like this there's bound to be plenty. We've only got to look!"

"But I mean to say," protested Archie. "That is, dash it all! I repeat, dash it all! A chappie can't live on fruit, laddie! The thing's utterly ridic.! Prepos., and all that kind of rot!"

"Well, we'll have something, anyhow," said Pitt. "I'm famished. What about getting up a party and exploring these woods? I expect we shall find something to eat."

"We must!" said Fatty Little frantically. "You know, I—I'm as empty as a tub! I'm feeling all faint and shaky! Unless I have something to eat straight off I shall fade away and die!"

Handforth snorted.

"Oh, dry up, you fat ass!" he said. "You'll come to no harm if you don't eat anything for a week! You've got enough blubber stored up to last a tremendous time!"

"I tell you I'm starving!" wailed Fatty. "And there's nothing to eat! I—I say, shall we eat one another after weeks and weeks? I've heard of that sort of thing, you know, when chaps have been cast away on a barren island. We shall all fight in the end, and those who win will make a dinner of the others."

"There's no need for that!" said Pitt. "The best thing will be to decide on you, Fatty—you'll provide us with grub for weeks!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't be so frightfully disgustin', dear boys!" exclaimed Sir Montie, shocked. "I'm appalled—I am, really! I shouldn't be surprised if cannibals live on this island—but there's no need for us to become cannibals, too! Begad! The idea is revoltin'."

"Of course it is," I agreed. "And there's no need to talk like that, either. There's plenty of grub to be had—tons of it. There's enough within sight, even now, to feed an army!"

"Within sight!" repeated Handforth.

"Yes—up there!" I said, pointing.

I directed the attention of the juniors to cocoanuts in all stages of development—small, half grown, fully grown, ripe, and unripe.

And as Handforth saw the nuts on the nearest palm he gave a whoop and dashed towards the tree.

CHAPTER IV.

BREAKFAST!



FATTY LITTLE raced up the sands in pursuit of Handforth, and most of the other juniors followed. They were all hungry—and the thought of cocoanuts increased their appetites. Cocoanuts might be an un-

conventional breakfast, but they would, at least, provide something to eat.

"Hold on, Handy!" I said. "How are you going to get those nuts down?"

"Oh, easy!" said Handforth. "In fact, there's nothing in it! Just swarm up the tree, and there you are! I'll do it, and you chaps can catch 'em! Be ready for a few dozen!"

He was standing almost under a big palm now—one of the many which grew along the fringe of the shore. Coconut trees love the sea and always line the shores of these Pacific islands.

And while we stood there, all of us looking up into the green foliage high above, a nut detached itself, and came hurtling down to the sand, where it rolled to Handforth's feet.

He picked it up and gazed at it.

"Cocoanut palms!" he sneered. "A fat lot you know! This giddy thing isn't a cocoanut!"

"I grinned.

"It's not particularly large, I know," I said. "That's a green cocoanut, and they're quite decent to eat, too—and the milk's O.K. The fully-matured nuts are topping, too—there's one lying over there!"

I pointed among the trees, and McClure picked up the object I indicated. He was looking rather puzzled, for the nut was of great size—about four times as big as a man's fist.

"That doesn't look like a cocoanut, either!" said Handforth gruffly. "It's not a cocoanut, either! You can't spoof me! I've seen cocoanuts hundreds of times——"

"But I don't suppose you've seen one as they grow on the tree," I interrupted. "Cocoanuts, my son, are funny things. The ordinary shell that you know is enveloped in a thick husk—and that's the husk you can see now. If you don't believe me, break it open."

Fatty grabbed the nut and gazed round.

"What are we going to break it with?" he asked anxiously.

"Better wait until we get some more down, and then we can make one job of it," I replied. "If that solitary nut is opened there'll be a fight for it."

Handforth didn't wait any longer, but hurried to the tall palm tree, and commenced swarming up it. But he didn't get far before he paused. Being practically bare, the task was not quite so comfortable as he had imagined.

"Go on—don't funk it!" said De Valerie.

"You—you rotter! Just wait until I come down!" roared Handforth.

But De Valerie's words were sufficient to make him continue his climb. He went up and up—slowly now, but there was no doubt that he was getting nearer to the top, where the foliage lay thick, and where the nuts grew.

"Hold ready!" called Handforth. "I'll soon have some down!"

More by luck than anything else he managed to reach out and grasp a nut. It was a big one, and as Handy touched it, it became detached and thundered down—nearly braining one of the fellows in its progress.

"Look out, you careless ass!" shouted Pitt. "You'll hurt somebody soon!"

"How could I help it?" demanded Handforth, from above. "The giddy thing came loose as soon as I touched it. I'll soon have—— Whoa! What the dickens—— Great pip!"

Handforth broke off abruptly, and stared with startled gaze into the next tree. The leaves were thick, and he had thought that a movement had occurred there. And almost before he could breathe again he saw a small face—a face with a number of white teeth gleaming.

Then another one appeared, and Handforth got a rare start.

It was some few seconds before he fully realised that these faces belonged to a number of little monkeys. At least, they appeared to be monkeys. They were small animals of that type, at all events. And now that Handforth was aware of their presence, he suddenly knew the reason for the peculiar chattering sound he had heard previously.

"Hi! There are a lot of monkeys up here!" he yelled. "It wouldn't be a bad idea to catch one, and we can cook it——"

Swish—crack!

"Yow—yaroo!" howled Handforth wildly.

A nut had come whizzing from the next tree, and it caught Handforth on the back of the head with a thud which nearly knocked him silly. How he managed to keep his hold was rather wonderful. But it was as well for him he did, for the distance to the ground was considerable.

Swish—whizz—whizz!

Nuts came at Handforth from all sides. Fortunately, the majority of them missed, but quite enough struck Handforth on the

body, and arms and legs. One or two hit him on the head, too.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors below, scampering out of range, roared with laughter. Although there was just an element of danger in this incident—for Handforth might have fallen—the fellows did not fail to see the humour of it. For Handy to be up a cocoanut tree, and to be pelted by monkeys was rather rich.

He gave another terrific yell, and then started swarming down—with more haste than caution.

For that descent cost him several patches of grazed skin, and by the time he reached the sand, he was considerably hurt—If his yells were any indication. By the sound of it, he was very badly damaged indeed.

And when he arrived on the sands, the nuts still came pelting down—one after the other, with remarkable aim. Handforth dashed to a place of safety, with the speed of a hare.

"The—the awful little demons!" he gasped. "Pelting me! Me, you know!"

"Nerve!" I grinned. "They ought to have known better!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's all very well to laugh—but you ain't in pain!" snapped Handforth. "I'll jolly well punch those monkeys on the nose next time!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, never mind—there's always a good side to every matter," I chuckled. "These monkeys may have pelted Handforth, but they've provided us with all the nuts we're likely to need."

"Good!" said Fatty. "Let's go and collect them. I—I don't think I've got enough strength to carry many, but I'll do my best. I'm feeling as weak as anything, you know! I haven't had anything to eat for days!"

The juniors hurried under the cocoanut palms, and hastily collected up the fallen nuts, and came running down the beach with them. There was a considerable pile by the time they had all been gathered together.

"And now we've got to open them!" said Church.

Somebody suggested taking the nuts along the beach to a spot where some white rocks were jutting out. They stood there in a pile, actually within the lagoon. And it was these rocks which had proved so disastrous to Nelson Lee. For, in the night, when the storm had been at its height, the waters of the lagoon had been angry and violent. Even now I couldn't quite understand how this had happened. The storm must have been of exceptional force.

The idea was a good one, for there were bound to be some loose rocks, and it would be easy to crush the nuts in this way. But while I was looking up the beach I suddenly noticed that Phipps had appeared from the trees. He had evidently been exploring, and, what was more, he seemed to have found

something, for he was carrying several objects which looked like melons. And, under his arm there was something else.

Two or three fellows gathered round Phipps as he came down the beach, and Archie was one of them.

"What's this, Phipps?" he asked. "I mean to say, what's the old scheme? Speaking frankly, I don't like the look of those frightful objects. Absolutely not. And what's the bally root doing under your arm?"

"Breakfast, sir," said Phipps calmly.

"Breakfast!" repeated Archie. "What! I mean to say, what? Breakfast! But really, dash it all! A chappie can't stoke the old face with such extraord. material!"

"I rather think, sir that the result will be appetising," said Phipps. "Cocoanuts are all very well, but scarcely sufficient for a really excellent breakfast. It will not be long, sir, before the meal is served."

And then I hurried up.

"Good old Phipps!" I ejaculated, with a yell. "Breadfruit!"

"Exactly, sir," said Phipps.

"I mean, breadfruit?" repeated Archie. "Bread, what? But, don't you know, that's deucedly strange! Absolutely! I didn't know, dear old lad, that bread was a bally fruit!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's not bread, you ass!" I grinned. "But the breadfruit tree bears these things that look like melons. They're ripping when they're cooked—I've tasted them before. Where did you find them, Phipps?"

"Not far inland, sir," said Phipps. "I thought I might as well be occupying myself, Master Nipper, and it struck me that there would probably be some breadfruit trees within easy reach. I have also succeeded in unearthing a most excellent taro root."

"Begad!" said Sir Montie. "An' what's that?"

"A taro root!" I repeated. "Why, they're first-class! In Japan the people eat the taro in just the same way as we eat potatoes. Yes, it's a taro root all right—and a terrific one, too!"

"Quite so, sir," said Phipps. "I fancy we shall have an excellent repast."

I looked at Phipps in more wonder than ever. Without a word to any of us he had gone off, and had returned with these excellent treasures.

"Look here, Phipps!" I said firmly. "You're a bit of a surprise packet. How did you know anything about breadfruit and the taro?"

"When I was a lad, sir, I voyaged to Australia, and while there went on several trips to various Pacific Islands," replied Phipps smoothly. "I am glad that my knowledge is now proving to be of some utility."

"Well, I'm dashed!" I grinned. "Phipps, of all the people! A Red Cross chap, a traveller in the South Seas? I always

thought you were just an ordinary valet, Phipps!"

"At St. Frank's, sir, I had my duties to perform," said Phipps. "The situation has somewhat altered, and my services as a valet are scarcely required. I am pleased to be of some little use. Could any young gentleman oblige me with a pin?"

"Good man!" I exclaimed. "You're turning out trumps, Phipps. But what's the idea of a pin? And you surely don't expect to find such a prize, do you? Pins are as scarce as doughnuts on this island!"

"Nevertheless, sir, I rather fancy I saw a safety-pin affixed in the jacket of one of the young gentlemen," said Phipps smoothly. "Ah, yes! Do you mind, Master Griffith?"

Griffith started.

"Eh?" he said. "I haven't got a safety-pin— Well I'm blessed! I'd forgotten all about it—I shoved it in there last night, before turning in! Great Scott! It seems years ago!"

Griffith was wearing a somewhat torn and battered pyjama jacket. And he removed the safety-pin at once, and handed it to Phipps. But just as he had done so, he looked somewhat aggressive.

"I say, what's the idea?" he demanded. "You haven't got any buttons missing—"

"I do not require the pin for any personal purpose, sir," said Phipps. "I have an idea of doing just a little fishing."

"Fishing!" gasped the juniors.

"Precisely, young gentlemen."

"But look here, Phipps—you may be a bit of a marvel, but you can't do that!" grinned Pitt. "To begin with, how are you going to get a line? And what about bait?"

"I have already got the line and bait, sir."

And Phipps calmly proceeded to unwind a long length of fine creeper from one of his arms. It was extremely thin, and as tough as fine string. And in the pocket of his solitary garment there were a number of wriggling worms or grubs. Phipps was a man of action.

Deftly, he opened the pin, and so fixed it that it made an excellent substitute for a fishhook. He had placed the breadfruit and the taro root on the sand, and had requested us not to interfere with them.

Having fixed his line to his satisfaction, he calmly walked into the lagoon until he was well up to his waist. And here he paused, and gazed down into the crystal depths. The water was so transparent that it seemed impossible that this could be the sea. And there were fish passing to and fro constantly, casting clear and distinct shadows upon the sand.

Phipps looked back, and smiled.

"Do you think you'll have any luck?" I asked.

"The fish are so abundant, sir, that I cannot fail to make a catch, sir," replied



Handforth's fist struck the shark in the very centre of the stomach.

Phipps. "And I rather fancy that this method of fishing is quite unnecessary. A long stick with a sharp point would be quite serviceable, sir. And, of course, it would have to be barbed."

"A spear, eh?" I said. "By jingo, that's a great idea, Phipps. We shall have to see about making some spears, and we might be able to catch a few kippers!"

Phipps smiled, and went on with his fishing.

"I only went away for a few minutes, but when I returned I discovered, to my astonishment, that several fish were lying on the sands, two of them wriggling still."

"My hat! You've been pretty quick!" I exclaimed. "At any rate, Phipps, you'll soon have enough grub for dinner as well!"

Phipps came out of the water soon afterwards, and by this time a crowd of juniors were watching him. They were not so anxious about the cocoanuts, they were waiting to see what this extraordinary valet would prepare. And the thought of fish for breakfast was somewhat enticing.

"A ripper, what?" observed Archie, gazing at Phipps with an air of proud possession. "A perfectly priceless cove, and all that! I always said that Phipps was absolutely the goods. I mean to say, the very chappie to rally round when things were frightfully diff. What? Absolutely!"

"He certainly seems to be useful now!" said Pitt.

"Oh, rather!" agreed Archie. "Fish,

what? I mean to say, soles, and haddock, and all that sort of stuff!"

"Yes, but there's one thing that Phipps seems to have forgotten," said Handforth knowingly. "I'm not pretending to be clever, or anything of that sort, but I'd just like to know how the thunder he's going to cook the stuff."

The juniors looked dismayed.

"Oh, my hat!" gasped Church. "We haven't got a match or—or anything! And we can't eat raw fish, can we?"

"We could, but it wouldn't be pleasant!" I said. "How are you going to get over the difficulty, Phipps?"

"Quite easily, sir," replied Phipps. "Could you oblige me, Master Archibald, with the loan of your monocle?"

Archie started.

"Gadzooks!" he exclaimed. "The old window, what? But, my dear old tulip, it's quite imposse. I'm a frightfully obliging chappie, but when it comes to loaning the old monocle, I'm afraid there's nix doing. Absolutely not. Pray desist from further requests, laddie."

"The monocle is necessary, sir, for the preparation of breakfast," said Phipps calmly. "I assure you that it will not be harmed in any way, and I shall return it to you in a sound condition. It is very fortunate, sir, that you brought the monocle ashore with you."

"Absolutely!" agreed Archie. "But quite an accident, old tulip! The bally thing was tucked round the old neck, as you might say. I don't like it, Phipps—I don't like the scene at all; but there you are, take it and treat it kindly. Absolutely!"

Phipps took the eyeglass, and looked at it closely.

"What are you thinking about, using it as a burning glass?" I asked. "It won't do for that purpose, will it?"

"I rather think so, sir," said Phipps. "It is a lens, one of Master Archibald's eyes being slightly different from the other—"

"Dash it all!" said Archie. "I mean to say, chuck it, Phipps! Absolutely chuck it, and so forth! Don't peach on the young master! Don't tell the world at large that Archie suffers from a bally infirmity!"

"That's all right, Archie!" I grinned. "Some of the fellows thought you were an eyeglass just for the look of it, but this proves that you are guiltless. In other words, you're vindicated!"

"That's frightfully, dashed good!" said Archie.

Phipps took the glass, and then requested one of the juniors to fetch a handful of dried leaves. There were plenty to be had further up the beach. They were soon obtained, and then Phipps tested the lens.

In a very short time the lens proved that it was perfectly satisfactory. The sun was focussed upon the handful of dried leaves, and after a few moments smoke appeared, and then a spark which burst into flame.

"Hurrah!" roared Church. "It's all serene!"

After that Phipps had no difficulty in getting all the help he required. He merely had to issue instructions, and they were obeyed to the letter. It was extraordinary, the change which had so rapidly come about.

Hardly more than an hour earlier Phipps had been a mere valet, a nobody, who wasn't worth considering. His presence on the island, in fact, was regarded as being absolutely unnecessary.

But now it was altered.

Phipps had suddenly become a person of great importance, not only in the eyes of the hungry fellows, but in my eyes as well. He had proved his sterling worth by setting Nelson Lee's arm, and making the gov'nor comfortable. All the juniors realised that. But now he was attending to their interiors, and doing it in such a businesslike way that there was no question about the success of his methods. And anybody who could prepare a breakfast of this kind, without any tools, was somebody to be treasured.

Phipps, in fact, was coming into his own.

"Here we are—we'll soon be feeding now!" declared Reggie Pitt.

Piles of sticks were at hand. And while these had been gathered, Phipps had been busy scraping out a deep hole in the sand. Nobody knew exactly what his idea was at first—more particularly when he proceeded to light a fire right in the hole. It was soon blazing and crackling merrily.

Another fire was lit near by, and in front of this Phipps was soon at work toasting the fish on long pointed pieces of stick. They were, in fact, being grilled, and the smell of the cooking fish caused some of the fellows to rave. They hadn't realised how terrifically hungry they were.

Phipps soon left the fish-grilling in the hands of the juniors. Then he proceeded to attend to the breadfruit. This was prepared in the usual way. The melon-like objects were broken into several sections, it was impossible to cut them evenly, and the core was removed. Then they were placed in the hole in the ground, near the embers of the fire. That hole was now like an oven, and the breadfruit was allowed to cook in layers, with leaves in between. Phipps certainly knew something about the methods employed in the South Sea Islands.

The taro was cooked in a similar fashion, after it had been thoroughly washed.

Phipps had recently been a surgeon, and now he had blossomed forth into an exceedingly skilful chef. In fact, within fifteen minutes we were all squatting round in a wide semi-circle and enjoying a delicious and luxurious breakfast. Grilled fish, with cooked breadfruit and taro root. The fellows were astonished to find how delicious these latter were.

For drink we had an ample supply of cocoanut milk—to say nothing of plenty of water. And there was enough food to satisfy us all. Considering that Fatty Little

had been stuffing himself with cocoanuts for nearly half an hour beforehand, it was rather astonishing that he found room for anything else. As a matter of fact he consumed more than anybody.

And then, as a finish to a perfect meal Phipps performed another miracle. He vanished just when we were picking the bones, so to speak. Nobody seemed to notice that Phipps went, he always did everything unobtrusively.

He came back in just the same way. You happened to look round, and there he was. And he carried a huge, luscious looking bunch of ripe bananas.

"Well, dash it all!" ejaculated Archie. "I mean to say, how the deuce did you manage it, Phipps? Like the bally old conjuror chappie, don't you know. Zing! Hey presto, and all that kind of rot, and the jolly old bananas appear in the offing!"

"Quite so, sir!" said Phipps easily. "I happened to see a banana tree not far distant, so I ventured to obtain a bunch. I thought they might be acceptable to the young gentlemen."

The young gentlemen thought they were. Within five minutes only a litter of skins told of the fact that there had been any bananas at all.

Without a doubt, Phipps was coming out strong.

CHAPTER V.

EXPLORING THEIR DOMAIN.



SOMEHOW, I couldn't feel very depressed, in spite of the tragedy which hung over us.

Lord Dorrimore and the others were apparently dead, and there was no sense in

sitting down and crying.

Now and again I felt a kind of lump in my throat, but there were so many things to do on the island, so many diversions, that it was impossible to be miserable. And our own plight was not a small one.

I knew well enough that when the juniors fully appreciated the position, they would not be laughing and joking as they were now. This island of delight was so wondrous that there were a thousand and one fresh things to occupy their attention, and to make the chaps forget the real trouble.

But the fact remained that we were stuck on this deserted spot, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of miles from civilisation, and we had no means of communication with the outside world.

I didn't refer to it much, for I knew that the juniors would see the full significance of the position before long. While they were able, it was better to let them enjoy themselves. There would be plenty of sorrow and trouble when the novelty of this adventure had worn off.

After breakfast all sorts of plans were suggested. The most popular idea was to explore the island, to go in a big party inland, and to see what manner of place this actually was.

It was still early in the day, of course, a considerable time before noon, and we should not require another meal for a good many hours. Nobody was apprehensive regarding dinner. Phipps had prepared breakfast so easily, and so effectively that the next meal was assured. The juniors already looked upon Phipps as a man to be absolutely trusted and relied on.

"I think we might as well do a bit of exploration," said Pitt. "We want to know how big the island is, and what kind of country there is inside, don't we? But how would it be, to start with, to walk right along the beach, and make a complete circuit of the island?"

"That seems to be a pretty good idea," I agreed. "But it'll be a fairly long walk, you know. By what I can see, the island must be at least six miles long, and probably four or five miles broad. A complete circuit means a pretty decent stroll, you know."

"H'm! So it does," said Pitt. "Well, anyway, we can try it, and see where we get to. Or we could go inland——"

"Have you got something in your pocket?" I interrupted.

"Pocket?" repeated Pitt, glancing at the pyjama jacket he was wearing. "Oh, that stain?"

"Yes," I said, looking at a dark, blackish stain which was spread all over the patch pocket which adorned the left breast of the coat. "I noticed it before, but I didn't say anything."

Pitt grinned.

"It's nothing much," he said. "As you know, I've been keeping a diary of all sorts of things that have happened on the trip, and I made a few notes last night before turning into bed. I slipped the notebook into my pocket—and the giddy thing was there all through the swim. The colour came out of the cover. It's dry now, and so all the priceless manuscript is saved!"

Reggie was rather amused, and it was certainly peculiar that the notebook should have come through the ordeal all right. It was nearly a new one, with the majority of the pages still blank. It was one of those pocket-books with a pencil stuck down the back. And it would probably prove to be very useful.

After a certain amount of discussion the juniors broke up into two or three parties. Pitt and I and Watson and Sir Montie and Archie, and one or two others decided to go on the beach round the next bay. If everything was all right, we could continue on and make a circuit of the island. But I had an idea that Archie wouldn't last the course, so to speak.

Handforth and Co. made plans of their

(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."

W. H. SMITH.

J. SEED.

WILLIAM HENRY SMITH is a native of Tanboly, a little town near Newcastle; and is one of the few players who during last season forced themselves to the front rank of their profession.

In 1913 he was playing with a minor club called Hobson Wanderers, and it was here that he was "discovered" by Huddersfield, and promptly signed on. He soon got his chance to show what he could do in Huddersfield's premier eleven, and so brilliantly did he shine, that his place there, from that time on, was assured.

Perhaps the worst misfortune of his life happened to him three seasons ago, when, having assisted Huddersfield through all the rounds of the Cup competition up to the Final he was suspended by the F.A. for an incident which happened during the course of a league match with Stoke, and as a result of which Smith was deprived of his Cup medal. He is a fine player on the right wing of the Huddersfield forward line, and his great forte is his splendid passing and accurate centres.

His first honour came to him in 1920, when, as an outside left, he caught the eye of the International Selection Committee, and was chosen to play in the Football League eleven against Scotland. Last season, however, was his best, for in addition to figuring in one trial match and the Cup Final, he also earned two caps for England's matches against Wales and Scotland. As he is now only 25 years of age, we may expect many more honours to be showered upon him ere his football career is finished. Height 5 ft. 10 ins. Weight 11 st. 9 lb.

POPULAR Jimmy Seed, the goal-getting inside-right of the famous 'Spurs, is a native of Whitburn, Co. Durham, and for some time before the war was an understudy to the one and only Charles Buchan, the celebrated Sunderland captain. Had the Roker Park management progressed with him as they ought, Seed would have blossomed out into one of the greatest "finds" they have ever picked up, but they did not, and thereon hangs the whole story.

During the war, Seed did his bit for his country, and in the doing of it was badly gassed. After being discharged, he rejoined Sunderland, but the Team of all the Talents, thinking that his injury had finished his career as a footballer, allowed him to go to Mid Rhondda, and there Seed played for a time in the same side as Carmichael, the prolific goalscorer of Grimsby. He soon threw off the effects of the gas, and blossomed out into a really class footballer, and was at the top of his form when Tottenham's attention was directed towards him. The 'Spurs realising that they were on a good thing, applied for his transfer and got him cheaply—at a cost of £300, as a matter of fact—and for every farthing of that money, Jimmy has been worth a pound to them since they secured him. He has scored a large number of goals, and has already earned honours in English trial matches. He figured in the victorious Tottenham team which won the Cup in 1921, and has also played for England against Belgium. His one ambition now is to represent his country against Scotland. Height 5 ft. 9 ins. Weight 11 st. 10 lb.

Nipper's Magazine

No. 30.

EDITED BY NIPPER.

June 17, 1922.

WONDERS OF THE TROPICS!

By **BOB CHRISTINE.**

No. 1.—A CORAL REEF.

TO a fellow who has never been out of the British Isles, the many wonderful things he sees in the tropics are almost too much for him. I'm not much good at writing this kind of stuff, but I'll do what I can to describe a few of the things I have seen.

In the South Sea Islands the coral is a constant revelation and a wonder. It isn't like the coral you see made into a necklace or a brooch. That stuff is red coral, and I think it comes from the Mediterranean Sea. The coral of the reefs and atolls of the South Seas is very different stuff.

Some people have an idea that there is a coral "insect." Of course, there isn't. The idea is ridiculous, because insects can't live in the sea. The chap who really does the work is a kind of sea-anemone—what they call a polypifer. That's his scientific name, and he's as lazy and slow as a snail. To be absolutely exact, the polypifer is a kind of worm, and he doesn't even provide a home for himself. The sea does that, because the polypifer attracts certain elements out of the water. Then he dies, and leaves his house—which is a bit of coral. And, of course, there are millions and millions of him in one bit of reef.

When you stand on a coral reef the rock-like substance below you is the result of ages and ages of this kind of development. And the reef isn't a mass of cold, dead rock, as you would probably imagine. It is half living. That's the amazing part about it.

The rock that is exposed is dead enough, but just under the sea, where the surf roars and thunders, things are very

different. Here there are massive chunks of stuff that seems to be rock, but it is a kind of honeycomb of coral, with millions of cells. And in each cell there are these polypifers.

And they are always dying and always being replaced. If the reef is exposed to the sun, they die in next to no time. Fish take a fancy to them sometimes, and make a good meal off a few thousand. And the sea has a whack at the beggars now and again. Being a polypifer isn't all honey.

When you walk on a reef, and look into the pools, you see some wonderful things. The living coral is all colours of the rainbow. And you see branching creeper stuff growing on the reef. This is really coral growing on other coral—as living as any animal. Yet it looks like gaily coloured vegetation.

You'll find coral as white as milk, and red, and all other colours. And on the reef there will be hundreds of interesting forms of life. Jellyfish, and crabs and sea-urchins, and terrific great sea-slugs as big as turnips. Beautiful starfish, and seaweed of every possible kind and colour.

Of course, all this is roughly shoved down, but I think you'll understand all right. Coral is amazing stuff, and the more a chap examines the subject the more he marvels. And it is when he walks on a reef and sees it all for himself that he realises how wonderful Nature really is. I've tried to take you on a coral reef with me, just to let you see some of these things—and I hope I have partially succeeded. But it would be impossible for the greatest writer on earth to put down in cold print the real marvels of a coral reef.

EXTRACTS FROM MY DIARY

By REGINALD PITT.

MORNING (don't know day or date).

EVERYTHING seems like a dream during the last twenty-four hours.

Hardly know whether I'm on my head or my blessed heels! The last entry in this diary was last night, I believe, but it seems like ages. The cyclone came, and the yacht was thrown on to the reef of a desert island. It's only by chance that I've got this diary. It was tucked in the pocket of my pyjamas—and came right through all the excitement. Daytime now, and we seem to be in Fairyland. Glorious scenery. An island of dreams. All the chaps here, thank goodness. But terrible tragedy. Dorrie and Umlosi and yacht's crew lost! Mr. Lee badly hurt and still unconscious. Don't know if it's any good keeping up this diary, but I'll stick it. One never knows. We might get back to civilisation some day.

AFTERNOON (same day).

Phipps doing wonders. Forgot to mention in previous note that Phipps is with us. He seems to know everything. Fatty Little is still alive, although this is rather amazing. He has been gorging himself with cocoanuts all the morning. As if this wasn't enough, he went off into the jungle, and came back with a huge bunch of lovely-looking berries—crimson things which looked delicious. The fat ass was just going to sample them when Phipps yelled like the dickens. Said they were arita berries, or something like that. Deadly poison. Nipper looked at 'em, too, and said Phipps was right. Fatty went a bit pale, and consoled himself with half a dozen bananas. We told him to confine himself to well-known stuff. Anyhow, I'll bet I sha'n't go sampling berries and things, just because they look nice.

LATER.

This island may be glorious, but it isn't all honey! It seems a place of delight and all the rest of it, but you come across some queer things. About an hour ago we saw a couple of golden-coloured crawling things in the sand. They gave some of the fellows a rare fright until they learned that the things were lizards. Harmless enough, I believe, and rummy looking

merchants. Christine turned over a lump of rock, and nearly fainted. A terrible centipede shot out—a ghastly thing eight or nine inches long. It whizzed away, and Christine whizzed away at about six times the pace. Nipper says that these tropical centipedes are jolly dangerous, and can inflict a fatal bite. Some of the fellows are thinking about making shoes! Going about with bare feet is all right, but if we're going to meet Mr. Centipede and Family at intervals—well, bare feet rather seems like asking for quantities of trouble.

EVENING.

Going on at this rate, I shall fill this giddy diary all in one day! But I've simply got to put these things down. There's been a lot of trouble with the tailoring department. Of course, we arrived on the island practically like a collection of Adams. So we've been faking up things out of grass, and now we look like a party of Wild Men from Borneo. It's all jolly interesting, and we're enjoying ourselves. We're thinking about shifting camp from the beach to a glade in the forest. There's a geyser there that supplies hot water—boiling water, in fact—at the rate of about a hundred gallons a minute. The most modern hotel in New York can't hope to equal this?

Archie is mournful because he can't be a dandy. He tried to be, and is now full of itching. That's the worst of monkeying with these tropical plants. Talking of monkeys reminds me that we've got a good few here. We know it all right, because the beggars keep pelting us with cocoanuts! Handy got one on his head this afternoon. The things he said about the monkey who had such a good aim were awful. And now Handy's got a bump almost as big as the cocoanut.

It's dark now, and I'm writing this in the light of the camp fire. The scene is so lovely that I sha'n't even attempt to describe it. Nipper is going to write yards of stuff about all our adventures, so why should I try? This diary is just a little account of odd incidents. I wonder what to-morrow will bring? Shall we ever find out what happened to the Wanderer?

Feeding on a Tropic Isle!

By **FATTY LITTLE.**

A FELLOW might think that a desert island is like a desert, and that grub is practically non-existent. That's what I thought, anyhow, and when I heard that we had been cast ashore on a coral islet I got the wind up a bit.

I thought we should have to starve, or something ghastly like that. Some people say that dying of thirst is an awful death. But I reckon that death from starvation is about a thousand times worse. It makes me go funny to think about it. Going without grub is horrible torture.

All you have to do on a desert island is to look round, and you are bound to find plenty of food. For instance, there might be some crabs walking along the beach. Well, crabs are jolly good to eat, and after you've boiled 'em, they're simply ripping. There may be a bit of trouble about the boiling, especially if you haven't got a saucepan, but these are mere details. You can't expect things to be all rosy on a desert island.

You can catch fish, too, and fry it with cocoanut-oil. That's what I did, and it was gorgeous. Easy enough, too. The fish may taste of cocoanut, but that doesn't matter. And you can dig up roots, and roast the blessed things. You've got to be pretty careful what the roots are, or you might get poisoned.

I found some glorious berries, and it was only by a bit of luck that I didn't eat some. Then somebody told me that they were as poisonous as the very dickens, and I had to eat dozens of bananas to brace me up again. When I feel queer the only remedy is to eat something. That jolly soon puts me right. Grub's wonderful stuff.

It's a pity potatoes and turnips don't grow wild in the tropics. I can't understand it. Bananas grow wild, so why shouldn't potatoes? Of course, you'll find bread-fruit and other things, but they don't seem the same.

I always had an idea that bread-fruit was like bread. Well, that's what the name implies, isn't it? But it isn't like bread at all. You cut it up into slices and cook it like marrow.

The surprising thing is how a chap gets used to the different things. On a desert island you haven't got any knives and forks, or plates or spoons or anything. You've got to use your fingers. That doesn't make much difference to me. The main thing is to get the grub into your tummy. How it gets there is of no importance, in my opinion.

You don't have beef, or mutton, or cabbage, or potatoes, or pepper or mustard, or tarts, or doughnuts, or cream-puffs, or sausage-rolls, or veal-and-ham pies, or bacon, or anything that you are really accustomed to.

Everything's different.

Fish may be a bit the same, but you don't get the kind of fish you've had before. So that's different, too. You might get some eggs, of course—but it's as well to break 'em open first, or they may be niffy. And they won't be chickens' eggs, either.

You've just got to do the best with what there is. For example, here's a dinner menu. Fish to begin with, served up hot, after being toasted on a stick in front of a fire. Then a couple of small birds, with taro root and cocoanut, and fried bananas.

The main thing, I always maintain, is to get enough. It doesn't matter so much what the grub is, so long as you get enough to fill you up. That's the most important thing of all. I'm not a particular chap, and I don't care what's shoved in front of me if it's eatable. I'll get it down all right. But I'm jolly particular about having enough. If I don't get sufficient to eat, I feel all faint and giddy.

Upon the whole, living on a desert island is pretty good. There's a certain amount of joy in going out and hunting your dinner—and then, after catching it, coming home and cooking it. It makes you enjoy the feed all the more. And all free! Not a penny to spend—no profit for the tuck shop! If you're hard up and want to live for nothing, come and get marooned on a desert island! It's the cheapest thing in all the world!

HOW TO EXPLORE!

By EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH.

BEING an explorer myself, I can write with full authority on this important subject. I hate a chap who boasts and brags about what he's done, so I won't say a word about my own experiences.

I'll let that pass altogether, and give a few directions as to how a fellow ought to start work if he wants to explore the untrodden paths of the wilderness. Of course, I've been in a few tight corners in my time.

I've explored in all the corners of the earth. I've been in Brazil—right up the mighty Mississippi*—I've been in the Rocky Mountains, and the wilds of North West Canada, and I've been in Egypt and the South Sea Islands. And I've always been tremendously successful in exploring. This is because I explore in the right way.

I've had hair-raising adventures. I've been chased by lions and tigers and polar bears and grizzlies. I've been nearly eaten by alligators, and I've had battles with sharks. Once I was nearly eaten by a shark, but I punched the rotter on the nose pretty quick, and knocked him out in the first round.

That's just what I mean.

You've got to *know* what to do at the right moment. If I hadn't punched that shark, the shark would have punched me. I mean it would have bitten me into little bits. You've got to keep your head—not let something else take it.

As I mentioned above, I'm not going to say a word about my own adventures. That would sound like boasting. I'll simply add that I have been through all sorts of thrilling episodes, and I've had hundreds of hair-breadth escapes, and I've always beaten the particular wild animal that's gone for me. That is because I was ready. I knew how to deal with the danger.

You've got to have a quick eye, and a brain that works like lightning. If you haven't got these, you're no earthly good for exploring. My eye is as quick as the eye of a lynx, and, as everybody knows, my brain is a bit different to the usual

brain†. That's why I'm such a famous explorer.

Now I'll finish up by giving a few words of warning to the intending explorer.

Don't go out without being prepared for trouble. You'll find a lot more than you expect. Every time I've been on an exploring expedition I've had so many adventures that I shouldn't be alive now if it wasn't for my extraordinary facility for smelling danger while it's a long way off.

Don't forget that if you are slow some wild animal will grab hold of you, and then you won't get back to your base. I've never let a wild animal get me because I'm always on my guard.

And talking about bases reminds me of something. You simply must have a base to work from. At this base you have a store of food and guns and ammunition. Without a base you might as well chuck up the thing at once.

I think I've said enough to show anybody the right way to explore. If I write much more I shall be tempted to say a few words about myself. And that's bad form—so I will finish up here.

* We wonder if Handy means the Amazon? Is it possible for such a famous explorer to have made a bloomer? We fear so!—Ed.

† M'yes! We've heard a few rumours to this effect several times!—Ed.

NIPPER'S MAGAZINE,
Editorial Office,
The Beach,

Unknown Island in the South Seas.

My dear Chums,—Thanks to Pitt's notebook, we can still write up the Mag., although we must postpone publication until some later date.

The Guv'nor is improving every day, and during his convalescence delights to talk over some of our earlier experiences in Gray's Inn Road. More than once he has startled me with new theories concerning certain mysterious cases in which we both took part. The Guv'nor's reminiscences are so interesting that I am seriously thinking of publishing them in the Mag. just as he relates them over the Camp Fire.

Yours to a cinder,

NIPPER (The Editor).

(Continued from page 17.)

own. Handforth was always a fellow to do different from everybody else. And he now insisted upon making a journey inland—right into the centre of the island, to see what there was there. And, of course, Church and McClure had to go with him.

Handforth wanted a whole crowd to go, but they weren't having any. And so, in the end, the three chums of Study D started off by themselves. They were, according to Handforth, going to do a large number of big things.

Phipps was not at all pleased with the plan. I could see that he was anxious for the boys to remain on the spot, without straying far afield. But, of course, Phipps had no authority, and it was impossible for him to forbid the fellows to do as they planned. And Nelson Lee was still lying there a somewhat pitiful wreck of his usual self. Consequently, the boys pleased themselves as to what they should do.

"Begging your pardon, young gentlemen, but I should strongly advise you all to remain close by this spot," said Phipps diffidently, as he came up to a crowd of the juniors. "We do not know what the forest may conceal. I have been in these parts before, and there may be dangers. Without wishing to intrude, young gentlemen, I venture to suggest that it would be more sensible to stay here, on the beach."

"That's all right. Phipps—don't you worry!" said Handforth. "The island has got to be explored, and it's no good wasting time over the job. The sooner we know where we are, the better."

"Hear, hear!"

"Quite right, Handy."

"We sha'n't lose ourselves, Phipps!"

"Of course not!"

"I mean to say, there's absolutely no need to get the wind up, old tulip," observed Archie. "As you can see, the lads are positively determined. The old minds are made up, and so forth. So it's up to you, laddie, to sit tight and say nothing. Absolutely!"

Phipps bowed slightly.

"Very good, sir," he said. "But it is not as I should advise."

He had had his say, and there was an end of it. And the juniors scattered almost at once, going in different directions. Handforth and Co. plunged straight into the thick woods which came almost down to the white sands. These sands were totally different to what one is accustomed to see on the seashores of England. The sand itself was fine and gleamed like salt. The whiteness of it was wonderful.

Handforth and Co. found themselves in a grove, and the coolness under the trees was both surprising and grateful. It was like going into a huge apartment, for the sky was practically blotted out, and hardly any sunshine came through.

The trees themselves were strangely even

and well matched. One might have supposed that this vast grove, instead of being primeval forest, had been planned by human hands.

For the trees seemed to be set at an almost exact distance from one another. And there was a soothing twilight over all, with the lazy hum of insects in the air. And all the time, like a distant echo, came the subdued thunder of the coral reef, out beyond the lagoon.

"Who the dickens would have thought the place was like this?" said Handforth, as they walked along. "Jolly wonderful, I call it! Just stop for a minute, and have a look up."

They all paused, and craned their necks.

"It's like being in a great glasshouse!" said Church.

A tremendous distance above them was what appeared to be a roof of the palest green. Here and there, there were dazzling atoms of light, glinting down for a flash, and then disappearing. These flashes of light were caused by the breeze, where it parted the high foliage now and again.

"Better make some kind of a mark on these trees!" suggested McClure.

"Mark?" said Handforth. "What for?"

"So that we shall know the way back."

"What for!" sniffed Handforth. "You can trust me, my sons, I sha'n't lose my way! I'm a chap who never gets lost. Once I've seen a place I never forget it. You can absolutely count on me to see you through."

But Church and McClure were not quite so sure. They hadn't half as much confidence in Handforth as Handforth had in himself.

"All right—don't blame us if we get lost," said McClure. "But people always mark trees when they go through a forest the first time. It's what they call blazing the trail."

"Blazing the trail?" echoed Handforth. "Why, you fathead, that means setting fire to it—burning a kind of pathway through the forest. That's blazing the trail."

Church and McClure considered it too much fag to argue and to point out that Handforth was fearfully ignorant. Besides, it wouldn't have been very safe.

They proceeded on their way, and at intervals a cocoanut would come tumbling down from that green roof, high above. And the forest itself was literally strewn with fallen nuts. There was no lack of food here. Even if nothing else could be obtained, the boys were certainly safe from starvation.

"Enough nuts here to feed an army!" said Handforth. "Hallo! These trees don't seem to be the same. And there are some different ones again further on—those ones over there, with those diamond-like marks on 'em."

Handforth and Co. did not know what trees these were. But they had now left the cocoanut grove, and there were all manner of other trees to be seen as they progressed.

And here and there they would come upon

a little clearing, where the sun shone down with dazzling brilliance. And they would see a glimpse of gorgeously-coloured birds and strange insects—much larger than the insects at home. And the flowers were glorious in their colours and variety.

"My hat!" said Church. "It is paradise, and no mistake!"

"Gorgeous!" said McClure.

Handforth made no special comment. He was a youth of practical methods, and had no particular eye for scenery. The trio was now passing through a chapparel grove. And there were large varieties of other trees as well.

The artu, easily distinguished by reason of its diamonded trunk, and the great beech-like breadfruit—at least, similar to a beech when it came to height. And beneath its shade everything was dim and gloomy.

There were vast masses of wild vine twining from tree to tree in the most abandoned festoons. There was the aca tree—and the perpetual cocoanut palm. This latter grew everywhere.

And in the glades the juniors found glorious flowers, including superb orchids. The air was hot and almost humid, but the juniors hardly thought of this. They were so interested in everything they saw.

At intervals they paused, and they could still hear the distant, far-off murmur of the reef, intermingled with the humming of insects.

Presently Handforth and Co. entered a much larger clearing. It was like a little valley, and even Handforth paused with mouth half-open, staring in wonder. For the beauty of the scene was not lost upon him. Practical though he was, he couldn't resist this picture of tropical splendour.

They were looking down a slope, and it was smothered in rich green grass and clumps of glorious flowers growing in wild profusion. Over towards the left a hill rose sharply, and down this hill there trickled a sparkling stream—like some miniature rapids.

The water came cascading down, from rock to rock, and on either side there were great ferns growing in imposing masses, intermingled with growths of wild convolvulus. And slightly to the right there was a tree which Handforth and Co. knew at once—although they had not seen one before.

The fruit with which it was laden gave the game away. For the tree, which had gigantic leaves—many of them over six feet long—was filled with huge yellow bunches of ripe bananas.

They looked very enticing.

"Fruit by the ton!" said Handforth.

"We won't bother about getting any now—we've only just had brekker. But we'll gather one of those giddy bunches on the way back. Bananas tuppence each—I don't think! Those giddy fruit shops at home must make a terrific profit, you know. The things simply grow wild!"

"Yes, but they've got to be brought over,

you know—and that costs a bit," said Church. "Besides, we don't get bananas from this part of the world. These are a lot better than the ones we buy in England."

"Hold on a minute!" put in McClure. "I seem to hear something."

They stood still, listening.

"Do you mean that hissing noise?" said Handforth.

"Yes."

"Oh, that's nothing—the sea, perhaps," said Handy. "Now, look here. My idea is to make straight up this hill, so that we can get to the highest point on the island. There we can have a look round."

For once, Church and McClure were in agreement with their leader, and they offered no objection. But they had hardly been going twenty yards before they paused. They could see a peculiar thing rising above a low clump of bushes away to the left and further down the glade. The juniors paused and stared hard.

"Smoke!" whispered Church, startled.

And, sure enough, a column of something that looked like smoke was rising above the bushes. The juniors glanced at one another in a rather a startled manner.

"Great Scott!" muttered Handforth. "There—there must be savages on the island!"

"Savages!" gasped McClure.

"Rather—cannibals, I expect!" said Handforth, with relish. "Good! We shall have some excitement, after all! Let's creep close to those bushes and peep over 'em! There's a camp just beyond, and we'll soon see how many of the beggars there are."

Handforth hurried on before his chums could stop him. And they all arrived at the bushes together. Handforth peered cautiously over the top. Then he looked rather disgusted.

"No giddy natives!" he snapped. "It's steam—not smoke."

"Steam!"

Church and McClure were surprised. But there was no doubt that Handy was right. Venturing beyond the bushes, the juniors found themselves in a continuation of the glade, where the valley sunk sharply into a deep hollow. And there, at the base, there was a great steaming pool, with a kind of fountain rising ten or fifteen feet in the air.

The thing was one of the marvels of Nature, and for a few moments the juniors stood staring in wonder. Then they cautiously went down the slope, and found the atmosphere growing hotter and hotter as they proceeded.

"It's a geyser!" exclaimed Church, in an awed voice. "A geyser throwing up boiling hot water! Better not go too close, or the thing might start squirting steam all over us!"

But Handforth was reckless, and went as close as he could to the steaming pool. And,

after all, it was fairly safe, for the very fact that grass and flowers grew here proved that the boiling water never spurted this far.

The heat was almost overpowering. And the great pool was bubbling and hissing like some gigantic cauldron. And the fountain in the centre of it sent out dense clouds of hissing steam.

"The water's not merely hot, but jolly well boiling," declared Church. "Did you ever see anything like it?"

"I've heard about the same kind of thing in New Zealand," said Handforth. "Think how jolly handy this'll be! No need to boil any water if we camp here—there's all we need constantly on hand."

"But this water may not be fit to drink," said McClure. "It looks all right, but you can never tell. It may be as salt as brine or as bitter as gall. We shall have to taste it before we can be certain."

They found part of a cocoanut shell lying near by, and Handforth ventured near and scooped some of the water out. It was like going into the hottest portion of a Turkish bath, and Handforth didn't feel very cool.

However, when they sipped the water they found it to be as pure as crystal and splendid for drinking purposes.

"We shall have to tell the other chaps about this," said Church. "I reckon this would make an ideal place for camping. After all, it's not very far from the shore—about ten minutes' walk, going briskly."

They soon started off again, carrying out their original intention of mounting the high ground. They had not proceeded far before they came across another valley where there was an enormous stretch of peculiar dried grass—dried so much that it was like straw, only very soft and silky to the touch. A big bunch was astonishingly light.

And then they went on, mounting higher as they progressed. The trees grew more scarce, and there were now practically no cocoanut palms. For this latter tree is very fond of the sea, and does not grow readily at any great distance from the beach.

And there was a tremendous great space filled with tall canes—a cane brake. These canes were all of twenty feet high, and the juniors paused as they looked at them. They were waving in the breeze like one sees a field of ripe corn.

"Just the very stuff for building purposes!" said Church. "A lot of these canes would make ripping walls, provided there were strong supports in the ground. And look how jolly good for making a roof—with tons of those big leaves on the top. If we have to make a house, we couldn't do better than come here for the material."

"Rather!" agreed McClure.

"Not much good!" sniffed Handforth, just for the sake of being different. "A decent wind would blow the whole thing to bits."

They passed on, going even higher. The ground here was becoming rocky, but com-

paratively easy to climb. But after a while the juniors found the task too much for them. The rocks rose steep and treacherous, and some distance further up it could be seen that there were sheer precipices—so high that it would be impossible to negotiate them. This was practically the topmost reach of the island. From the summit it was possible to see over the whole expanse of land, in every direction.

But the summit could not be reached. The juniors were perspiring freely—and it must be remembered that they were ill-clad for climbing purposes. Their feet were bare, and they had, practically speaking, no clothing on. Even Handforth realised the impossibility of going on.

"Well, we've seen a good bit, and perhaps we can get to the top of the ridge from some other direction," said Church. "I suggest we go back now."

"Good idea!" declared McClure. "Oh, to find that stream again! I badly need a drink—and I'm going to have a dip in the lagoon, too."

From the point where the juniors were now standing they could see right over the cane brake and the two valleys and the forest land. They could see the beach, with figures moving about near the tiny breaking waves. And, out beyond the lagoon, the surf was breaking in an ever-white line upon the barrier reef. In that glorious sunshine the scene was an entrancing one.

But it was impossible to see what lay on the other side of the island. For the ridge rose up sheer behind the three juniors. And the summit could not be attained. So they turned back.

They plunged down into the valleys, going cautiously, for with bare feet it was impossible to make any speed. And it was hardly surprising that the juniors lost themselves.

Handforth was perfectly confident of his bearings. But Church and McClure were not. Two or three times they told Handforth that he was going wrong. He laughed at them. But the fact remained that they shortly found themselves in a swampy valley which they certainly did not remember passing on their way up.

"We haven't been here before!" declared McClure, looking round. "Ugh! I don't like the look of this place at all! And—and there seems to be a nasty kind of a smell, with a suggestion of musk in it, a rotten, dank kind of niff that hints of fever!"

The others made no comment as they descended further into the valley. But they could see that it was fresh ground to them. The soil underfoot was becoming moist and sodden, and just a little way ahead flowed a river. But it was half choked up with rushes and all kinds of thick vegetation. It appeared to be almost stagnant.

And, as McClure had said, there was a most unpleasant odour.

"Come on, we'll wade through this river,"

said Handforth. "It won't take us long to get to the beach. We're going in the right direction, anyhow. You can trust me to find the others."

They went to the edge of the unpleasant looking river, and plunged into it, for it was obviously shallow. They went in almost up to their waists, their feet becoming entangled with weeds which choked the river bed. The water was almost humid, and felt like a warm bath.

And then, suddenly, a great commotion appeared in the still water a few yards distant.

"Quick!" screamed McClure, with starting eyes. "Get back—get back!"

CHAPTER VI.

HANDFORTH'S NARROW ESCAPE.



HANDFORTH gasped, and turned. "Oh, great pip!" he exclaimed hoarsely.

The next second his chums seized him and dragged him back with all their strength. And only in the nick of time. For a ghastly reptile swirled and thundered by—an alligator of enormous size!

A sickening, horrible stench accompanied it. The juniors saw a glimpse of ugly, vile fangs, and then the thing was past, its great, powerful tail swinging round with sufficient force to kill all of them.

They ran madly up the valley, breathing quickly. One glance at the alligator had been enough to make them all turn pale. The creature was not on inch less than twenty feet long. The juniors could hear a fierce, strange bellowing.

"Oh, my goodness!" gasped Handforth.

They stared back at the stagnant river, at the rushes, and the mangrove bushes. There was a disturbance among the mangroves. The alligator was as large a specimen as one can meet with in Papua, and it had meant murder.

"Did—did you see it?" asked McClure shakily.

"I saw it, and smelt it, too!" said Handforth. "We—we'd better not try to cross that rotten stream again! We'll get out of this place as soon as we can. I'm sick of it!"

So were his chums. They found that they were smarting round their ankles and shins, and realised that various insects had stung them. They were hot and perspiring, and it was with huge relief that they caught sight of the canebrake soon afterwards.

Once there, they had not much difficulty in finding their way back to the delightful valley with the waterfall and the banana trees. They drank copiously, and finished with a few bananas.

"Alligators!" said Church, with a shudder.

"I never want to see one again. I—I thought the awful thing had got you, Handy. Just a foot more and you would have been bitten in half!"

"Oh, dry up!" growled Handy. "The thought of it's enough! Well, it shows that it isn't all honey on this giddy island! It may be a fairyland, but you've jolly well got to keep your eyes skinned! My hat! I'm bitten all over!"

They trod very carefully as they picked their way through the palm grove, and were delighted and relieved when they came out suddenly upon the beach, and found themselves only a few hundred yards from their starting-point.

Phipps was visible, talking to a group of fellows.

"Oh, so there you are!" exclaimed Handforth, as he walked up. "Where are the others?"

"They haven't come back yet," replied Armstrong. "They've gone round the beach, and they may not turn up until the evening. But what have you chaps been up to? You look a bit fagged out!"

"Fagged out!" echoed Handforth. "We've had an awful time, and we were nearly eaten by a terrific great alligator!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Jolly funny, isn't it?" said Church. "You may not believe it, but Handy's right. This awful thing was between twenty and thirty feet long, and it was only by a bit of luck that we escaped."

The juniors listened with great interest as Handforth and Co. told of their various adventures. If Handy had spun the yarn alone, he would not have been credited. But it was Church and McClure who did most of the telling.

"So we've got alligators on the island, have we?" exclaimed Griffith. "Phew! We shall have to be careful!"

"Rather!"

Phipps was looking serious.

"I must warn you, young gentlemen, that there may be other dangers. It would be advisable for you to keep as near as possible to the beach. I do not wish to push myself forward in any way, but——"

"All right, Phipps, keep your hair on!" said Armstrong. "We sha'n't get ourselves into any trouble. I'm not so sure about these alligators. They're probably only about five feet long, and as harmless as tadpoles—Yaroooh! Yow—ow! What the——"

Without warning Handforth had delivered one of his lightning punches, and Armstrong reeled back.

"That's for casting a doubt on the yarn!" said Edward Oswald firmly. "Say another word, and I'll take you to that river, and chuck you in."

After the little breeze was over, Phipps was looking rather thoughtful.

"I think you mentioned a field of dried grass, Master Handforth?" he said, after a bit. "It occurs to me that this grass might

come in very useful for the purpose of manufacturing clothing. At present we are decidedly short of attire, and it is absolutely necessary to do something."

"That's what I was thinking," said Bob Christine.

"You've got to realize, young gentlemen, that we have only ourselves to rely upon," went on Phipps. "Mr. Lee is unfortunately very unwell, and can do nothing just now. It may be weeks before he is fit again."

"Yes, that's the awful part about it," said Church.

"Well, Master Church, it's no good sitting down and wringing your hands," said Phipps. "We're cast ashore on this island, and we've got to make the best of it. Now, if it wouldn't be too presumptuous, I suggest that we attend to our personal wants first—that is make clothing, and after that build some kind of a shelter."

"A house, do you mean?" asked Griffith eagerly.

"Well, something after that style, Master Griffith."

"Oh, good wheeze!"

"Rather!"

"And then, after the house, some weapons," went on Phipps. "We have taken it for granted that this island is uninhabited. But there may be hostile savages in the portions that are as yet unexplored. Therefore we must have means of defending ourselves."

"But what weapons can we make?" asked one of the juniors.

"It is obviously impossible to provide ourselves with firearms, sir, but an arrow is a very nasty proposition," said Phipps. "It ought to be comparatively easy to manufacture bows and arrows. With a little regular practice daily you young gentlemen will soon become proficient in the art of using the bow."

"Back to the primitive age, what?" drawled Archie, who was lolling on the sand, with his back to a palm tree. "I mean to say, the bally old savage instinct, what? Bows and arrows and spears and all that kind of rot! Absolutely! I must say, Phipps, that you're dashed brainy!"

"Not at all, sir——"

"Dash it all—don't interrupt me!" said Archie severely. "I mean to say, we chaps know whether you're brainy or not, old tulip. You've proved it—absolutely! That is to say, you've trotted out the old ideas every bally time. Always on the spot, don't you know. Always ready with the goods!"

"I am trying my best, sir, to cope with the situation," said Phipps modestly. "And, as I was remarking just now, it is most essential for us to realise the full position. I regret that the young gentleman should have gone off exploring. That would have done later. The chief thing is to be prepared. I therefore suggest that we should make the most of our time now, and see about clothing at once. After the cloth-

ing we shall at once set to work building a shelter."

"Good old Phipps!"

"We'll help!"

"Trot out the orders, Phippy, and we're your willing slaves!"

The fellows were only too glad, and they were quite anxious to do everything that Phipps required. Handforth, of course, was inclined to jib. But this was only to be expected.

"Before I move a finger, I'm going to have a bathe!" he declared. "It's no good trying to mess me about. The lagoon's lovely, and I mean to sample it. And you chaps are coming in with me."

Church and McClure didn't object. For once they were willing to follow their impulsive leader. For a bathe it, the lagoon sounded enticing. And two minutes later the three juniors slipped off their scanty apparel, and plunged into the crystal lagoon. The water was delightful.

Phipps had just gone off into the palm groves, accompanied by about half a dozen fellows. If he had remained he might have had something to say, but he took it for granted that the juniors needed no warning.

It was quite all right to bathe in the lagoon just near the sandy shore. There was no danger where the water was shallow. Indeed, a number of fellows had already bathed, and had thoroughly enjoyed the dip.

But Handforth, being Handforth, wanted to be different.

"Come on, you chaps!" he exclaimed, after a few minutes splashing about. "The water's nearly hot here, so we'll swim right out, where it's deeper. I'll race you half-way across the lagoon."

"Better not venture out too far, Handy," said Church.

"Why not?"

"Well, you never know what might happen——"

"Rot!" said Handforth. "What could happen? Never knew such nervous fatheads. Are you trying to make out that I shall run into a crocodile or something?"

"I suppose you mean an alligator?" said McClure.

"Same thing!"

"Rats!" said McClure. "A croc. isn't a 'gator——"

"Don't argue!" roared Handforth. "What difference does it make, anyhow? There aren't any crocodiles or alligators in the lagoon, and I've a jolly good mind to swim right out to the reef."

Before Church and McClure could protest, Handforth started off. He went away with a tremendous amount of splashing and plunging. This is what he considered good swimming. He seemed to think that the more noise you made, the better. He was like a miniature cyclone disturbing the placid lagoon.

He was striking out for the reef, although he probably had no intention of going all

the way. Handforth had a big idea of his own powers, but he was not likely to venture on such a swim. He would talk about it, of course, but talking and doing were two different things.

"The silly ass!" said Church, frowning. "I don't suppose there's any danger, but it's not worth risking. Anyhow, I'm staying here."

"So am I!" declared McClure.

In the meantime Handforth had eased up somewhat and was now treading water somewhere near the centre of the lagoon. The depth here was considerable, and the water itself was delightfully cool. Handforth had never enjoyed a swim so much as he had enjoyed this.

It was gloriously refreshing, and he felt that he would like to remain in the water all the afternoon.

It was now comparatively still. And he was amazed at the wonderful things he could see far below, and the bed of the lagoon. That was the astonishing part. Although the water was so deep it was as clear as a crystal, so clear that in mere cold print one cannot possibly give an accurate idea as to the wonder of it. Such clear water must be seen to be believed.

Gazing down, Handforth could see the branching masses of coral fathoms below. He could see clusters of fish swimming along, and odd ones here and there. They were of all sizes, some tiny little things, others flat and peculiar in shape, and others three or four feet long. And now again there would be a bigger specimen dart along, far below in the water.

Looking towards the shore, Handforth could see the silvery white sands, with the tiny waves breaking in little ripples. From this aspect the beach looked quite different, and, if anything, more entrancing. The stately palms, bending their heads towards the lagoon, and with the foliage rustling in the breeze. A flock of blue birds rose up from the palm grove, wheeled round, and passed inland.

"My hat!" said Handforth enthusiastically. "Life's worth living!"

He was about to swim again. And then, at that moment, he noticed something rather peculiar further down the lagoon, not out towards the reef, but parallel with himself, and about a hundred yards distant.

There was a slight disturbance on the surface of the water. And then Handforth saw that something was swimming towards him—something which looked like the periscope of a submarine. A big fin was cutting the water in a dead line, and coming straight at him.

And Handforth remained still, looking at it!

He didn't realise his awful, ghastly peril. Danger in this peaceful spot seemed ridiculous, and the idea didn't occur to him. He watched the oncoming fin with lazy interest.

It so happened that I had come along the

beach a few moments earlier, accompanied by Pitt and Grey and a number of others. I had seen Church and McClure bathing in the shallow water, and I had resolved to join them. But I was rather alarmed when I saw Handforth so far out.

"The silly ass!" I exclaimed, frowning. "I don't suppose he'll come to any harm, but it's risky in these tropical waters."

"Risky?" said Tommy Watson. "How?"

"Sharks!" I replied.

"And how can sharks get into the lagoon?" demanded Watson. "Answer me that! There's no shark living that could cross that reef—"

"Perhaps not, but it'll be a very peculiar thing if there's no opening," I interrupted. "At some point there is bound to be a break in the reef, a break big enough to admit a steamer. And to swim out into deep water is simply asking for trouble."

I waved to Handforth, but he didn't see me. And then, that moment, I spotted the sinister fin, cutting through the water and making straight for the junior. My heart seemed to stop beating.

"Look!" I gasped. "I was right! I was right! There's a shark there now, and going straight at him. He'll be killed before our very eyes! Oh, the idiot—the reckless idiot!"

The fellows with me were thunderstruck, and so startled that they could not even make any comment. They stood stock still, staring, and waiting for the terrible end.

But only for one second did I hesitate. The urgency of this matter was so great that I ran helter skelter down to the beach, and ran into the water.

"Handy—Handy!" I shouted. "Swim—swim for your life!"

Handforth looked round.

"What's that?" he asked, his voice coming to me as though he were only a couple of yards distant. "Swim? What for?"

"The shark—the shark!" I shouted wildly. Handforth gave a gulp.

"The—the shark!" he gasped. "Oh, my goodness!"

In that flash he knew the truth. Dimly, he had had an idea that that fin belonged to something dangerous. And now he remembered. The shark is a fish which attacks in this way—giving warning of its approach by that deadly fin cutting through the water. And the enormous fish was now only twenty or thirty feet away.

It was a man-eater—without a doubt, the shark was one of those enormous monsters which infest such tropical lagoons as this. And once it had Handforth at close quarters there would be no hope for him. He would be snapped into threads as easily as a knife cuts through butter.

I instinctively closed my eyes, and felt sickened. This would be the first tragedy among the juniors—and all because of insane recklessness. I dreaded to see the ghastly crimson stain in the water.

It seemed to me that Handforth was doomed—that there was absolutely and utterly no trace of help for him. And I honestly believe that ninety-nine people out of a hundred, placed in a similar position, would have perished. Handforth was the exception.

Having realised his danger, he acted.

And, whatever his faults, Handy was a fellow who didn't do things by halves. And now his very life was in danger—in horrible peril. It rested with him whether he died the most horrible death imaginable, or whether he lived. Help from outside was out of the question.

He saw the fin coming towards him, and then—for the first time—he caught sight of the fish itself. Up till now he had only seen that sinister dorsal fin, but he became aware of the fact that a great shadow was blotting out the lagoon bed. It seemed impossible that the thing could be of such size.

As a matter of fact, the shark was a formidable specimen, probably measuring from twenty-five to thirty feet. This was no unusual size for these tropic seas, some sharks running to forty feet and more.

But the very idea of being attacked by a fish that was as large as a small factory chimney was staggering. It was small wonder that I gave Handforth up for lost. But he didn't

Handforth was rather indignant, in fact. He thought it was like the nerve of this shark to attack him at all, and never for a second did he lose his head. His one idea was to show the shark, plainly and forcibly, that he was not wanted.

And Handforth dived.

Without hesitation, without pausing to think, he dived clean down—deep into the transparent depths. But Handy knew that death lurked near. He didn't expect to die—but he would have been insane if he had imagined that this was a picnic. One false step, and death would be instantaneous.

The shark looked like a submarine to Handforth as he sank down through the water. Swift swimmer though he was, the great fish had no time to alter its direction, and it shot over the very spot that Handforth had just vacated.

Handforth could see the gleaming body, long and sleek—and he had caught a glimpse of the horrible mouth, with the cruel fangs. And then, with the utmost recklessness, Handforth attacked!

Here was a boy having the nerve to attack a shark thirty feet in length!

That was the staggering part about it. Like lightning, Handforth acted. He gave himself a thrust forward and upwards, and he had his clenched fist ready. And then, with every ounce of his strength, he punched.

He delivered one of his famous rights—a punch that would have knocked any fellow clean out. And his fist struck the shark in the very centre of the stomach. It was like hitting the gas-bag of a balloon.

Handforth felt the body yield somewhat—and after that pandemonium reigned. The water became like a boiling cauldron. By a miracle, Handforth escaped the shark's lashing tail—one blow of which would have crushed him to pulp.

The fact was, the enormous fish had met with an experience unique in its life. He had received a punch in a delicate spot, and he not only resented it, but he was slightly scared.

Huge though the brute was, he probably thought that here was something that needed approaching rather more carefully. And, swirling round, he made off across the lagoon, in the direction of the reef.

We, on the shore, seeing that commotion, took it for granted that the disaster had occurred. The juniors were pale and scared, and one or two were nearly on the point of sobbing. Church and McClure acted as though they were insane.

"He's killed—oh, he's killed!" wailed Church. "I knew what it would be—I told him to be careful! Poor old Handy!"

"Yes, he's finished—it's all up with him!"

"Good heavens!"

In the meantime, Handforth saw the shark speeding away. He felt shaky, but he managed to grin.

"I'll jolly well teach you!" he said warmly. "Anyhow, I think I'd better scoot!"

Handforth was reckless, but not reckless enough to tempt Providence a second time. He had had quite enough for one occasion. And with every ounce of his strength and energy he struck out for the shore, swimming with as much noise and commotion as he could make. His object in doing this was to scare off the shark in case it took a fancy to him again.

And to us on the shore, it seemed that a miracle had happened.

CHAPTER VII.

SOMETHING TO WEAR!



CHURCH and McClure grabbed Handforth feverishly as he came within reach. The other fellows, including myself, rushed up, wild with excitement and wonder.

"Oh, Handy—Handy!" panted Church. "We—we thought you were done for! We thought you were killed!"

"It's a wonder you weren't bitten to bits by that shark, old man!" gasped McClure.

Handforth took a big gulp.

"It takes more than a shark to finish me off!" he said calmly. "The rotten brute! I soon sent him about his business, I can tell you!"

I grabbed Handforth, and held him.

"But how did you manage it?" I asked amazedly. "I gave you up for lost, Handy—"

I was expecting to see the lagoon stained with your gore!"

"Oh, were you?" said Handforth. "Well, I'm sorry I didn't oblige. That giddy shark was about thirty feet long, and looked like a U-boat! I just dived, and gave the rotter a punch as he swam over me!"

"A punch!" yelled Pitt.

"Of course!"

"You—you punched a shark!" I shouted. "Why, I've never heard of such a thing! It's—it's astounding! A brute like that could have gobbled you up in one mouthful!"

"And punching it would only make it worse," said De Valerie.

Handforth was growing calmer now. He was safe—in a mere foot or two of water near the beach, and surrounded by amazed juniors. And he suddenly realised that he was a hero, and he adopted his famous air of calm indifference.

"It was like the shark's nerve to go for me!" he said, with contempt. "Do you think I'd stand that? Not likely! I just waited, and then dived at the right moment and gave the beggar a punch in his giddy bread-basket!"

"What, in the stomach?" gasped Pitt.

"Yes—fairly and squarely!" said Handforth. "I got in a right-hander that made it see stars, I'll guarantee! He simply shot round and staggered a bit, and then scooted. I scared him properly!"

"Great Scott!"

"Well I'm blessed!"

"I mean to say, dashed remarkable, what?"

"It's—it's amazing!" I exclaimed. "Thank goodness, Handy! You don't know how delighted I am to see you safe and sound! And it'll show everybody that the lagoon is unsafe for swimming."

"Oh, I don't know," said Handforth carelessly. "I've half a mind to go back—and try that punch of mine again!"

"Grab him!" I said curtly.

A dozen hands seized Handforth in a firm grip, and he was held. I don't think he meant it, but you never could tell with Handy. He was reckless enough and dotty enough for anything.

He soon came out of the water, and I could see that he was looking rather shaky. And I felt convinced that he wouldn't tempt Fate any more. Any other junior would have been helpless for hours with the shock of it.

But within ten minutes Handforth was himself again—and for the rest of the afternoon he was talking on every possible occa-

sion about his escape from the alligator and his fight with the shark. Handforth was the only fellow who had met with any perils—and then only because of his own rashness.

Phipps soon returned with the juniors who had accompanied him. I had been exploring, but hadn't found much. With a party of fellows, I had gone to the further end of the second bay. But we had been unable to progress further, for the big cliff, which I have previously described, jutted right out into the deepest part of the lagoon, and we had not ventured to swim round.

So, even now, we could not tell what lay on the other side of the island. We only knew the geography of our immediate vicinity.

Phipps and his party were full up. They had come back laden with huge armfuls of the dried grasses which Handforth and Co. had first seen. But Phipps had something else as well. He had a number of green leaves in one hand, and when I took one and smelt it, it had a strange aromatic scent. I crushed a portion of it between my fingers, and the scent was much stronger.

"What's this stuff?" I asked.

"I don't quite know the name of it, Master Nipper—but I have seen it on several occasions, and know that the juice from the leaves is highly antiseptic and healing. A most valuable herb, sir."

"You—mean—the guv'nor?" I asked eagerly.

"Quite so, sir."

"Good old Phipps!" I said. "But you're quite sure—you're positive that this plant is really safe?"

"Certain, sir."

"I mean to say, the chappie is a positive marvel!" remarked Archie. "He simply trickles forth and proceeds to gather the old patent medicine stuff. The fact is, Phipps is a bally brainy cove. As you might say, one of the ones, what? A lad of the village and all that kind of rot! Absolutely the kind of laddie to have knocking about the show!"

I was more delighted than I could say, and felt very much warmed towards Phipps. He was turning out trumps in every respect. Ever since early morning, when we had first found ourselves on the island, he had been energetic and full of activity. And he was a perfect encyclopædia for ideas and suggestions.

And now, while I looked on, he obtained two pieces of rock—one much larger than the other. The surface of this large piece was flat, and Phipps placed the leaves on the rock and commenced to pound them to a pulp.

They exuded an oily kind of fluid, green and thick.

Bandages were now handed to Phipps, and he smothered the material with essence from the leaves. Then, when everything was prepared, we went to Nelson Lee's side and tenderly redressed his wounds.

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It must not be supposed that the gov'nor had been neglected.

Somebody had been watching him practically all the time—I had done a good deal of this myself. But he was in no danger, and so we were not filled with any great anxiety. At the same time, I was very keen upon seeing him regain consciousness. That was the main thing.

He had been breathing steadily and evenly, and had shown no signs of developing any unfortunate complications. We now found that he was looking slightly better. His cheeks had more colour in them, and his breathing was deep and regular. Phipps was pleased.

"I think he'll soon come round now,

And Phipps immediately got busy in another way. He was not the man to remain idle when so much had to be done.

The long dried grasses were laid out upon the beach, and then great lengths of creeper were obtained. These were to be had for the mere pulling. The groves were choking with creepers and wild vines.

And Phipps got busy with these creepers, cunningly entwining them with the dried grasses, and at last turning out something which looked like a wide skirt. It could be fastened at the back by means of tying the creepers. There was a kind of band formed at the top for the waist, and the grasses hung down all round, in full flowing volumes.



Handforth gasped and scrambled to the bank, only just in the nick of time, when an enormous alligator swept by.

Master Nipper," he said. "About another hour, at the most. After that he'll take a rapid turn for the better, and we'll have him as strong as a lion within a week."

"By jingo, I hope so!" I exclaimed fervently.

The herb juice was applied—and it was needed, too, for the gov'nor's wounds were inflamed and angry looking. I felt wild with Fate that we did not even possess a pocket medicine-case.

We were, in fact, in an absolutely primitive state. We had nothing on the island with us—we were Crusoes in real earnest. Every utensil required had to be manufactured—crudely, and without tools.

But this was the worst of all—providing Nelson Lee with the care he needed. Cold water was all very well, but his wounds needed something more healing and soothing.

After the gov'nor had been bandaged up again we left him—with Sir Montie in charge, watching over him all the time.

Phipps donned the thing, and walked about testing it.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If he was painted black, he'd look like a Zulu chief!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's jolly fine!" declared Pitt. "It's clothing, and a lot better than these clinging pyjamas. A chap doesn't really need anything to wear at all in these parts, but it looks better with just a bit of something. We sha'n't feel so conspicuous."

"Jolly good idea!" agreed Watson. "We'll all have dresses like that."

Phipps was quite pleased with his handiwork, and he proceeded to instruct the fellows as to how this primitive costume should be made. They were all eager to help, and each junior made his own dress.

It was rather a long job, but at the end of a couple of hours we were all attired in our new suits. They were extremely simple, as I have described—being merely skirts of

dried grass which reached from the waist to the knee, and which stood out something after the fashion of a ballet dancer's dress.

We wore nothing on our chests and shoulders, and nothing from our knees to the ground. It would, in fact, have been very difficult to contrive anything of this nature.

But we were satisfied. A simple dress of dried grass round the middle was all that we required. We were dressed, and fit to enter into any society. And as I looked at the fellows walking about that sandy beach, I could not help marvelling at the extraordinary change which had come about in our fortunes during the last twenty-four hours.

Instead of being attired in white flannels and cotton shirts, and socks and shoes, and strolling on the deck of a modern steam yacht, we were here on a desert island, dancing and capering about like a lot of primitive savages—and wearing exactly the same kind of dress.

If somebody had told me, a week earlier, that we should be living in this state, I should have laughed with scorn. For the very idea was fantastic—and apparently impossible.

And yet it was now happening!

Just a little brown dye would have converted the whole crowd of us into real South Sea Islanders. It is surprising how primitive attire will give the most highly-

developed types of humanity the appearance of the savage.

But, after all, it was better that we should be dressed in this way. Certainly, these rough grass costumes were far more comfortable than any European clothing, and the sunlight upon our bodies would undoubtedly do us all a world of good. For sunlight is the one enemy of disease and fever. It is the great healer of the universe.

And while we were walking about, and testing our costumes, a hail came from Sir Montie. He looked like the rest of us, but he was very doubtful about the propriety of walking about with bare chests. He said he had an idea that we looked most shockingly indecent, begad!

At his hail, I turned, and found that he was running towards us.

"Quick, dear old fellows!" he shouted. "It's all serene, you know—it is, really! Mr. Lee has come to!"

"Hurrah!" roared the fellows.

"Thank goodness!" I panted gladly.

Like a hare I ran over the sands, and fell on my knees by the gov'nor's side—where he lay in the cool shade of the palms and the little overhanging cliff. I found Nelson Lee with his eyes open, and looking round in wonder.

"Oh, gov'nor!" I panted. "How—how do you feel?"

(Continued on next page.)

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(Continued from page 32)

"Why, good gracious, Nipper, what does all this mean?" asked Nelson Lee, his voice perfectly rational, but rather weak. "What extraordinary capers have you been getting up to?"

"Oh, blow our capers, sir!" I said. "You've recovered consciousness—and that's all that matters! You've got to get well now, sir—as quick as anything! We're absolutely lost without you!"

Nelson Lee looked at me curiously.

"But, Nipper, what do you mean?" he asked. "Have I been unconscious for long? Is it possible that— Ah, yes, I seem to remember! There was the storm—and the coral reef and— Yes, yes! We were all cast ashore—"

"And you half-killed yourself in rescuing the fellows, sir," I reminded him. "Don't you remember? Your left arm's broken, and you've got some nasty gashes on other parts of your body. We thought it was all up with you at first, sir, but Phipps has been doing wonders."

"Phipps?" repeated Nelson Lee wonderingly.

And then, quietly, I explained all the affair to Nelson Lee. I told him how we had all arrived safely ashore, all the juniors, that is—but we had seen no sign whatever of Lord Dorrimore and Umlosi and Captain Bentley and all the members of his crew.

Lee listened with great attention. I was delighted to find that he was so far recovered that he wanted to hear this news. He was feeling so much better that he insisted upon being told everything.

He was very sad about Dorrie and all those members of the party who were missing. And he was thankful that all the boys were safe.

"And you've got to hustle up and get well, sir," I declared. "At present we're all alone on the island, and there's only Phipps to do things. It's amazing the way he's blossomed out."

"I must have a word with Phipps soon," declared Nelson Lee, with a faint smile. "I have reason to believe, Nipper, that the man's prompt treatment saved my life. You say he set my arm?"

"Yes, sir!"

"Splendid! Phipps is indeed a treasure," said the gov'nor. "I only hope, my boy, that you will get along all right. I feel terribly helpless lying here. Perhaps, within a day or two, I shall be well enough to be up and about. I sincerely hope so, at all events."

But for the time being, as I mentioned, the only able-bodied man with us was Phipps. We felt quite capable of looking after ourselves, of course, but there was not the slightest doubt that Phipps was proving himself to be an ingenious leader, and his store of ideas was never exhausted.

And Phipps hadn't done yet!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PRICE OF VANITY.



ARCHIE GLENTHORNE adjusted his monocle and regarded Phipps with an expression of pain upon his aristocratic countenance.

"There's no denying, Phipps, that you've surprised the natives, and what not," he observed. "I mean to say, you've turned up trumps and generally proved that the old bean is in priceless condition. You gather the trend?"

"I think so, sir," said Phipps.

"Good!" said Archie. "That is to say, jolly good! I might remark, Phipps, that I'm dashed proud of you. I mean to say, you've positively solved the riddle, and all that sort of rot. To be exact, you've gathered the old reins up in the digit department and taken command."

"Hardly that, sir," said Phipps. "I am still your valet, sir, and I have no authority whatever over the young gentlemen. I am desirous, however, of helping in every way possible. Our present position is very unfortunate, and requires a great deal of thought."

"Oh, absolutely," said Archie, nodding. "I mean to say, absolutely twice! Yards of agreement, old tulip! Thought, what? Well, of course, that stuff isn't in my line, but you're just the blighter for it. The bean on your manly shoulders, Phipps, was always gilt-edged and hall marked!"

"Thank you, sir."

"Don't mensh," said Archie. "And I beg of you laddie, not to interrupt the young master when he's allowing the old flow of wisdom to trickle out for an airing. What? However, I've got a certain amount of ticking off to do, Phipps. I might even say, a deucedly large amount of ticking off. I absolutely hate to touch up the old feelings, but these things have got to be done."

"I trust I have not displeased you, sir?"

"I mean to say, the fact is, you have, as it were," replied Archie. "Not absolutely, of course. But you've neglected me, Phipps. Absolutely! You've neglected the young master in the most poisonous manner!"

"I'm very sorry, sir—"

"Not at all!" interrupted Archie. "Pray refrain from trotting out that kind of stuff, dear one! The fact is, I'm in a foul state! I mean to say, gaze upon me, Phipps! Cast the old optics upon my tender skin! Shocking, what? I mean to say, I'm positively going about wearing as much as a dashed billiard ball!"

"Under the circumstances, sir, I fail to see what else can be done," said Phipps. "The pyjama suits are very precious, sir, and must be preserved. They are all we have in the way of bandages, and such like. It would be a pity to—"

"Kindly cease the old flow, laddie," put

in Archie. "I'm not suggesting for a moment that I should array myself in the old pyjamas. Not at all. In other words, absolutely not! No, old bean! But surely you can do something better than this?"

"You are dissatisfied with the dried grasses, sir?"

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "This skirt business is not only fearful, but absolutely revolting. It positively gives me the pip every time I gaze upon it, don't you know. And I must remark that a chappie has no opportunity to stagger the populace with fancy colours, and what not!"

"Quite so, sir," said Phipps. "I agree as to that. But what would you suggest as an alternative?"

Archie looked astonished.

"Well, I mean to say, that's rather thick, what?" he protested. "Somewhat near the old limit, Phipps! Dash it all, what would I suggest? My dear old turnip, that's for you to say—not me. You're the fellow with the ideas. You're the cove who trots out the reels of wisdom. And it's up to you, darling, to fake up a really posh suit, what? Something different from the rest, you know. I mean to say, something that will distinguish the young master from the common ruck, as it were."

"I see, sir," said Phipps slowly. "I am beginning to grasp your meaning, Master Archibald, and I will see what can be done."

"Good lad!"

"If you will permit me, sir, I will now retire," went on Phipps. "I will do my best to have the suit ready within the hour."

"Priceless!" said Archie. "Absolutely the stuff. I mean to say, I hardly expected such a large quantity of promptitude. Away, Phipps, venture forth, and return with the goods!"

And Archie lay back languidly on the sands, and dozed off. He was enjoying this adventure tremendously, he hadn't had such an easy time for years. The lazy, languid life of the island was just to his liking.

Phipps mysteriously disappeared into the palm groves. He did not turn up again until nearly an hour had elapsed. And directly he appeared he took care to avoid meeting the other juniors on his way to join Archie. Apparently he wanted to keep this new suit a secret until it was actually in wear.

He placed the light burden he had been carrying on the ground, and gave Archie a shake. The genial aes of St. Frank's opened his eyes, blinked, and gazed round.

"What-ho! What-ho!" he murmured. "That is to say, several what-ho's! Where are we. On the ocean blue, or— Gad-zooks! I've been dreaming, Phipps. Absolutely having large numbers of nightmares!"

"Your suit, sir," said Phipps evenly.

"What? What?" exclaimed Archie, jumping up. "The old suit, as it were Good lad! I knew I could rely on you to shove

the business through. Kindly display the carcase coverings!"

Phipps unrolled his bundle and Archie was staggered by a vision of gorgeous, brilliant colours. Phipps had found a large number of tough, dried leaves, most of them being large and of almost every colour in the rainbow. Some were blue, others red, and tinged with russet, and still others were a brilliant yellow. And all were tough and leathery and dried.

Phipps had displayed great ingenuity, for he had secured the leaves together in such a way that there were two garments, a kind of skirt affair, and a cloak to wear over the shoulders. And the leaves were arranged evenly, a yellow patch on either side, with a touch of red above, and a touch of blue beneath. The leaves were of the same kind, and apparently off the same type of tree or bush. Only they were in different stages of development.

"I mean to say, absolutely the right stuff!" exclaimed Archie enthusiastically. "Priceless, Phipps—positively tophole and all that sort of thing! The colours, I might observe, are dashed good!"

"Perhaps you will try the garments on, sir?"

"Oh, absolutely!"

Archie removed the grass affair, and Phipps proceeded to rig him out with the new "suit." The skirt reached from Archie's waist to just below the knees, and the cape was made in such a way that it fitted snugly over his shoulders and was almost waisted. There were armholes provided.

"If I may say so, sir, a distinct improvement," remarked Phipps.

"Rather," agreed Archie. "Amazing, laddie. I always said you were a dashed clever cove, and you're proving it every minute of the day. The fact is, Phipps, I never gave you enough credit. I'm feeling bally generous to-day, and I'm jolly well going to raise the old wages by twenty-five per cent."

"Thank you, sir," said Phipps gravely.

Archie waved his hand as though to dismiss the matter. He didn't seem to realise that wages were no more good than cocoanuts on this island—in fact, the cocoanuts were far the more important. It made little difference to Phipps what his wages were.

Archie bemoaned the fact that he had no mirror to survey himself in. It was the one absolute necessity that the island lacked.

"The lagoon is very still, sir," suggested Phipps. "There are one or two pools, too, which serve excellently for purposes of reflection."

"The old brain again!" said Archie. "There's absolutely no limit to it!"

He was soon surveying himself in a pool, and he was decidedly pleased with the result. He looked a regular dandy in comparison to all the other juniors. The gaily coloured leaves, so cunningly contrived by Phipps gave the whole thing the effect of a jazz fancy costume. Archie was somewhat

shocked by the colours, but he couldn't expect everything.

Having satisfied himself that he looked all serene, he lounged elegantly down towards a group of juniors who were watching Fatty Little prepare huge quantities of breadfruit for the next meal. Fatty was determined to waste no time in getting some more grub on the go.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated De Valerie suddenly. "Look what the tide's chucked up! Oh, my eyesight!"

He shaded his eyes, and pretended to stagger. The other juniors stared at Archie in surprise for a moment or two, and then they yelled with laughter. Archie's appearance was so comic that the juniors were bound to yell.

"Good old Archie!" chuckled Pitt. "I suppose this is one of the twenty-guinea tailor mades? Of course, we've got to be content with common or garden reach-me-downs!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I mean to say, rather striking, what?" asked Archie. "I hope you chappies won't get jealous, but—"

"Where did you get that fatheaded suit from?" demanded Handforth bluntly.

"What? What?" exclaimed Archie. "Well, really—I mean, gadzooks! Scarcely polite, what? However, I'll overlook it this time, old thing. The fact is, Phipps got deucedly busy and there you are. There you absolutely are. Observe the result!"

"Well, I don't see why you should wear things like that while we've got to go about dressed in common grass!" said Handforth. "I'm a fair chap—always have been. I want that giddy outfit, and I'll fight you for it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fight me—what?" exclaimed Archie. "But I mean to say, old chap! That is, kindly consider! I'm not the kind of lad to funk a bally scrap with the old fists, but at the same time, I'd just like to point out that there's nothing doing! The suit is mine—absolutely!"

"Rats!" said Handforth. "Anyhow, I'm going to have it! I'm not jealous—I hate jealous chaps! But, at the same time, I don't see why you should go about like a giddy peacock while we have to be content with grass! Or Phipps can make me a suit just like that—I don't care which!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Archie held up his hand.

"I'll pass the old word to Phipps!" he exclaimed firmly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Handforth was generally very careless about his clothing, and I had confidently expected him to ridicule Archie in loud and decided accents. But Handforth was a wonderful chap for doing just the opposite to what one expected.

By some freak of chance, this jazz-like cos-



"I don't see why you should wear things like that while we've got to go about dressed in common grass," said Handforth.

tume took his fancy. And, of course, he had to have one. There was no getting out of it. Unless a suit like that was forthcoming, there would never be any peace. So, while Handforth continued to talk, I slipped up to Phipps, and gave him the wheeze. Phipps allowed his face to relax into a smile.

"I quite understand, sir," he murmured. "At the same time, I do not fancy that Master Handforth would care for such a costume. And Master Archibald might soon grow tired of it."

"Why?" I asked.

"The costume will be somewhat warm, I am afraid," replied Phipps.

I couldn't quite understand what he meant. But, shortly afterwards, I noticed that Archie was hunching his shoulders, and wriggling, and showing every sign of discomfort.

This went on for some time, and Archie's movements increased as the minutes passed. In fact, he soon became almost violent.

"Anything wrong, Archie?" I asked, going up to him.

"Er—er not at all!" gasped Archie. "I mean to say, dear old lad—Gadzooks! What-ho, and so forth! Stinging nettles, don't you know!"

"What?"

"I don't know how it is, old dear, but I'm most frightfully uncomf." said Archie. "Deuced pricklings, and what not! That is to say, I feel somewhat like the chappie who shoved himself into a thorn bush! That is

— Yow— Great absolutely Scott! This—this is poisonous!"

And then he allowed all his restraint to go to the winds. Gasping and squealing, he tore Phipps' patent suit off shred by shred, ripping the leaves to pieces. Then, with a howl, he rushed down the beach, and dived head first into the lagoon.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" I exclaimed blankly.

I hurried down to the water, and found Archie sitting up.

"Sharks, what?" he gasped. "Quite so, laddie. I fully understand. But I'd rather face a dozen sharks than wear that frightful costume again. The bally thing's too awful for words!"

I stared at Archie, and then let out a yell.

"Why you're smothered with bumps and blisters!" I shouted.

Archie gazed at his arms and chest in a fascinated kind of way. Sure enough, he had broken out into a kind of rash. A number of other juniors had come up, and were gazing at him.

"Good heavens!" yelled Armstrong. "Archie's got the fever!"

"Fever!" whispered Archie faintly. "But, dash it all—"

"Smallpox!" roared Griffith.

"Really, I—I— My only sainted aunt!" exclaimed Archie, rubbing his chest tenderly. "Smallpox, what? Measles and all that kind of rot! This is absolutely foul!"

"Don't be silly!" I said. "It's not smallpox, those highly coloured leaves are evidently poisonous."

"Poi—poisonous!" stuttered Archie, in a feeble voice.

"Great pip!" said Handforth. "You can keep your rotten costume! I don't want one like it! But you needn't worry, old son. We'll bury you decently."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I mean to say—bury me!" said Archie. "Pray desist, laddies! I mean to say, hardly the sub, for jokes, what?"

"Who's joking?" said Handforth. "I'm going to put flowers on your grave, Archie, and we'll keep your memory green. Of course, you're green already—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Archie staggered out of the water, and looked round wildly.

"Phipps!" he yelled. "Phipps!"

For a fellow who was dying, he had a remarkably powerful voice. And Phipps soon came hurrying down the beach. He regarded the bumps very closely, and then shook his head.

"It would have been advisable, sir, if you had stuck to the original costume of grass, like the other young gentlemen," he said gravely. "However, there is nothing to fear. The bumps will soon vanish, sir, and then you will have no further discomfort."

"You're sure of that, Phipps?" asked Archie anxiously.

"Positive sir."

"Good man!" said Archie. "Large assortments of relief. That is to say, I breathe again! You're a wonder, Phipps!"

But, somehow, I was inclined to think that Phipps had been teaching Archie a gentle lesson. Archie had paid the price of vanity! Phipps had probably known from the start what would happen, but he was as serious as a judge.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FLICKERING LIGHT.



AND so the hours passed. Feeling quite content and cheerful, the juniors occupied themselves in various ways while the hot, tropical day measured its course. They

had no thoughts for the future—no worries regarding their predicament. They were schoolboys, and irresponsible.

Dinner had been a great success. It was very much like breakfast, consisting of fish and taro root and breadfruit and bananas, to say nothing of cocoanuts. Phipps declared that he would have some birds before long, but it would be necessary to manufacture some weapons first. There was no lack of diet on the island, and we should have constant changes.

At tea-time we badly missed a cup of tea; but, of course, it was impossible to have anything of that sort. We had nothing to drink except water or cocoanut milk, and this latter was certainly very refreshing and palatable.

And then came the sunset, a glorious tropical rainbow of colours in the evening sky. A more perfect day could not be imagined. And the night promised to be just the same.

The twilight was short—so short as to be almost incredible. The sun sank low into the sky, and disappeared like a huge ball of fire beyond the waves. And it did not descend slowly, as one sees a sunset in England. It seemed to pop down at great speed, and then there was only a short period of twilight before the night swept down with the rapidity of a camera shutter.

But we had been in the tropics for some time, and we were accustomed to this. Overhead, the stars were gleaming and scintillating in the purple heavens. Such stars that they were like points of fire, sparkling and shimmering. And there, on the beach, a big camp fire was blazing merrily, and supper was well on the way to being ready.

Nelson Lee was much better by now, and he had eaten a hearty meal, which was certainly a good sign. And then, after we had partaken of supper, we all sat round the camp fire in a wide semi-circle, talking about our prospects, and what hopes there were of rescue.

And now that the night had come on, the juniors were more silent. They did not chatter so much. Their light-hearted laughter was less in evidence. For, with the night they began to get a fuller understanding of the position. Sitting round the camp-fire, the boys had time to think.

"When you come to consider it, we're in a pretty tidy mess!" said Handforth. "Goodness knows I'm not the chap to orook, but it seems to me that we shall be jolly lucky if we get off this island within twenty years!"

"Lovely!" I grinned. "A jolly cheerful chap, Handy! But I don't think things will be quite as bad as that. Personally, I don't believe in discussing the matter at all. It won't do any good, and conjecture is almost useless. The best thing we can do, is to see about the things that are absolutely necessary."

"I quite agree, sir, if I may venture the remark," exclaimed Phipps.

"Of course," I went on. "There are lots of things to be done, as you have already pointed out, Phipps. The first thing is to build a house—and we ought to get busy on that to-morrow. And then, after that, we shall have to make weapons of some kind. I suggest building a stout house, and a stockade all round it, with loopholes, and everything complete."

The juniors were interested and eager.

"Jolly good idea."

"Ripping!"

"You see, we never know," I continued. "There may be blacks on this island, and it's always well to be prepared. So we mustn't waste any time to-morrow. We've had things free and easy to-day, but there's work ahead."

All the fellows agreed, and they looked forward eagerly to the morrow. Building a house and a stockade was a glorious prospect. They were all tremendously sorry about the fate of the missing members of the party. But nothing could be done—and, after all, the juniors had quite enough to think about on their own account.

Just before turning in I suggested going along the beach for a bit—out of the range of the camp-fire. I wanted to have a look at the lagoon by starlight—for I had an idea that it would be interesting. And so about a dozen of us left the camp and strolled along the carpet-like sands with the tiny waves breaking at our feet. The lagoon itself reflected all the stars in the most bewitching manner. And the reflection of the tall palms on the reef could be distinctly seen, so clear and crystal was the night.

"Isn't it glorious?" asked Pitt, in a hushed voice. "I've never seen anything so lovely in all my life!"

"H'm! Not so bad!" said Handforth. "But I'm blessed if I can see anything to rave about! That light over the hills is more interesting, to my mind."

I turned round quickly.

"What light?" I said. "What light?"

Handforth pointed. We were right down the beach, and we could see over the palm grove, and beyond over the hills which formed a barrier in the centre of the island.

Sure enough, Handforth was right.

There, beyond those rock crags, a curious flickering light appeared against the sky. It rose and fell in a way that could not be mistaken. I felt a thrilling sensation run through me as I watched.

"My hat!" I breathed. "Don't—don't you understand?"

"Understand what?" demanded Handy.

"That light—those flickering beams!" I exclaimed. "They're caused by a fire—a camp fire!"

The juniors were startled.

"What!" shouted Church.

"Nothing else could account for that flickering glow!" I went on. "There's a camp-fire there—and that proves beyond doubt that there are blacks on the island—natives, and perhaps cannibals!"

"Oh, my goodness!"

"Cannibals!"

We dashed back at full speed to the camp, and told all the others. They were startled, and there was an immediate stampede down the beach to the spot where the glow could be seen. Handforth suggested going on an exploration tour at once, but this wild idea was immediately squashed.

And I suddenly noticed that our own camp fire had been extinguished. When I got back I found that Phipps had put it out, promptly and effectively. And Nelson Lee approved. He had been about to suggest the same thing, only Phipps, ever ready, had forestalled him.

"We don't want to give any warning of our presence, young gentlemen," said Phipps. "If we can see their fire, they can probably see ours. And it's just as well to be absolutely sure. It would be madness to attract these blacks, and to bring them swarming round us. We are unprepared."

But everybody realised the urgent necessity for building defence works, and providing ourselves with weapons of some kind.

And so, in this state of uncertainty, we turned in for the night, wondering, vaguely, what the morrow was to bring. Two fellows remained on guard, and they were relieved at intervals throughout the tropic night.

And though we were expecting adventures and excitements on the morrow, we little pictured in our minds what stirring events were really destined to take place!

THE END.

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CHAPTER I.

Bouncer's Academy for Young Gentlemen.

ABOUT three weeks had passed since the tragic deaths of Foster Moore and Posh Powner. Morning school was just over, and the boys were idling about, waiting for the dinner-bell to ring, when the ramshackle fly from Peddleton railway station passed through the school gates, and drew up at Dr. Wrasper's door.

From the vehicle alighted a small, soberly-dressed, mild-looking man.

He was obviously expected; for Perks, who stood at the open door, instantly conducted the newcomer to Mr. Wrasper.

"That must be the new assistant," remarked Tom Tartar, who, with his chums, was watching from the dining-hall window. "He seems to have brought plenty of luggage with him."

The fly, in fact, was piled high with trunks and portmanteaux, which Wooden Jerry, under the direction of Perks, now proceeded to lift down and carry into the house.

Perks was in livery, and bore himself as loftily as a knight of old directing some coquire in his duties.

Personally he did not attempt to do anything but look on. He did that remarkably well.

"Hurry up there, you idle dog!" they heard him say to Jerry. "Remember that idleness is the root of all evil, and that he who works to-day shall have bread to-morrow."

"Perks is a queer fish," said George Hammerton, a tall, good-looking boy, who had only arrived at the school three days before, but who was already a firm friend of Tom and his fellow-"Eagles."

"Yes," agreed Tom; "Perks is a bit of a

character, and I haven't got to the bottom of him yet."

They expected to see the new tutor at the dinner table, but he was not there, nor was he at the opening of the school; but shortly after the usual lessons were begun the door opened and the small, mild-looking man entered.

"Boys," said Mr. Wrasper, "this is the gentleman who has kindly consented to assist me in my labours—Mr. Achilles Chopps."

"Achilles, indeed," muttered Tom; "more like Mr. Cherub Chopps."

Lawrence Turrell, who sat next to Tom, caught up the word Cherub and passed it round.

In two minutes every boy had begun to associate it with the new master.

He had obtained his nickname; as the "Cherub" the boys would thenceforth know him among themselves.

He was certainly of the cherub order—round-faced, fair-haired, blue-eyed, and, as to age, he might have been anything between twenty-five and fifty.

Seen in different lights he looked different ages.

He had a few minutes' consultation with Mr. Wrasper, and then proceeded to perform his duties.

He went to work, as became a cherub, very quietly; but Tom, who watched him pretty closely, saw that he not only knew his work, but meant the boys to know theirs also.

"Not such a lamb as he looks," thought Tom.

Things went fairly smoothly. Two or three boys were called to order for inattention, with a gentle reminder that if they did not get through their exercises they would have the pleasure of staying in late to do them.

The hint served, and they laboured like mental gladiators, until at four o'clock the whole school was dismissed to an early tea.

Needless to say, the new master was the

principal subject of discussion. Mr. Wrasper had experienced considerable difficulty in finding a suitable man for the post; but he thought he had managed it at last.

Tom Tartar thought so, too, and said as much.

His chums agreed that Mr. Achilles Chopps seemed to be a decent sort.

Then Sam Smith turned the subject by suddenly remarking:

"It's a bore those Bouncer fellows being so near the girls' school."

"How's that?" asked Tom.

"They make love—or what they call making love—to the girls through the fence."

"I should not have thought those Bouncerites had it in them," said Tom.

"There's one fellow whose head I am going to punch," said Sam, ferociously.

"Jenny tells me he throws letters and sweets at her whenever he has a chance."

"She should not take any notice of him," said Tom.

"Oh, you know what Jenny is," growled Sam. "She likes attention."

"Well, what fellow is it?" asked George.

"That long fellow with a head like a turnip lantern," replied Sam. "His name, I believe, is Hautleboy Snacks. I'll Hautleboy him."

"Let's go down to Mrs. Blake's," added Sam. "There may be a letter or two from the girls."

"All right," laughed Tom. "What a chap you are, Sam! You seem fairly gone on Jenny!"

"Well, what about you and Lottie!" retorted Sam. "You're sweet enough on her, goodness knows!"

And chaffing one another, they started for the village.

* * * * *

A fortnight previously an individual named Bartholomew Bouncer had appeared in Peddleton, and taken possession of a house which practically adjoined that of Miss Smatterly, as only a very thick fence separated the respective grounds.

He brought with him a dozen solemn-looking young gentlemen, who wore mortar-board caps, and were always painfully neat in their general attire.

They were never allowed out alone or permitted to speak or to mix with any other boys.

As for mixing with the pupils of Mr. Wrasper's school, it was not to be thought of for a moment.

Why Mr. Bouncer should thus assume so high a standing was an inscrutable mystery, as there was nothing in his pupils to warrant the assumption that any of them were born to wear the ducal coronet.

The youngest pupil of Bouncer's Select Academy for Young Gentlemen was about ten, and the eldest, Hautleboy Snacks, might have been anything up to twenty.

He was a lank, goggle-eyed youth, with a vacuous expression of countenance, who

thought of little save himself, and always found in the contemplation of his personal charms a source of complete satisfaction.

Mr. Bartholomew Bouncer himself was a thin, lank-haired man, whose attire was invariably of black. There was no relief from this sombre hue, save in the narrow edge of collar peeping above his waistcoat, and his somewhat red nose.

Mr. Bouncer expressed the utmost contempt for Mr. Wrasper.

"He gives his pupils too much liberty," he told the village tradesmen. "He makes no attempt to keep the minds of his boys in a well-regulated condition. He is preparing a lot of young savages for the world."

On arriving at the Widow Blake's, Tom Tartar went to a shelf in a corner of the shop, and took down an empty biscuit-tin.

This tin served as a letter-box for communications passing between the boys of Wrasper's School and the girls of Cecilia Academy. The young people were the Widow Blake's best customers, so she was only too glad to allow them to utilise the biscuit-tin as a post-office.

On this occasion the tin contained one letter only, and it was addressed to Tom.

Eagerly tearing it open, he read as follows:

"Dear Tom,—I do wish you would do something to those Bouncer boys—they are so rude. There is a pole in their garden, and they climb up it like monkeys and kiss their hands to us as we sit at the school-room window. They also make up packets of miserable sweetstuff—the very cheapest—and direct them to us. Then they throw them into the garden, and Miss Smatterly picks them up. She blames us, and says we are a miserable lot of little FLIRTS.—Yours, as ever, "LOTTIE."

"The whelps—the miserable hounds!" growled Tom. "Those Bouncer cads again! Read this, Sam."

Sam Smith read the letter, and handed it back again.

"We shall have to take the cheek out of them," he said; "but just read what I picked up as we came in. Somebody must have dropped it."

It was only a paper—one of Bouncer's circulars, or to use the more acceptable word, prospectuses.

It let a lot of daylight into the real nature of his aristocratic academy—

"Mr. Bouncer has the pleasure of sub-

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See cover page iii;

mitting his terms for high-class education, for boarders only.

(Here followed the terms for tuition and board.)

"It will be seen that Mr. Bouncer's terms are extremely low, owing to his having acquired a commodious freehold residence in a neighbourhood where meat, poultry, milk, butter, eggs, etc., of the highest quality, are procurable at favourable prices.

"The strict rules of Mr. Bouncer's Academy are a guarantee that the pupils will not fail to acquire a high tone, which will be of essential service in the best circles of society. . . ."

There was a lot more of it—mainly references from persons with high-sounding names and vague addresses.

Tom read it through, and then looked at his chum.

"Why, it's a lot cheaper than Wrasper's!" exclaimed Sam Smith. "Bouncer is a dealer in shoddy gentility, and yet he has the cheek to give himself airs and pretend that his show is of a classier grade than ours!"

The two chums returned to the school, Sam taking care of the Bouncer prospectus, which he meant to read aloud to his school-fellows as soon as opportunity offered.

It was not because Bouncer's Academy was a cheaper establishment than Wrasper's that he intended to expose it, but because of the superior airs which Bartholomew Bouncer and his pupils gave themselves.

Tom at once wrote a letter to Lottie Fenn, stating that steps were being taken to stop the annoying behaviour of the Bouncer boys.

With this letter he hurried off to Widow Blake's shop, deposited the missive in the biscuit-tin, and, having purchased some sweets, started to return to the school.

Taking a short cut round by the vicarage-wall, he came upon three Bouncer Academy boys—by name Winks, Raddles, and Dumbleton.

"Hallo!" cried Tom. "You're just the fellows I want!"

"What do you want us for?" demanded Winks, trying to speak haughtily. "We have no wish to converse with you!"

"Haven't you?" retorted Tom grimly. "Well, you've jolly well got to—what you call converse with me—whether you wish to or not!"

He advanced on them with a look in his eye which evidently they did not like; for with one accord they backed against the vicarage-wall, and, like three figures worked with one string, put up an arm and a leg as if to ward off a blow.

"You let us alone!" said Winks.

"I will—when I've buried some of you somewhere!" rejoined Tom grimly. "What do you Bouncer cads mean by annoying Miss Smatterly's girls?"

"We don't annoy 'em!" said Winks. "It's they who annoy us. How would you like to be giggled at and called stupid—eh?"

"I'm not going to argue with you about

it," replied Tom. "But just understand—and let the rest of your chaps understand—that if I hear of you annoying the Smatterly girls again, I'll give you a pasting!"

"Would you give Snacks a pasting?" asked Winks eagerly.

"Certainly I would!" answered Tom.

"I'll tell him so," said Winks. "Do fight him, please! All of us want to see Snacks get a licking! He's such a big fellow that he's able to bully us as much as he likes. And whenever any of us get extra grub sent from home, Snacks makes us give him most of it!"

"Oh, so that's snacks, is it?" said Tom. "But I don't see why I should be your champion. Why don't you pay him out yourselves?"

"He's so big and strong!" said Winks.

"Oh, but if he's a bully he's probably a coward, too. Now, don't forget what I said just now. Your fellows have got to stop annoying Miss Smatterly's girls. Understand?"

Winks and his two companions hastened to assure Tom that they quite understood, and that they would convey Tom's warning to Snacks and the others.

Tom went his way, leaving the trio to discuss the episode among themselves.

"That chap Tartar is a strong chap," remarked Winks.

"Could he lick Snacks, do you think?" asked Raddles.

"Don't care if he can't," replied Winks. "But it would be a jolly fine fight, whichever won."

"I say," exclaimed Raddles, "couldn't we get 'em to fight somehow? Suppose we tell Snacks that Tartar is frightfully afraid of him?"

"That's the ticket!" agreed Winks. "If we tell him that, Snacks is certain to start strutting about and boasting. He might even challenge Tartar. Yes, it's a good idea, Raddles. We must try and work it up!"

And away the three went to lay the foundation of the future confusion of Snacks.

CHAPTER II.

The Mysterious Master.

MR. ACHILLES CHOPPS was a good tutor; careful, assiduous, and firm.

For all his cherub looks the boys had to obey him. He stood no nonsense, and shirking work he abhorred.

The tutor had a sitting-room to himself, and ever since his arrival he had been engaged in embellishing it.

Sundry packages came for him, which he opened himself, and nobody saw what the contents were.

One thing struck Tom as very odd when he heard of it—Mr. Achilles Chopps never admitted anybody to that room.

(Continued on page iii of cover.)

(Continued from page 40.)

He did all the necessary dusting and even the sweeping himself.

When he wanted coals he put the scuttle outside the door, and Perks or Jane filled it.

The key of the door he carried in his pocket.

He gave Mr. Wrasper an explanation of this apparently eccentric conduct.

"The fact is," he said, "I have a lot of brittle little nick-nacks, left me by my uncle, and I don't want any of them broken."

Mr. Wrasper was satisfied.

Neither he nor his wife were of a prying disposition; but this peculiarity of the tutor's way of living excited a restless feeling in others.

Jane really wondered at the man dusting his own room.

Perks said nothing, but he longed to get a peep into that apartment, and was perpetually dodging about to attain his object.

Nor was the feeling absent from the breast of others.

Tom could not help feeling mighty curious about this room, which was at the end of the corridor, and, in a measure, apart from the rest of the house.

He knew it had a bay window, because it could be seen from the kitchen garden, and, like the rest of the house, it was wainscoted, and had deep, roomy cupboards.

The boys were soon whispering together about the tutor and his room.

He spent most of his spare time in it, playing upon some instrument that sounded like a small harmonium.

Nobody had ever seen such a thing arrive, and the conclusion the wonderers came to was, that it was a small thing like a musical box.

The music it gave out was very sweet.

But the tutor never sang to it, nor was there ever much movement heard in his room.

"He likes to sit in an easy-chair and smoke his cigars as he listens to the music," said Sam Smith.

"I can't understand his liking that lazy sort of thing," said Tom. "He seems such an active fellow."

"It is very odd," remarked George Hamerton, "but, of course, it's no business of ours."

The boys were undressing as they talked, and Tom, who was monitor of the room, was getting ready to put out the light.

"That's just it, George," he said. "It is no business of ours. Chopps seems to be a very good fellow—I like him."

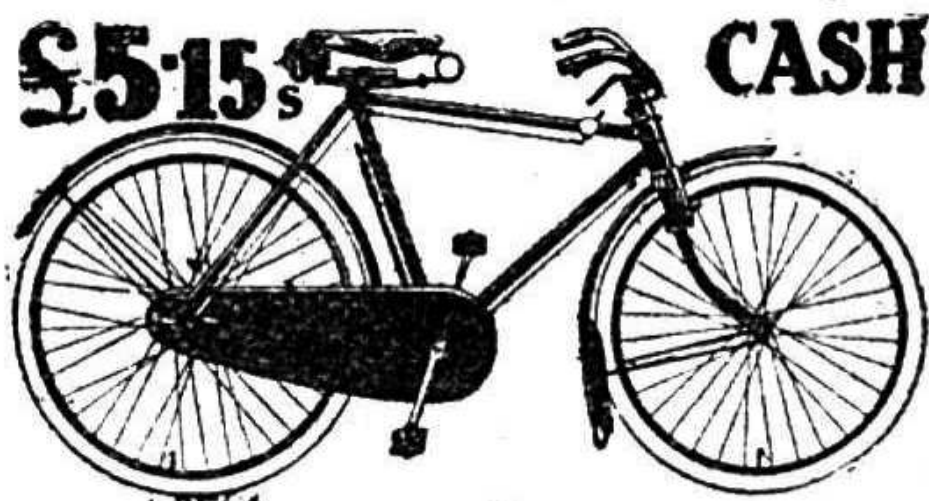
"So do I," said Sam. "But when a fellow is odd, other fellows can't help noticing it. Listen—the music again. I'll open the door if you put out the light."

This was done, and Sam stood for a few minutes listening to the sounds.

How wild and weird it was, yet how beautiful!

(To be continued.)

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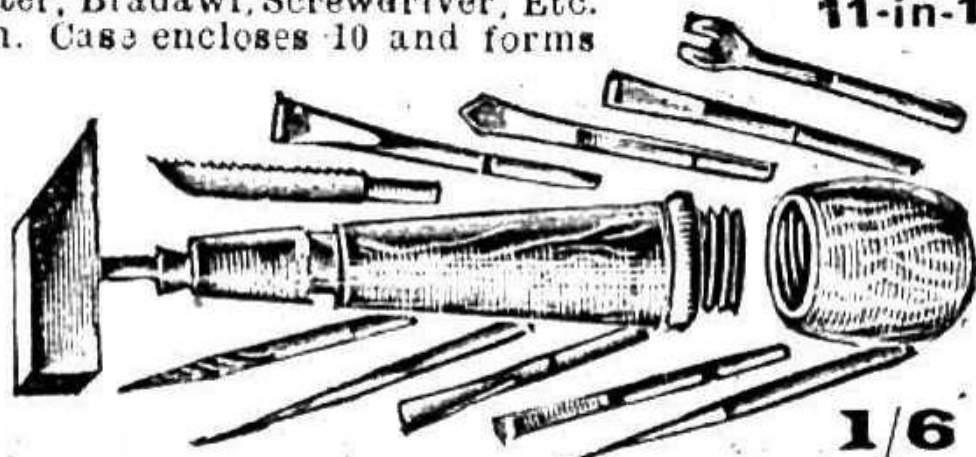
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