

TWO FINE COMPLETE STORIES OF NELSON LEE!

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## THE STORMING OF THE CAPITAL

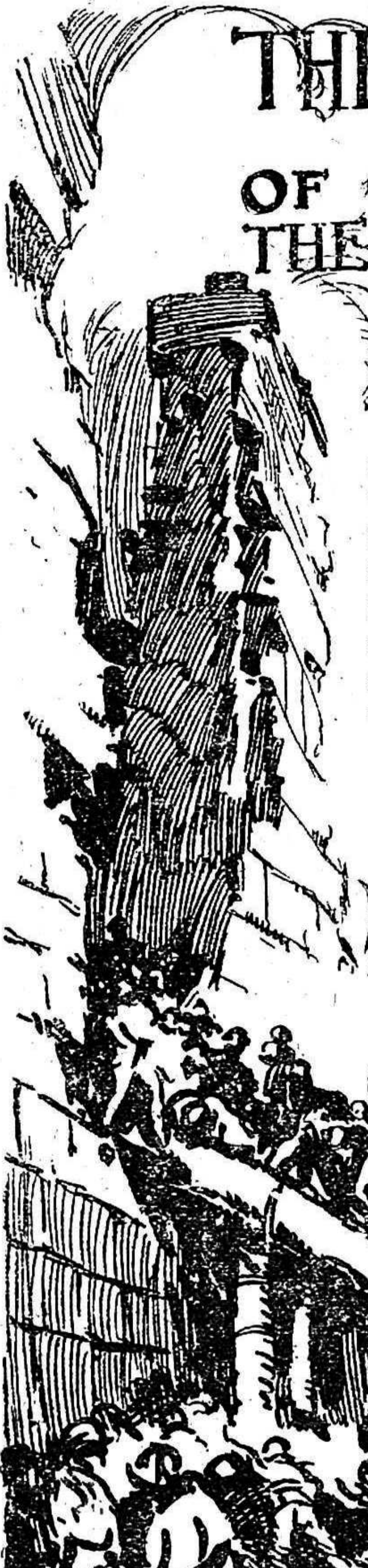
GRAND CONCLUDING STORY OF WONDERFUL SCHOOLBOY  
ADVENTURES IN THE FAR SOUTH.





Suddenly a great swirling mass of cloud entirely encircled the airship. Mr. Gray was hardly prepared for the dash over the peaks. In attempting to get into the clear air again, he went round in wide circles.





# THE STORMING OF THE CAPITAL !

This thrilling story of the great battle between the armies of King Jasper and the defenders of New London under the leadership of Nelson Lee, ably assisted by Lord Dorrie, Umlosi, and the boys of St. Frank's, concludes the wonderful series of adventures that began in the early summer when the Holiday Party left England in the Wanderer. When you have read it, I am sure your verdict will unanimously acclaim this story as the finest of the series.—  
**THE EDITOR.**

**(THE NARRATIVE RELATED  
THROUGHOUT BY NIPPER.)**

**CHAPTER I.  
ON THE CITY WALLS!**

**BATTLE!**

The shouts of the invaders, the defiant cries of the defenders, and the clash of mighty men! From the roads leading towards the capital of New Anglia came regiment upon regiment. And these troops were wearing gleaming armour, and glittering metal helmets. Their swords flashed, and their faces were alight with vicious lust for gory victories.

Already they had tasted triumph—they had swept the country, devastated villages and towns. And now they were at the very walls of the capital itself. And their leaders imagined that the taking of New London would be a comparatively simple matter.



For the soldiers of St. Edmund vastly outnumbered the few semi-trained troops of New Anglia. These latter, indeed, had only been a mere handful to start with. But now there were many volunteers from among the sturdy country workers and city labourers.

These men were fighting for their very kingdom—for all knew that if the capital fell the cruel rule of King Jasper, of St. Edmund, would descend upon the whole land. But it seemed a forlorn hope.

And now, at last, the great clash had come.

The fight for the capital itself was taking place.

And it was upon this scene that we looked—a crowd of juniors from St. Frank's! It may seem really extraordinary that this should be the case. But we had grown accustomed to it by this time.

And there we were, eighteen of us, standing upon the great balcony of the clock tower—a clock tower which somehow reminded me of Big Ben. This was situated in the very centre of the city, and we could easily see the exact course of the battle which was now raging round the city walls.

I was very anxious, because both Nelson Lee and Dorrie were in the fighting. The guv'nor, in fact, was Commander-in-Chief of the Defence Force. It was he who was directing operations.

"I hope he comes out all right!" I said grimly.

"You mean Mr. Lee?" asked Reggie Pitt.

"Yes—but, of course, it applies to Dorrie and Phipps, and Umlosi as well," I said. "Then there's Major Barrance. He's fighting, too. I hope they all come through without any harm."

"Rather!" agreed Tommy Watson. "Everybody hopes that. But it's not possible, Nipper. Oh, it's awful! Why should Mr. Lee have to fight for these people? They're strangers to us. He'll get killed—they'll all get killed. I jolly well know it—against such odds, they can't hope to live!"

"The optimist!" said Pitt. "It's a good thing we're not all quite so certain of defeat as you are, Tommy. I'll admit that the condition is pretty bad, but it's not quite so horrible as you picture. By jingo! Look at that crowd over there! They'll have a job to hold the beggars back!"

Pitt pointed to one section of the city wall. A great flood of King Jasper's troops were pouring in, evidently with a fierce determination to take that part of the wall by sheer force.

And we watched, fascinated.

But the defence held—the swarm of enemy troops hurled themselves impotently against the barrier. And they fell back, defeated. The same kind of thing was going on all round the city.

Of course, the troops of St. Edmund had taken on a pretty stiff task.

It was rather stiffer than they had antici-

pated. For the city walls were at least forty feet in height, and quite wide enough at the top to accommodate many men. And before entering the capital itself this wall had to be conquered. And neither army possessed guns or artillery.

"If all seems so objectless," went on Tommy Watson. "Why can't we stand aloof, and let these people fight their own battles? I mean, it's rotten for Mr. Lee and Dorrie to expose themselves——"

"My dear chap, you don't seem to realise the position," I interrupted. "The guv'nor and Dorrie are fighting because they want the defence to hold. If these New Anglians were left to themselves they would crumple up in no time. They haven't got a really decent leader. That's why the guv'nor has stepped in. And what would happen if these St. Edmund rotters took the city? Answer me that!"

"What would happen?" repeated Watson. "Why, they'd take it, I suppose."

"Brainy lad!" I said. "And what would our fate be? That's the whole point. If King Jasper and his men get in, the first thing they'll do will be to grab the whole crowd of us, and lop our heads off. And that wouldn't be particularly pleasant, would it?"

"Dear old boy, it would be most shockin'!" said Sir Montie Tregellis-West.

"Of course it would," I agreed. "So, you see, the guv'nor and Dorrie are not fighting because they want to help these New Anglians, but because they want to save us from a particularly messy finish!"

"Begad!" murmured Sir Montie. "Iray don't be so frightfully crude, old boy!"

We continued to look at the battle.

All the St. Frank's fellows were up there with the exception of Archie Glenthorne and Fatty Little. Archie considered the tower steps too arduous to climb, and Fatty could not be dragged away from the food in Snowball's kitchen.

And down below, in the great central square, lay the Golden Rover. She was disabled at the moment, but Mr. Raymond Gray, her owner, was working like a nigger in order to affect repairs.

For as soon as the wonderful aircraft could leave the ground, we should be saved. We should be able to leave this city of bloodshed and swoop away. Not that Nelson Lee would do anything of the sort.

Having started the task of helping these people to victory he wouldn't back out of it. It was the guv'nor's way to see things through. But the very fact that the Rover could fly would make all the difference.

For she would immediately bring defeat to the enemy.

With the Rover in the air, sweeping up and down the enemy lines, defeat for King Jasper would be absolutely inevitable. His spies had disabled the Golden Rover—and now he was making one tremendous bid for victory before any repairs could be made.



For if he could take the capital now, his success would be complete.

The affair was, therefore, something like a race.

And we continued to watch with almost fierce interest. I was particularly keen about that section of the wall held by Nelson Lee and Dorrie. And I kept my binoculars turned in this direction.

So far the battle had not turned very much in this way. And Nelson Lee and Dorrie were having a rather easy time of it. But there was no doubt that this lull was only temporary. There would soon be plenty to do.

On the city wall, Nelson Lee had two revolvers gripped firmly. And Lord Dorri-more was similarly armed.

Fortunately, they had plenty of ammunition—plenty of cartridges. And several of the New Anglians had been instructed in the work of reloading. So, when the time came, Lee and Dorrie could fire continuously.

"Nothin' doin', old man," said Dorrie. "I thought we were goin' to have the full brunt of the fightin'. But the Meggars are steerin' clear of this section. Had we better shift?"

"No," replied Nelson Lee. "This respite is only very temporary. It will not last long, Dorrie. In fact, I strongly believe that the biggest attack of all will soon develop in this direction."

"Well, I wish it would come," said his lordship. "There's nothin' worse than hangin' about. I'm longin' to push daylight into a few of these hounds. We'll teach 'em to butt in where they're not wanted."

Nelson Lee smiled.

"Our task is going to be a heavy one," he said quietly. "If only the defenders will remain firm and courageous, all will be well. They come of good British stock, and they ought to succeed. But they have had practically no fighting in this country for a hundred years—and so this grim business comes new to them."

"Still, it's in the blood," said Dorrie. "The good old strain of England. An' if they show the white feather they won't be worth a cent. Why, by gad! What's this? What's all this?"

Dorrie turned and looked down into one of the city streets which came right towards this part of the wall. It was thronged with New Anglians—men who were ready to fight for their city. They were volunteers, one and all—mostly young fellows who had had no experience of battle.

But they had been fired with enthusiasm by Nelson Lee's vigorous leadership. And they were all eager to fight their hardest. But now there was a stir, and the picturesque scene was one of animation.

These people were all attired in the most gaily coloured dress, and when a crowd gathered the result was most pleasing to the

eye. It could be seen that a number of extra gorgeous people were coming along.

"The king!" said Nelson Lee, frowning.

"The king and his suite!"

"You're right, old man," agreed Dorrie.

"Now, this is what I call thoughtless! What the deuce does he want to come buttin' in for, just when things are beginnin' to get excitin'?"

Nelson Lee made no reply.

King Arthur of New Anglia was walking with stately stride towards the wall. He was surrounded by members of his own court—dukes and lords most of them. And he appeared to be quite heedless of any danger.

All this sounds very strange, I know.

But I don't think it's necessary for me to explain much; I've done it several times already! For we were all in New Anglia—a somewhat extraordinary little country which was situated in the heart of the Antarctic zone.

There it was, tucked away and hidden by the mountains. These great peaks, always snowclad and inaccessible, rose up to the Heavens in a vast barrier. And between them lay this basin—a great basin extending for eighty miles, and being close upon forty miles in width.

Down there everything was green and warm.

The place was fed by a hot river, and other volcanic phenomena caused the whole country to be temperate. The air was always mild and the ordinary plants and vegetables of England grew in profusion.

These people the New Anglians and St. Edmunds—were descendants of a large number of Quaker pilgrims who had set out in the seventeenth century in order to make a settlement in the Argentine. But they had been caught in a fearful storm and driven far south. This, at all events, was the account given in the history books of the New Anglians.

And in some way the pilgrims found this haven of refuge. And they had been compelled to settle in the strange, verdant valley amid the ice. And they had never been able to reach civilisation again.

And so they had flourished. They had increased, generation after generation, during this two hundred and fifty years of time. And the course of development had been rather curious.

The descendants of the pilgrim ship's crew were fierce, arrogant and restless. These had been cast out by the New Anglians, and they had called themselves the St. Edmunds—after the name of the old ship.

The New Anglians themselves were peaceful, as befitted the descendants of Quakers. They had built a stependous wall across the valley, completely shutting off the Kingdom of St. Edmund. These latter people were barred—they were thrown out as worthless.

But King Jasper had ideas of his own. It was his ambition to seize New Anglia by force, and to conquer the whole land.



To a large extent he had succeeded. Indeed, once he gained the capital, his victory would be absolute.

He had broken through the great wall by undermining it, and by causing a big section to collapse. And the New Anglians had been taken completely by surprise. They had been caught unawares—unprepared for any kind of warfare. But for the fact that we were on the spot, no resistance would have been made.

But Nelson Lee knew that our very lives depended upon this big battle. If the St. Edmund troops were held back, we should be saved, for Mr. Raymond Gray would complete his repairs on the Golden Rover.

So the gov'nor had thrown himself heart and soul into the fight, ably assisted by Lord Dorrimore, Major Barrance, Umlosi and Phipps. But for them the capital would have fallen long since.

The greatest blow of all had been when the Rover had been disabled. With the air-ship in perfect trim, King Jasper would not have been able to make any progress. For the soldiers would never have advanced in the face of bombs and machine-gun bullets from the air.

And then again, King Jasper had used his villainous spies to do other damage. Nelson Lee had had four machine guns in different parts of the city walls. These guns were to be used for the defence—and there was no question that they would have held the enemy back.

But traitors in the ranks had smashed these machine guns at a given signal. Three had been smashed outright, but Umlosi had managed to save the fourth. But even this was jammed and useless.

It had been sent back to the Golden Rover for repairs, and Mr. Raymond Gray had ceased all work on the vessel itself in order to put this machine in fighting trim.

Nelson Lee was anxiously awaiting word that the weapon was repaired. And now came King Arthur with his suite. Lee had requested his majesty to remain in the palace and to hope for the best. But the king thought differently.

He mounted one of the many ladders to the top of the wall, and Nelson Lee and Dorrie met him. The king was a tall, well-built man, and he seemed to be quite calm and determined, although there was a sad expression upon his face.

"'Tis pitiful to see such things!" he exclaimed gravely. "To see my city on the verge of being battered and wrecked! Maybe the great disaster may be avoided, Master Lee. Thinkest thou there is any hope?"

"Your majesty, I think that there is a great deal of hope," replied Nelson Lee. "As it happens the fighting has not yet extended to this quarter. But at any moment the enemy may swarm up in their hundreds. It is inadvisable for you to remain."

"So!" said the king. "Thou art wrong,

my noble friend. My advisers have well nigh gone down upon their knees beseeching me to remain within cover. But 'tis idle. I am determined. And I have come, Master Lee."

"For what reason, sire?"

"To fight!" replied his majesty defiantly.

"Good man!" said Dorrie. "That's the spirit!"

"It is an excellent scheme, sire, but, in my opinion, most inadvisable," said Nelson Lee. "Please return to your palace at once, and remain there until I send news—"

"I cannot agree," said King Arthur firmly.

"But you may get killed in the fighting—"

"If so, 'twill be a noble death!" interrupted the king quietly. "But I have grown tired amid my gorgeous and peaceful surroundings. I have had time to think, my good friends. And I have realised that it is no place for a king to skulk in hiding while his subjects fight! Even this scurvy rascal from St. Edmund—Jasper—even he leads his own troops. So! I will fight with mine own men—and encourage them to victory!"

"Perhaps it would be as well, if you are so determined," said Nelson Lee. "But I warn you, sire, that the fighting may be very severe."

"'Twill be better!" interrupted the king. "For I need work, Master Lee! I need something to thrill me! This great upheaval has made my nerves raw. I want to act—I want to show my people that I am no mere puppet. When it comes to a battle for my country's very existence, I will be in the forefront!"

The king turned, his face flushed with enthusiasm. He raised a hand, and the hundreds of men who were crowding in the streets below gazed up at their monarch. There was an absolute silence—except for the distant sounds of conflict from the other parts of the city walls.

"List, you, my people!" shouted the king boldly. "I am here to fight for thy cause—which, indeed, is mine own cause, too. I am here to lead thee to victory! If thou wilt lend me thy support, all may be well."

There was a large number of excited exclamations.

"Wait!" went on the king. "If this knave from St. Edmund gains control over our country, 'twill go hard with all of us. 'Tis for us to fight with our very life's blood against this menace. I command thee to use every ounce of thy strength in the cause of thy country—and in making this demand, I know that thou wilt regard it as a request, and obey!"

Cheer after cheer arose.

The king's words had fired the men to a pitch of enthusiasm they had hitherto never touched. Nelson Lee had done a great deal to fire these volunteers with a determination to defend the city.



But it needed the king himself to impart that reckless, valiant strain which meant all the difference between success and failure.

And the news that the king himself was fighting with his lowest subject swept through the city like a flame before a gale. It was known in all quarters in less than fifteen minutes—the word passed from man to man. And the cheering was taken up everywhere.

The New Anglians were now fighting with a determination which had seemed impossible on the previous day. A surging wave of intense patriotism swept through the whole population.

The lethargy was shaken off—the bonds were removed.

And the entire male population of the city was ready—eager to fight to their last breath in order to save the kingdom from destruction.

With such feeling in the air, was defeat possible?

It was—but King Jasper and his troops would have a terrible struggle in order to gain their ends!

## CHAPTER II.

### THE HORDES OF ST. EDMUND!



**K**ING JASPER, of St. Edmund, was a cunning rascal.

There was no question about the fact that he had planned his big attack in a skilful manner. In this campaign he was being assisted by his commander-in-chief—a brutal man, who was known as General Horton. And the St. Edmund army was divided into two main bodies.

One section was led by King Jasper himself, and the other section was under the command of General Horton.

It was General Horton's army which was now engaged—on the northern wall. King Jasper himself had not yet brought his troops into action. With rare forethought, he decided to wait. He believed that the defenders would think that Horton's attack was the only one.

Then, with lightning-like surprise, the other onslaught would commence. And if the first army failed to get through, the second would succeed. And even this was not the end of King Jasper's cunning resource.

Upon King Arthur joining Nelson Lee on the west wall, Lord Dorrimore had hurried away to the north—where the fighting was in progress. Here Umlosi was battling fiercely, and glorying in the whole proceeding.

And Phipps, who had been hit by a flying boulder, and severely jagged, was given a rest. Later, he would join Nelson Lee.

On the eastern wall Major Barrance was in charge—greatly to his disgust. For here



Umlosi staggered back with a great gasp, and then his foot slipped over the edge of the wall, and he fell headlong to the ground beneath.

everything was quiet, without even a single sign of an enemy soldier. No action had started in this section. And Barrance, who was a V.C. and a D.S.O., considered that he was being swindled.

From the tower we could see all that was progressing—although, of course, we could not make any minute details. We knew that the king had gone into the fighting line. And we also knew that Lord Dorrimore had joined Umlosi on the northern wall.

"Just like him!" I said. "He's always spoiling for a fight—and if he doesn't get potted, it'll be a queer thing. Dorrie was always a chap to enter a fight baldheaded."

"It's a rummy thing, but chaps like that generally escape without a scratch," said Pitt. "I've noticed it in all sorts of accounts. Those fellows who don't care whether they die or live, nearly always live. I'll bet Dorrie comes completely through, smiling all the time."

"Let's hope so!" I agreed. "By jingo! They seem to be getting it pretty hot in the north. Anyhow, Umlosi is enjoying himself. He only lives for the times when he'll be fighting."

This, in fact, was very true.

Umlosi was absolutely revelling in the whole thing. He had not been able to use his spear very much, but he thought there would be ample opportunity before long.



Lord Dorrimore found him standing near the edge of the high wall. He was gazing out across the green country, watching the movements of the enemy troops. This battle was very unlike a modern battle of the outside world. For, with no artillery, and practically no firearms, the opposing armies were compelled to fight hand-to-hand.

There was no actual clash until the enemies were within arm's reach of one another. And his was just the kind of fighting that suited Umlosi down to the ground. He hated rifles and machine-guns and artillery. In his opinion, the only real fight was when men stood face to face.

The New Anglians and the St. Edmunds' knew something of gunpowder and explosives. Their ancestors had brought this knowledge with them from England—for gunpowder had been in common use in those days. But the resources of this valley were limited.

And gunpowder was not only difficult to make, but only comparatively small quantities could be available. There was certainly not sufficient for muskets or pistols. In the course of the past years, firearms had died into obscurity in this land. Instead of being developed, as they have been in the great world, firearms were allowed to become well nigh obsolete.

At the most, these people used explosives in the form of bombs. And they only took steps of this kind in the greatest extremity. For the bombs were nearly as dangerous to the throwers as to the intended victims. There had been so many accidents that gunpowder was not in general favour.

At all events, the two armies were now opposed to one another with hardly any weapons except swords, clubs, and similar articles. That was why King Jasper had so feared the deadly machine-guns from the Golden Rover. These weapons would have made success impossible for his troops.

"Wau! Thou art come, O, my father!" shouted Umlosi, as Dorrie appeared. "Thou art indeed welcome, since the red blood will soon be flowing! The mists are before my eyes, N'Kose, and methinks it will be but a short while before the great battle is in fierce progress."

"You seem quite pleased about it," said Dorrie.

"Is it not wondrous?" asked Umlosi, showing his white teeth. "Wau! I am all anxiety to smite these accursed dogs down, one by one! My spear is waiting to slice the life out of the cowardly jackals!"

"Well, there's nothin' like feelin' fit," said Dorrie calmly. "But I thought you'd been killin' a few hundred already?"

"Merely a paltry dozen, N'Kose!" said Umlosi in disgust.

"Well, dash it all, a dozen isn't so bad for a start," exclaimed his lordship. "But how did you manage it? How did the enemy

succeed in gettin' to the top of the wall, old friend?"

"It was yonder, my father," replied Umlosi, pointing. "Two score of these wretches succeeded in getting over the wall, and they dropped upon these worthy defenders. The moment was a great one, N'Kose!"

"I expect so," said Dorrie. "You sailed in?"

"Thy words are wondrously strange, but methinks I catch thy meaning," replied the great Kutana Chief. "Even as thou sayest, my master, I sailed in. With my great spear, I slew these curs, right and left—"

"An' by the look of it, there'll be some more slayin' to do soon," interrupted his lordship. "By the Lord Harry! What in the name of all that's queer is this? Gaze upon it, Umlosi! Feast your eyes upon the scene!"

Dorrie had faced the other way, and was now looking down from the wall into the territory held by the enemy. Beyond this northern wall were green fields—fields which contained vegetables, and grain. But now they were trampled down and ruined. In warfare, there is no time to respect cultivation.

Quite a number of King Jasper's troops had been in sight all the time. At intervals, these men would hurl jagged stones, and other pleasant objects. But there was very little danger.

But now a new thing had cropped up. At least two hundred men were desperately struggling with a vast wooden structure. They were carrying it bodily across the fields in the direction of the wall. The structure was composed of tree trunks and other wooden objects bound tightly together. At one side it was nearly fifteen feet in height, and sloped back gradually. And the whole thing had a kind of sloping platform, twenty feet wide. It must have weighed tons.

But in the hands of so many men it was pushed forward with ease. And it came on—like some vast monster of war. And the St. Edmund troops shouted as they came forward.

In the rear were hundreds of other soldiers—waiting.

"By gad!" said Dorrie. "This looks nasty!"

"Thou art surely wrong, N'Kose," said Umlosi, his eyes gleaming. "I can see the meaning of this strange contrivance. It is intended to hurl the thing against the wall—and once fixed there it will provide a means for the enemy to run up, and thus swarm upon us."

"Exactly!" said Dorrie. "That's the precise idea. An' when the thing is in position it'll be as good as a gateway. The brutes will come up that slope in hundreds, an' before we can know what's happenin', they'll be swarmin' down into the city streets like a lot of locusts!"



Dorrie could see that the position was acute.

This great wooden structure had been specially made in order to conquer the wall. Placed in position, as Dorrie had said, it would provide an excellent means for the St. Edmund soldiers to beat down the defence.

But Umlosi seemed quite happy.

"Well, I suppose I'd better begin!" said Dorrie calmly.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Again and again he fired his two revolvers. He was one of the most expert marksmen in the world, and although he fired quickly, and apparently without taking aim, every bullet went true.

Men fell one after another.

But with such a vast horde, Dorrie's single-handed efforts made practically no impression. He caused a large number of casualties, it is true, but the greater number swarmed on.

And then, at last, the great wooden thing crashed against the city wall.

It was in position in less than a minute. And then came the enemy—swarming up, with fierce yells and wild cries. They came in hordes. But if they expected to find a set of weak-kneed defenders, they were mistaken. The men of New Anglia were determined to admit the enemy dearly.

"Come on, my lads!" roared Lord Dorrie. "Put some beef into it!"

The men responded with a will. With their swords and clubs, they swarmed upon the wall. And as the first onrush of the enemy troops developed into a fight, the conflict raged murderously.

The fierce cry of the injured, the thud and crash of blows, the howls of agony—all filled the air in one conglomerate roar of sound. Dorrie himself had shoved his revolvers away now, and was using his sword.

Slash—slice!

Again and again he thrust the trusty blade home, and he was never in the slightest danger of being struck. When it came to absolute skill, Dorrie and Nelson Lee and the other members of our party were miles ahead of these others. There was very little peril of their being hurt in a hand-to-hand encounter.

Umlosi, too, was fighting like a Trojan.

His great spear was working overtime. The perspiration poured from his brow, and his arms must have ached. But he didn't seem to mind. He went on, actually forcing his way into the very thick of the battle.

He was not content to remain on the wall. He forced a channel of dying St. Edmund troops down the sloping gangway. And before long he was causing the enemy to waver with dismay and awe.

This fight of Umlosi's was wonderful to watch.

Almost single-handed, he was beating the enemy back. Dorrie and the New Anglians

were dealing with the men on the outskirts of the great crush. They had no chance to get nearer, for they were fully engaged.

But Umlosi was like a man possessed.

At last, however, he could not withstand the terrible strain. Already he had been hit by a club, and the deliverer of this blow was now lying dead. But the effect on Umlosi was not good.

He was half-stunned, and rendered dizzy. Still he fought on—but now his blows were not so accurate. His skill had lessened.

And in the meantime Lord Dorrimore was forced back. Sheer weight of numbers had compelled him to retreat along the wall. He was beating the men down one after another, but with a dozen upon him he could not possibly retain his position. His only course was to retreat fighting.

And then the disaster occurred to Umlosi.

A flying stone, coming from nowhere, caught him fully upon the centre of his forehead. It was a fearful blow, and would have cracked any ordinary man's skull. But Umlosi was not fatally hurt. He staggered back with a great gasp, and then his foot slipped over the edge of the wall and he fell headlong to the ground beneath.

His fall was the signal for a fierce renewal of battle.

The enemy came swarming up, and then they were through. The New Anglians were driven back, although they fought desperately and valiantly. Score after score of the enemy swept up to the wall and slithered down the ladders. They were within the city now—and the more that swept in, the greater would be the task of driving them back.

Umlosi, fortunately for himself, had fallen against one of the ladders as he pitched over. And so, instead of dropping sheer, he had made a swift sliding descent to the ground.

These ladders were set up every few yards along the side of the wall. They had been made by the hundred in preparation for this battle. And each ladder was a great wooden structure, five or six feet wide. They were roughly, but strongly, constructed.

And down swept the enemy, shouting and bleeding.

Lord Dorrimore, from further along the wall, saw the danger. He knew that the position had been lost. This was one of the vital points of the city wall. If this fell the soldiers of St. Edmund would stream in in one vast, unbroken line.

And then the city would, indeed, be lost.

Dorrie set his teeth and ran recklessly down the nearest ladder. He found many New Anglians standing there, gazing with horrified eyes at the enemy.

"Come on, you chaps!" roared Dorrie. "We can't allow this! They've got to be driven out again! By glory! The very things we need!"

Stacked in a corner of the wall, behind a kind of stone buttress, were ten or twenty



tiny metal things—gleaming objects which looked very much like steel eggs.

Dorrie recognised them at once as a special type of hand grenade. They had been placed there by Phipps, who had now retired to have his injuries attended to. Phipps had thoughtfully put them there to be used when the big onslaught came. And these little bombs, as Dorrie well knew, were deadly in effect.

They had been brought in the Golden Rover—two or three hundred of them. For when Mr. Gray had started out on this expedition, he had provided every kind of modern weapon and other methods of warfare. For he had not known what dangers lay within the strange country he was going to explore. And the inventor-explorer believed in being well prepared for all emergencies. His forethought was now proving to be of great use.

"Now we'll see!" roared Dorrie.

He dashed at the little pile of hand grenades and recklessly picked up half-a-dozen. There was a little metal catch on each of them. The jerking of this would immediately set the thing in action. He raised one aloft and clicked the metal trigger over.

Whizz!

He sent it hurtling in among the enemy troops, who were now coming down the ladders in scores, for the resistance at the top of the wall had completely failed. Many New Anglians had fallen.

Cra-a-sh!

The explosion was short, sharp and devastating. It seemed to split the very ears, and in the centre of the invaders a blinding sheet of flame appeared, to be instantly followed by a cloud of smoke.

Men fell by the dozen, for these little bombs were terribly powerful. At least six of the enemy were killed outright and a dozen others fell, badly wounded. Many more were dazed by the shock.

Whizz! Whizz!

Dorrie flung two more of the bombs.

The explosions were short and sharp again. And now these members of the enemy who had penetrated the city walls scattered in every direction. They were frightened out of their lives by this method of warfare. Dorrie didn't exactly like using the grenades, for they seemed too murderous. But with the situation so acute he could do nothing else.

As the enemy scattered they were met by dozens of the defenders. Short fights followed, the clash of swords and the thud of clubs. And in less than ten minutes all the St. Edmund troops were beaten.

The position was restored. And Dorrie, swiftly mounting the wall, hurled three bombs in quick succession at the wooden structure—the sloping gangway. Those bombs destroyed it, they converted the whole affair into a mass of wreckage. And the invaders retreated in disorder.

Lord Dorrimore took a deep breath.

"Well, that's the first scrap!" he exclaimed, brushing some blood away from his cheek. "Good! We've beaten the blighters hollow! An' now we'll go an' have a look at poor old Umlosi! I'm afraid he's whacked."

But Umlosi wasn't. He was recovering rapidly, and he was filled with a great rage. By all appearances Umlosi was ready for a lot more fighting yet.

It had been a very near shave, but the position was now fully restored. Were the other defenders faring as well along the walls?

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE ENEMY BREAKS THROUGH!



"BEGAD!" said Sir Montie Tregellis-West. "That was frightfully near, dear old boys—it was, really! I thought things were goin' to be awfully bad. But it's all serene now."

"For the time being—yes!" agreed Reggie Pitt.

"Good old Dorrie!"

"Hurrah!"

"Three cheers for the defenders!"

"Hurrah—hurrah!"

The juniors on the great balcony of the clock tower made up for their inactivity by letting their voices ring. They couldn't take any part in the fighting, but they could certainly see it, and they could also encourage the defenders by their cheers.

At least, they thought so—but their voices could not be heard amid the clash of battle. They were thoroughly excited by now—watching the whole panorama of fighting from every quarter of the city walls.

And it was, indeed, a fierce, invigorating spectacle.

I was quite fascinated by the whole thing, and watched with bated breath. The very uncertainty of the affair made it all the more entrancing. If the defence held good we should be safe. But if the defence failed it would probably mean death for us.

For King Jasper, flushed with victory, would seize us all, and would take a kind of horrible delight in putting us to death. On one occasion, when Handforth had fallen into the hands of the St. Edmund troops, the enemy king had given instructions for Handforth's head to be chopped off! Handy, with his usual luck, had escaped from this unpleasant ordeal.

But if we all fell into King Jasper's hands, we should get no mercy. This was why we watched the battle with such enthralling interest. Our anxiety can be imagined as we watched that fight on the northern wall, when Dorrie only just succeeded in recovering the position.

It was little wonder that the fellows cheered themselves nearly hoarse.



But the excitement was not yet over, the greatest thrill of all was to come.

The battle had now started on the western wall. Nelson Lee was dealing with a situation very similar to that which Dorrie had had to cope with. Another of those great wooden structures was brought up. Hundreds of men surged forward, and soon the thing was in position.

And the fight raged madly.

But here King Arthur himself was in command—for Nelson Lee had retired further along the western wall to another section—where danger threatened. The king was fighting with a kind of inspired enthusiasm.

And all the men about him caught the same fever. The St. Edmund troops—trained men, one and all—found these volunteers to be absolutely unconquerable. Most of the defenders had never handled a weapon of war in their lives. But under the influence of their fighting king, they went into battle with fearless energy and undying determination.

In fact, so fiercely did they fight that King Jasper's men were forced back—back all the time. And this wooden gangway, instead of providing means for the enemy to sweep up, really proved a bridge for the defenders to sweep down!

They meant business in real earnest. And the battle was now taking place beyond the city walls. In this particular section the St. Edmund soldiers were beaten back. There was no question about the way in which the fight was going. The enemy were getting the worst of it.

They had come full of confidence, expecting to find little or no resistance. Instead, the capital was in a state of arms—with every able-bodied man ready and bubbling with eagerness to fight.

So, in a way, the invaders' calculations were all at sea.

Nelson Lee was like a man possessed. As he fought, he directed operations. Hundreds of men followed his instructions to the letter. And many members of the enemy troops were cut off or cornered. And scores were taken prisoner. For Nelson Lee was trying in every way possible to avoid bloodshed. Instead of killing, he captured.

We could see all this from the tower—and we watched, held in a kind of trance. And then, suddenly, Tommy Watson clutched at my arm.

"Look over there!" he panted.

I gazed over towards the eastern wall. Here everything was quiet. Major Barrance could be clearly seen pacing up and down on the top of the wall, sword in hand. He was eager and anxious to move to the scene of the fighting. But, although his own section was quiet, he could not leave it.

At first I could not see what Tommy Watson meant.

But then, as I watched intently, I discovered the reason for his agitation. Major Barrance had paused for a moment, and was

standing quite still, staring out across the grassland towards a big clump of trees. The country beyond was rather hidden from him.

But we, from our elevated position, could see that large numbers of enemy troops were gathering there. And we knew that Barrance would be quite active. For a third big thrust was being prepared against the city—and this time the full brunt of it would fall upon the eastern wall.

It was far removed from Nelson Lee's own section—and, indeed, quite a long way from Dorrie, in the north. If the invaders cut a way through where Major Barrance had command, the fat would be in the fire. But there had never been any real fear that this would happen.

But I could see that things were developing dangerously.

And the most immediate peril was at hand. For two men—two volunteer defenders—were walking up behind Major Barrance as he stood there. And we could see that their heavy clubs were upraised.

So long as the major was in command all would be well—Nelson Lee knew this. For Barrance was an experienced soldier, and could be well trusted to keep the position.

"They—they're going to knock him down!" gasped Tommy Watson.

"No!" I said tensely. "It can't be possible! They're New Anglians—they would not turn on him—Oh, my hat!"

I broke off, holding my breath. For at that second the two men raised their clubs. They were, indeed, traitors! Paid spies, probably, and members of the St. Edmund secret service! King Jasper did not do things by halves, and he had been preparing for this campaign for years. New Anglia was swarming with enemy agents, and it was difficult to pick them out.

Just as the blows were about to fall we yelled with all our might. For the other juniors had now seen the peril. We gave one great warning shout—but this, of course, was useless.

Barrance was nearly a couple of miles away from us. From our height, and in the clear air we could see things distinctly. We expected him to fall, with his skull broken in.

But, at the crucial moment, he half-turned—possibly he suspected something. But one blow missed him, and the other struck him a glancing blow on the head, the full force striking his shoulder.

He fell—stunned. But, undoubtedly, his life had been saved by that half turn. He lay there, inert. And the two spies brutally kicked him out of the way. We saw the major pitch down from the top of the wall—to fall upon the roof of a low cottage which was built quite near. He struck the sloping thatch—for, fortunately, the roof was not tiled—and rolled to the ground. There was more than a chance that he had not suffered any fatal injuries.

On the wall-top the two spies were now fighting against their own men. They were battling against the New Anglians—and



they were New Anglians themselves. It was short and swift. The pair were slain after a few moments, and their lifeless bodies were pitched down.

They had paid the penalty of their treachery—but the damage was done.

All the volunteers in this section were without a leader. With Major Barrance helpless, the defenders were absolutely at sea. And we noticed that two men far beyond the wall had suddenly started running back.

They had been watching—and they had seen the whole incident—and they were now taking the news back to their commander.

He acted with precision and swiftness.

Here was a chance to get through—a chance that might not occur again. And in a few moments a great column of men moved forward at the double. And a third of those great gangway structures came into view. It was rushed forward towards the wall. In a few moments it would be in position—and then King Jasper's troops would get through.

I knew it. They would sweep into the city in one great wave, beating all they came in contact with. For we could now see that the army in the rear was the biggest one of all.

This was Jasper's master stroke.

While his other troops were fighting along the other walls he had rushed this big army up on a section which was supposed to be quiet. We could tell by the very numbers engaged that the result would be fatal.

With Barrance helpless, the defenders were leaderless, and would never withstand the shock. The fall of the city seemed inevitable, and I clutched at the rail in front of me as I watched—as I pictured the result.

These troops would swoop in—and they would swarm upon Dorrie and Nelson Lee from the rear. The fight could not be long. It would be short and swift—and then would come absolute defeat.

I clutched at Reggie Pitt.

"Look here, I'm going!" I panted. "I'm going to rush like mad to the gov'nor and warn him of this new development. There's only one thing to be done—they'll all have to retreat to the central square and defend the Rover."

"Just what I was thinking!" gasped Pitt. "I'll come with you!"

I made no demur. And a moment later we were both tearing down the stairs within the cathedral tower. We rushed down as we had never rushed before, and when we reached the square, we raced across and took no notice of the protests of the citizens who were on guard.

Everything depended upon speed.

We didn't care what happened so long as we got to Lee and Dorrie. And at one of the forked roads we parted company—Pitt dashing off to warn Lord Dorrimore, and I continuing straight on towards the West Wall.

Should we be in time to avert a catastrophe.

## CHAPTER IV.

### TOUCH AND GO!



THE battle was raging fiercely on the western wall.

Nelson Lee was directing his men and fighting with all his strength.

Just before arriving I had stared back, and I had seen the figures of Watson and the others high up on the balcony of the clock-tower. Just before darting away we had told them to wave their handkerchiefs if the enemy broke through.

And now, as I looked, I saw that the figures were still.

"Thank goodness!" I gasped. "The brutes haven't smashed through yet!"

I ran up one of the many ladders and in a few moments I was by Nelson Lee's side. He was looking hot and somewhat dishevelled, but a very picture of calmness and alert determination. He looked at me angrily.

"What's the meaning of this, Nipper?" he snapped. "Go back at once——"

"Hold on, sir!" I exclaimed tensely. "I've come to warn you!"

"What do you mean?"

"Over on the eastern wall!" I said, gripping his arm. "Two of the New Anglians struck Barrance down—the rotten traitors! And the biggest attack of all is developing in that quarter! I believe the enemy will break through—and they'll come in hundreds!"

Nelson Lee clenched his fist.

"By James!" he said between his teeth. "Now I understand! For the last twenty minutes the attack here has been getting weaker and weaker—the invaders have been vanishing by the score! They have been withdrawn—in order to join the other army on the eastern wall!"

"That's it, sir!" I exclaimed. "They're being sent round as reinforcements—and the enemy will sweep through in one great swarm. I've arranged with the chaps on the tower to wave their handkerchiefs if the wall is taken! Thank goodness they haven't waved yet——"

"They are waving now," interrupted Nelson Lee grimly.

"By Jove!" I gasped. "So they are!"

Far away, on that high balcony, a few tiny white spots had appeared, floating up and down. They were handkerchiefs—being whirled about by the juniors. And this was the signal!

"It means that the St. Edmund rotters have got through, sir!" I exclaimed tensely.

"Oh, my hat! And it won't be merely a temporary breach, but a terrible catastrophe. From the eastern wall there's a clear way right through the central square!"

Nelson Lee nodded and stood rigid.

"What are you going to do, sir?" I asked quickly.

"Wait!" said Lee curtly. "Wait!"



I knew that he was making a decision. And it was up to him to come to that decision swiftly—without a second's hesitation. It was one of those moments when a general has to take a big step. He may be wrong—and disaster will follow. And there was no time for careful thought.

Nelson Lee looked at me hard.

"Good lad!" he said crisply. "You've done well, Nipper—this may mean all the difference between disaster and victory. We shall retreat!"

"Into the central square, sir?"

"Yes!"

And without another word Nelson Lee turned away from me, and then he proceeded to rap out numbers of sharp, crisp orders. It was impossible to misunderstand

From the very start it was orderly and well managed. Word had been quickly sent to Lord Dorrimore that he was to withdraw his men also. But Dorrie, acting upon Pitt's information, had already commenced to retreat. The advice from the gov'nor was not necessary.

The retreat, although orderly, was very swift.

And in a short time the defenders were streaming through the streets, all making in the one direction of the great central square. I knew how anxious Nelson Lee was. For, if the enemy had reached the square first, it was possible that the Golden Rover was already captured. And the first act of King Jasper's troops would be to wreck the airship beyond repair.



**Z-r-r-r-r-h! The machine-gun rattled and roared. The fire swept the enemy ranks like a devastating hail.**

him or to disobey. When the gov'nor really got going he was like a bunch of electricity.

King Arthur nearly broke down when he realised that retreat was necessary.

He hated to think that these enemy troops were to be allowed to enter the city. So far, they had been kept out—and there was no telling what damage they would cause once they swarmed within the walls.

But, as Nelson Lee pointed out, the enemy had gained admittance already. They were sweeping through the breach in the defence like a flood through the gates of a lock. And unless a retreat was instantly made we should all be overwhelmed in that flood of enemy soldiery.

We should be cut off—hemmed in, and compelled to surrender. The finest policy of all was to beat a masterly retreat and take up a firm, last position in defence of the central square, the cathedral, the public buildings, and the palace.

We could, at least, hope to protect the chief parts of the capital:

And so the retreat commenced.

It was, indeed, touch and go.

Nelson Lee and I were among the first to arrive. And at the very same moment we became aware of tremendous conflict on the other side of the great open space. We could see figures dashing about—figures struggling. We could see clubs raised and swords flashing.

"They're on us, sir!" I shouted.

There was no doubt about it. The enemy hordes had reached the centre of the city. They had swept through the streets in one rush, beating down all attempts at opposition. And now they were swooping into the square itself.

Even as we entered on the western side, the soldiers of St. Edmund burst through on the eastern side. They had made short work of the volunteers who were guarding the streets in that direction.

I was rather appalled by the numbers engaged.

And then, suddenly, a well-known sound broke out.

Zrrrrrrh! Zrrrrrr!



"Hurrah!" I roared. "It's the machine-gun!"

"Thank Heaven!" muttered Nelson Lee.

I was right. The machine gun was barking out its vicious message of death. A hail of bullets was hurtling across into the ranks of the enemy. And there, moving forward with the gun, were Mr. Raymond Gray and Jock McGregor. They operated the instrument of war as they advanced.

At the last moment the inventor had repaired the gun—had got it into going order. Zrrrrh!

The machine-gun rattled and roared.

And King Jasper's soldiers fell in every direction. The fire was of a sweeping nature, and the bullets were being sent into the enemy ranks like a devastating hail.

To advance in the face of such opposition was deadly.

And the enemy halted, paused irresolute, and then commenced a disorderly retreat. There were dead and dying lying everywhere. The air was filled with the screams of the wounded. And then, in a quick glance of understanding, Mr. Gray ceased fire.

He could see that Nelson Lee had arrived with hundreds of defenders. The machine-gun had done its work for the moment—it was no longer necessary. But for that gun, the enemy hordes would have swept into the square, and seized the Rover. But now all was well.

"Hurrah!"

It was a wild cheer from the great clock.

"They're beaten—they're whacked!"

"Hurrah!"

"Three cheers for New Anglia!"

"Go it, ye cripples!"

"Hurrah!"

The enthusiasm was tremendous. It had spread to the defenders themselves, and they were shouting wildly with excitement and the fury of the battle. The whole conflict had reached a pitch which aroused both defenders and attackers to a state of absolute frenzy.

And these peaceful New Anglians, who had not known warfare, and who were untrained, dashed headlong across the square with the determination of war veterans. They simply hurled themselves against the enemy ranks, with swords flashing, and clubs whirling.

The fighting strain was showing itself in the blood of these men. Lying dormant for generation after generation, it was now appearing in all its glory. And the New Anglians were like a people possessed. They were fighting for the safety of their capital—their very king!

And as they swept upon the enemy, they were irresistible.

The clash of the two forces meeting was tremendous. The whole square was filled with shouts and yells and shrieks and groans. The noise rose and fell in an extraordinary way.

And I watched, fascinated.

But the best view of all was obtained from the high balcony. There the juniors clung to the railings, positively gripping themselves with intense excitement. It was altogether too wonderful to be true.

The blood coursed hotly through their veins. They wanted to be in the thick of it all—but, at least, this was the next best thing. To watch it—to see every ebb and flow of the conflict.

And there could be no doubt that the New Anglians were winning.

That great charge was one of the finest pieces of work any battle has created. It was a kind of second edition of the famous charge of the light brigade. The odds were all against the defenders, for the enemy were in greater force.

But so fierce and determined was the attack—and so demoralised had the St. Edmunds become, after the machine-gun fire, that they found it impossible to resist the onslaught.

The New Anglians swept into the St. Edmund ranks. They cut their way clean through. Every street in the eastern vicinity of the square was a struggling mass of humanity. Men were lying in all directions, and blood flowed freely. As in all battles, death and injury went hand in hand.

But the citizens were grim and merciless.

They meant to throw these invaders out. If they failed now, the men of St. Edmund would win—and winning would mean slavery and degradation for the whole kingdom of New Anglia.

Once King Jasper and his rascally men were in charge, the bonds of slavery would be fastened upon this country. And so they fought as men had never fought before. And so great was their enthusiasm—so enormous their strength—that they achieved far more than they had even hoped.

Nelson Lee was staggered by the whole scene.

The leadership had been taken out of his hands—in fact, there was no chance for him to do a thing. King Arthur, at the head of his troops, was leading the attack.

Nelson Lee had intended making certain movements with the men—but he had had no opportunity of getting these movements into operation. He was left stranded, for the fiery enthusiasm of the New Anglians was beyond all bounds. They needed no urging. They were filled with a wild heroism that sent them onwards to do deeds of valour and bravery that were totally unsuspected.

The enemy was not only hurled out of the square, but they were sent fleeing along the streets in every direction. Their sudden retreat—so unexpected after their initial success—demoralised them. It became a wild rout.



And up on the balcony, the juniors could see the progress of the whole affair quite clearly.

The St. Edmund soldiers were dashing towards the walls like mad—their only thoughts being of escape. On their heels came the yelling, enraged volunteers. Now that they had the upper hand, they gained courage enormously. They were like men possessed with treble strength.

And it was here that Nelson Lee suddenly received a brain wave.

He knew the direction the fleeing troops were taking—and he could see that, owing to the formation of the streets, they would have to escape at the northern wall.

There were still hundreds of defenders sweeping in from all parts of the city. And Nelson Lee turned upon them.

In clear, ringing tones, he urged them to follow him. His object was to take a short cut, and take the enemy by surprise before they could reach the wall. In this way, the whole enemy forces would be trapped—and captured.

The volunteers needed no urging.

Once they understood, they were only too willing to follow Nelson Lee. And in a few seconds they were dashing away with every ounce of speed of which they were capable.

And in a comparatively short time they had reached the city walls. They could hear the shouts and the clash of battle coming down the other streets. And then the troops of St. Edmund appeared in sight.

They were running like men possessed of sheer panic. And as they fled from their pursuers, they cast aside their helmets, their armour, and their equipment. Their one thought was to get away.

But their retreat was cut off!

For in front of them, along every street, came scores and scores of New Anglian volunteers.

The result was inevitable.

To fight was impossible, since they had no weapons. And, in any case, they had no stomach left for battle. This section of King Jasper's army had had enough. Expecting an easy task, they had found themselves up against a terribly stiff proposition. And their fighting stamina was not equal to the occasion.

With upraised hands, they shrieked for mercy.

And within the next half-hour, over two hundred St. Edmund soldiers were captured, and marched away, prisoners. A few escaped. These took good care to get out of the city as quickly as possible.

And the breach in the wall was restored.

Without any question, the New Anglians had turned an apparently hopeless defeat into a rousing victory. The first victory of the conflict was for the defenders. The enemy was momentarily routed!

## CHAPTER V.

### IN THE NICK OF TIME!



**B**UT it was not long before King Jasper's generals appreciated the position. Instead of despairing, and withdrawing men, they sent them dashing against the city defences with renewed ferocity.

The defenders were allowed no respite.

In three sections, the enemy battalions charged, and made desperate attempts to smash through once again. Fresh troops were brought up for this work. But so capable was the defence, that the men of St. Edmund were kept at bay.

But it was a terrible conflict.

And it simply could not last for long. The armies were well matched now, and the odds, if anything, were in favour of the citizens. But then news of the most grave order arrived.

Nelson Lee was talking with Lord Dorrimore in the central square. They were having a brief respite. Indeed, it seemed that their work was over. The New Anglians were now capable of dealing with matters themselves.

Having been shown the way to fight—having been instructed in the grim business—they were now entering into the battle with heart and soul. Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore were not really required.

Umlosi had been brought in, and so had Major Barrance. Both were bruised and battered, but not seriously injured. The major, bandaged, and feeling rather weak, was now within the Golden Rover, tucked away in bed.

His head had been badly gashed, and in his fall to the ground he had crocked an ankle, and rendered himself quite incapable of further fighting. He was absolutely furious, for he had been anxious to continue.

Umlosi was continuing. Nothing would keep him out of the fight. But, unlike the major, his feet and ankles were secure. Only his head had suffered—and Umlosi's head, in many respects, resembled a chunk of seasoned oak. It was very difficult to crack it, and it was as hard as granite.

He had dashed off to the attack once more, taking his faithful spear with him. There was not much fear of him meeting with any big disaster. Being absolutely fearless, he didn't care—and he could look after himself.

The news which arrived was disquieting.

Two special runners had come in from the surrounding country. They had managed to get through the enemy lines. And one of them, breathless and panting, halted before Nelson Lee and saluted.

"I bring thee tidings from without, my lord!" he exclaimed, breathing hard.

"Speak on, my friend!" said Nelson Lee.

"The accursed troops of the enemy are



gathering for the biggest attack of all!" said the runner. "Vast reinforcements are coming from beyond the great dividing wall. Every available man from St. Edmund has been called to the fight—and five hundred strong are now dashing towards our city!"

"That will about put the lid on things!" said Dorrie.

"Are these men near?" asked Nelson Lee quickly.

"Ay, my lord, they are within an hour's march of our gates!" replied the scout.

"'Tis ill news I bring—and methinks 'twill be defeat for our cause. Never can we withstand such a terrible onslaught!"

"Go!" said Nelson Lee. "Seek out your king, and tell him of this. In the meantime, I will do my best to think out a scheme. We can but do our utmost, in any case."

The man hurried off, and Nelson Lee turned to Dorrie.

"Five hundred fresh troops!" he exclaimed. "This is bad!"

"Five hundred don't amount to many—"

"Man alive, you don't understand!" interrupted Lee. "It's all very well to regard such a number as insignificant—but the New Anglians are fighting in a kind of frenzy now, and they are only just managing to keep the enemy at bay. That frenzy cannot last for long—a reaction is bound to come."

"I suppose you're right."

"It will come," went on Lee. "And then Jasper's men will hurl themselves into the city once again. And with these additional five hundred troops there can be no question of result. No matter how brave and determined the defenders may be, they will never be able to withstand such a determined onslaught."

"You think the city will fall?"

"Yes—unless we can do something to prevent the disaster," replied the gov'nor.

"King Jasper is risking all in one throw of the dice. This will be either complete success or dire defeat. He is a clever man—he knows that he has only this one chance. And the odds are with him."

"Yes, you're on the mark!" agreed Dorrie, gripping his fists. "If these reinforcements arrive soon, they'll turn the tide. An' when the defenders are swept back again they'll never have a chance of repeating their first performance. They'll crumple up!"

"That is what I am afraid of," said Lee. "We cannot expect miracles, Dorrie. Up till now they have done wonders—but there is a limit."

Dorrie nodded.

"Then what's to be done?" he asked. "I don't want to be pessimistic, or anythin' like that, but it seems to me things are beginnin' to look rotten. Just as I was kiddin' myself

that everythin' was all serene. As soon as these rotters arrive the city will fall!"

"I cannot help believing so."

"What about the machine-gun?"

"It will do much damage—and, at a pinch, we may perhaps rely upon it to protect the Rover," replied Nelson Lee. "That, indeed, is our last hope. We will mount the machine-gun upon the Rover's deck. And with the aid of this, and our revolvers, we might succeed in keeping the enemy hordes at bay even after they have taken the city."

"By gad, you've given me hope again!" said his lordship. "You mean, we'll hold the brutes off until the repairs are effected?"

"Yes."

"But wouldn't it be a good idea to take a leaf out of their book?" asked Dorrie keenly. "Instead of waitin' for them to come up, why shouldn't we slip out by the back way, so to speak, carry the machine-gun with us—to say nothin' of a few hundred volunteers. Then we'll engage the enemy reinforcements before they really arrive at the walls."

Nelson Lee shook his head.

"The suggestion is excellent in many ways, but I do not think it would be of much service here, Dorrie," he said.

"You know best, of course," said Dorrie. "Don't mind me. If it's a rotten scheme, say so. I'm all right when it comes to a scrap—but thinkin' things out isn't exactly in my line."

"You are not quite so helpless as you try to make out, old man!" smiled Nelson Lee. "But, you see, we can't afford any volunteers. If we took a few hundred away to embark upon this adventure—well, we might succeed in holding these reinforcements back—but the depleted defenders, in the meantime, would suffer defeat. So what would be the good of our work?"

"Well, of course, puttin' it like that makes all the difference," said Dorrie. "But what do you suggest as an alternative? It seems pretty rotten for us to stand here—"

"I think, Mr. Lee, that we can risk it!"

They turned, and found that Mr. Raymond Gray had come up. The inventor was grimy from head to foot. His eyes were heavy, his cheeks hollow—but he looked triumphant. He had had no sleep for two nights, and had hardly had time for eating. He had worked continuously.

"We can risk it?" repeated Nelson Lee.

"Exactly," said the owner of the Golden Rover. "A few hours ago I decided that the situation was so acute that we dared not complete the repairs to my full satisfaction. So I've patched the Rover up. Her wing is by no means perfect, but I think she will take to the air."

"What!" shouted Dorrie. "She's ready?"

"I think so—although it would be something of a risk," replied Mr. Gray. "Once we are up, all will be well. The chief danger will be in getting off the ground. If



we succeed in rising above the houses, then we need have no further fear."

Nelson Lee's eyes gleamed.

"I had no idea of this!" he exclaimed.

"I understood that the Rover would not be ready until to-morrow, at the earliest."

Mr. Gray smiled.

"I thought so, too," he said. "But I have changed my plans. Instead of making a thorough job of the work, I have resorted to patchwork. It is a dreadful botch, but all the controls are perfect, and the ship will undoubtedly answer with her usual facility."

"There will be no danger of a collapse in mid-air?"

"None whatever," replied the inventor.

"I can safely assure you of that, Mr. Lee. Upon the whole, I think we had all better get on board. It would be most unwise to leave the boys behind. It will be far safer to take them away, and chance whether we rise in safety."

Nelson Lee nodded.

"Yes, we must certainly take them with us," he said. "It would be unwise in the extreme to leave them behind. I would rather risk an accident than allow the juniors to face the danger of a possible enemy victory. But when shall we be able to get off, Mr. Gray?"

"Within half an hour!"

The very unexpectedness of this announcement made it all the more welcome. We had all been anticipating that the Rover would have to be defended—that she would be unable to move from her present position, even if the enemy troops broke into the city again.

I heard the news at once, for I came up to the gov'nor with Reginald Pitt. And we found ourselves looking up at the Golden Rover. She seemed immensely huge in this square.

A great, towering mass of gleaming yellow metal. Her huge body, with the many windows, was unharmed. The enormous propellers had not been touched by that exploding bomb which had caused the original disaster.

Only one wing-tip had suffered—this had been shattered with such completeness that all hope of flying had been at an end. But now the damaged wing was beginning to look more like a real wing. It was botched up, as Mr. Gray had said, but seemed serviceable.

Later, when this tense time was over, there would be ample opportunity to make the repair good.

But as long as the machine was flying, all would be well.

The great danger was that the accident had upset the Rover's balance. There would be no peril whatever if the great aircraft was standing in the open country, with plenty of air space.

But here she was compelled to rise abruptly, in order to clear the many high buildings. And anything which was inclined

to upset her balance might cause her to swoop round and graze one of the buildings. If that took place, disaster would be swift and certain.

But a chance had to be taken.

"Are we going up, sir?" I asked eagerly.

"Yes, my boy."

"Oh, ripping!" I said gladly. "Do you mean all of us?"

"Yes, every one!" replied the gov'nor.

"I think the risk of going up in this aircraft will be a great deal less than the risk of remaining on the ground. And of two evils, it is always best to choose the lesser. I have every confidence in Mr. Gray, and I am certain that he will get us into the air without mishap. And then—and then——"

"King Jasper will get his punishment!" said Dorrie calmly.

"In the neck!" I added, grinning. "Oh, great! Shall I rush and tell the others, sir?"

"Good gracious, yes!" said Nelson Lee.

"They are up in the tower, I believe?"

"Most of them," I replied.

"Then hurry away and fetch them down."

I went off rapidly, and Nelson Lee mounted the short ladder and entered the great, cool body of the aircraft. He glanced into the saloon, and found that it was solely occupied by Archie Glenthorne. He was lounging elegantly in one of the easy-chairs. He nodded amiably.

"What ho!" he observed. "What ho! How goes it, sir? I mean to say, what price the old battle, and all that?"

"The battle is raging fiercely, my boy," said Nelson Lee. "But it is quite possible that we shall miss it, for the Golden Rover will soon be soaring into the air."

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "That is, what? Soaring, and so forth? But, dash it all, the old 'bus is rather wrecked, if you know what I mean! Huge chunks of damage to the old wing department, and what not!"

"The wing has been temporarily patched up," put in Lord Dorrimore. "So you'd better look alive, young man. There'll be plenty of bustle pretty soon, an' we can't have you lollin' about all over the place!"

"Absolutely not!" said Archie. "I mean to say, dash it all! Lolling about, what? Not exactly, old bean! As a matter of fact, I was simply indulging in a pretty decent assortment of winks! That is to say, the old dreamless, don't you know!"

"Lazy young rascal!" said Dorrie.

"I mean to say, pretty terse," said Archie, adjusting his eyeglass. "To be absolutely frank, old darling, I've been making a kind of tour into dreamland. Absolutely! And I saw a somewhat huge chappie about fifteen feet high, with a large variety of legs. And the blighter, don't you know, grabbed the Golden Rover in about fifteen different places and——"

"My dear kid, I don't want to hear about your nightmares!" said Dorrie. "I'm dyin'!"



for a wash—an' now I come to think of it, I haven't tasted any grub for about fifteen hours. It's time somethin' was done in the matter. I shall have to beard Snowball in his lair."

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "Snowball is a most priceless cove. His face is always divided into two black chunks by a somewhat enlarged smile. A really cheerful chappie, if you know what I mean. And he's been preparing grub for the very deuce of a time."

"Good man!" said Dorrie. "There'll be tons to eat when we've got time."

"Quite possible, old bird," said Archie. "But, as it were, there is a slight doubt. I mean to say, Fatty Little is absolutely on the job. For about five weeks he's been hovering about in the old offing, grasping at sundry odds and ends. And, dash it all, the fat chappie has positively enlarged like a bally balloon! He's simply bulging, and all that sort of rot!"

Fatty Little appeared for himself just then, and Dorrie could see that he was certainly one or two sizes larger. A few crumbs adorned his waistcoat, and there was a fat look of satisfaction upon his face. Fatty Little had been improving the shining hour.

What did it matter to him about battles? What concern was it whether the city fell, or whether it didn't fall? He was here amid all the grub—with nobody else to assist him. He had been having the time of his life.

But there were other matters to attend to—grim matters.

The fellows began trooping in. I had fetched them down from the balcony—and they brought the news that huge bodies of enemy soldiers were appearing quite near to the city walls. They were concentrating for a big attack.

There was some difficulty in finding Umlosi. And when he was found he had to be literally dragged towards the Rover. He had no desire to go into the air. He wanted to stay behind and fight.

But Dorrie's wish was a command, and he reluctantly obeyed.

And so, well within the half-hour, the entire crew of the Golden Rover had gathered together. We were all there. There were no missing members. And then everything was ready for the attempt.

All the juniors gathered in the saloon—excited and eager.

Although they were famished with hunger, they didn't even think of food. They wanted to see if the Rover would be able to get up. I was an exception, for I was

allowed to be on the airship's upper deck, with Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore.

The machine-gun was mounted fairly in the centre of the deck—clamped down so that it was quite firm, and could swivel about in all directions. But it was so fixed that under no circumstances could an accident occur, and the bullets sent into the whirling propellers.

Mr. Gray was down in the navigating chamber. Jock McGregor and the mechanic were in the engine-room. They were nearly falling with exhaustion—for they had worked untiringly ever since the explosion. They had had no sleep, and practically no food. They were heroes.

But now, in spite of their fatigue, they were ready for anything.

And Mr. Gray, from the navigating chamber, rang the telegraph.

Jock at once set the engines going at full speed. They hummed with power and tremendous force. And the great aircraft commenced moving gracefully forward. The big square was all cleared in readiness for the attempt.

"Will she do it, sir?" I asked tensely. "Yes!" said Nelson Lee quietly. "She must!"

And then, even as I held my breath, the Golden Rover left the ground. She bumped slightly, rose again, and then mounted steeply into the air—so steeply that if she once lost way, and stalled, she could never be recovered in time. It was a big risk to take.

But it had to be taken in order to clear the buildings.

And with the engines working at their utmost capacity, the Rover swooped upwards.

I saw that Nelson Lee was anxiously watching the damaged wing. If that held, all would be well.

The rough repair had the effect of increasing the resistance, for the perfect streamline of the wing was partially destroyed. And in a huge aircraft of this kind, even minor details would sometimes upset the whole equilibrium. Our flight was a big chance.

I noticed that the Rover was tilting slightly—and this was caused by the damaged wing, for it affected the balance. However, it was only slight, and certainly not sufficient to bring disaster.

And then, when it seemed certain that we should dash full tilt into the high tower of the cathedral, the great aeroplane banked round steeply and sharply—and, indeed, dangerously.

But it was the only way.

We skimmed through a space between two of the buildings, one wing-tip missing the stonework by less than six feet. And then, a moment later, we were above the danger zone—we mounted higher and higher, into the clear, unimpeded air.

We were up—and the worst was over!

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## CHAPTER VI.

## THE FINAL BATTLE!



"HURRAH!"

In the saloon, the juniors cheered enormously.

"We're up—we're up!"

"She's flying, you chaps!"

"Absolutely!" said Archie.

"The old ship is positively floating into space, and all that kind of rot! Everything, as it were, is priceless!"

"Good old Archie!"

"This means that the St. Edmund rotters will be whacked to the wide!" exclaimed Pitt delightedly. "There's no question about it, you chaps. It's a dead certainty. We're victorious!"

"Oh, good!"

"But what about some grub?" asked Fatty Little. "We haven't had a square meal for days——"

"You—you gorging glutton!" roared Handforth. "You rotter! You've done nothing but pack yourself all the time we've been fighting! We've been defeating the enemy, and you've been scoffing up the ship's supplies!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty was indignant, but it made no difference. The juniors were all light-hearted, and they laughed and joked. And in the meantime the Rover was mounting higher and higher. Presently, indeed, I was compelled to come inside with the others—for the air became too chilly to be comfortable.

Mr. Gray was a great believer in height. It was far safer up in the sky than near the ground.

We continued to fly slowly, without doing any stunting. But Mr. Gray put the Rover through a number of evolutions in order to test the repaired wing. The result was entirely satisfactory. Except for that very slight list, there was nothing wrong.

The Rover was as good as ever.

And now, instead of thinking about rest and sleep, Nelson Lee was determined to do his utmost to bring defeat upon King Jasper's forces. That was the first thing in hand.

By acting at once, the capital could be saved. We were secure, in any case. But it would have been a dirty trick to think solely of ourselves, and allow the New Anglians to fall victims to their harsh enemy.

The only thing was to take a hand—and with the Rover at our disposal, we had the means of inflicting a crushing defeat upon the invaders.

But, nevertheless, Snowball served a splendid meal. The juniors were quite ready for it. There was nothing they could do, anyhow. Now that the airship was up, they were mere spectators.

And there was no reason why they should



**Boom! Nelson Lee hurled a bomb. In every direction the enemy were running—scared, demoralised.**



not satisfy their ravenous appetites. By the way Fatty Little ate, one might have supposed that he had starved more than anybody else. How on earth he packed it away, was a wonder.

In the engine-room there was a great sliding plate in the flooring, well clear of the mechanism. This uncovered a glass observation window. And from here it was possible to see everything below the airship directly below. From the deck, and from the navigating-chamber, it was easily possible to see everything that lay ahead—but not immediately underneath.

And so this special observation window had been provided.

As the airship flew along—quite slowly—Nelson Lee and Dorrie crouched on the floor of the engine-room, staring down through the clear glass, and occasionally using binoculars. The Rover circled about slowly right over the city.

It was up at about a thousand feet.

And the whole panorama of the capital and the surrounding country was clearly visible. The sight was a most fascinating one. Tiny dots moved about the city streets, and upon the walls—and these marked the desperate defenders. Beyond the walls were clusters of moving figures. The biggest attack of all was about to commence.

The reinforcements had arrived!

And King Jasper was about to hurl his troops upon the city, in one last effort to smash through and crush the New Anglians, once and for all. But he must have despaired.

A glance into the sky was enough to bring black dismay into his evil heart. With the Rover helpless, he could have put this thing over, but with the Rover in the air it was impossible.

"I wouldn't give much for old Jasper's feelin's just now," said Dorrie calmly. "The beggar is makin' a few kindly remarks, I judge, concernin' us. He's wishin' that we were all in a very different spot to this!"

"Undoubtedly!" said Nelson Lee. "Well, we can't delay any longer. It seems that this attack is about to commence. If we leave it until too late, we shall find our task very difficult—for the two armies will be intermingled, and we cannot fire or drop bombs without the danger of hitting our friends."

"Right!" agreed Dorrie. "We'll begin the show!"

Nelson Lee sent word up to Mr. Gray, and then, with engines shut off, the graceful aircraft slipped down towards the ground. And Nelson Lee and Dorrie mounted on to the deck once more. I went with them, half-expecting to be turned off. But I wasn't.

After all, there was no danger. This was going to be a one-sided affair. The enemy had no means of bombing us—they had no

anti-aircraft guns. They would be entirely at our mercy.

And Nelson Lee decided to be humane.

He could not bring himself to slaughter these men, wretches though they were. He would give them a chance to flee—he would drop bombs on open ground in order to scare them. If that failed, other means could be adopted.

The Golden Rover descended swiftly—in a steep, terrifying dive. And then, when she was near the ground, Mr. Gray opened up the engines. We simply hurtled across the city wall, only a hundred feet up, at a speed of two hundred miles an hour. One fearful roar—one rush of wind—and we were gone.

Bocoom!

Nelson Lee hurled a bomb, and it fell just in a space where there were no enemy soldiers. But flying fragments injured eight or ten men, and others were bowled over by the shock of the explosion. In every direction men were running—scared, demoralised.

Then the Rover turned in one sweeping curve, and back she came, right over the main force of the enemy.

Boom!

Another bomb was dropped just before the crowds of soldiers were reached. They fled—utterly unable to stand against the terror of this monstrous thing from the sky. It took the heart out of them—it made them panic-stricken. They were no longer capable of continuing the battle.

King Jasper was with his troops—and he raved madly.

He swore at his officers—he cursed them—he went purple with an insane rage.

But it was useless. The officers obeyed to the best of their ability. They rushed about, trying to stem the rot. But they might just as well have attempted to push the waves of the sea back.

The men were terrified out of their wits by this danger from the heavens. They could not face such a peril. So long as they had the New Anglian troops to fight against, they were willing to obey their officers.

But with the deadly bombs dropping from the heavens, and with the danger of the machine-gun bursting into fire, they thought only of escape. Their sole desire was to get away.

And Nelson Lee was glad—he did not want to slaughter the enemy.

The New Anglian defenders were quick to seize their advantage. They could see that the appearance of the Golden Rover had made all the difference. The St. Edmund soldiers were flying.

And with remarkable decision, King Arthur took matters in hand.

He dispatched a flying column of his own troops towards the great dividing wall between the two countries. Practically the whole of his volunteer army took part in this advance.



For the king knew that Jasper's troops were now on the run, and would never return to the attack. Here was a chance to finish the battle swiftly and decisively. King Arthur, in short, meant to take the war into his rival's country.

His scheme, quickly conceived, was to crush St. Edmund, once and for all. Then, and for ever afterwards, there would be peace in this land.

King Jasper was nearly foaming at the mouth with helplessness. He gazed up at the Rover, sailing so smoothly and sedately—such an omen of terror and misery to his troops.

The king shook his fists with impotent rage. But the Rover still soared above with absolute impregnability. She was mistress of the situation, and King Jasper knew this only too well.

Again he cursed his captains. There were three or four about him—harried and worried to a point of desperation. And Jasper cursed them, reviled them, and heaped insult after insult upon their heads. He goaded them to fury.

"'Tis useless, sire!" snarled one of them, at last. "Thy words are of no avail—we cannot fight against this strange thing of the air—"

"Fool!" raved the king. "Hopeless dolt! Thy brains are of mud! Thy blood is like filthy water—"

"Have a care, your majesty!" snapped the officer. "I have suffered insult after insult, and my hand has been held. But I am nearly on the point of losing all patience. 'Tis ill to goad me further!"

"Ay!" muttered the others. "Thou art going too far, sire!"

King Jasper went purple.

"Thou wretched traitors!" he snarled. "Thou beasts of the forest! Thou art no better than insects which crawl—"

"'Tis enough!" shouted the officer angrily. "Cease thy talk, sire!"

He, himself, was purple with rage, too. And the king, without a second's hesitation, drew his sword in a flash, and buried the blade into the officer's breast. He fell with a grunting groan.

This was more than the other officers could stand.

Already foaming with rage at their monarch's words, this brutal murder was too much for them. Uncontrollable, they drew their own swords, and went for the king in one determined rush.

"Stand back, thou accursed fools!" gasped Jasper. "Wouldst strike thy king—"

"Ay, thou brute!" shouted one of the men. "Die! Thou hast been asking for death long enough! Die, thou cur!"

The king fought like mad with his own sword. But against such odds it was a hopeless battle. The sword was ripped out of his hand at last. And then blade after blade ran through him.

He fell, killed instantly.

"Thus dies a tyrant!" shouted one of the officers. "'Tis well, my comrades! We have suffered under the brutal yoke long enough!"

Like a fire in a dry forest, the news rushed through the St. Edmund troops. The king was dead! King Jasper had been killed in battle! It was not generally known that he had been slain by his own officers.

But the effect was disastrous.

For years the St. Edmund soldiers had trembled under the tyranny of King Jasper. And now, in a flash, the spell was lifted.

Every atom of fighting ardour vanished from Jasper's troops. Their sole thought was to get back to their own country. They had met with defeat—dire, crushing defeat.

And the Rover was no longer required.

She had done little enough, but this was sufficient. Her very appearance in the sky had had the very moral effect which was necessary. For the knowledge that she was there, capable of dealing death, destroyed the discipline of the entire enemy force. Instead of being a trained army, they became a rabble.

And King Arthur's daring move succeeded.

His own orderly volunteers succeeded in reaching the great gap in the dividing wall long before the main bulk of the enemy. And when the latter arrived—most of them without arms—they were easily captured. But they surrendered at once, only too pleased to have the whole business over.

And now the result was quite obvious.

King Arthur would rule over the two countries. There would be no longer any need for a dividing wall. The gap would probably be converted into a big highway. But, of course, the people of St. Edmund would be ruled sternly, in order to keep them in their own place.

But, as Nelson Lee remarked to Dorrie, there was no need for us to worry our heads. It wasn't our concern. By joining actively in this trouble we had saved our own lives. If we had not taken any part in the fighting we should have fallen victims to King Jasper's insane hatred.

And so, in helping the New Anglians, we had saved ourselves.

At last the fearful excitement was over—and peace lay ahead. And we now began to think of the outer world—of England—of St. Frank's!

## CHAPTER VII.

### A STARTLING DISCOVERY!



ARCHIE GLENTHORNE gazed round approvingly.

"I mean to say, somewhat priceless, if you grasp the old trend!" he observed. "In fact, dear old

things, the scene is absolutely frightfully topping. Banners of peace, and all that sort of stuff!"



"Rather!" said Pitt. "My hat! What a difference!"

"And only a week has passed since that battle!" said Tommy Watson. "You wouldn't believe it. For the last five or six days things have been as quiet as anything, and now we're in the middle of the festivities."

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "What ho! Phipps staggers in! How goes it, old darling? You look positively enormous!"

"I feel quite fit, sir, thank you," said Phipps.

"Good!" said Archie. "Absolutely good! That, as it were, is the right material to give them! Back to the old ways, Phipps. Back to the old stuff. And before long, don't you know, we shall be soaring towards the old country!"

"I hope so, sir!" said Phipps.

We were all guests of honour at a great festival which was taking place in the banqueting hall of the king's palace. It was a rare occasion. We were the most important people present, and the juniors knew it, too.

During the past week great changes had taken place.

The warfare had come to a complete end, and the kingdom of St. Edmund had automatically become a part of the kingdom of New Anglia. And rejoicing and feasting was the order of the day.

Many had been killed and injured during the fight. But such was the joy of victory that there was nothing but gladness in all hearts.

And now had come the last day of our stay.

It was morning—quite an unusual time for a big festival. But Nelson Lee and Mr. Raymond Gray were determined to be off by noon. We had stayed long enough—far too long, in fact, and now our chief aim was to get away as quickly as possible, and to sail off to England.

During this past week the Golden Rover had been thoroughly repaired. The damaged wing was now as good as new, and the huge vessel was fit and ready for her long trip.

From the very start, we reckoned to be in England in less than a week—for when really going, the Rover could absolutely eat up the miles. And we should not pause anywhere—we should make one straight run for home. If all went well, we should do the journey in very much less than the week.

Even now the new term had started at St. Frank's long since. We should be very late. But, under the circumstances, this could not be helped. We had done our best.

And, undoubtedly, the experience had been splendid for all the juniors. We had learned far more by remaining than we should by returning to the school. At the same time, most of the chaps were thrilled at the prospect of getting back.

Adventures and excitements are all very well, but they are somewhat inclined to pan-

if one has too much of them. And now we were all longing for a sight of the old school once more. We thrilled as we thought of the Triangle, and the old clock tower, and the common room, and all the other familiar places.

But they seemed a terrible way off.

And yet distance can only be gauged by the time it takes to cover it. In the Golden Rover, the distance was a simple matter. It rather staggered us to realise that to-day was Thursday, and that by the following Tuesday we might even be in the old school.

It seemed utterly impossible. Here we were, amid the everlasting ice of the Antarctic. And yet, with modern speed machines like the Golden Rover, such enormous distances became insignificant.

I don't need to go into many details concerning the feasting and the gaiety. There were all sorts of wonderful things, including dancing, and entertainments by trained performers.

But, at last, everything was ready.

We were escorted down to the central square in state. King Arthur had urged us to remain for a month—but this was quite out of the question. But Mr. Raymond Gray promised that he would soon return.

Indeed, he had his plans cut and dried already.

The main thing was to get back to England so that all the fellows should be delivered safely at St. Frank's. Fresh supplies had to be taken on board, and the Rover needed a complete overhaul.

Mr. Gray reckoned to be in England about a month. Then, with a number of eminent scientists and explorers as passengers, he would set out again—and pay a grand visit to New Anglia.

He also had an idea of bringing away a number of the New Anglians themselves—to show them what the outer world was like. But he would not do it this trip, as the Rover was already well loaded.

On the next journey things would be different. Mr. Gray was filled with tremendous enthusiasm for the whole programme, and his one anxiety now, was to get back to England and to prepare for the big journey.

And so there was no delay in our starting off.

The Rover was not exactly in the central square, but further beyond, in a kind of big park—where there was plenty of grassland, and where the big aircraft could rise safely.

Great crowds watched our preparations for departure.

"'Tis a sorry pity that thou art leaving so soon!" exclaimed King Arthur, as he stood with Nelson Lee. "I would have thee remain much longer. For I am grateful to thee, my good friend. 'Twas thy help which saved my capital and my kingdom. Without thee I should have fallen!"

"We did the only thing possible, your Majesty," said Nelson Lee. "We could not



allow you to suffer at the hands of the St. Edmunds. Moreover, we had our own safety to think about. But it is over now."

"Ay, thank Heaven, 'tis over!" said the king. "But 'twill always be a wondrous memory in the minds of my people. And thou art going—so soon! I fear that thou wilt not return."

"Don't you worry, old man!" said Lord Dorrimore. "Mr. Lee won't return, because he's got other things to do—but I shall!"

"'Tis well!"

"You're right—'tis certainly well!" agreed Dorrie. "I've fixed it all up with Mr. Gray. We're comin' back in about a month or five weeks. You can look upon that as a dead certainty. An' we shall bring quite a number of big pots with us—so you'd better be ready."

King Arthur nodded.

"Thy words are surely true!" he said. "My nobles and myself will make great preparations for thy return. Festivities will be arranged—and when we see thy craft speeding through the air, it will be a signal for great rejoicing. Greatly would I love to see England with mine own eyes—"

"And so you shall," declared Dorrie. "That's all fixed up, too. But we can discuss matters of that kind when we return. By the way, I expect we shall bring a representative of King George's Government with us, and you'll be able to pay your respects to him."

"'Twill be a great pleasure," said King Arthur. "Ay, and 'twill be a greater pleasure to know that my own country will be allied ere long to the great Motherland."

Dorrie made no answer. He wasn't sure whether this would ever come about. For New Anglia was so isolated—so hemmed in by the surrounding ice—that ordinary intercourse was obviously impossible. In the years to come, perhaps, when tremendous airships were the order of the day, such things would be. But not yet.

And then came the actual departure.

We all got on board, and there was great cheering for us. Personally, I was rather glad when it was all over. We rose gracefully into the air, and, gazing down, we could see the streets thronged with people, all waving up to us. And it was the same out in the country. Everywhere the population was out of doors, wishing us God-speed on our homeward journey.

We could, of course, have travelled by river—for we should have to take to the water in order to get through the dank cavern which was the only exit from this mountain-surrounded basin.

But there was that tremendous wall in the way—the wall which divided St. Edmund from New Anglia. By a clever piece of engineering, the river had been forced into a great tunnel which took it right beneath this wall. The current was so swift that in this short aqueduct we should have

suffered needless danger. And so we flew overhead.

Besides, it was much quicker. Our plan was to descend at the very extremity of the valley, and take to the water just where it entered the cavern. We should then have a comparatively short trip to the outer ice.

And it had already been planned that the bulk of us should sleep during this period.

We were all feeling happy and merry now.

We had left things peaceful and quiet in this strange land, and we were homeward bound. There was a great thrill in the very thought.

Since leaving England we had had adventures galore—adventures on sea and on land. We had sojourned on a tropic isle, we had fought cannibals, and we had fought cyclones. But now all was peace. We could look forward to a swift homeward trip, and then—St. Frank's.

"And football!" I exclaimed eagerly. "Think of it, you chaps! The giddy season's started long ago!"

"I've been thinking about it for days!" said Reggie Pitt, with glittering eyes. "Goal! Off-side! Go it—"

"Dry up, you ass!" growled Handforth. "We can't have football here, so what do you want to egg us on for? By George! I'm longing for a game, too! That's only natural with a really ripping player!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

It was certainly natural in Pitt's case—for Reggie was the most wonderful footballer in all St. Frank's. And I could easily understand why he was so eager to get back to school.

We talked and talked about these subjects. But now we were descending in a long glide, and the engines were cut off.

I was just speaking when I thought I heard a peculiar rumble—something like a deep boom. But I thought it was a mistake on my part.

Nelson Lee and Dorrie, up on the deck, had no doubts about the matter.

The great mountainous cliffs which hemmed this valley in rose up to tens of thousands of feet just ahead. And below lay the river, with that black entrance to the grim cavern showing.

Lee and Dorrie were watching it. And then, as they did so, they noticed two men running like mad away from the entrance, and along the river bank. They got as far as about three hundred yards.

And then there was a blinding flash from the black tunnel—a dull, thunderous roar, and a dense cloud of murky smoke.

The rocks tumbled about like pebbles. And when the smoke cleared, there was no longer any cavern entrance. It had been destroyed! That explosion had caused the exit to become blocked!



## CHAPTER VIII.

## A DESPERATE CHANCE!



NELSON LEE gripped the rail fiercely. "The hounds!" he snapped. "Don't you understand, Dorrie? This has been done deliberately—by hotheads belonging to

Jasper's crowd! They've done this out of sheer malicious hatred."

"Yes!" said Lord Dorrimore quietly. "That's about the only explanation. It's a pretty steep business, old man. We can't get out through the cavern now—because this is the only possible means of exit."

"It means that we are doomed to remain here!" exclaimed Nelson Lee. "Can't you understand that, Dorrie? It means that our escape is cut off! This is terrible—far more terrible than we can realise during these first moments!"

The Golden Rover alighted upon the water at this moment, gently and with scarcely a splash. And now she continued to glide along the surface for a short distance. Very shortly Mr. Gray would convert her into a submarine—in readiness for her trip through the tunnel.

But that, of course, was now useless.

The news soon spread throughout the ship. The juniors certainly did not realise the awful meaning of this active hatred. For we should not be able to get out. Like the New Anglians themselves, we were doomed to remain for all time within the mountain-encircled valley.

An examination was made at once.

Nelson Lee, Dorrie, and Phipps went ashore, and they had a look at the damage at close quarters. And the first glance was quite sufficient. The entire roof of the tunnel had fallen. Not only was the opening completely blocked, but the river itself was partially diverted.

The bulk of the stream still continued to roar through, between the fallen rocks. The power of the water was stupendous. But, in spite of this, those vast boulders would never be washed away. And even if they were, others would fall. The explosion had barred the exit for ever.

And so, for a time, we lay there in the water—quite in safety, but helpless. Nelson Lee told all the fellows not to worry. He advised them to go to sleep, in accordance with the original programme.

And, as the fellows were all tired, they agreed. In a very short time the ship was slumbering, except for the men. Dorrie, Nelson Lee, Mr. Gray, and the others gathered together in the navigating-room, and had a consultation.

"Well, on the face of things, we're in a pretty rotten hole," said his lordship. "What on earth possessed these curs to bar our exit? It's done them no good, an' we're bottled up!"

"I'm afraid you are right," said Mr. Gray quietly. "The position is terribly difficult. There is no way out from this trap. We can walk through into the cavern, of course, for there is a small tunnel further to the west. But it is not possible for the Golden Rover to pass through that way."

"And to walk would be useless, since we should only find the ice beyond," said Nelson Lee. "We either go out in the Rover, or not at all. You are in charge of the vessel, Mr. Gray. What can you suggest?"

The inventor shrugged his shoulders.

"There is only one way," he said. "You know that way!"

"You mean over the mountains?"

"Yes."

"By gad!" said Dorrie. "But that's impossible."

"I'm afraid it is!" agreed Mr. Raymond Gray. "But, gentlemen, what else can we do? We do not wish to remain here—such a thing is unthinkable. We cannot allow all those youngsters to spend the rest of their lives hidden away in this obscure valley. And think of their parents—their relatives."

"Yes; we must get out," said Nelson Lee. "Do you think the Rover is capable of crossing the mountains?"

"I do not think—I know," replied Mr. Gray. "The Rover is quite capable, Mr. Lee. But can the journey be done in safety? That is the whole question. The height is appalling—for these peaks reach up higher than any other mountains I have ever set eyes upon. They are stupendous."

"That's just the trouble," said Dorrie.

"No, I beg to differ," went on the inventor. "Even the height does not worry me much—the Golden Rover is capable of such altitudes. But I am thinking of the fog—the everlasting cloud bank which surrounds these peaks. That cloud-bank probably goes up so far into the Heavens that we could never rise above it. It means, therefore, that we must rise to our utmost limit, and then fly through the clouds. And we shall stand the terrible chance of striking one of those icy peaks."

"Exactly," said Nelson Lee. "That, indeed, is the terrible peril. For we shall receive no warning—the peaks, being snow-covered and white, will be invisible until they loom up within a few feet of the Rover. A crash will be inevitable. Is it worth the risk?"

The problem was a momentous one.

"What is your opinion, Jock?" asked Mr. Gray.

The engineer removed a pipe from between his lips.

"We'll nae come to ony harm!" he said briefly.

"You think we shall do it?"

"Ay!"



Jock was one of the most silent men imaginable—he never spoke unless he was spoken to, and generally answered in the briefest of language. His quiet confidence now made the others feel confident, too.

"Well, we've got to decide," said Mr. Gray quietly. "What shall it be, my friends? A return to New Anglia, and life with these people—or a desperate bid for liberty and freedom?"

"I vote we go!" said Dorrie.

"Yes—we must!" exclaimed Nelson Lee. "Although the danger may be awful, and although we may perish, it is far better to do this than to remain in this living prison. We will go."

And so, in that quiet way, the momentous decision was made.

It was agreed that the fellows should not be awakened. If possible, it would be better to let them sleep—and get the thing over while they still slumbered. There was no sense in delay.

And the Golden Rover rose from the warm river, and then she commenced her great climb into the upper sky.

She had already done wonders at altitude tests—but it was doubtful if she would be able to break her own record now, for she was heavily loaded—and, moreover, the engines were in need of overhauling.

In the observation chamber, Nelson Lee stood at the big glass window, gazing out into the sky. He was rigid and silent. When Dorrie spoke to him, he made no reply.

For Nelson Lee's anxiety was great.

And the Golden Rover continued to rise. In great, continuous circles she went up and up. Five thousand—ten thousand—fifteen thousand—twenty thousand feet. And still she rose higher and higher.

Thousands and thousands of feet up she went. The window became covered with frost, so that it was difficult to see out. And, notwithstanding the automatic heating apparatus of the airship, the temperature became low within the great hull. For outside the air was terribly cold.

And the Rover continued to rise.

Right in front of her were the peaks—now dimly visible in the gathering mists. These mists rose upwards into the very Heavens themselves. And now something else became apparent. The vessel shook and swayed—clearly proving that up here there was a fierce, raging wind.

It amounted to a gale, and now the Rover was compelled to fight. She was still in clear air, however, and the whole country of New Anglia could be seen below—the rivers and roads looking like tiny threads—the woods and forests like mere patches. The houses were almost invisible, for they had become so small. And from below the people of New Anglia must have wondered why the Rover travelled skywards.

And then, before any on board knew it,



"Stand back, thou accursed fools!" gasped Jasper. "Wouldst strike thy king——"

a great swirling mass of cloud entirely encircled the airship. She had been in the clearest of clear air up till this minute. Mr. Gray was hardly prepared for the dash over the peaks. He attempted to get into the clear air again.

And so he went round in wide circles.

All to no purpose. The mists clung to the Rover, and she was now fighting against a gale which shook her from stem to stern. It had come so suddenly—so unexpectedly—and it proved thrilling.

Nelson Lee and Dorrie stood there, gazing out into the blank mist. They seemed helpless—they felt that at any moment they might dash headlong into some fearsome glacier.

It would soon be all over if that took place—one splintering, devastating crash—and instantaneous death for all.

If the end came, it would come quickly—and that was one mercy. The very helplessness of the whole position was enough to set the strongest man's nerves on edge. The die was cast now. There could be no drawing back. Since it was impossible to get out of this swirling cloud-bank, and the raging wind, the only thing was to stagger onwards.

It was like a nightmare.

The higher the Rover rose, the higher the gale rose, and the thicker became the clouds. But, fortunately, the great airship was still flying serenely, battling with magnificent strength against the elements.

Peaks and glaciers might have been within a mile—or they might have been within a few yards—but they could not be seen. The fog surrounded the ship like a dense blanket. It was frightful to bear.



And down below, the juniors were no longer asleep.

The very rocking of the Rover had told them that something was gravely amiss. Handforth & Co. had got up first—and after that, of course, there was no rest for any of the others.

Archie was the only fellow who remained in bed. As he explained to Phipps, there was no bally sense in getting up. He was comfortable, and if the ship got through all right—all well and good. If it didn't get through, he was just as safe in bed as anywhere else. Archie's logic was certainly sound.

But all the other juniors crowded at the saloon windows.

They stared out into the cloud-bank—unseeingly. For there was nothing within view except the dull, dismal mist. The wind shrieked through the Golden Rover's staywork. And the whole vessel quivered now and again as an extra heavy gust struck her. And at other times she would heel giddily over—only to be righted under the master hand of her pilot.

And the engines performed magnificently. With never a misfire—with never a pause—they kept up their continuous beat, sending the propellers whirling round to fight against the mighty elements of nature.

It seemed that hours had passed—and now the Rover was no longer rising. She had reached the limit. And Mr. Raymond Gray, without telling any of the others, was making his dash.

He was not travelling in circles—but, guided by the compass, was striking due north. In a very short time he was bound to get clear over the terrible barrier, or to send the great aircraft hurtling into eternity.

With rare skill, Mr. Gray was keeping his ship head to the wind. It may be thought that this was an unwise policy—that it would have been better to speed with the wind, and thus get the whole grim business over quickly.

But Mr. Raymond Gray thought differently.

By fighting against the gale, and by allowing the Rover to go at her slowest speed, the great ship was only travelling forward at a crawl. At times, indeed, she was even swept backwards, by the very force of the gale. And when she progressed she travelled at between ten and fifteen miles an hour—so great was the rush of wind.

The inventor held his vessel in a level keel, and so she went onwards—into the unknown blankness. His plan was a splendid one, for if a vast glacier loomed up ahead, there might even be time to turn the ship before the crash came. This was his reason for travelling against the wind.

But it was a nerve-trying ordeal.

Dorrie could keep silent no longer. - He

had been gazing out of the window, and he could see nothing. There was daylight percolating through the mist—a kind of drab greyness. But it was utterly impossible to see any object. The sensation was one of utter helplessness.

"Hang it all, this is getting on my nerves!" said his lordship, at length. "What's it going to be, Lee? Shall we manage it?"

Nelson Lee half turned.

"I don't know, Dorrie—I don't know," he replied quietly. "It is better not to speak. We must wait."

"Yes, but it's absolutely awful!" exclaimed Lord Dorrimore. "We simply go on, and nothin' happens. By gad! What's that?"

He started, and stared harder than ever.

It was as though a part of the very mist had become thicker. Something whitish loomed out of the greyness. And then, with a startled cry, Mr. Gray jerked the controls.

The Golden Rover reeled over and swung to starboard. Then she swooped along for a few moments, with an eddy of the wind carrying her before it.

And both Lee and Dorrie caught a glimpse of a great mountainous peak of ice. It swept by on the starboard side—not more than fifty feet distant! Then the fog enveloped everything again.

There were beads of perspiration on Dorrie's brow.

"It can't last!" he muttered. "It can't last!"

It certainly seemed impossible that the thing could go on.

It was only by the merest of shaves that the Golden Rover had escaped disaster—and then only because of the absolute quickness of her pilot's hand. He had swung the vessel out of the danger zone—but there was no telling what fresh perils lay along the new course.

But one thing was certain.

The Golden Rover was not above the great peaks. In spite of her tremendous engine power, she had been unable to rise free, so that she could soar over the mountains. The topmost peaks were higher than she was.

And a moment ago she had nearly scraped one of these icy monsters. During the next few moments she might crash down into another.

In clear air there would not be a very great deal of peril, for she would be able to fly through the gorges and to pick her course. But under the present circumstances she was obliged to go forward blindly—and with ten chances to one against her winning through.

But still she continued on—fighting for her very life, and for the lives of all those souls she carried.



CHAPTER IX.

HOMEWARD BOUND!



"DID you see it?"  
 "Yes—yes!"  
 "A—a great wall of ice!" gasped Church. "Oh, my goodness! I thought we were going to smash into it. But we didn't!"

And we're still going on! I wonder if we shall be able to get right through!"

"Of course not!" growled Handforth. "We're done!"

"You—you pessimistic bounder!" said McClure. "Ugh! Hasn't it turned chilly? I—I can't help thinking that—"

"Look!" roared Tommy Watson.

He pointed out through one of the saloon windows—but it was merely a piece of imagination. He had seen a thicker clump of mist, and took it to be another icy peak.

"I—I thought it was going to be the end of us!" gasped Watson.

"You—you ass!" said Pitt. "Scaring everybody like that!"

But it simply gave an indication of the general state of everybody's nerves. Down in the saloon they had seen that narrow escape from the peak. And now the fellows were standing at the windows, gazing out. Their hearts were in their mouths, and they half expected disaster at any second. They were not far wrong—for all the chances were in favour of a fearsome crash.

And still Nelson Lee stood at the observation window. He was not thinking of himself. All his thoughts were for the juniors—for their safety. He silently prayed that they would beat the elements in this great tussle.

And then came a terrible shock.

Without the least warning, a kind of shudder went through the whole ship—not a quiver as hitherto. This was something more definite. And there could be no doubt that the vessel had struck something.

She lost speed, and then, abruptly, she sagged completely over on one side—and came to a stop. Her propellers whirled uselessly! In some extraordinary way, she had struck, and was held firm.

"Good heavens!" gasped Mr. Gray.

He signalled quickly to the engine-room, and the propellers ceased their beating. And there lay the Golden Rover—still and silent. She was surrounded by mist—and, apparently half buried in a snow drift.

It had all happened so suddenly that nobody could quite realise what this catastrophe meant.

But one thing was certain—the Rover was fast on the top of a great glacier. In flying over, she had just scraped the snowy edge of it. Failing to clear, she had slithered along the smooth drift, and had stuck there.

This, in itself, was miraculous—and yet, after all, quite understandable. Instead of

striking head on, she had hit the very top of the mountainous ridge. If this had been hard, rocky ground, nothing could have saved her. It was snow—thick, impenetrable snow.

And when Nelson Lee and Dorrie gazed out, they could see that the snow was descending in blinding clouds. They had never seen such snow in all their lives. It was coming down like solid sheets.

And the wind howled with terrific fury.

"Well, this has just about finished it, I reckon!" said Dorrie, forcing himself to be calm. "In about ten minutes we shall be absolutely buried. Ye gods! Look at the snow! Did you ever see anythin' like it?"

Nelson Lee's teeth were set.

"Can anything be done, Mr. Gray?" he asked.

"Nothing!" replied the inventor, his whole form drooping. "Heaven knows I did my best, Mr. Lee. I imagined that we were just on the point of clearing the great ridge. On the very last lap we are defeated! It is a ghastly piece of luck for us all. But I am afraid it means the end."

Nelson Lee and Dorrie looked at one another in silent agony.

"You—you mean the boys?" asked Dorrie, at length.

"Yes—they must be told!" said Lee quietly. "I am almost sorry we did not strike in one terrible crash. This is worse than anything. For here we are—stuck here—and death will come slowly."

Just then a tiny buzz sounded, and Mr. Gray went to the telephone—which communicated with the engine-room.

"Well, Jock?" he asked dully.

And then he stood listening, his whole being becoming more erect.

"You really think there is a chance?" he asked, after a while. "But what if we only make things worse? Yes, yes—you are right! Unless we act now, it will be too late. We will try."

He turned to Lee and Dorrie.

"Jock is a man who would never give in!" he said. "He believes that we might possibly escape if we set the engines going at full speed. His idea is that we shall drag ourselves off, and commence sliding—for we are already tilted nose downwards."

"Yes, I know that," said Lee. "I thought the aeroplane's tail was sticking into the air."

"Jock does not think so," replied Mr. Gray. "He says we are on a great slope of snow—a vast hill which leads downwards."

"So we've only got to get a good start, and we shall go tobogganin' off?" asked Dorrie. "Well, that's not a bad idea. Anyhow, it's a lot better than doin' nothin'. There might be just a chance."

"It seems a slim one—although, we must do everything possible," said Lee.

As a matter of fact, the chance was not so very slim, after all. For even as the engines commenced their powerful beating, and



the propellers whirled round, the Golden Rover shivered.

She tilted further forward, and for one ghastly second it seemed that she was about to turn turtle.

But then, with a sudden lurch, she righted herself. And now she was moving slowly forward—as though pushing against some fearful resistance. It all depended upon whether she was able to keep this movement up.

Down in the saloon, the juniors had been excitedly discussing the position. Many of them were scared—and small wonder. To find the great aircraft stationary amid this snow and gale was enough to startle anybody. And now the juniors had fresh hope.

"She's off again!"

"Hurrah!"

"Oh, shall we get through?" groaned Tommy Watson. "I—I can't stand this suspense, you know!"

"We're going faster!"

There was no question about it.

The Golden Rover, as though seized by some sudden impulse, was sweeping downwards now. She gathered speed as she went. From the base of her hull came a roaring noise—caused by the snow as she swept through it. Then, as though by magic, it ceased.

And the airship lurched round, dipped dreadfully, and went hurtling along. We all

felt a horrible sensation below the belt, and it seemed certain that the great vessel was dashing downwards to destruction.

But again she was got under control.

Mr. Raymond Gray, quivering with hope, could feel his wonderful vessel was in the air once more. She had got clear of the snow. And after that first lurching descent he had managed to regain full control.

He swung her round, and she answered.

"We may do it!" he exclaimed tensely—"we may do it!"

"We're flyin' again!" exclaimed Dorrie. "Oh, by gad! This is a bit too much for a weak-nerved chap like me! It seems like some fearful nightmare. I hope we shall soon wake up!"

It was just the same down in the saloon. The juniors were utterly bewildered and startled by the quick change of events. No sooner had disaster come upon us than hope was renewed.

But, even now, the worst catastrophe of all might take place.

But we certainly seemed to be better off. For the great craft was careering along at a tremendous pace—for she seemed to be going with the wind now, and not against it. The clouds still enveloped her.

The most hopeful person of all on board was Mr. Gray—with the exception of Jock, the engineer. The latter would not even

(Continued on next page.)

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entertain the idea that any real damage could befall his beloved charge.

The fact that we had struck that icy slope—and the fact that we had slithered downwards—seemed to indicate that we had actually passed over the ridge. If so, the clear air was now before us, with no obstacles in the way.

But until we got out of the cloud bank, we should know nothing.

Nelson Lee was watching intently all the time. The fog encircled the airship in that same thick, blanket-like way. No matter how fast she went, she could not shake the mist from her.

Nelson Lee turned.

"I am beginning to become more optimistic—" he began.

"By the Lord Harry!" yelled Lord Dorrimore.

He uttered the words in a roar, and quite close to Nelson Lee's ear. And when the detective turned back, he gasped. It seemed too impossible. He had only turned his head for a fraction of a second.

But now, as he looked out again, there was a great change.

The air was clear—absolutely clear!

And, tens of thousands of feet below, stretched out a vast panorama of ice. White, gleaming ice, with the clear sunshine upon it. The fog had vanished as though by magic. There was not even a single sign of any mountain peak.

Nelson Lee found his voice after a moment.

"Thank heaven!" he said fervently. "We have done it!"

"Yes—and I do not mind confessing that I never expected to live to see the sunshine again!" said the inventor. "Of all our escapes, Mr. Lee, I think this is the most extraordinary of all."

Just then I came tearing up from the saloon.

"It's all serene, guv'nor!" I yelled excitedly. "We've done it!"

"No need to make yourself hoarse about it!" said Dorrie. "Of course, we've done it! Who said we weren't goin' to? This bally machine can do anythin'! But I'll admit I had the wind up once or twice!"

"The chaps don't know what to do!" I gasped. "They all thought they were going to die, and now they're so excited that they're dancing round the saloon, and kicking no end of a shindy."

Nelson Lee smiled with relief.

"Let them! I rather feel like giving way to a pretty good whoop on my own account," he said. "It is necessary to do something to explode the charged feelings caused by the recent ordeal."

"What about a good old brandy-and-soda?" suggested Dorrie.

"I'll leave you to it!" I said. "We'll raid Snowball's kitchen for some lime-juice!"

The goings-on down in the saloon were really terrific during the next few minutes. The juniors shouted and danced, and hardly knew what they were actually doing. But who could blame them? They had stared death in the face, and it seemed too good to be true that the Golden Rover was now absolutely free—and speeding ever northwards, on the homeward trip.

Up in the navigating-room, Mr. Gray left the controls—for the Rover was quite capable of looking after herself when there was no gale to fight against. And he and Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore drank one another's health. And, really, they felt the need for a little stimulant.

"Well, what about it?" asked Dorrie, at length. "I mean, it looks pretty sick for you, Mr. Gray. Not much chance of gettin' back on your proposed visit—eh?"

"No, I am afraid it is quite impossible," said Mr. Gray. "One more ordeal of that sort, and the airship would never survive. She may do it once, but it would be madness itself to attempt such a feat again."

"She only did it because we had to get out," said Nelson Lee. "But there is no earthly need to get back. That would mean a double danger. I'm afraid the people of New Anglia will wait in vain."

"It is a terrible pity," said Mr. Gray. "I had so hoped to take some big scientific men back to that wonderful land. One day, perhaps, it will be possible. But I would not attempt the trip in the Golden Rover."

"Does that mean that you will build another vessel?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Gray quietly. "I shall now concentrate upon a ship that will rise a great deal higher than this one is capable of. It will then be a comparatively easy matter to get over these mountainous ridges."

"It may be quite impossible," said Nelson Lee. "And it is quite likely that we shall be the only people of the outside world who will ever set eyes upon the kingdom of New Anglia. Now that the tunnel is blocked, the only entrance is by way of the cloud-encircled heights. And that way may never be attempted again. The people of New Anglia are cut off from the world."

We wondered if Nelson Lee was right—if the strange people we had sojourned with were really cut off for all time. It certainly seemed so. In the future, perhaps, another expedition would go to that Antarctic valley.

But for the present the place was like a closed book. And the New Anglians were still unknown to the great outer world. We had been permitted to see—but perhaps no others would have our good fortune.

And from that moment we speeded northwards towards home.

It was a glorious thought, and we en-



joyed every moment of the trip. It was, indeed, a very wonderful journey. For we passed over many lands, without once attempting to stop.

We took a route which carried us over the great Southern Ocean, and the first real land we sighted was South Africa. And then we went right up, speeding over the vast African continent—making a bee-line for the Mediterranean, France, and then dear old England.

We saw very little during our great flight over Africa. For we maintained a height of about twenty thousand feet the whole way. It is very probable that the inhabitants saw nothing of us.

For a great deal of the way clouds obscured the ground. And, in any case, we were at such a height as to be almost invisible.

And, travelling at about two hundred

miles an hour, we ate up the distance. And this long, continuous trip was the finest testimonial of all to the wonderful qualities of the Golden Rover.

And then, one fine September morning, we saw below us the green fields of France, and, in due course, the Channel—with the white cliffs of Dover like a little streak against the blue and the green.

We were home—there, beyond, lay a smoky patch which denoted London. We had come back from our great adventures in the far corners of the world.

And now we felt only one anxiety—and that was to get to St. Frank's—and to tell all our adventures to all the rest of the fellows.

Considering all the adventures we had gone through, it was wonderful that we should arrive home so safely.

But here we were—and all was well!

THE END.

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## Editorial Announcement.

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**IMPORTANT.**—All correspondence relating to "The Nelson Lee Library" should be addressed to The Editor, "The Nelson Lee Library," The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

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My Dear Readers,—After many varied and wonderful experiences the wanderers have at last returned to home and safety. They had been almost given up as lost, for St. Frank's had reassembled some days before the schoolboy adventurers put in an appearance. Meanwhile, certain events had been happening at St. Frank's in which Fullwood and Co. come to the fore. During Nipper's absence, the cad of Study A contrives to get himself elected as captain of the Remove. This will be fully described in Next Week's story, "FULLWOOD'S FORTUNE!"

### Which is Your Favourite Story?

In the interval between now and next Wednesday I shall be glad if you will drop me a line giving me your opinion of what you consider was the best story of all the recent holiday adventures from "Lagoon Island" to the story you have just read.

### Next Week's Detective Mystery Yarn—

From the many letters I have received there can be no doubt that the short, complete detective stories of Nelson Lee and Nipper continue to be very popular. You will be delighted to hear that I am publishing another of these mystery detective yarns next week. It will be called, "THE CASE OF THE WOODEN-LEGGED SAILORMAN!"

### "THE IDOL OF ST. FRANK'S"

Among the attractive volumes of complete stories on sale this month in "THE BOYS' FRIEND 4d. LIBRARY" is a NEW, LONG, COMPLETE story of St. Frank's, introducing all the famous characters that appear in "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY." The title of the story is "THE IDOL OF ST. FRANK'S!" and none of my readers should fail to read it.

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.



# Nipper's Magazine

No. 43.

EDITED BY NIPPER,

Sept. 16, 1922,

## THE PENGUINS OF THE ANTARCTIC.

**N**O impression of Antarctica would be complete without mention of that exceedingly droll and picturesque member of the fowl family, the penguin. There are two varieties of this bird peculiar to the Antarctic, the Adelie penguin and the Emperor penguin.

### THE ADELIE PENGUINS.

The Adelie penguins breed in large numbers in certain places on the Antarctic coasts during the latter part of October. For a fortnight they are busily employed in collecting pebbles for their nests. Then two round, white eggs are laid, and for thirty-two days both the female and the male parents take turns in sitting on these eggs. At the end of that time two little, sooty black chickens appear. In the same way, the parents share the responsibility of finding food for their young, alternately going out to gather shrimps while the other looks after the nestlings.

### THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST.

As the chickens grow bigger their demands for food grow in proportion, with the result that both parents have to go out together to hunt for food. By this time the chickens are able to leave their nests and associate with neighbouring chickens. They may be seen in groups of from twenty to thirty, with three or four adult birds protecting them from the skua gulls which prey upon them. The fun begins when the parents return laden with shrimps, and try to find their infants. They mob the adult bird until it is compelled to give way to the most persistent of these hungry chicks. In the melée, the weakest chickens are left behind, and eventually become the prey of the roving skua.

### MIGRATING NORTHWARDS.

By the end of January the chickens have replaced their woolly black feathers with a glossy coat of blue-grey, a white breast and throat. Towards the end of February the adults leave the rookeries to migrate to the north. Their young are left behind to fend for themselves. In a short time they learn to take to the water and then they follow their parents northwards.

### THE EMPEROR PENGUINS.

The Emperor penguin is easily the largest of the penguins, measuring nearly four feet high, and weighing from eighty to ninety pounds. The name given to this penguin is admirably

suited to his outward bearing and appearance, for he is an extremely handsome bird, and most dignified in his movements. His head is a beautiful jet black with a brilliant patch of orange on the neck. The back and wings are bluish-grey, while the chest is a striking lemon-yellow. In contrast with the grey and white background of their surroundings, these birds look very impressive.

### AN INQUISITIVE BIRD.

In keeping with his other characteristics, the Emperor penguin has a loud and clarion-like voice, which sounds weird and startling in the silence of the Antarctic wilderness. They do not seem to have a particle of fear for man. Instead, they are remarkably inquisitive. According to accounts given us by explorers, they will solemnly crowd round the stranger, scrutinising him in a most human way, and then appear to discuss with each other various points about their strange visitor.

### A NOVEL METHOD OF CARRYING ITS YOUNG.

Like the King penguin of the sub-Antarctic, the Emperor penguin carries the egg or chick upon its feet in order to protect it from the ice. The egg or chick rests in a kind of sheltered cavity formed by the dorsum of the foot, the legs, and lower abdomen. And, to make it still more snug a fold of well-feathered skin falls loosely over the niche, completely hiding the egg or chick from view, and giving the erroneous impression that the bird carries its young in a "pouch."

### KILLED BY KINDNESS.

The Emperor penguin makes a great deal of fuss over its young, an affection which for a very good reason is not appreciated by the spoilt chick. Both male and female adult will dote over the chick, whether it is its own or belongs to somebody else, and, as they usually outnumber the chickens by about twelve to one, they tumble over each other in a kind of tussle to fondle the youngsters. More often than not the chick is crushed, smothered, or falls through an ice crack, while the adult birds squabble for possession. Of the high mortality among the chicks, it may be truly said that a great proportion are killed by kindness.

### ENEMIES OF THE PENGUINS.

Penguins are as much at home in the water as on the ice, using their wings, which were originally intended for flight, as fins. But in the water, from where they procure their food, they have two formidable enemies, the Sea Leopard and the Killer Whale. They are, however, quite secure on the pack-ice, where they spend most of their time after they have left their breeding-grounds.



# Your Football Club.

## What the Goalkeeper Must Do.

### Another Interesting Chat to Junior Footballers.

A POPULAR idea among a big section of football spectators is that the goalkeeper of a side is about the least important man in it.

"Take the forwards, the half-backs, the full-backs," they will say: "all the men composing these lines of attack and defence have special qualifications, and must know their job thoroughly, if they are to succeed. But the goalie—well, he's only between the sticks to keep shots from going into the net, and anybody, with a bit of practice, can do that. Any forward, or half-back, or full-back could, at a pinch, go into the net and play goal; but a goalkeeper couldn't come into the field of play as a forward or half-back!"

That is a sufficiently strong argument for these people. On the face of it, perhaps, it seems reasonable; but it's wrong—all wrong—as I have had proved to me on more than one occasion. The goalie's is not a position that any player can take up at a moment's notice—not a position in which the average forward, even with practice, could make a success. The goalkeeper's job is a job of its own; it is safe to say that it is the most important position on the field. And goalkeepers, as some wise old football judge has told us, "are born, not made."

#### The Goalie's Job.

Are they? Perhaps; it is no purpose of mine to argue the point here. But the fact remains that the goalie's job is treated, with the exception of the goalkeepers themselves, far too lightly by most folk. It is not every footballer who can make a success as a custodian. In fact, I doubt if one forward or half-back out of twenty could go between the sticks and do even half as well as the team's usual custodian. Just as forward play has its arts and snares, so also has goalkeeping.

Consider for a short moment the responsibility that lies upon the custodian's shoulders. When the opposition has barged through, he is the one man who stands between them and the scoring of a goal—a goal which might mean all the difference between defeat and victory. There are occasions—during a hot siege of his citadel, for instance—when he is called upon to do practically the whole of the defensive work of the side. A forward may make a mistake and cover it up easily; a goalkeeper—no. Whatever he does, whether it be for good or ill, glares out conspicuously.

#### What the Goalie Means.

A good goalie is half the battle, and captains of teams should always be careful of their

judgment in choosing a man for this position. The player who is likely to make a success of the job must be cool and quick-witted, should have keen eyes and a quick-working brain. He should be sturdy and athletic, and his motto should be, "Eyes on the ball all the time." Wherever the leather happens to be, always watch it, even if it is right down the other end of the field. Football is such a peculiar game that one can never say with any degree of certainty what is going to happen next. The ball may be at the opposing keeper's end of the field one moment; two seconds later, you—if you happen to be the other goalie—might be caught napping by that same ball, and let in an "easy" one, that will bring down the wrath of the crowd and your team-mates on your head. You cannot watch the ball too carefully.

That is the first golden rule a goalie who is going to make a success of his job must observe. The second, "Always use hands in preference to feet."

#### The Safest Plan.

It is not always easy to do that, of course, especially when an opponent is in dangerous proximity and a clearance becomes a race against time. You have to kick on those occasions, and kick quickly; and there will be other occasions, too, when speed in getting rid of the leather will become the most urgent necessity, and you will have to dispose of the ball in the quickest manner possible. But, whenever possible, use your hands, even if the ball is only crawling towards you. It's the safest plan, and it's the best.

When anticipating a shot, keep on the move, and, while making up your mind at which angle it is coming, you will disconcert the scorer, who will be uncertain at which corner of the net to shoot. Do not rush out from your citadel unless you are absolutely sure in your mind that it is a safe plan to follow. The best thing to do with a high, dropping shot from wing or centre is to judge the spot at which it will fall and, timing your movement, rush out and punt away with your hands as the ball comes down, or, if possible, catching the leather first and then transferring with a drop-kick either to the touch-line or to one of your men who is in a good position to clear.

#### Keep Your Eyes Open.

Keep your eyes constantly on the ball, as I have already told you, and when threatened, keep your eye, too, upon the feet of the man possessing the ball. It is often easy, by this means, to judge within an inch in what direction it will come. When punching the leather into play, always double your fists tightly and endeavour to catch the ball fairly and squarely. Play for safety all the time, and never hesitate when occasion occurs to concede a corner kick.

These are a few golden laws to be going on with. There is much more that I could say about the goalkeeper's job, had I the space; but as I have not, I will leave this subject for the present and return to it later, perhaps. Next week I will talk to young full-backs on the art of position play.



# THE STRANGE CASE OF THE THURLINGHAM HALL ROBBERY



## BRIEF SUMMARY OF PART I.

On the occasion of the twenty-first birthday of the Earl of Thurlingham's heir, the family jewels are displayed on a table in the strong-room. Zenith, the Albino, boasts that he will make a haul of these jewels, and he keeps his word, in spite of special precautions to ensure their safety. The mystery, which I invited my readers to try and solve, is how the cunning rogue removed the jewels. The strong-room is built of heavy stone, three feet thick, with one double-grilled window, no fire-place, or any other means of ingress except through a stout steel door. This was kept locked, and two plain-clothes detectives were on guard in the room when the robbery was committed. With the exception of a small inaccessible air-grating for ventilation purposes, and the grilled window, the strong-room may be regarded as a solid stone vault. Nelson Lee has made particular note of the peculiar fact that the thief took only necklaces, bracelets, and the tiara, leaving the mounted stones untouched. Now read on and see for yourselves how the crime was actually committed.—THE EDITOR.

NELSON LEE and Nipper stood on the far side of a shallow but rapid stream, and looked across at the stone flank of Thurlingham Hall rising sheer out of the water.

"That," said Nelson Lee, pointing to a square of stained glass not much above the level of their faces, "that is the window of the annexe where the heirlooms were displayed."

"You don't suppose," queried Nipper, "that the theft was accomplished by means of that window?"

"I am quite sure that it wasn't," Lee replied, "but I am not so sure about the ventilating shaft above."

"That," exclaimed the lad; "why a man couldn't get his arm through there!"

"I did not assert that he could."

And, with these rather cryptic words, the private detective began to walk slowly along their side of the bank of the rivulet, closely inspecting every inch of soft ground. In reply to Nipper's question as to what he was seeking, he replied that he did not know.

After this, Nipper, who had learnt when not to be curious, contented himself by following his employer, and imitating the minute search which the latter was conducting.

And, as it happens, Nipper was the first to make a discovery.

Within a patch of soft ground three or four feet back from the edge of the water, he found a deep, circular depression, as if someone had thrust a copper-stick downwards with considerable force.

Lee's triumph at the discovery was unmistakable.

Going down upon his hands and knees, he scrutinised the imprint for some seconds.

Then, with the ejaculation "Bamboo!" he began to go over the neighbouring ground, inch by inch.

"Within a radius of six feet, or thereabouts," he said, half to himself, "there must be another depression of the same sort. If there isn't" he added, "my theory falls to pieces."

But, once again, Nipper was lucky.

Half concealed by a gorse bush, between loose boulders, he found a second imprint, and, seven feet away, a third.

Nelson Lee's comment was surprising.

"This man Zenith is an athlete," he said.

Taking the direction indicated by these three depressions, he began to find others with considerable ease. Mostly they were faint, sometimes they were all but invisible, but always they were about the same distance apart and in the same straight line.

"And it was a dark night, last night," exclaimed the detective. "What a nerve the man had!"

Presently, Lee abandoned his search for particular imprints, and merely followed the



line of those already discovered until he came to the country road which led down towards Wylam and the Tyne.

At the edge of the sandy road, however, he recommenced his search, and was rewarded by finding two of the circular imprints close together.

"This," Nipper heard him mutter, "is where the fellow stood to have them unstrapped."

He stepped out into the road, and scrutinised some tyre-tracks, evidently left by a large car which had drawn up at that spot.

"That's right," the private detective went on, "the man who did the unstrapping would stand upon the seat."

He ran over to the low rubble-wall which separated road and pasture land.

"But where are they?" he said. "Where are they?"

On the far side of the road was a deep ditch overgrown with lush grass. Not pausing to find out what depth of mud or water awaited him, Nelson Lee jumped into this ditch and began to force his way along it.

Before he had gone twenty yards, he uttered an exclamation of triumph, and, bending down, lifted out a couple of bamboo poles, eight or ten feet long.

They were made of the yellow, or male, bamboo, and at the top of each was a stout strap, transfixed by an iron bolt.

"Stilts, my lad!" said the detective, the stilts which Zenith wore strapped to his shins when he took the jewels."

Nipper looked at them interestedly.

They were not the type of stilts which European boys use, the type which extends to beneath the arms; but the kind which is used in the rice-lands of the East, strapped to the shin, and reaching only to the knee. As Nelson Lee had said, to use such appliances to cross unfamiliar country on a dark night, was an act of superlative recklessness.

But that they had been so used was made plain by a slip of paper, the leaf torn from a pocket-book, which Nipper found caught beneath the twisted straps.

It was a message from Zenith the Albino. "To Nelson Lee," it ran, "congratulations if you have got this far. My best wishes for your continued success.—Zenith."

"Now, my lad, said Lee, "what we have to do is to find out the destination of this car of which you see the tyre-tracks upon the surface of the road. It contains the Thurlingham heirlooms, and—Zenith. I want both the stolen goods and the man who stole them."

"And what are you going to do, guv'nor? Track the car?"

Lee shook his head.

"No. Too late. They have had seven hours start. We must get back to Thurlingham Hall."

Nipper carrying the stilts, which he had a fancy to experiment with at the first

opportunity, they returned to Thurlingham Hall.

The place was seething with excitement, now that the news of the robbery was known to the guests; and Lee, had he been so minded, might have answered questions for the rest of the day.

But he waved all questioners aside, and made straight for the telephone.

"Our only chance," he explained to Nipper, "is to follow Zenith's processes of thought. He has made his getaway all right, we cannot close our eyes to that fact; but, if we are lucky, we may hit his trail at some point further along. We must calculate what he is likely to do. He has got an extremely valuable parcel of jewels to dispose of. Would he go to London and sell them to a fence? Or would he cross the North Sea and sell them himself?"

"I should say," Nipper ventured, "that he would sell them himself."

"I agree with you. He would sell them himself, and that as quickly as possible. He will calculate that, by the first thing this morning, we should have a double watch put on probable seaports. Therefore, if a boat is sailing at this minute from, say, Newcastle-on-Tyne, we may safely assume that he is on that boat."

"And what then?" queried Nipper. "Cable the Dutch police?"

Nelson Lee smiled.

"Not so fast, my lad."

And, with that, he went to the 'phone.

"I want the steamship booking office at Central Station, Newcastle," he said.

"Hullo. Police speaking. What ships are sailing this morning to Continental ports? One, the Breslau, to Hamburg. And that's gone? How long ago? Ten minutes, if on time. May be late, eh? Where does it go from? Quayside, by the swing bridge. Thanks. Good-bye."

The detective dashed out into the hall and shouted for Nipper.

"At the double," he ordered, "get motor kit, and come to the garage. Tell the viscount I am using his racing car. Tell Anderson I am not to be stopped by the police. He must see to that. Sharp."

Himself, he hurried to the garage and began to tune up the giant racer, which was an expensive and dangerous hobby of the heir to the earldom.

When a car makes thirty miles per hour at her first speed and ninety at her last, it is not safe to take her out before the tuning is done.

Nevertheless, within two minutes, cloaked and goggled, they were doing thirty on the country road. Within five they had passed Heddon-on-the-wall, and had opened out to sixty.

Now the devastating roar of the engines had dwindled to a pleasant drone. The pressure of the air made hearing difficult.



Presently, a mile of straight road made the ninety mark possible. It was exhilarating but terribly dangerous.

Inspector Anderson had done his work well. And several times they flashed past vehicles drawn up alongside the road in charge of a member of the county police.

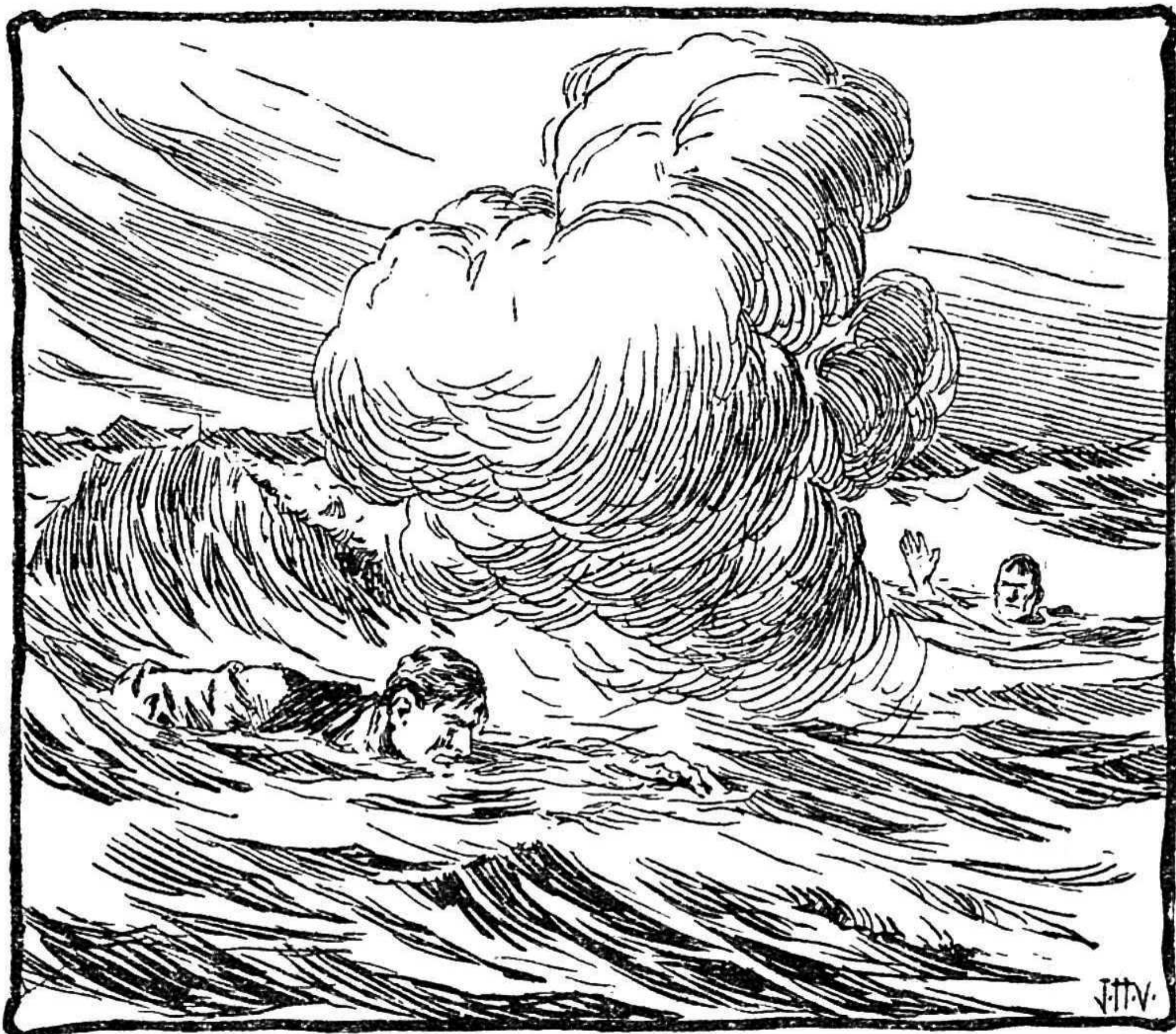
Ten minutes after starting, they had passed St. Nicholas Cathedral and were dropping down Sandhill to quayside. For the

Lee whipped out a ten-shilling note.

"Quick," he said, "she drops her pilot at Shields. Wireless her, and tell her skipper to be prepared to pick me up then. Here's my card. Police! Urgent!"

The lounge, for once in his life, moved rapidly. Proudly conscious that he was making history, he went up Quayside at the double, making for the shipping offices.

Almost as quickly, Lee swung the great



**He saw the distant swimmer raise his hand and hurl something away from him upon the surface of the waves.**

last hundred yards the gear lever had been slipped into neutral. Now Lee took his foot from the throttle and applied one of the two brakes.

Now, with two hundred yards to go, he had both brakes hard on; yet she swerved on to the Quayside with the near-side wheels in the air, and Nipper hanging on to her flank in the hope that his weight would do something to pull her down.

"The Breslau?" repeated a Quayside lounge. "Hard luck, sir. She's just gone. There she is, nearly to Walker. You can see her smoke from here."

car round, breasted the steep bank at twenty miles per hour and turned into the Walker-Road.

He had reason to be glad then that Inspector Anderson had nothing to learn in the way of efficiency. Although he had extended his route, the inspector was continuing to receive reports and send instructions. So that, even on the road to North Shields, where he purposed to connect with the Breslau, he found the public warned of his coming and the police ready to help him.

Lee smiled broadly at these things. The fact was as he clearly perceived, that the



inspector's career hung upon his success. If the thief of those jewels got away with them, then Anderson was disgraced for ever. He smiled, but he was rather sorry for the inspector.

It must be remembered that his journey to Shields was entirely a shot in the dark. Even if he boarded the Breslau, it was by no means certain that Zenith—or, what was more important, the gems—would be aboard. It was a forlorn hope from the beginning.

But the race was exciting enough.

They ran abreast of the steamship as she passed Jarrow works; and, when the giant car they were using banged her way into quiescence at the riverside ferry, the vessel was already slowing to allow the pilot's sloop to come alongside.

A launch from Walker Hunter's yard happened to be at the landing stage; and, without any ceremony, Nelson Lee and Nipper hurled themselves into this, demanding to be taken to the Breslau.

Fortunately for them, the man at the helm knew when to act without asking questions; and, before the rope-ladder which had been dropped for the convenience of the pilot could be drawn back to the lower deck, Lee and his assistant were clinging to its rungs, and waving a farewell to the departing launch.

Once again the efficiency of Inspector Anderson made things easy for them. The captain now all about their business, and placed himself unreservedly at their disposal.

Lee took his seat in the captain's cabin, and asked for the chief steward.

"Now," he told this functionary, "I am working in conjunction with the police, and I want to find a man who is accused of jewel robbery. The man in question is a master of disguise, so I am quite unable to describe him in any useful way; but there is one thing which makes our chance of finding him a good one. He has pink eyes—is, to be exact, an albino. That is the one characteristic which he cannot disguise. Therefore, we may expect him to be wearing tinted spectacles. Have you a passenger aboard who—"

"I have, sir," the steward interrupted, excitedly. "An old gentleman travelling alone. Came aboard last thing. He's your man, for a fiver. In the saloon now. If you'll come with me—"

This seemed rather precipitate; but Lee dared not take the risk of frightening the resourceful albino; and, accompanied by captain and steward, Nelson Lee and his assistant walked forward to the saloon.

An old gentleman with dark glasses was sitting at one of the writing tables at the side of the dining saloon, and looked up inquisitively as they entered.

Lee slipped a hand into his pocket, and gripped the automatic which lay ready.

"Sir," he said, "I want a word with you."

"You do, do you?" replied the stranger, and—dropped his hands.

Instantly Lee's automatic was pointed between his eyes, and the barrel of Nipper's weapon was thrust into the small of his back.

"One more movement," threatened the private detective, "and—"

"But, good heavens," complained the old man, "I—"

"Remove those spectacles!" ordered Lee.

"I refuse. Cap'n Blake, I—"

With a single rapid movement, Nelson Lee removed the pince-nez from in front of the old man's eyes, and—

They were a watery blue!

Lee began to apologise, then something in the old man's face stopped him. Surely there was an expression of triumph.

He turned, and dashed up the steep stairway towards the deck.

They were already nearly a mile from the shore, and a quarter of a mile behind the vessel he saw the head of a solitary swimmer appear on the crest of a wave.

Without the least hesitation, he ran at the rail, cleared it with a beautiful swallow-dive, and struck out in the direction from which they had come.

The old man with blue eyes was a confederate. Zenith had intercepted Anderson's wireless, and sent the old man to the saloon to gain time in case Lee succeeded in overtaking the boat. The master-crook had witnessed their arrival, and was risking an escape by water.

On the strength of this conclusion, Nelson Lee was undoubtedly risking his life.

A mile swim in sea water on a warm day was nothing to him, but who knows what currents he would have to meet and master before he made the shore?

But one of the things which made Nelson Lee great among crime investigators was his readiness to act upon intuition. He had made one bad mistake that day, and, conceivably, he was about to make another; but still he would see the thing through.

He settled down to a stroke of his own invention. Lying low in the water, trudging with the arms and using a crawl kick, he drove ahead at nearly three miles an hour.

At the end of ten minutes, Lee was compelled to stop for the purpose of unlacing and kicking off his shoes. He was then noticeably nearer the man he pursued; but, so far as he could judge, about the same distance from the shore.

A minute later he received evidence, not only that the swimmer before him was indeed Zenith; but also that the master-crook had been using wireless on his own account, before he left the Breslau.

A distant drone came to his ears; and, looking upwards, he saw a small grey sea-plane circling overhead.

He saw the distant swimmer raise his



hand, and hurl something away from himself upon the surface of the waves.

It was evidently some sort of bomb, for, on hitting the water, it exploded, and gave out a cloud of heavy, black smoke.

Instantly the seaplane banked. Its engines stopped, and it drifted in a beautiful curve down to the surface of the sea, not far from the man whom Lee supposed to be Zenith.

The detective groaned.

Certainly, he had given the crook a good run for his money; but now he had to admit defeat.

He saw the distant swimmer turn towards the seaplane. It taxied over the surface only a hundred yards away. Then, while he settled down to vanquish that mile of salt water, the seaplane climbed into the air and disappeared.

The house-party at Thurlingham Hall waited with considerable impatience for news of Lee and his assistant.

The racing car had been collected by Inspector Anderson; and—since he could not find anyone with the nerve to drive it—towed back to the Hall. Inspector Anderson was also able to inform his host that Lee and Nipper had boarded the Breslau, and that Lee had jumped or fallen overboard.

Later, to their great relief, he received a message that Lee, very exhausted, had been picked up off Sunderland.

After that, the messages ceased, and Inspector Anderson prepared to leave Thurlingham Hall.

Having failed in his protection of the Thurlingham treasures, he was in no enviable frame of mind; and, when at length he received a further message, two days later, that both Lee and Nipper were returning "with important information," he clutched at the possibility of reinstating himself as a drowning man might clutch at a straw.

At the appointed hour, which was immediately after dinner-time of that same day, Nipper arrived alone.

In response to the multitude of questions which were directed upon him, he replied that he had no instructions.

"The gov'nor told me to tell you," he repeated, "that he would meet you here in the banqueting chamber in five minutes' time, and that he would show you how the theft was committed."

"Very well," said the earl, huffily, "we will wait."

The large stone room, coloured by the elaborate gowns of the ladies of the house-party, and set off by the conventional black of their male escorts, made an imposing scene.

Even the inspector and his plain-clothes

assistants were there; for the mystery of the disappearance of the heirlooms had been more discussed than any other event in the length and breadth of England during the last day or so, and if Nelson Lee really had an explanation to offer, he would not lack an appreciative audience.

The five minutes were nearing their end, when the earl, who happened to be looking at the now empty green baize board whereon his treasures had lain, uttered an incoherent exclamation, and started forward.

The green baize table was not empty any longer!

There, neatly set out, were all, or nearly all, of the missing valuables.

"Heavens!" he cried, clutching at his forehead, "am I mad?"

He turned to his wife.

"Tell me, Louisa, do I imagine it, or are our treasures returned? Did I only dream that—"

His further remarks were lost in a hubbub of voices which even the good manners of the house party could not restrain.

What happened next was seen by every individual in that place.

Very deliberately and silently, a slender, whip-like object came through the small aperture of the ventilating shaft.

"It's a trout rod," said one of the men, "and, by Jove, there's a periscope attached to it."

The appliance was indeed a split-cane fly-rod, hardly thicker than a straw; and, half-way along, fixed to its middle joint by a small bracket was a tiny circular mirror.

It was more than likely that the individual at the far end of the shaft could, by means of that mirror, see every part of the table beneath.

As they watched, a multi-coloured, scintillating object fell free of the masonry. For a few seconds, it swung in the air. Then, obedient to the easing of an unseen reel, it sank noiselessly down and settled into its appropriate place upon the table.

It was the Thurlingham tiara!

"What witchcraft is this?" said the earl, at last.

He hurried towards the front door.

"I'll get to the bottom of it, somehow," he declared.

The house-party swarmed out after him, and presently, like the pygmies around Gulliver, they were crowding around the gigantic figure of Nelson Lee upon the bamboo stilts which had been used by Zenith.

"Excuse me," laughed the detective, "I'm not used to this game, and, if I don't keep on walking, I shall fall over."

With the help of Nipper, who stood upon the steps in front of the Hall, he managed to loosen the straps which bound the bamboos to his legs and lower himself to the ground.



"My somewhat theatrical experiment," he explained, as soon as the party had re-entered the Hall, "was intended to demonstrate the means by which the theft was carried out. The thief used stilts to raise himself to the level of the air-duct, and removed the jewels by dropping a gut cast over them, just as one drops a cast over a likely rise in fly fishing.

"He used the mirror as a sort of periscope to allow himself to see what he was doing.

"My deduction of his *modus operandi* was simple.

"I observed, as indeed, we all did, that he had left certain articles which, if he had been in a position to pick and choose, he would undoubtedly have taken.

"My conclusion was that he could not have been in a position to pick and choose, or, in other words, that he had been compelled to confine his felonious attentions to objects having a certain characteristic.

"What was this characteristic? What, in other words, was common to all the things stolen, and lacking in those which were left?

"This question was easily answered. An outstanding characteristic of the things stolen—necklaces, bracelets, rings, and the tiara—was that they offered great facilities for mechanical prehension.

"I deduced, with fair certainty, that the thief had picked up his spoils by mechanical means.

"I do not believe in miracles, ladies and gentlemen—well, not miracles of this sort, anyhow—and, as there was only one opening in the annexe through which the vanished jewels could have disappeared, I asserted to myself that they had indeed gone through that opening. An obvious conclusion, I am afraid.

"Very well, that being decided, I had only to seek a mechanical means which could be thrust through that opening and pick up such articles as were stolen. The answer jumped into my mind at once—a fishing-rod!

"I don't know now if that really was the means used; but, as I found it almost possible by that means to return the stolen goods to their places in the presence of a room-full of people, I am inclined to think that it was."

"I think," the earl agreed, in his grandest manner, "that we must all agree with you. For my part, I offer you my sincerest thanks. I am very glad to inform you that a reward of two thousand pounds has been offered for the return of the stolen property. That reward will now be yours."

There was a murmur of applause, at which the private detective looked slightly uncomfortable.

"As to that," he said, "I think my assistant deserves it more than I. You have yet to hear the exact means of the recovery of the stolen goods."

Nipper hated the limelight.

"Cut it short, guv'nor!" he growled.

For which insubordination Nelson Lee instantly punished the lad, in his own good-humoured way.

"That," he said, "is not my story. My assistant will tell you himself."

And, on the spot Nipper became the focus of attention.

"Well, look here," said the lad, impishly, "it's like this.

"The day before yesterday, the guv'nor and I went out for a joy ride. We got tired of motoring, and went for a sea voyage. The guv'nor got tired of that, and went for a swim. I stayed aboard ship because I had formed a friendship with a chap who wore dark glasses.

"This chap bought an attache-case from the steward; and, as he went to great pains to keep the thing dark, I thought it must be a good spec., so I bought one exactly like it.

"I hadn't anything to put in mine, so I went down to the stokehold and got some coal. Might be very useful on a winter night, don't you know.

"But I didn't have a chance to keep it, because, when we were going ashore, my friend's attache-case got mixed up with mine.

"I certainly got the best of it; because the contents of my case can't have been worth more than tuppence, while the contents of his were worth two thousand of the best."

"As a matter of fact," broke in Nelson Lee, laughing, "my assistant saw, what I also had suspected, that the man in question was a confederate of the thief. By changing the bags he got a chance to verify his suspicions. It was a very clever ruse."

"Oh, chuck it!" said Nipper disgustedly.

"So that," the private detective continued, "as regards the reward of two thousand, I think it will be fair if we—my assistant and I—go fifty-fifty."

And, amid a burst of applause, the two shook hands on it.

Before the cries of congratulations had died away, the butler arrived with a large tray filled with slender champagne glasses. After him came footmen carrying ice-buckets in which champagne was already in the process of being cooled.

"We are going to drink your health," the nobleman explained, "your health and that of your assistant!"

"If," put in Inspector Anderson, "I might identify myself with the expression of that toast, and the admiration it implies, I should be much honoured!"

It was the sincerest compliment Nelson Lee had ever received.



# The NEW USHER

## BEING THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF Tom Tartar at School

A. WATSON

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THIS ABSORBING STORY OF  
SCHOOL LIFE!



### FIRST CHAPTERS.

Mr. Achilles Chopps, the new tutor at Wrasper's School, is a man of angelic appearance, but behind his innocent exterior there lurks something foreboding and mysterious. Shortly after his arrival at the school his alleged uncle comes to stay with him. Tom Tartar, the leading spirit at the school, makes some startling discoveries concerning the new usher.

(Now read on.)

### CHAPTER XXXV.

#### The Return of the Explorers.

"**R**EALLY," said Lady Freshly, "it's a mystery where those two boys have gone! If they are wandering about the park, they must have forgotten all about the time."

"I have made inquiries," answered Sir Claude, "and nobody saw them leave the house."

It was half-past four, and the entire crowd of guests were assembled in the great hall.

There were Mr. and Mrs. Wrasper, Mr. Chopps, and all the boys of the school—save and except Tom Tartar.

And the baronet's son was absent, too.

"I cannot understand it at all, Sir Claude," began Mr. Wrasper. "Tartar was perfectly aware that we—"

His sentence was at this moment interrupted by the entry of a man-servant, who addressed the baronet.

"Sir Claude," said the man, "Mr. Cecil borrowed a lantern from the stables about two hours ago."

"A lantern!" exclaimed the baronet. "For what purpose did he require a lantern?"

"He didn't say, Sir Claude. But James trimmed it for him, and filled it with oil."

"Send James here at once!"

James, one of the stable-boys, was fetched,

and he arrived in a state of perspiration and awe.

But Sir Claude's questionings elicited little from him. Master Cecil had entered the stables at about two o'clock and had asked for one of the best lanterns, which he took away with him, saying he would bring it back in about an hour's time.

"Very strange!" commented Sir Claude. "What on earth should the boy want a lantern for?"

"Maybe," began Mr. Wrasper, "he and Tartar have gone off on an—"

But once more Mr. Wrasper's sentence was cut short—this time by a screaming maid-servant, who came rushing down the broad staircase as though pursued by demons.

"What is the matter, Parsons?" demanded Lady Freshly, in much alarm.

"Oh, my lady," panted the frightened servant, "I were a-beeswaxin' the floor o' the Gallery Chamber upstairs, when two awful ghosts—black ghosts they was, my lady—stepped right out o' the wall into the room!"

"Black ghosts, Parsons?" said Lady Freshly. "Absurd girl! Whoever heard of black ghosts! You must be suffering from delusions!"

"But I see 'em plain as plain, my lady! They stepped clean out of the wall, and—"

"All serene, mater!" called out a familiar voice from the top of the stairs. "It's only Tom and me."

"Why! that's Cecil," said Lady Freshly, joyfully; "the boys have been up to some trick!"

"It appears to me to be a rather foolish one," retorted Sir Claude, somewhat angrily.

"It is not a trick, sir," said Tom, descending some of the stairs; "we have been lost for a time."

He stood in front of them all, as grimy with dust as a sweep in full business is with soot—a pitiable yet a comical object.



It was impossible to help it—everybody roared.

Even the plethoric butler, who had only smiled twice since he held his important position, gave way to a cackling laugh, that was as funny as anything just then going.

"I'll come up to you," said Sir Claude, "and hear what it all means."

He went upstairs, and found Cecil on the landing, a duplicate of Tom in dust, and evidently much fagged.

The explanation was soon given.

They told him all that the reader knows about the secret way, then went on to state how they had lost themselves in an intricate lot of passages, and had gone up and down, calling aloud at intervals, afterwards knocking at panels which they could not open, until they came to one which looked very much like the same as that by which they entered.

Finding it was the same, they opened it, and, joyful over their release, jumped down into the room, to the intense alarm of Parsons, the housemaid.

But not a word was said about the grim skeleton in the stone chamber.

"Well," said Sir Claude, "it is as well that things are no worse. We have been very anxious about you. Go into the bathroom and take off your clothes. I'll send the man up to brush them. You will find hot and cold water, soap and towels."

Leaving them, he went back to the old hall and told the story, which caused much interest and amusement.

"I knew there were secret ways about the old place," said Sir Claude, "but I never took the trouble to find them out, and I dare say Cecil's curiosity is quite satisfied."

In about half an hour Cecil and Tom appeared, clothed and clean, and in their right minds, the heroes of the hour.

"In luck's way again," said George Hamerton. "You always get the good things, Tom."

"This promised to be good enough to stop my fun for ever," said Tom. "We've had to crawl about like snails to save ourselves from being choked by the dust. Cecil dropped the lantern and it went out. Like a duffer, I never thought of taking matches with me."

And just then the gong sounded for high tea.

It was past midnight when the party at the hall broke up, and it was admitted by all that a happier time they had never spent.

The boys did not ride—they walked; and there was little or no attempt to keep them in order.

A clear night, with innumerable stars, sufficed to guide them home, and the only restriction on them was that they should go the longer route, and not attempt to cross the lock.

Obedient to this command, they went off in parties, passing through the silent village a little before one o'clock.

(Continued on next page.)

# DO YOU KNOW

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There was only one man visible, and that was Ralston, who was standing by his garden gate smoking.

He gave Tom a cheery "Good-night" as he passed, but ignored the salute of Chopps, who said, "It's a fine night."

Chopps appeared to be very much exasperated, and Pubsey Wrasper, who was his companion, heard the sound of his teeth as he ground them together.

"You don't like Ralston," Pubsey said.

"I hate incivility," hissed Chopps, "especially from a fellow who is—is—what the deuce does it matter what he is?"

The next day came news that Walt Powner had been captured. He was duly brought up before the local magistrate, charged with "shooting with intent," which is virtually an accusation of attempted murder.

As his future history does not concern us, we may as well here state that eventually he was desired by an amiable judge to spend the next ten years of his life within the precincts of one of his Majesty's prisons.

"It's the last of the Powners," was the comment of Sir Claude, "and I hope we have done with them for good and all."

And that hope was destined to be realised. For the Powner family were heard of no more in the village of Peddleton.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### Wild Talk from Perks.

**P**ERKS was going down-hill all the time. He got thinner and thinner and paler and paler every day.

As his cheeks lost flesh his nose seemed to increase in size, until that always prominent feature became painfully perceptible to the eye.

It became an aggressive nose.

The cook laughed at it. Sam roared at it as if it were some terrible excrescence. Wooden Jerry resented its appearance in the kitchen.

As Perks lost courage, Wooden Jerry gathered strength.

Inch by inch he came back to the position of head man, and he soon began to order Perks about as Perks had ordered him.

"You've got to wake up, young feller," he said, one evening, as the servants met together in the kitchen, "or you will hear from somebody."

"I don't mind if I do," replied Perks gloomily.

"And perhaps," added Jerry, "you will get the sack."

"I'd like to get it," answered Perks.

Wooden Jerry knew of no threat more dire.

"If a boy don't mind the sack," he said, "it's no use talking to him. He's fast going to ruin."

"We are all a-going to ruin," said Perks.

"Lawks a-mercy!" exclaimed the cook.

"What's the boy talking about?"

"We may all go to pieces," said Perks; "be blowed up, or took by the police."

"Here young man," said Wooden Jerry, "you speak for yourself."

"I speak for all," insisted Perks; "it don't matter whether you've done anything or not—you're likely to be took."

"I'll take you in a minute—by the 'air," said Jane, "and lead you out."

"I don't mind," said the reckless Perks, presenting one side of his head to her; "lay hold."

"I shall pull hard," said Jane, laughing.

"I can't help it," said Perks. "I'd rather have an ear pulled off by you than be kissed by some people."

Jane laughed gleefully.

She was a woman, and flattery from any source was acceptable.

But Perks, while giving vent to his heroics, happened to be looking at the cook, and that lady fired up.

"Perhaps by 'some people' you mean me?" she said.

"I didn't, but you can take it if you like," replied Perks.

"I don't kiss boys," said the cook; "but I can smack 'em."

She dealt Perks a resounding open-hander on the side of the head, but it made no more impression on him than on a wooden figure.

"Try another!" he said.

"That's enough for me," said the cook, tossing her head.

"Perhaps you hurt yourself," suggested Perks, sarcastically.

"I don't think he is a boy at all," said the cook; "he's a demon."

Perks squinted, and made a most hideous grimace. Jane covered her eyes, and the cook gave out a short, sharp scream.

"Put him out of the kitchen, Jerry!" she said; "he ain't a human boy at all."

"If Jerry lays a finger on me," said Perks, "I'll give him a winder as will shake up his beer!"

And to show that he was up to the pugilistic business he began to caper about the kitchen, sparring like a champion lightweight afflicted with St. Vitus' dance.

Altogether his conduct was very strange.

As Jerry showed no desire to assault him, Perks soon sat down, and asked if he couldn't have his supper.

"It's only eight o'clock," said the cook, "and we don't have it till harf arter."

"Say half after," corrected Perks. "Jerry, why don't you teach the old girl how to speak grammatically?"

"I can't stand the hook-nosed little villain," cried the cook, seizing the poker; "if he doesn't get out of the kitchen I'll kill him."

"All right," said Perks, unflinchingly; "hit away. I don't care. I'm tired of my life."

And then he began to hum a most dismal tune—a sort of dirge—as if he had his own funeral in his mind's eye.

"Jane," said the cook, desperately, "get



out the supper—let him have it and go to bed."

Jane, who was also desirous of getting rid of the mysterious Perks, speedily laid the cloth, putting on cheese, butter, and bread.

"Where's the meat?" asked Perks.

"Ain't got any," replied the cook, shortly. "Bread and cheese won't hurt for once."

"It won't be long before I have kidneys and sweetbreads for supper," said Perks, "and drink all sorts of wine—claret, Burgundy, champagne—and I'll smoke choice havannahs all day long."

"Give up your wild talk," said Wooden Jerry, "and eat your wittles."

"I shall want a servant then," pursued Perks—"several of 'em. I shall have a better man than you to black my boots, and a pretty parlour-maid like Jane."

"This," said the cook, "isn't sense—it's a loony talkin'!"

"I'm goin' to be rich," went on Perks, flourishing a table-knife in the air, "and I won't give anybody but Jane a blessed penny."

"I won't have any of your money," replied Jane.

"Ah! you say that now," rejoined Perks, "but when you see the rustlin' bank-notes, and——"

The cook, who was sewing, jumped up, dropping her scissors and cotton upon the floor.

"I'm going upstairs," she said. "Come for me when that lunatic's gone to bed."

As she left the kitchen Perks laughed hoarsely and flourished the knife again.

"She thinks I'm talkin' out o' my hat," he cried, "but it's a fact. When you are a crossing-sweeper, Jerry, I shall be riding hoss-back in Rotten Row!"

And then he went on with his supper, commenting scornfully on the poor fare, but disposing of a good quantity of it nevertheless.

He talked no more, but, having finished, left the kitchen, as they supposed, to go to bed.

But he only went upstairs to Mr. Chopps' room, where he found the usher alone.

Then his hilarity was at an end, and he stood humbly, meekly, before his master.

"Do you want me for anything to-night, sir?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Chopps; "you must take a note to Peddleton, and wait by the railway crossing—the one in the fields, not that at the station."

"A once?"

"No, you donkey—not till everybody is in bed."

"I'm very tired, sir," pleaded Perks; "and it's a long way."

"You must go," said Chopps, "as I want the men to know that the watch-dogs are going to sleep, and they will be able to pass in about two days."

"So soon, sir?" said Perks, with glistening eyes.

"Yes," said Chopps, who was scribbling a few words on a piece of paper, "and then heigh for the new life! I'll be a friend

to you, Perks, as I said I would; but if you do anything to betray me—if you bungle the business in any way—make your will out and order your coffin. You understand me?"

"Yes, sir," replied Perks, and he looked as if he thoroughly believed that Chopps meant what he said.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### A Plunge for Liberty.

**A**BOUT two hundred yards from Peddleton station was the railway crossing to which Perks had been directed to go.

It was not much used by the public, being principally designed for the use of farmers, who had a right of way along the narrow lane through which the railway was cut.

At night a more lonesome place than this lane could not have been found by the most ardent lover of solitude.

Being overhung with trees it was very dark. The ruts in it were many and deep, and on either side the tangled briar and thorn grew in profusion.

Into this lane Perks turned, about midnight.

He hesitated a moment at its mouth, but the image of Chopps rising up before him, he went forward with a groan.

"I wish I'd died years ago!" he muttered.

He would have liked to whistle, just to dispel the absolute silence, but he dare not.

His orders had been to go "as quiet as a mouse," and he crept along, quailing as he glanced from side to side.

It was a quarter of a mile down the lane to the crossing, and the upper end was not quite so dark as the rest. The trees were not so plentiful, and behind them was meadowland right away to the river.

Quite close to the railway gate was another gate leading into one of the meadows. In the dim light Perks could just see that this gate was secured by a padlock.

He drew softly up to the railway, and stood there for a moment, listening intently.

On the other side he heard a faint shuffling of feet. He coughed softly, and instantly, just as if he had risen from the ground, a man stood before him.

"Are you Perks?" asked the man gruffly.

"Yes, s'r."

"Hand over what you've brought!"

Perks gave him the letter; whereupon the stranger produced a small dark lantern from his pocket, opened the bullseye, and, by its light, carefully read the message from Chopps.

"All right, boy," he said, as he thrust the missive into his pocket. "Tell the chief that all is ready—two sets, everything double—awaiting the signal. That's all, go!"

The man wheeled round, slipped across the line, and disappeared on the other side.

(To be continued.)



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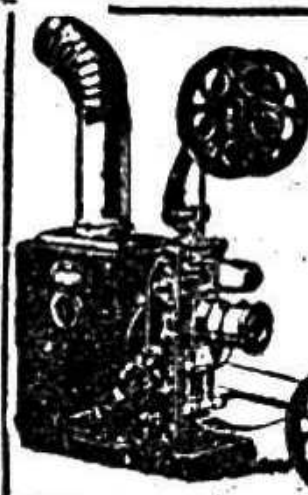
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