

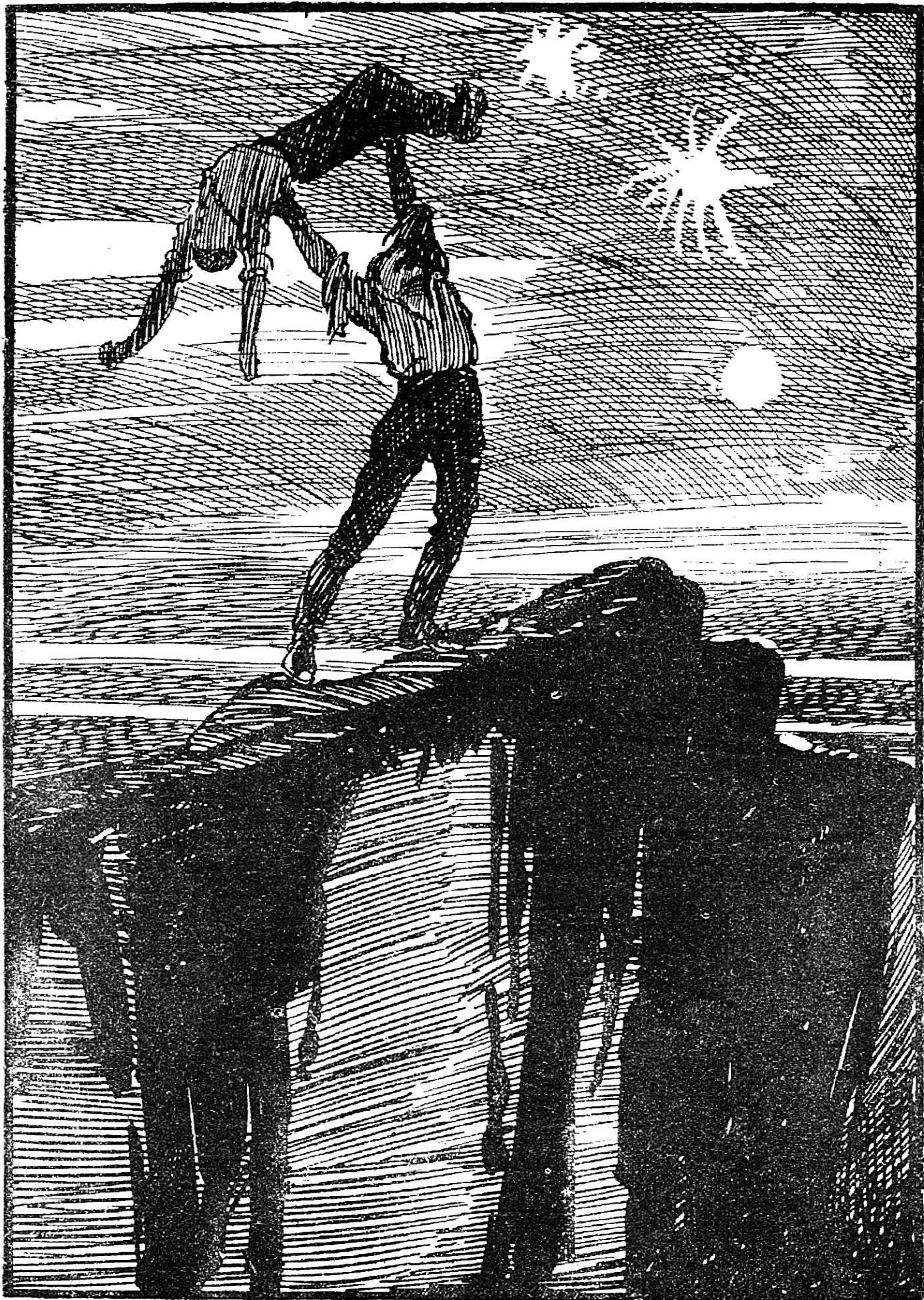
THE ADVENTURES OF CASTAWAY SCHOOLBOYS! SEE THIS WEEK'S STIRRING NARRATIVE!

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And then the pair fought—screaming and cursing.

A tense moment from This Week's thrilling story:—
CAPTAIN HURRICANE'S LAST STAND!



Dorrie was within fifty yards, and already his revolver was within his grip. He was even taking aim when Captain Hurricane raised Nelson Lee high above his head. And there he stood, with Nelson Lee poised on the edge of eternity.

Captain Hurricane's Last Stand!



*Related Throughout
by Nipper.*

Being a thrilling account of the castaway schoolboys and their final adventures on Dorrimore Island. It is the concluding story of the Holiday Adventure series, describing how the Remove of St. Frank's make their escape from their island prison, and how Captain Hurricane, the cold-blooded skipper of the Henry R. Cane, makes a final bid for liberty only to procure for himself a just retribution for his crimes. At last the Holiday Party are homeward bound, arriving back at St. Frank's where many surprises await them.

THE EDITOR.

CHAPTER I.

THE SCHOOLBOY CASTAWAYS!

LOOK OUT!" roared Handforth frantically.

Splash!

The famous leader of Study D executed what he described as a perfect dive. He landed in the water with a mighty swish of foam; and Reggie Pitt and Church and McClure and a few other fellows only just managed to get out of the way in time.

"Reckless ass!" gasped Church. "You might have bilged into us! Diving like that, without giving a second's warning!"

"Diving?" repeated Pitt. "Oh, sorry! I thought he was seeing what it felt like to fall flat!"

By this time Edward Oswald Handforth had risen to the surface. He spluttered violently, swished the water out of his eyes, and looked round at the bobbing forms in the blue water near by.

"That's the way to do it!" he said breathlessly.

"Do what—cause a tidal wave?" grinned De Valerie.

"Fathead!" sneered Handforth. "I was diving!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors of the Remove at St. Frank's continued to disport themselves in the turquoise waters of the bay. Far out into the distance, right to the clear-cut horizon, the wide Pacific stretched.

The juniors were diving from a somewhat rickety-looking staging which had been erected just at the point of the bay, where a few rocks jutted out.

Round the bay itself, dotted about on the silvery sands, were many tents and lean-to sheds, and numbers of wooden cases—the camp of the entire party. And beyond stretched the barren expanse of Dorrimore Island.

Hearing the boys shouting with glee, and with merry laughter in the air, it was very hard to believe that the whole party was marooned on this speck of land in the wide, vast expanse of the Pacific Ocean.

We were, in a way of speaking, castaways—not only the complete Remove, but Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore and Umlosi and all the officers and men of Dorrie's famous steam yacht, the Wanderer.

In spite of the position, the boys were enjoying themselves.

The whole trouble had come about because Dorrie had taken it into his head to probe into the affairs of a certain notorious character named Henry R. Cane—and fanned up and down the Pacific Coast of America as Captain Hurricane. He was the owner and skipper of the schooner bearing his own name.

There was a kind of gold mine on this island. It wasn't a secret, because many big mining concerns had attempted to work it. But it was of a very poor quality, and the cost of production was greater than the results. The project, in fact, was always a losing proposition.

And Captain Hurricane, the brute of the Pacific coast, had evolved a daring, cunning scheme.

He had realised that the mine could be made to pay, and pay handsomely, if the labour of extracting the gold was obtained for nothing. And he had hit upon the extraordinary idea of kidnapping men, bringing them to this desolate island, and sending them to work as slaves.

Wild as the enterprise seemed, it was a big success.

Captain Hurricane had his own crew—as villainous a set of criminals as ever breathed. During the course of many months, Captain Hurricane had succeeded in bringing forty men to the island.

And when we had arrived, we found these unfortunate wretches chained together in gangs, working in conditions of slavery that would have staggered the civilised world—and would do, as soon as the story became public property.

We had had all sorts of adventures.

For a time, we, ourselves, had been captured by the wily skipper. We had even had a taste of slavery. But, turning the tables on Captain Hurricane, we had captured his gang, and released all the slaves.

And that, in fact, was the main cause of the trouble.

These poor fellows—seamen of all nationalities, for the most part—had been leading a life of utter and ghastly misery for months. The mine was situated down in an awful pit—this latter being the centre of the island. To be out of that place was like a breath of Heaven.

And the released slaves, headed by a brute of a fellow named 'Frisco Mike, had overrun the Wanderer, capturing her, and making off. This seemed a very peculiar way of expressing their gratitude for being released.

But their move could easily be understood.

Never hoping to be rescued, their release had come suddenly and unexpectedly—they had become drunk with the glorious freedom. And they knew very little about our party.

'Frisco Mike had suggested the idea that we might merely be rivals of Captain Hurricane, and had come to work that gold-mine for ourselves. 'Frisco Mike, in short, had hinted that we should put all the men to slavery again, and keep them in just the same horrible condition. In all probability, 'Frisco thought this was the truth, for he was a man of brute strength, but little brains.

Considering the suffering these men had had, even Lord Dorrimore could not find it in his heart to be angry. He rather pitied the crowd. It was unfortunate in the extreme that the Wanderer should have been seized and taken away—but the position was not so very hopeless.

Captain Hurricane and his two chief lieutenants, had escaped in their own schooner. These other two men, Mr. Skinner and Mr. Seelig, were their captor's only help on board the sailing-ship. They had fled from the island, and it looked very doubtful as to what the result might be if a tropic storm came up and caught the schooner in its grip.

But that was not our affair. If the schooner foundered with her three men, the world would be considerably refreshed.

But we, who had done practically all the work—who had rescued the forty slaves from their awful servitude—we were left as castaways on the island. But although it was a barren place, with two palm trees as the only vegetation, we were fortunate in possessing a plentiful supply of stores.

At one time Captain Hurricane had decided to sink the Wanderer—but before doing so he intended stripping the yacht of all her stores—foodstuffs, linen, plate, cooking utensils and everything that was easily portable.

The fact that Captain Hurricane had begun putting this plan into execution was very lucky for us. For we had discovered huge piles of stores strewn over the beach.

There was enough food for all of us for a month, at least—and good food, too. The Wanderer's kitchen staff was provided with a tent all to themselves, and so we generally fed at the ordinary hours, and upon excellently prepared grub. We had only a few ordinary items missing from the menus.

We had now been castaways for two days.

And our camp was looking surprisingly shipshape. Captain Hurricane's own tents were being utilised by us. Sleeping accommodation was rather lacking, but this was not a matter which worried the Remove, or any other members of the party. Out there, in the tropics, blankets and such like were not vitally necessary.

A good deal of stuff had been transported out of the pit to the beach, including the dismembered parts of several wooden shacks. All this timber had been brought down in batches, the yacht's crew working with a will.

And now, big operations were in progress. While the juniors were amusing themselves

—mainly by bathing—since this was about the only possible recreation—the men of the party were busy with planks and boards and ropes, the work being superintended by Nelson Lee and Dorrie.

A raft was being constructed.

And it was no ordinary raft, but a huge thing, capable of carrying fully a dozen men in comfort. It was designed with considerable skill, having an upper deck which would be well clear of the water in any moderately calm sea.

We had found large numbers of barrels down near Captain Hurricane's old camp. These barrels were being used in the construction of the raft—lashed into position between two decks.

These barrels, being very buoyant, would float well clear of the water, thus raising the deck fairly high. A rail was being placed all round it, and a kind of mast was being put up.

Right amidships a shack was built. Here protection could be obtained from the sun. And this elaborate raft, moreover, was provided with a rude steering apparatus. Armed with a compass, and any knowledge of navigation, a man would be able to sail the raft in a given direction.

But it would necessarily be a slow business.

"Well, I don't think we can grumble at it, on the whole," said Dorrie, as he regarded the constructional work with a critical eye. As a ship builder, Lee, you're goin' a long way to get a first prize."

Nelson Lee laughed.

"You are paying me a huge compliment, Dorrie, by referring to this crude affair as a ship," he replied. "But it will serve its purpose. It will ride through any ordinary storm without question. And with plenty of food on board, the party will be able to remain at sea for a long period."

"Until they sight another sail, eh?" asked Dorrie.

"That is the only idea of the raft," replied Lee. "We are so far out of the track of ships here that it might be months before any sail appears. But in this raft Mr. Barry's party will be able to navigate into more frequented waters. In the course of a week, with any ordinary luck, they will be in the direct track of shipping. And then, of course, Mr. Barry can attract attention, and soon have a ship here to take us all away."

"A mighty fine scheme," said Dorrie. "So I think we can reckon upon leavin' before so very many days have passed. But that doesn't bring the Wanderer back, does it? An' what shall I do without the old tub?"

Nelson Lee smiled.

"You needn't worry about the Wanderer," he said. "She's gone, Dorrie, but those men won't sink the vessel. They're nearly all seamen, and I believe 'Frisco Mike himself—who is in command—has held a master's ticket. Before being brought to this awful slavery here, he was a fully certificated mate.

So he knows quite enough about navigation to handle the Wanderer. And with forty men—rough though they may be—the yacht will be fully equipped with hands. You'll have the old ship back sooner or later, never fear."

And the cheerful note of Nelson Lee's remarks was quite general among the castaways. We all had the feeling that our troubles would now soon be over. The fact that this big raft was soon to be launched was a great source of interest and satisfaction.

Mr. Barry, the Wanderer's second officer, was to be in command. He would take six men with him, and his instructions were to attract the first ship that he sighted—and bring it to the island. Any old tub would do, just as long as we were able to return to civilisation.

It would indeed be unfortunate if the raft was unable to perform the simple service that was required of it. Sturdily built, it would withstand the shocks of any ordinary ocean storm.

And it was due to be launched on the morrow. By then it would be completed, and Mr. Barry was eager to be off.

Handforth was inclined to be critical, as usual.

"It's a dotty idea!" he declared, as he stood looking at the operations.

"What is?" asked Church.

"Sending out that raft with Mr. Barry and six other men."

"Why, you duffer, it's the best idea of any!" said McClure. "It's going to mean rescue for us—Mr. Lee calculates that it'll only be a week or ten days before Mr. Barry's party return with a ship of some kind."

Handforth sniffed.

"Yes, I know that," he said. "But that's nothing. Why couldn't we be on the raft—that's what I want to know?"

"Better ask Mr. Lee," said Church sarcastically.

"I have done—and he just laughed at me!" exclaimed Handforth, with a snort. "What do you think of that? He laughed at me!"

"Awful!" said Church and McClure.

"And it wasn't as if I'd made a dotty suggestion, either," continued Handforth, becoming somewhat indignant. "Instead of being left on the island, we ought to go on the raft, so that we can get straight on to a passing liner. If we did that we should be on our way across the Atlantic in no time."

"The Atlantic?" asked Pitt, who was standing near by.

"Of course—that's the way home, isn't it?"

"Considering that the Atlantic's on the other side of the world, we should have a bit of trouble in finding that liner!" grinned Pitt. "I'm afraid your geographical knowledge is horribly shaky, old man."

Handforth glared.

"My hat!" he said, exasperated. "I've

never known such chaps? Quibbling about a mere word!"

"Or a mere ocean or two!" grinned Pitt.

"I don't care whether it's the Pacific Ocean or the Atlantic Ocean!" roared Handforth. "All I know is that we want to get home—and if we don't buck up we shall be late for the new term. I don't mind telling you chaps, I'm a bit fed up with all this globe-trotting."

Church and McClure sighed.

"Same here," said Church. "Oh, for a sight of dear old England again!"

"Don't!" said Pitt. "It makes me see pictures of green fields, and hedges, and winding country lanes and—St. Frank's! By Jove! It'll be ripping to get back to the old place."

"Rather!"

"Football!" said Pitt dreamily. "Football, with Handy in goal, and Nipper playing centre-forward. Me on the outside left! Go it! Over to me, Jack! Now we're off—here it comes, Nipper! Buzz her in! Good!"

"Goal!" roared Handforth.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Great pip!" said Handforth. "I can almost see it! You—you giddy ass!" he added, glaring at Pitt. "Talking about St. Frank's, and football, and we're stuck here as helpless as Robinson Crusoe! It seems to me that whenever we come out to the Tropics, we get cast away on a desert isle!"

"Well, we've had the experience before, but not like this," chuckled Reggie Pitt. "Cheer up, old man. We'll soon be on our way back to the old country—and then for football and all the joys of the Autumn term at St. Frank's."

To the juniors on the island it seemed a dream—but it wasn't. Before very long we should all be speeding homewards, and in a surprisingly short time Reggie's mental picture would be a reality.

But we hadn't quite finished with Captain Hurricane yet.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIGHT ON THE WANDERER!



"LUMMY! All you blokes is barmy!" declared Mr. Hawkins contemptuously. "I've seed a few idjits in my time, but you fair take the bloomin' bun! Why, you ain't got no more sense than wot a pack of insects has!"

And, having expressed himself in these uncomplimentary terms, Mr. Hawkins, A.B., turned away and spat overside with unnecessary vehemence. The men who had been listening to him looked rather uncomfortable.

They were all lounging for'ard on the deck of the Wanderer, and the steam yacht was gliding steadily along through the crystal waters of the Pacific. She was only going at half speed, and her decks were looking somewhat littered and untidy. The brass-work was dull, and there was an unkempt

appearance about her. Otherwise she was quite her old self.

Mr. Hawkins and the group with him were off duty.

Even among this rough crowd of ex-slaves, there was some kind of order. 'Frisco Mike, who had appointed himself commander of the yacht, insisted upon watches being kept. Any man who resisted felt the weight of 'Frisco's enormous fist. The man was a kind of second Handforth when it came to fighting. In all other respects a comparison would have been an insult to Edward Oswald.

Mr. Hawkins turned, and looked at the eight or nine men who were lounging there, smoking. He had half expected them to reply, but as they did not do so, he felt encouraged to continue.

Mr. Hawkins was one of the few British seamen among the party. He had been one of those slaves—having been kidnapped by Captain Hurricane six months before. Mr. Hawkins had passed through a terrible experience, but he had managed to keep his head.

"Blowed if I can make you out!" he went on. "'Tain't as if you was a crowd of kids! You're men—chaps wot 'as sailed in many a ship. An' you ain't sufferin' from no excitement now, neither."

"We sure done the best thing, Ted!" said one of the others. "'Frisco's the boss, anyways, an' I guess there's no sense in kickin'."

"That's wot you all sez!" growled Mr. Hawkins. "But I'd like to know why this 'ere' Frisco is the bloomin' boss? 'E's only one of us—'e ain't no better! And you ain't got a spark of decency in any of you. You aint better than a lot of crooks!"

"Say, you'd best quit that dope!" growled a man.

"Yus, an you'll make me, won't yer?" demanded Ted Hawkins. "Come on! Let's see yer do it! Bloomin' 'arf-starved rat! I'll say wot I likes—see? I'll call yer wot I thinks I will—see? An' I can tell yer straight out I ain't never seed such a bloomin' pile of rubbish as you chaps!"

The men growled and muttered.

"It's all very well to talk, Ted!" grunted one of them. "But, look at it as you like, 'Frisco did the right thing. For all we know them guys who set us free might have put us back to slavery—"

"Crumbs!" ejaculated Mr. Hawkins, in disgust. "That's sense, ain't it?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why, about Mr. Lee, and that there lord, and the others—the crowd wot really owns this yacht!" said the A.B. "Just because 'Frisco Mike shoves a lot of bunkum into your 'eads, you believe 'im! I ain't got no bloomin' patience! Didn't that there officer chap come and set us all free? Didn't he take our chains off, and say as 'ow we was at liberty?"

"You know he did—"

"Then wot's the idea of talkin' about slavery?" demanded Mr. Hawkins. "If them chaps 'ad meant us to remain slaves,

they wouldn't 'ave unchained us. Not likely! I tell you, the 'ole thing's wrong! Wot we ought to do is to go back, and 'and the yacht over. We'll chuck 'Frisco Mike overboard if he ain't careful!"

"He sure is playin' blazes around this craft," said one of the others.

"I ain't sayin' anything agin 'Frisco as a bloke who can look arter the ship," went on Hawkins. "That ain't the question. But wot I sez is this 'ere: 'e ain't got no right to pinch this yacht, an' leave them coves on the island. Lummy! They come there to rescue us, an' all we can do is to leave 'em in the bloomin' lurch! 'Tain't matey! 'Tain't doin' the square thing."

"We don't want to go back to that all-fired slavery!" retorted one.

"You betcha we don't!" said another.

"We ain't taking any chances!" declared another.

impressed. They were just beginning to realise that this man was right; they had done the wrong thing by coming away in the yacht. All the men were of the uneducated, ignorant type, and they were obstinate.

"An' look 'ere, too," went on Ted Hawkins, seizing his advantage. "There's another thing wot you fellers ain't thought of. Wot's goin' to become of us—hey? Answer me that question!"

"We'll get took aboard another ship soon——"

"Yus, an' took to 'Frisco or Los Angeles an' 'anded over to the cops," said Mr. Hawkins sourly. "That's wot'll 'appen to us, mates! A bloomin' crowd of 'arf-starved tramps like us! No skipper—no officers—no engineers! Like as not we'll be took for mutineers, an' shoved straight into chokey! But if we do the right thing, an' go back to the island?"



When the boat was within a few hundred yards, there came another surprise. A light appeared in one of the portholes!

"Takin' chances!" repeated Mr. Hawkins fluently, in exasperation. "Strike me pink! I'm blowed if you idjits don't make me wild! Look 'ere! We come away on this yacht, which ain't ours—leavin' the chaps wot 'elped us on the island! That's rotten, to begin with. Them fellers is the right sort, an' don't you forgit it! British, they are—the good ole Bull-dog Breed! See? Them boys, too! Reg'lar matey young fellers, if ever there was! An' they're all left down there in that pit—prisoners! Crikey! Wot a darned shame to treat 'em like that! I tells yer straight, mates—it's a filthy trick! That's wot it is! You ain't no better than a crowd of ungrateful dawgs!"

Mr. Hawkins spoke with bitterness and rising anger. And his listeners were rather

"Wait a minute, Ted," interrupted one of the others. "If we get rid of 'Frisco Mike, who's going to navigate the ship back to the island?"

"Me," said Mr. Hawkins promptly.

"Aw, gwan!" growled the fellow. "You ain't no sailor!"

"If I wasn't afeared of raisin' a racket I'd swipe you for that," said Mr. Hawkins grimly. "I ain't no sailor, hey? Bust my buttons! An' I've lived on the bloomin' sea ever since I was a kid! 'Eld a third mate's ticket once, too! I'd 'a' been skipper of my own ship by now if it 'adn't been for the rotten booze! That's what done me in—that's wot put me in Cap'n 'Urricane's clutches! But I'm capable o' steerin' a ship, an' I knows the compass, an' I can work out

our position by dead reckonin', an' then git back to the island. Lummy! A blind land-lubber could git back to that place—we ain't left it more'n a day! Well, mates, are you with me or not?"

The men hesitated.

"Tell you wot," went on Hawkins. "Talk to the others, an' see wot they sez. Then we'll meet together to-night, arter the second watch. If there's thirty of us we'll turn on 'Frisco. See? An' if you blokes has got the sense you oughter 'ave, you'll git all the supporters you can."

Mr. Hawkins considered that he had said enough. And he turned away, and gazed over the water. The men gradually went away in different directions. And nothing further could be done until later in the evening.

It was all dark, and the Wanderer was steaming along at only half speed, when the time for the second meeting arrived. 'Frisco Mike was taking a spell below, having put the wheel in the hands of one of his own special supporters.

'Frisco had been drinking heavily, and was now sleeping like a log. Everything was going smoothly—the yacht moving through the water at an easy pace, with her engines in the care of men who knew something about their job.

Mr. Hawkins was supposed to be at work in the stokehold, but he left this, accompanied by every other man who had been working there. Mr. Hawkins had brought them all round to his own view.

In fact, a real mutiny against 'Frisco Mike was in the wind.

On deck, for'ard, other men had gathered. Ted Hawkins was more delighted than he could say. For, with himself, there were twenty-five men in this crowd. The majority of them had left their posts in order to attend the meeting. It meant that there were only fifteen non-partisans in the movement. Of these fifteen, five were sleeping, two were on the bridge, and the rest below.

"Mates, I knew as 'ow you wouldn't fail!" said Mr. Hawkins. "Look at it which way you will, the best thing we can do is to go back to the island. Good for you! It won't take us no time to git control."

"All right, Ted—we're ready!"

"Sure!"

"We ain't going to be sent to prison!"

"We'll go back to the island, and get things straight!"

The others agreed, and while they were talking two more men came up to join them. Mr. Hawkins, being a seaman, was a bit superstitious. He grinned amiably as this pair arrived.

"Lummy, that's good!" he said. "That only leaves thirteen! See, mates? 'Frisco's gang only makes thirteen—an' that's a bloomin' unlucky number! It won't take us a jiffy to wipe 'em up!"

One of the men on the bridge had been looking at the crowd for'ard for some minutes, and now he came down the ladder,

and joined the group. He was a big, burly fellow.

"What's this?" he demanded harshly. "Listenin' to that English hobo again? Gee! You've sure got fool ideas into your heads! Cut this guy out, and get back to your jobs!"

"Grab 'im, mates!" said Mr. Hawkins curtly. "'E's one o' the wust!"

The newcomer was seized on the spot, and in spite of his yells, he was forced into submission. He was finally silenced in the most simple manner possible—for one of the mutineers delivered a fearful kick which caught the unfortunate man on the front of the head.

The affair had started now—and there was no drawing back!

The next man to go was the one who had command of the wheel on the bridge. A crowd, led by Hawkins, went down to the engine-room. Here four others were seized and roped up.

In the meantime the rest had been made prisoners—with the single exception of 'Frisco Mike. And he, awakened out of his drunken sleep by the unusual commotion, was just coming on deck.

He looked round, and it took him only a few moments to realise the truth. The Wanderer's engines were silent, and there was nobody at the helm. She was just drifting.

"By gosh!" roared 'Frisco violently. "What's this? Mutiny, you doggone hoboes! Say, this is the work of that blamed English guy! I'll sure choke the life out of him—the durned skunk!"

"Ho, you will, will yer?" shouted Mr. Hawkins, striding up. "All right, me lad—try it on! Lummy! If I was afraid o' you, I'd be no good for anythink! You sloshed me once, but I wasn't prepared for yer."

Hawkins didn't wait for the burly American to attack. Hawkins himself rushed in—for he considered that it would be a big victory if he defeated 'Frisco Mike single-handed—and it would also make his supporters stick to him.

It was a grim business.

'Frisco Mike was the better man, but his brain was still slightly befuddled with drink—he had not regained all his swiftness of movement. And this disadvantage enabled Mr. Hawkins to make rings round the fellow.

One blow from 'Frisco's mighty fist would have knocked the A.B. clean out—but Hawkins was as nimble as a squirrel, and dodged this way and that, avoiding every one of Mike's deadly thrusts.

He could never have done this if Mike had been in his usual condition. And, finding that all his blows went astray, 'Frisco became desperate. He commenced kicking wildly.

And this, indeed, was his undoing.

Quick as a flash, Hawkins seized the man's foot as he kicked. With one heave, Hawkins pulled, and 'Frisco Mike crashed over on his

back. His head struck the deck with a fearful thud.

"I reckon that's finished you, mate!" panted Mr. Hawkins.

And it had.

'Frisco Mike lay there, groaning—too beaten to even move. He was pounced upon at once, and hustled straight to the side of the ship. One of the bigger lifeboats had been lowered—at the orders of Mr. Hawkins. And it was now lying there close up against the yacht. But for the steady Pacific swell, the sea was smooth and calm.

"Over with him, mates!" said Hawkins curtly.

'Frisco Mike was just coming round. He was pushed over the side, and ordered to cling on to a rope. He either had to cling or fall—one or the other. He pulled himself together sufficiently to make the descent.

The others were bundled down after him—eleven altogether. For one of the fatal thirteen had turned completely round, and was willing enough to place himself under Hawkins' orders.

The twelve cursed and swore violently. They were true to 'Frisco Mike, and Hawkins wouldn't have had them on board in any case. They were all lowered into the boat.

"I ain't takin' no chances!" said Mr. Hawkins. "I might have kept you blokes on board—but it's too risky. Like as not you'd get out, and then we'd 'ave the whole trouble over agin. Best place for you is in that there boat, where you can't do no 'arm."

"Say, cut out this foolery!" shouted one of the victims. "I guess we'll go back to the island! We won't turn on you, Hawkins!"

The A.B. nodded.

"You won't 'ave no chance!" he replied. "When I sez a thing, I means it! An' I ain't 'avin' none o' you scum on board this ship! It was you wot supported 'Frisco when all those innocent chaps was left on the island. You needn't get the wind up—you won't come to no 'arm!"

Hawkins had prepared everything, and plentiful supplies of water and food were lowered down into the boat. There would be enough to last the twelve men a full month, and the lifeboat itself was big and seaworthy. Sooner or later they would be picked up by some vessel.

And as the lifeboat drifted away from the yacht's side, 'Frisco Mike recovered his full senses. He raved and cursed in vain. And he only had himself to thank for this terrible state of affairs.

If he had acted right in the beginning, he would have suffered no fate such as this. He had had no justification for seizing the yacht, and now he was paying the penalty.

Hawkins had had the right idea from the very first. He was now about to do the correct thing—to find his way back to the island, and rescue the good people who had done so much for the unfortunate slaves.

Within twenty minutes Hawkins had his

watches arranged. Men were sent below into the stokehold and engine-room, and Hawkins himself took the wheel.

And soon the Wanderer was under way again. She turned about, and steamed back into the direction of the island. And all the men on board were feeling rather relieved.

The responsibility of this yacht was beginning to awe them slightly. They would prefer to hand it back to its rightful owners. Hawkins had fully convinced them all, by this time, that it was the only right thing to do.

As for 'Frisco Mike and his own particular friends, they were helpless. In that lifeboat there was no danger of death from thirst or starvation—no danger of capsizing in a storm.

Sooner or later they were certain to come within sight of a sail.

But nobody guessed what was to be the result of this unexpected change. For Fate was working things out in a strange manner.

CHAPTER III.

HAWKINS TURNS UP TRUMPS!



CLANG—Clang!

The sound came drifting across the sunlit beach from the encampment—a kind of clattering noise made by a piece of rock hammering against an old tin can. And this, indeed, was the actual source of the sound.

Fatty Little, who was bathing, gave a violent start.

"Lunch!" he gasped frantically.

He commenced dashing out of the water as if half a dozen sharks were after him. He blundered into Handforth and Pitt, and one or two others.

"Ass!" snapped Handforth. "What's the idea of going mad?"

"It's lunch time!" panted Fatty. "Didn't you hear the gong?"

"Of course I did; but that's no reason to bash into me," said Handforth. "Besides, you can't eat any lunch! I saw you wolfing biscuits and things less than half an hour ago!"

"Leggo!" said Fatty wildly, as Handforth clutched at him. "I think it must be the air, you know. I get as hungry as anything on this island. It's given me a terrific appetite."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Fatty apparently thought that he had had no appetite previously.

He and the others soon arrived in the camp, and they found an excellent luncheon all prepared by the Wanderer's regular kitchen staff. Stewards were there, ready to wait upon the party. For discipline was being maintained, just the same as on board ship.

It was a special occasion. For the raft was fully completed, and all ready to be launched. She lay there, in the bay, look-

ing quite an imposing craft—with her mast, all equipped with a makeshift sail, with her little charthouse, and with the surrounding rail.

She floated well out of the water, so that her "deck" would never be awash, except in a fairly rough sea. Mr. Barry, the second officer of the Wanderer, was fully prepared for his trip, and the men who were going with him were quite eager to be off. They regarded it an honour that they had been chosen.

There had been some talk of delaying the actual start until the dawn of the next morning, but Mr. Barry would not hear of this. He was determined to go at once.

of the island. And as Pitt looked, he flushed.

"The look-out's signalling, sir!" he exclaimed quickly. "Look! He's waving like mad!"

"By gad," said Dorrie, "so he is!"

Everybody stared up at the figure which was plainly visible on the top of the hill. Night and day a look-out man was kept there, besides a temporary flagstaff, from the top of which fluttered an improvised signal of distress.

"My only hat! Perhaps he's seen a sail!"

"Let's rush up and see!"

"Hurrah!"

"Steady, boys—steady!" shouted Nelson

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And the voyage was due to begin immediately after lunch.

It was a kind of farewell feast—a big send off.

And the juniors ate with unusually hearty appetites. They felt that their troubles would soon be at an end. Once the raft was gone, it would only be a matter of a few days before rescue would come.

"Nothin' to worry over now," said Dorrie easily. "Of course, this has messed up our plans a bit—all this delay—but these little things are sent to try us. We'll be laughin' at our troubles before long."

Reggie Pitt looked up suddenly, and gazed towards the top of the hill—the steep, rocky prominence which formed the centre

Lee. "There's no need to get excited. Perhaps there's no—"

But it was quite useless for Nelson Lee to talk. All the juniors with the exception of Fatty Little had left their places, and were rushing up the rocky slope. Fatty preferred to eat his lunch in comfort.

The look-out man was signalling so excitedly that even Lord Dorrimore and Nelson Lee began to believe that something special was in the wind. They hurried up the slope, too.

Handforth and Co. were first to reach the top, with Tommy Watson and myself almost on their heels. Quite close here was that deep, grim pit—that awful chasm with a sheer drop of five hundred feet—where

Captain Hurricane had kept his unfortunate slaves. But we didn't give it a look or a thought.

We gazed out to sea.

"It's a sail—a ship!" yelled Handforth joyfully.

"Hurrah!"

"Coming this way, too!"

"My goodness! So it is!"

There was no question whatever that the look-out and the juniors were right. Far away, and still hull down on the horizon, a tiny speck was to be seen. As yet it was impossible to judge what kind of a vessel this ship happened to be—except for the one comforting fact that she was a steamer. For smoke was rising in the clear, blue sky.

It was this smudge of smoke that had first caught the look-out's attention.

It wasn't long before almost every member of the party was on the hill top with the luncheon completely forgotten. It looked very much as though Mr. Barry would not have to go on his journey, after all.

"She's getting nearer!" said Handforth.

And we all continued to watch—eagerly and intently. And, at length, we could even make out her shape, and form a rough estimate of her size and design. The vessel was coming straight towards the island.

And as I looked, I suspected something. At first I thought I was mistaken—it seemed too good to be true. I certainly didn't want to raise false hopes. I went over to Lord Dorrimore, and touched his arm.

"Dorrie!" I whispered. "I believe she's the Wanderer!"

His lordship grinned.

"That's what I was thinkin', my lad, but it seems too good to be true," he replied. "Gad! That would be fine, wouldn't it? The Wanderer! Between you an' me, old son, there's not a question about it?"

"You really think——"

"I know!" said his lordship. "By the Lord Harry! Do you think I don't know my own boat? I even recognise her smoke?"

And the truth soon got out.

The excitement, of course, was even intensified. Not only were the juniors half dotty with joy, but all the members of the crew cheered and capered about with just as much vim and enthusiasm as the Removites.

"The Wanderer—and she's coming straight here!"

"Hurrah!"

"Now we'll soon be off!"

"But what does it mean?" demanded Handforth. "Why is she coming back so soon? Perhaps those rotters on board have come back to fight, or something? If so, we're jolly well ready for them!"

But there was no question of fighting.

For after an hour had elapsed, the Wanderer was once again in the bay. Her anchor was lowered, and she lay there, look-

ing hardly any the worse for her adventures.

Two boats put off, and in the foremost of them was Mr. Ted Hawkins—looking very spruce and clean for the occasion. He had just had a shave, his hair was neatly brushed, and he was wearing a new sailor's uniform that he had found in the men's quarters.

As he jumped out of the boat, he found Nelson Lee and Dorrie waiting on the beach, with Captain McDodd, Mr. Barry, and the other yacht's officers. Hawkins smartly saluted.

"Brought the ship back, sir!" he said respectfully.

"So I observe, my man," said Dorrie. "But what's the idea? I wouldn't dream of troublin' you, but I'd really like to know why you went away at all? I'm rather curious on the matter."

"Wasn't me, sir—'Frisco Mike 'ad charge then," replied Mr. Hawkins. "'E done it, sir. Took the yacht, an' all these blokes was kind of barmy. But they've 'ad some sense knocked into 'em by now, sir. Soon as I got command, I thought the best thing was to come back 'ere."

And Mr. Hawkins saluted again.

"What part did you come from—Rotherhithe?" asked his lordship.

"No, sir—Wapping."

"Thought I wasn't far wrong," grinned Dorrie. "Well, you seem to be the right sort, old man. I shall certainly see that you are fully rewarded for your common-sense attitude, an' your honesty. An' the task of bringin' this yacht back was no light one. There might be an openin' for you in the crew of my yacht."

Mr. Hawkins' eyes sparkled joyfully.

"You mean it, sir?" he asked eagerly. "Lummy! I'd be in luck, then!"

Captain McDodd lost no time in taking the chief engineer and Mr. Barry. And they forthwith went on board. Mr. Colgate, the chief officer, had gone in advance. And it was soon known that the Wanderer was unharmed.

Untidy, with dull brasswork, but materially she was the same as ever.

Captain McDodd was a new man when he felt the sturdy deck planks beneath his feet. He had been lost without his beloved yacht. And within half an hour the entire crew were at work.

The men went into their task with terrific energy. They had not expected this wonderful stroke of good fortune, and they were more than eager to make up for lost time.

Mr. Hawkins told the full story of what had happened.

"I don't altogether agree with your move in setting 'Frisco Mike and his companions adrift," said Nelson Lee, at length. "It would have been better if you had imprisoned them below."

"Too risky, sir," declared Hawkins.

"Wot with a crowd of blokes like this 'ere, there ain't no certainty of 'em stickin' by. Most of 'em is tramps and such like, and they're as iggerant as blackies! Lummy! I ain't arf 'ad a time with 'em. You'd never believe, sir!"

"There's no need to worry about that boatload, old man," said Dorrie. "They were provided with plenty of water and food, an' they're bound to be picked up by some ship or other."

Everybody was supremely happy.

This meant that everything was now all serene—the return of the yacht made things smooth and easy for us. For we should be able to leave the island within twenty-four hours now.

Besides that, there was the eminently satisfactory feeling that we should soon be homeward bound. Although the fellows didn't like to admit it, many of them were becoming astonishingly homesick.

Any mention of England caused them to discuss the Old Country eagerly and with voices that clearly expressed their longing. And the prospect of an early return was decidedly alluring. And now there was no further obstacle in the way—the path was smooth.

Nelson Lee, of course, would decide what was to be done with all these men—the ex-slaves of Captain Hurricane. Furthermore, there were the prisoners down in that chasm—members of Captain Hurricane's band who were now being kept in captivity. They had to be dealt with.

But, as far as the juniors were concerned, they had no further worries whatever. Nelson Lee was soon on board the Wanderer, and his first visit was to the wireless-room. To his great satisfaction, he found that everything was in order. The apparatus was in no way harmed.

And, without delay, Lee sent messages broadcast, instructing all vessels to be on the look-out for Captain Hurricane's schooner, and also the open boat containing 'Frisco Mike and his companions.

Replies came from one or two ships, but the most interesting of all was from a British naval vessel—a light cruiser which was comparatively close at hand. Lee obtained her position, and found that she was at no greater distance than thirty miles, on her way to one of the outlying posts of the British Empire.

Word was received from this cruiser that she would at once alter her course, and search for the schooner and the boat.

"Well, of course, everythin' in the garden's lovely," declared Lord Dorrimore, when he heard this piece of news. "Gad! It's funny how these things come all at once. A few hours ago we were lonely castaways, with no prospect of communicating with the outside world. An' now we're standin' on the good old Wanderer, an' we've just been in communication with half

a dozen ships—includin', if you please, a British cruiser!"

Nelson Lee smiled.

"Yes, Dorrie, things do happen like that," he replied. "And I think we can safely say that our worries are now completely ended."

"Absolutely!" agreed Lord Dorrimore.

But there's many a slip—

CHAPTER IV.

'FRISCO MIKE'S REVENGE!



CAPTAIN HURRICANE swore with lurid fluency.

"I'll have my time yet!" he declared. "Ey gosh! Those guys figger I'm beat; but I'm not the kind of feller to play second fiddle! Gee! When my time comes they'll sure wish they'd never been born!"

Mr. Seelig, the mate, grunted.

"Aw, cut it out, cap!" he exclaimed gruffly. "That kind of talk cuts no ice. Guess we've got to hand it to the bunch that they've got us beat. Say, what's the good of thinking anything else?"

"Guess I'm with you, Seelig," said the third member of the party. "Best thing we can do is to quit—make for the Solomon Islands, or one o' them groups. I figger these waters ain't safe for us. Gee, cap, you kinder make me tired! When a man's down, the best thing he can do is to admit it!"

Captain Hurricane brought his fist down with a crash on the cabin table.

"Down, am I?" he snarled. "By heck! We'll see who's right!"

He swallowed a big gulp of neat rum, and proceeded to rave violently and at random. He was nearly drunk, and was going the right way to become almost incapable. His two companions were rather more cautious.

The schooner, Henry R. Cane, was lying listlessly upon the ocean. At the time there was practically no wind, and the disreputable old vessel lay there with sails that slatted idly in the gentle breeze. Her wheel was lashed, and she just managed to keep a certain amount of steerage way.

These three men were the sole occupants of the schooner.

They had escaped from the island when the catastrophe had come. The other members of the crew had been left behind. In the case of a sudden storm, the schooner was hopelessly undermanned, and it would be a bad thing for these three, indeed.

The captain was in such a state that he didn't care what happened.

But the mate and the other man had rather more thought for their own skins. They refrained from getting entirely drunk—in case a tropic storm should suddenly blow up. Left to herself, the schooner would undoubtedly founder, if called upon to fight against a typhoon, or some such atmospheric disturbance.

There seemed no prospect of it at present. The weather was gloriously calm, and the glass was steady. The absence of wind made progress very slow. Moreover, Captain Hurricane had not even troubled to set the sails with any care. And the schooner was just ambling along at a bare two knots to the hour.

The three men were down in the cabin. It was evening, and the light was rapidly failing. None of the trio cared anything about seeing to the ship's lights. They just sat in the cabin, talking and drinking.

For, indeed, they had lost everything.

They were lucky enough to have got away at all. Each one of these men was a murderer. During the course of the last six months, while they had developed their scheme of slavery, more than one unfortunate wretch had lost his life. And these cold-hearted villains were directly responsible. They were brutal murderers, every one.

Even Captain Hurricane himself knew that the game was up. He told himself constantly that he would have his revenge—that he would go back to that island, and continue the scheme. But he knew, in his stony heart, that all such ideas were mere dreams.

The end had come—and the only thing was to flee.

And the schooner was idly dallying—and would continue to do so until the skipper came out of this drunken orgy. From experience, the mate knew that Captain Hurricane would not be himself until two or three days had elapsed. Then he would throw the drink aside, and become intensely active. And the only thing was to make for one of those groups of islands in the wide Pacific. Perhaps it would be possible to obtain a living by means of trading. In any case, a return to San Francisco or Los Angeles was out of the question. These men had only to set foot in either of those ports, and arrest would follow. Both Skinner and Seelig knew this full well.

The trio was not a happy one.

They constantly bickered and argued. Again and again they went over all the adventures that had happened. And Captain Hurricane roundly abused his two cronies for failing him.

Indeed, on more than one occasion, it seemed as though an open quarrel would result. Snarling at one another, hour after hour, this seemed to be the inevitable result—it was bound to come, sooner or later.

But at present they were just managing to maintain peace.

And it was necessary, too. For unless these three clung together, death would almost certainly result. The schooner would never reach the islands of the Southern Pacific without encountering two or three storms. And the old schooner was by no means an easy craft to handle in bad weather. Undermanned, she would require



And these were the men who had caused the torture! They were there—the three of them—Captain Hurricane, Skinner and Seelig. And all three were sprawling in awkward attitudes in the cabin.

every attention to bring her safely through.

And each man knew this—and they all feared death. Each one was unfit to live, and yet they were afraid to die. They had lived lives of the most vile and atrocious character.

Misfortune had now come upon them. Just when they had been at the height of their prosperity, this blow had come. It was retribution, for that prosperity had been gained by means that were inhuman and foul.

And while they thus sat round the cabin table, the schooner lay there upon the calm waters. And, far away, almost invisible, there was a tiny speck. Through a telescope this speck would have revealed itself as a boat.

But the villainous trio were below—and saw nothing.

In that boat were twelve men—'Frisco Mike and the others who had been set adrift by Ted Hawkins. They were not an extremely merry crowd. But they were certainly sober—for they had no means of being otherwise.

Their boat contained a plentiful supply of food and water—but not a drop of intoxicating liquor.

They had been adrift for many hours, and darkness was now approaching. For the greater part of the day they had quarrelled with one another. 'Frisco Mike had been condemned again and again for leading them all into this predicament. And Mike had laid out more than one man. He was still the leader—he allowed no insubordination.

"A crowd of snivellin' skunks—that's what you are!" he said contemptuously. "As for them guys who put us here—I guess I've got something for them! I'll sure mark every one of 'em!"

"Yes—if we see land again!" growled one of the others. "By the look of things, we shall go to the bottom! There's not much chance of sighting any ship in these waters."

"And, say, what's going to happen when we do sight a ship?" asked another man. "I guess we'll have a heap of difficulty, explaining things. Gee! We sure were dog-gone mutts to monkey around with that yacht."

"Quit that talk!" snapped 'Frisco Mike. "Get busy on the oar, you! I sure figure it's time for your spell, anyway!"

The fellow grunted, but obeyed. He knew very well that if he didn't he would be knocked out. Life in the boat was exceedingly charming. 'Frisco Mike compelled the others to take turns at the oars.

If they had chosen, they could have joined forces and thrown Mike overboard. But they all knew that this would be fatal. For the burly ruffian was the only man amongst them who knew anything about navigation. 'Frisco fully realised his power, and used it.

The short tropic twilight was near at hand. And one of the men, who had stood up to shift his position, suddenly gave a hoarse cry.

"Sail-ho!" he shouted, his voice cracking with excitement.

Instantly half the men were on their feet, and the boat was rocking dangerously.

"Sit down, you scum!" roared 'Frisco. "Are you tryin' to capsize us, or what? Holy gee! You're sure right! There's a sail 'way over to stabbord!"

He stared eagerly, his evil eyes lighting up with hope.

The ship was far distant, and almost lost in the slight haze of coming night. She was a sailing vessel of some kind, and appeared to be making little or no headway.

But it was impossible to tell at such a distance.

"Now then, you swabs!" roared 'Frisco. "Get busy on them oars! All hands, mind you! We'll sure make this ship right now—or we'll lose her. She don't seem to be showing any durned lights."

The men needed no ordering.

They were only too willing to work, and every oar was wielded with full energy. It was bad enough to be in this open boat, with prospects of storms and sudden tropic hurricanes.

It would be good to feel a solid deck beneath their feet. This ship would certainly

take them on board. And once land was reached they wouldn't care. There would be a way out of the difficulties somehow.

The boat fairly flew through the water.

And as darkness was descending in real earnest, it came within a short distance of the vessel—which now revealed herself as a schooner. There was still just a little daylight left.

And 'Frisco Mike stared hard at the ship.

He could see her lying there, outlined against the fading sky. He could see her masts, sails, and the general cut of her. And memories were stirred within him. The man suddenly clenched his teeth.

"By gosh!" he muttered. "She's the Henry R. Cane!"

"What!" said those near him.

"Sure!" went on 'Frisco. "This is Captain Hurricane's old schooner. Guess I'd know her among a dozen! Say, but what's the blamed idea? Not a light showing—and she's not moving!"

"Gee! It sure looks queer!" muttered one of the others uneasily.

There was, indeed, something strange and uncanny about the appearance of this schooner. Perhaps the gloom lent somewhat to this effect. But there was no doubt at all that the vessel had a strange appearance.

There was absolutely no sign of life on her decks.

She carried no lights, her sails were slatting idly as she rose and fell with the oily motion of the sea. And her general appearance was one of untidiness and desertion.

"She's sure a ghost ship!" said one man, shivering.

"Cut out that dope!" snarled 'Frisco Mike. "This craft's the Henry R. Cane—and it sure seems to me that she's just driftin'. Say, I reckon she must have dragged her anchor off the island, and got adrift with no hands on board! By gosh! It's a bit of luck for us!"

'Frisco Mike was highly elated. He believed that his surmise was correct. There was certainly no indication of life on board. The schooner was like a dead thing, idly drifting on the calm sea.

But then, when the boat was within a few hundred yards, there came another surprise.

A light appeared in one of the portholes!

"Gee!" muttered 'Frisco. "She ain't deserted, after all! Say, go easy—let them oars rest a minute. I'm figgerin' that Captain Hurricane's on board."

Some of the men started back, with scared glances.

That name was a terrible one to them. They had received nothing but torture from Captain Hurricane. The very mention of his name was enough to frighten them. They had been slaves for so long that they could not realise that victory was theirs.

'Frisco Mike examined the schooner closely as they silently slid nearer and nearer. He had cautioned the men to remain absolutely quiet. On the deck of the ship

there was no sign of human life. The wheel was deserted. Where one would expect men to be, there were no men.

"Say, it's durned queer!" muttered 'Frisco. "I guess we'll slip alongside, and make fast. Then I'll creep on board, and look around. You guys will wait, and get ready for action."

The rest made no objection—they were not very keen upon stepping on board this ill-famed craft. It was the one that had brought them from freedom into slavery. Their memories of it were painful.

With scarcely a bump, the boat touched the schooner's side. She was held fast there, and 'Frisco Mike stealthily scrambled on board. He crouched there for a few seconds, gazing up and down the decks.

Everywhere, the ship was deserted.

But a light gleamed upwards from the cabin skylight. Mike crept forward cautiously. Obviously, there were men below—but it was quite clear that the only human beings on board were in the skipper's cabin. Everywhere else the vessel was dark and silent.

As 'Frisco crept along the deck the only sounds were those of the creaking spars, caused as the schooner jogged idly up and down to the swell. And then 'Frisco Mike arrived at the skylight.

It stood wide open, and he peered down.

"Gosh!" he breathed. "The three of 'em! Say, I figger this is where we sure get our revenge! The doggone skunks will—pay!"

'Frisco spoke in a low, vibrating whisper. In those few seconds he pictured himself as he had been down in that terrible pit—chained to a gang, compelled to work twelve hours a day—lashed and whipped if he dared to offer the slightest resistance.

And these were the men who had caused the torture! They were there—the three of them—Captain Hurricane, Skinner and Seelig. And all three were sprawling in awkward attitudes in the cabin.

Captain Hurricane was obviously dead drunk. The mate was in a condition which was nearly as bad, and Mr. Skinner was helping himself to another drink with an unsteady hand.

And nobody else was on board!

'Frisco Mike dragged himself away, and swiftly ran along the deck. He leaned over the side and stared into the boat.

"Up you come—the whole crowd!" he called softly. "Say, no noise! I guess we've got these durned guys just where we want 'em! The skipper, Seelig and Skinner! Gee! We'll have our revenge!"

The men swarmed on board in a crowd. And then, all becoming imbued with 'Frisco's confidence, they followed him down the companionway towards the captain's cabin. And they, too, were remembering the terrible times they had passed through. They were in a dangerous mood.

With a crash, 'Frisco Mike hurled open the cabin door.

Skinner dropped his glass and started

back. His face went the colour of putty, and a scream arose from his throat. The face of 'Frisco Mike leered at him—alight with evil intent. And to Skinner it seemed that this apparition was some awful ghost.

But he soon found that the intruders were very real!

He and the mate and Captain Hurricane were seized. They had no time to fight—no opportunity of defending themselves. They fell easy victims to these invaders. And within five minutes they were aroused from their drunken stupor.

Carried up to the deck, the three were placed in a row, with their backs to the bulwarks. Captain Hurricane was trembling with fright. The men he had tortured now held the upper hand! Instinctively the scoundrelly skipper knew that the hour of reckoning had come.

It was only with difficulty that 'Frisco Mike kept his companions away.

"We'll kill the doggone brutes!"

"Throw them overboard!"

"Send 'em to the sharks!"

"Sure!"

"Let's shoot the dogs as they stand!"

"Say, quit that!" roared 'Frisco Mike.

"I guess we ain't lettin' these skunks off as easy as that! Quick death ain't good enough—I guess we'll give 'em something a bit harder than that!"

Captain Hurricane found his voice.

"You scum!" he raved, attempting to exert the old influence. "Listen to me! If you'll man this ship I'll reward every one of you! I'm short handed—I guess I'll pay you well if you——"

He was brought up short by 'Frisco Mike, who suddenly whirled a rope's end through the air, and brought it slashing against the skipper's cheek. A raw, livid mark was left.

"I guess you're in my power now, Captain Hurricane," snarled 'Frisco Mike. "For months I was in yours! You and your scum whipped me—kicked me—treated me like I was a beast! Say, it's my turn!"

The captain shrank back, shaking with fear.

"We're all in this, 'Frisco—we've all got something to pay this coyote!" shouted one of the other men. "Guess you oughter let us do as we like! I figger we'll soak the guys in paraffin, and set 'em alight!"

"Yep, sure!"

"You said it!"

"No—no!" screamed Captain Hurricane. "Not that! You—you devils! You wouldn't burn us alive like that!"

'Frisco's eyes gleamed.

"Say, that's sure a dandy scheme!" he exclaimed. "But I guess it's too risky—we might set the ship afire——"

"We can drop 'em in the boat!"

"Sure!"

The men clamoured round, shouting wildly. They were quite ready to carry out their dreadful purpose. Their prisoners had treated them so shockingly that the ordeal of being burned alive seemed only a fitting

punishment. But 'Frisco Mike saved the trio from this terrible end.

"No!" he thundered. "I've sure got a better scheme. It's a good idea to burn 'em alive—but it's too swift! Guess they'd be all in within two minutes! Nope! We'll put the guys in that boat and set 'em adrift!"

"Aw! That's no doggone use!"

"You're mad, 'Frisco!"

"We'll set 'em adrift!" repeated 'Frisco. "They'll have no oars—no food—no water! I guess they'll drift until they die! Get me? Until they die of thirst and madness!"

The men listened eagerly.

"There ain't no chance of them being picked up!" continued 'Frisco. "Guess we'll force salt water down their blamed throats to begin with! By to-morrow they'll be gasping with thirst. Then the sun will come out—they'll have no water—no food! Gee! That's what we'll do!"

It was a terrible, ghastly revenge.

For no torture in the world could be as bad as this—set adrift in an open boat, without oars, without water, under the fiercely burning sun of a tropic sky. But, knowing all the facts, who could say that such an end was not deserved?

The scheme was put into operation at once.

The Wanderer's lifeboat was not used. Instead, one of the schooner's own small open boats was put overside—a tiny cockleshell in which the three men would hardly have room to move. Here they would obtain no shelter from the sun—no rest or ease whatever.

And, one by one, they were dealt with; they were held by many willing hands, and each was compelled to swallow at least a quart of sea-water. It was forced down their throats, gulp by gulp. Kicking, screaming, cursing wildly, they were helpless in the power of these avengers.

And at last they were dropped into the boat—each one utterly exhausted. And the boat itself was set adrift.

The revenge of the ex-slaves was complete!

CHAPTER V.

FATE'S CAPRICE!



THE Henry R. Cane still drifted.

At least three hours had passed, and night had descended fully, with myriads of stars in the purple heavens. The Pacific lay

calm and unruffled, with its constant, restless swell.

But there was no peace near the Henry R. Cane.

Across the waters came the sounds of shouting, singing, cursing, wild laughter and the playing of a cracked concertina. It would not have been at all difficult for any observer to guess that 'Frisco Mike and his companions were making merry.

But there were no observers.

The schooner was without any guiding hand. At the very beginning, after Captain Hurricane and Seelig and Skinner had been cast off in the boat, there had been some attempt at discipline.

'Frisco Mike, had, in fact, made himself skipper.

He had appointed two of his special friends as mate and bo'sun, and for the first half-hour the Henry R. Cane had picked up a little speed, and it seemed that things would soon be going in orderly fashion.

But then the celebration had commenced.

Somebody had found a case of whisky bottles. Drinking had commenced. 'Frisco Mike, thinking that his men would work better, allowed them to indulge in a few tots.

This had led to further drinking—until, indeed, 'Frisco himself was well-nigh incapable. And with the only leader hopelessly intoxicated, the rest simply went wild. They drank until they were quarrelsome—until they became wild and merry.

And now there was no man on board in a sober condition.

It would have been a terrible thing for the schooner if a sudden storm had come down. But, fortunately, there was every sign of continued calm weather. And the old Henry R. Cane lay there, like a helpless derelict.

If those on board had been on the alert, they would have seen the lights of a ship appearing over the horizon—they would have seen these lights coming nearer and nearer.

And they would also have seen a powerful searchlight sweeping over the waters in every direction. But the drunken wretches were below, and the decks of the schooner were bare and deserted.

The approaching ship was none other than the British light cruiser, The Norbury. And she was on the lookout for the schooner herself, and for the Wanderer's boat containing 'Frisco Mike and Co. Her commander hardly expected to find both at one and the same time.

But this was what he did discover.

Before long the disreputable old sailing ship came into the beam of the searchlight. There was a good deal of interest on the cruiser, and she bore down upon the Henry R. Cane at full speed.

Many bluejackets lined the rail as the cruiser came to a stop. Officers were given instructions, and they, in their turn, rapped out some sharp orders. A boat was manned, lowered, and pushed off.

And in a very short time the deck of the schooner was swarming with eager blue-

(Continued on page 15)

EXCITING NEW NELSON LEE SERIAL JUST STARTED!



CONTAINS THE VERY BEST DETECTIVE STORIES.

OUR DETECTIVE STORY SECTION

No. 41. PRESENTED WITH "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY." September 15, 1923



THE MISSING HEIR

A clever Detective Story, featuring the brilliant exploits of Nelson Lee versus his most dangerous and unscrupulous opponent, Professor Mark Rymer.

FIRST CHAPTERS.

But for a son by a secret marriage, the heir to Lord Easington would fall to Professor Mark Rymer, the crafty and unscrupulous cousin of the late peer. The story opens in Sydney, Australia, with Nelson Lee and his opponent, Rymer, setting off in search of the missing heir, who, as Richard Seymour, is employed as a stockman in the interior of New South Wales. Rymer's intention is to get Seymour out of the way of the inheritance.

(Now read on.)

TRAPPED IN DINGO GULCH.

A MOMENT later the professor happened to glance back. Then he, too, raised his glasses to his eyes. Instantly, Nelson Lee crouched down over his horse's neck, hoping to conceal his face. But, quick as he was, the action

had evidently been too late; for when he ventured to raise his eyes again, the professor had put spurs to his horse, and was galloping through the bush as fast as the jaded animal could cover the ground.

The detective at once followed suit, and for a little while a race ensued. But the pace was too hot to last. Both horses had already done a hard day's work, and although they were still good for another thirty miles if allowed to take their own time, they were in no condition for racing. Consequently, ere many minutes had passed the animals began to slow down, the gallop deteriorating into a trot, and ending finally in an easygoing amble.

This fact did not worry Nelson Lee in the least.

"After all," he mused, "it doesn't matter to me how slowly we crawl, so long as I keep Rymer in sight until we reach Macpherson's station."

The professor, however, did not take matters so complacently. With a backward, vindictive glance at Nelson Lee, he growled to himself:

"Curse him! He's going to give me as much trouble over young Seymour as he did over the Silver Dwarf! If only I'd brought a rifle with me! If only his horse would fall lame! If only something—anything—would happen to keep him back for an hour or two! If it was anybody else but Nelson Lee, I'd wait till he came within range, and then I'd open fire with my revolver. But I daren't risk it. He's a better shot than I am, and it's a thousand to one that I should be the one to be winged!"

He ambled on for another hour and a half, his chin sunk on his breast, and his dome-shaped brow wrinkled with anxiety. At the end of that time he came to the foot of the Nynawarra Mountains, a lofty range of bush-clad hills, some over two thousand feet in height, which stretched from east to west for a distance of thirty miles.

The northern aspect of the range rose sheer, like the wall of a house. To cross such a formidable barrier and get to Garoo Downs, which lay on the other side, seemed an impossibility.

Reference to the map, however, revealed the fact that at one particular spot the range was pierced by a deep and narrow ravine, which cleft its way through the hills like some titanic sabre-cut.

This ravine was known as Dingo Gulch, and it led straight to Garoo Downs. The only other way of reaching the Downs was by riding round by Nymagee, a distance of twenty miles or so. Therefore, both Mark Rymer and Nelson Lee struck a bee-line for Dingo Gulch.

It was close upon six o'clock when the professor rode into the ravine, which was nowhere more than a quarter of a mile wide, and was bounded on each side by precipitous heights.

Except for a narrow bridle-path running down the centre, the floor of the ravine, as well as the hills on either side, was covered with the all-pervading scrub. Not a single tree or streamlet was anywhere to be seen—nothing but the interminable bush, which rolled down one side of the ravine, across the bottom, and up the side, with the bridle-path running like a dark-brown thread through the centre of it.

For upwards of a mile Mark Rymer rode along this path, his face sullen and dejected. Then, suddenly, the look of despondency vanished as if by magic, and his deep-set eyes glinted triumphantly.

"A magnificent idea!" he muttered. "Why didn't I think of it before?"

He glanced back over his shoulder. Nelson Lee had not yet entered the mouth of the ravine. Spurring his horse into an unwilling gallop, the professor kept the poor, jaded brute at the stretch for another mile or so, ere once again he rose in his stirrups

and glanced backward. That glance showed him that Nelson Lee had just ridden into the ravine.

With an evil chuckle, Mark Rymer reined in his horse and sprang to the ground. Having hastily collected an armful of dry twigs, he divided them into two heaps, one on each side of the bridle-path. Then he struck a match and applied the flame to his miniature bonfires.

The result may be imagined. No rain having fallen in that district for many months, the surrounding scrub was as dry as tinder. A stiffish breeze was blowing up the ravine from the direction of Garoo Downs. In less time almost than it takes to tell the bush was blazing merrily, and the bridle-path was enclosed between two living walls of flame.

Onwards and sideways the fire spread with incredible rapidity. In five minutes' time it had reached the foot of the hills, and was creeping up their precipitous sides. In ten minutes' time a continuous belt of smoke and flame was sweeping up the ravine in the direction of Nelson Lee.

Nothing daunted, the detective put spurs to his horse, and galloped to meet the advancing line of fire, hoping to be able to force his way through; but the attempt was doomed to failure. As soon as the horse came in sight of the flames it wheeled round with a snort of terror, and endeavoured to gallop back.

Whilst the detective was striving to restrain it, a blazing twig, borne by the wind, settled on the horse's flank.

With a scream that was almost human, the terrified animal suddenly bounded forward. Taken off his guard, the detective was flung violently to the ground, and the next instant was lying on his back within fifty yards of the advancing flames; whilst the maddened horse, freed from its rider's weight, was galloping up the ravine in a series of frenzied leaps and bounds.

CAPTURED BY BUSHRANGERS.

THE shadows of evening were stealing across the sky when Professor Mark Rymer, tired but triumphant, drew rein at the foot of the verandah steps of a lonely looking house on the edge of Garoo Downs. The clatter of his horse's hoofs had already announced his arrival, and a typical middle-aged squatter, with iron-grey hair and ruddy cheeks, was standing at the door.

"Good-evening!" said the professor, dismounting and raising his hat. "Mr. Andrew Macpherson, I presume?"

"That's me, sir," assented the squatter.

"My name is Shaw," said the professor, lying with his accustomed facility; "I am one of Mr. Dudley Sinclair's agents. You know Mr. Sinclair, I believe?"

"The Sydney detective?" asked Macpherson.

"Yes," said the professor. "You may

possibly remember that he wrote to you a few years ago with reference to a stockman in your employ—a young fellow named Richard Seymour."

"Yes; I remember," said Macpherson. "But you're wrong about him writing. He didn't write; he came up here himself, and he questioned Dick for nearly an hour about his early days, and his mother, and how long he'd been in Australia, and heaps of other things. Young Dick was flabbergasted! He couldn't make it out at all, and Sinclair wouldn't tell him anything, for he said he was sworn to secrecy, and wasn't at liberty to divulge the name of the person who had sent him, or the object of his inquiries."

"Quite so," said the professor gravely. "That was perfectly true at that time. Since then, however, the seal of secrecy which was set on Mr. Sinclair's lips has been removed. That's why I am here."

"Man alive, you don't mean to say you've come all the way from Sydney to see Dick Seymour?" gasped Macpherson.

"Certainly I have!" said the professor. "I haven't come to tell him anything, however. As a matter of fact, I know no more than he does himself. I have merely come, by Mr. Sinclair's orders, to ask you to be so good as to allow Richard Seymour to go back with me to Sydney at once. There Mr. Sinclair will tell him——"

"But—but you don't seem to understand!" interrupted Macpherson. "Dick Seymour isn't here!"

"Not here!" cried the professor in dismay.

"No. He left my service three years ago!"

If a bombshell had suddenly exploded at Mark Rymer's feet, he could hardly have displayed more consternation than he did upon hearing this news. Never once had the possibility occurred to him that Dick Seymour might have left Macpherson's station.

"I don't wonder you feel mad," said the squatter sympathisingly. "I should feel mad myself if anybody had sent me on a wild-goose chase like this. Mr. Sinclair ought to have written to ask me whether young Seymour was still in my employ before sending you on a four-hundred mile journey."

"Yes, yes, he certainly ought!" agreed the professor huskily. "It is annoying—most annoying! Do you know where Seymour is?"

"In New Zealand, I believe. At least, he was there when last I heard from him—but that's two years ago."

With difficulty the professor choked back a savage oath.

"Can you give me his exact address?" he asked.

"I'm afraid I can't," said Macpherson. "But let us go inside. You must be hungry, thirsty, and tired out. You'll stay the night here, of course? My wife is away at present; but, all the same, I fancy we can make you fairly comfortable."

The professor hesitated before accepting the proffered hospitality. He was thinking

of Nelson Lee, and of what would happen if the detective found him there.

"Oh, come!" exclaimed the genial Macpherson. "You will stay, of course! You've ridden over from Nyngan to-day, I suppose?"

The professor nodded.

"I guessed as much from the look of your horse," said the squatter. "The poor brute seems completely done up. He'll carry you no farther to-night, that's certain; so you'll have to put up with such accommodation as I can offer you."

"Thanks!" said the professor, with a tinge of reckless desperation in his voice. "If you'll have me, I'll be very glad to stay."

Macpherson accordingly called to one of his men and instructed him to take the horse round to the stables. Then he led the professor into the house, and set him down to a plain but substantial supper.

"And now about Dick Seymour," said the professor, when the table had been cleared, and the two men had lit their pipes. "When did he leave you?"

"About three years ago," replied Macpherson. "I rather fancy he'd inherited a bit of money—mebbe a hundred pounds—from his mother, and he'd saved about as much himself. He never really settled down to a squatter's life, and on the day he was twenty-one he came to me and told me that he was going to try his fortune in New Zealand."

"He wrote to me about six months after he left, telling me that he had invested his savings in a small frozen-meat concern in Napier. He wrote again, a few months later, saying that his partner had absconded, and had left him a bankrupt concern on his hands; but he hoped to be able to pull the business round and set it on its legs again. Whether he succeeded or not I cannot say, for from that day to this I have never had another line from him."

"Do you remember the name of his firm?" asked the professor.

"I'm sorry to say I don't," replied Macpherson. "I burnt his letters as soon as I'd read them, and all I remember is that they were written from Napier."

For more than an hour the professor closely questioned his host, but without obtaining any further information of importance. Then he knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and rose to his feet.

"I think I shall go to bed, if you've no objection," he said, stifling a yawn. "I've had a pretty hard day to-day, and I shall have another hard day to-morrow."

"You intend to return to Nyngan, then, I suppose?" asked Macpherson, as he ushered him into his bed-room.

"Yes," said the professor. "I shall ride back to Nyngan to-morrow, take train to Sydney on Tuesday, and cross to New Zealand by the first available boat. Good-night!"

He waited until Macpherson's footsteps

died away, then he dragged the bed across the room, planted it against the door, and unfastened the window.

"In case Mr. Nelson Lee arrives in the middle of the night!" he murmured to himself.

He examined his revolver, saw that it was loaded in every chamber, and laid it on a chair by the side of the bed. Then, without undressing, he flung himself down on the bed, and in ten minutes' time was fast asleep.

It was six o'clock when he awoke. Macpherson had been up for more than an hour, and greeted him with an announcement that made his blood run cold.

"Don't cuss," he said, as he shook the professor's hand, "but you can't go back to Nyngan to-day! In fact, I shall be very much surprised if you're able to get through to Nyngan before the end of the week!"

For a moment the professor stared at him in speechless consternation.

"What do you mean?" he demanded hoarsely.

"The bush is on fire!" said the squatter. "I've just come back from Dingo Gulch, where the fire appears to have originated. It must have started shortly after you rode through the gulch yesterday evening. Luckily the wind is from the south, so that the fire isn't spreading in this direction, but it is creeping across the plain, on the north side of the mountains, in the direction of Bobalong. The line of fire already extends for miles and miles across the plain, and, considering the dry state of the bush, it will certainly be three or four days, and may be a week, before it burns itself out."

The professor ground his teeth in impotent exasperation. The biter was bit! He had fired the bush to delay Nelson Lee, and now it appeared that the fire he had kindled was going to keep him a prisoner at Macpherson's station until Nelson Lee arrived. It was just possible, of course, that the detective had perished in the conflagration; but the chance was so remote that Mark Rymer dared not count on it.

"Is there no other route by which I can get back to Sydney except via Nyngan?" he asked.

"Yes," said Macpherson. "There's a southern route, by Eauabalong and Condobolin. A coach leaves Nymagee at six o'clock this morning and runs to Eauabalong, which is seventy or eighty miles from here. From Eauabalong another coach runs to Condobolin, and from Condobolin the railway runs to Sydney. Come with me."

He led the professor to the door, and pointed to a crystal stream which threaded its way across the bush-clad downs.

"If you follow that stream for about nine miles," he said, "you will come to a fairly big wood, which is known as Barnby Coppice. The road from Nymagee to Eauabalong runs through the middle of that wood, and is

carried across the stream by a wooden trestle-bridge. The coach is due at that bridge about half-past eight."

"And it is now a quarter-past six," said the professor, pulling out his watch. "Half an hour for breakfast, and an hour and three-quarters to ride to Barnby Coppice—capital! Nothing could be more convenient! But what shall I do with my horse after I have joined the coach?"

"I'll buy him, if you'll sell," said Macpherson.

But I shall need him to carry me to Barnby Coppice."

"Of course," said Macpherson. "But as soon as you reach the bridge you can tether the horse to one of the rails, and I'll send one of my stockmen for him later in the day. I'd send one of them with you now, and then he could bring the horse back with him, but they're all engaged at present, and are waiting for me to join them."

"Then pray don't let me detain you," said the professor. "Give me a glass of milk and a loaf of bread, and I shall be as happy as a king."

The hospitable squatter gave him something a little more substantial than bread and milk, and at a quarter to seven, the richer by twenty pounds, the professor mounted his horse and rode away.

It was twenty minutes past eight when he reached the bridge which Macpherson had described. It was situated in the very heart of the wood, and from each end of it the road ran steeply uphill—in one direction towards Nymagee, and in the other direction towards Eauabalong.

Both sides of the road were lined by a perfect forest of trees.

Before dismounting, the professor decided to ride to the top of the hill, on the north side of the bridge, in order to see if there was any sign of the coach. Before his horse had taken a dozen strides, however, a couple of villainous-looking cutthroats, armed with rifles and revolvers, sprang out of the wood and called upon him to halt.

Acting on the impulse of the moment, he dug his spurs into his horse's sides. But even as he did so one of the men made a grab at the reins, whilst the other seized him by the leg and dragged him to the ground. An instant later a dozen other ruffians leaped into the road, and surrounded him.

"Hurry up, or the coach'll be here before we're ready!" cried the man who had seized Rymer's horse, and who was evidently the leader of the gang. "There isn't time to search him now. Truss him up, and stuff a handkerchief into his mouth, and we'll rifle his pockets when we've stuck up the coach!"

It only needed this speech to enlighten Mark Rymer as to what had happened. It was plain that the men who had captured him were bushrangers.

Having gagged him with a pocket-handkerchief, they dragged him into the wood, and bound him to the trunk of one of the trees.

Their own horses were hobbled close by, and, as soon as the professor's had been similarly treated, the whole fourteen returned to their former positions, and silently awaited the arrival of the coach.

Five minutes passed. Then the distant thunder of horse's hoofs and the rumble of iron-shod wheels were heard. Nearer and nearer came the sounds, till the coach itself came into sight.

From his position in the wood, Mark Rymer caught a fleeting glimpse of the coach as it thundered down the hill towards the

the terrible peril by which he was menaced served only to stimulate him to fresh vigour; and in less time almost than it takes to tell, he scrambled to his feet and bolted up the ravine as fast as his legs would carry him.

When he reached the end of the gorge he was relieved to find that the horse had partly recovered from its terror, and was quietly jogging back in the direction of Bobalong.

Needless to say, he lost no time in giving chase; but by the time he had caught the beast the fire had reached the mouth of the



But even as he did so one of the men made a grab at the reins, whilst the other seized him by the leg and dragged him to the ground. An instant later a dozen other ruffians leaped into the road, and surrounded him.

bridge. On the box-seat were three men. The man in the middle was the driver. The man on his left was a Government trooper. The man on his right was Nelson Lee!

"BAIL UP!"

WHEN Nelson Lee was thrown from his horse in Dingo Gulch, within fifty yards of the advancing line of fire, he might well have been excused if he had yielded to despair.

So far from this being the case, however,

the ravine, and was spreading east and west, as well as north, with incredible rapidity.

It has already been explained that the only other way of reaching Garoo Downs—except through Dingo Gulch, which was now impassable, of course—was by riding round by Nymagee, a distance of twenty miles.

A hurried reference to the map disclosed the fact that the road, which was little more than a bridle-path, ran through the bush for five or six miles in a westerly direction, crossed the Garoo River at a spot called

Stony Ford, wound round the western spur of the Nymawarra Mountains, and finally joined the coach-road from Cobar to Nyamgee, a mile and a half to the north of the latter town.

As soon as Nelson Lee had mastered these facts he mounted his horse, turned the animal's head towards the west, and urged him forward.

Fast as he rode, however, the fire spread still faster; and when at last he came within sight of the river, about seven o'clock in the evening, he was dismayed to find that the bush on each side of the road had fallen a prey to the all-devouring flames, and that, in order to reach the ford, he would have to ride for nearly half a mile between two walls of fiercely blazing scrub.

Nothing daunted, he sprang to the ground, and blindfolded his horse with his handkerchief. He then took off his coat and wrapped it round his head, leaving only the tiniest of peepholes for his eyes. Finally, having vaulted back into the saddle, he wound the reins around his wrists, bent himself nearly double over the horse's neck, drove his spurs into the animal's quivering sides, and dashed into the lane of fire at a furious reckless gallop.

Words fail to describe the horrors and perils of the next few minutes. Death menaced him at every stride. Long, snake-like tongues of flame darted out at him from each side of the narrow track. Blazing twigs rained down on him in a ceaseless shower. So fierce was the heat that it blistered his hands and scorched his clothes; whilst the air was filled with dense, black clouds of suffocating smoke, which made breathing all but impossible.

The memory of that awful ride was branded on his brain in literal letters of fire. Half a dozen times, in the course of half as many minutes, he gave himself up for lost. But at last, just as he was beginning to succumb to the heat and smoke, the welcome sound of running water fell on his ears. With a superhuman effort, he roused himself from his apathy; but even as he did so his horse began to reel, and an instant later, with a gasping moan, the poor brute stumbled forward on his knees and rolled over, dead!

Half dazed though he was, the detective had still retained sufficient presence of mind to extricate his feet from the stirrups and slip to the ground as the horse fell.

His fate now seemed to be sealed, but, with indomitable courage, he staggered blindly forward through the smoke, and had covered perhaps a dozen yards, when all at once the ground seemed to sink from under his feet, and he found himself falling through space.

An involuntary wail of despair burst from him at this new and unexpected catastrophe; but almost before the cry had crossed his lips he plunged into five or six feet of cool, refreshing water, and realised that he had

merely stumbled over the river's edge and had fallen into the stream.

This discovery galvanised his flagging energies into life again, for he knew that the river would form an impassable barrier to the further advance of the fire, and that if he could reach the other side his troubles would be over.

Sustained by this hope, he rose to the surface, and struck out for the opposite bank. When he reached mid-stream, the force of the current proved almost more than his strength could battle with; but by dint of heart-breaking exertions, he at last succeeded in gaining the shore, and hauling himself out of the water.

No sooner had he done so than his overstrained nerves gave way, and after scrambling up the sloping bank, he tottered forward for a yard or two, stood for a moment with both hands clasped to his aching brow, and then pitched forwards on his face in a swoon.

It was broad daylight when his wandering wits returned. The fire had burnt itself out on the opposite side of the river; but away in the distance, in the direction of Bobalong and Nyngan, a dull, red glow and an overhanging pall of smoke, bore witness to the fact that its devastating march had by no means been arrested.

On the west side of the river, however, all was clear and tranquil, and as soon as the detective had wrung some of the water from his clothes, and had fortified himself with a pull at his spirit-flask, he started out for Nymagee.

Five o'clock was striking when he entered the little town and dragged his weary limbs to the nearest hotel.

"I want a horse," he said to a clean-shaven, ruddy-complexioned man, who appeared to be the landlord.

"Do you, now?" replied the man, surveying him from top to toe with a not too friendly stare. "Well, I'm sorry to say that I don't happen to have any horses to give away at present!"

"Don't be an ass!" said the detective, somewhat tartly. "I don't want to beg a horse—I want to hire one. My name is Nelson Lee."

"The detective?" gasped the landlord.

"Yes."

"Well, I'm blowed! And I took you for a tramp! What in thunder has happened?" Briefly the detective told him.

"Ah! Now I understand," said the landlord when he had finished. "You want a horse to ride to Macpherson's station, on Garoo Downs."

"Exactly!"

"Well, take my advice, and go by the coach," said the landlord. "You'll be there almost as quickly as on horseback, and it'll be a jolly sight easier for you in your present limp condition."

"To what coach do you refer?"

"The coach from here to Eauabalong."

"When does it start?"

"In an hour's time?"

"From this hotel?"

"Yes. It crosses Garoo Downs, and will set you down at Barnby Coppice, which isn't more than a couple of hours' walk from Macpherson's station."

Nelson Lee decided to do as the landlord suggested. First of all, however, he purchased a fresh suit of clothes from a neighbouring store, and then, having had a bath and changed his things, he sat down to a substantial breakfast. Just as he was finishing, the landlord came into the coffee-room.

"The coach will be ready to start in five minutes," he said. "I've booked you a seat on the box. There'll be nobody in front but yourself and the driver and the trooper."

"The trooper?" said Nelson Lee. "Does the coach carry a trooper?"

"Always."

"But surely there aren't any bushrangers round about here?"

"Aren't there, though!" replied the landlord, shaking his head. "It's plain to be seen that you're a stranger in this district. Have you never heard of Bush Billy's Gang?"

"Never," said the detective. "Who are they?"

The landlord explained that "Bush Billy's Gang" was the name of a gang of bushrangers whose lawless doings had made them notorious throughout the whole of the western region of New South Wales.

Their leader was an escaped convict, whose real name was William Randerson, but who was better known by the nickname of "Bush Billy." Under his skilful guidance, the gang had ravaged the district between Cobar and Eauabalong for over five years, lifting cattle, raiding stations, sticking up coaches, and occasionally looting a bank.

The Government police—commonly known as "the troopers"—had made desperate efforts to run this rascally gang to earth, but hitherto without the slightest success.

It was known that the gang had a secret retreat somewhere in the mountains, but though fabulous sums had been offered for information leading to the discovery of its whereabouts, no one had yet come forward to claim the reward.

"The scoundrels have been lying low of late," said the landlord in conclusion. "Nothing has been seen or heard of them for over eleven months. Some folk think that the gang has been disbanded, but I'm not of that opinion myself. In former times, every coach that crossed the downs was accompanied by an escort of half a dozen troopers. Four or five months ago the escort was reduced to three, and now it's reduced to a single trooper, who rides beside the driver and carries both a rifle and a revolver. It's a mistake not to have more, and some day— But there goes the horn! You'd better be taking your seat."

The detective accordingly left the hotel, climbed up on to the front of the coach, and seated himself beside the driver. The trooper followed suit a moment or two later, and punctually on the stroke of six o'clock

the driver cracked his whip, and the coach started off on its eighty miles journey to Eauabalong.

For the first twelve or fourteen miles the road was more or less up-hill all the way, and the horses dragged the coach across the bush-clad downs at a sober, monotonous trot.

Then, suddenly, the road began to run steeply downhill, and the horses broke into an easy, swinging canter.

"That's Barnby Coppice," said the driver, turning to Nelson Lee and pointing with his whip to a thickly planted wood at the bottom of the hill. "The road, as you see, runs down through the wood, across that bridge, and up the hill on the other side of the stream."

"I leave you at the bridge, don't I?" said the detective.

"Yes," replied the driver. "Macpherson's station lies straight over there," he added, pointing towards the north. "You can't miss it. It's the only house between Barnby Coppice and Dingo Gulch. All you've got to do is to follow that stream, and it'll lead you straight to—"

Crack!

With startling suddenness a rifle-shot rang out. The trooper's head fell forward on his breast. For one half-second his body swayed from side to side, limply and horribly. Then he slid down from the seat and rolled out into the road. The bullet had entered his brain, and death had been instantaneous.

Long before the echoes of the shot had died away a number of men, armed with rifles and revolvers, dashed out of the wood on each side of the coach and sprang into the middle of the road.

As the reader has doubtless guessed, they were the bushrangers who had captured Mark Rymer. Their leader was the notorious "Bush Billy" himself.

Four of the scoundrels sprang to the horses' heads, and forced the animals back upon their haunches. At the same instant two of the others levelled their rifles at Nelson Lee, and two at the driver, whilst the rest crowded round the door of the coach and overawed the passengers.

Never was a surprise more skilfully planned; never was a victory more complete. Resistance was out of the question, and the stern command, "Throw up your hands!" was obeyed in sullen silence.

"Now then, gents, we'll trouble yer to step outside, one at a time, and bail up as quickly as possible," said Bush Billy. "Some of yer, no doubt, have important engagements at Eauabalong, and we've no wish to detain yer any longer than is absolutely necessary."

Nelson Lee was the first to alight. When he had been disarmed and robbed of everything he possessed, Bush Billy pointed to the end of the bridge.

(This thrilling episode continued next week.)

GRAND NEW COMPLETE TALES OF THE FAMOUS SCOTS DETECTIVE!



DEREK CLYDE

DETECTIVE

THE . . . ECCENTRIC BURGLAR

THE Clyde Fortnight, the great annual yachting carnival, was in full swing, and Derek Clyde, for whom the sport had an intense fascination, was following the various events with eager interest.

He had made his headquarters Hunter's Quay, and one blistering hot afternoon, he dropped into the smoking-room of the Royal Clyde Yacht Club, where he was warmly welcomed by a number of old friends.

Seated by a wide bay window, which commanded a magnificent view of the Firth, Clyde lit his pipe, and joined in the discussion, while now and again his eyes dreamily filled as he looked out.

The sea was like glass, scarcely a ripple breaking its surface, which sparkled and shone in the bright sunlight. Steamers were passing to and fro, snow-white yachts lay idly at their moorings, their sails flapping helplessly, and fussy little motor-boats darted here and there, while in the background were the tall hills, their crests gleaming purple.

It was a magnificent panorama which lay before him—one of the loveliest vistas to gladden the eyes of man—and Clyde drew a deep breath as he lingered over the exquisite beauty of his surroundings.

He turned round to answer a question, when he was interrupted by the entrance of a tall handsome man with a greyish moustache, who was almost uproariously welcomed.

"Come along, Sir Roderick," said one of the gentlemen, "perhaps you can settle the question in dispute."

Sir Roderick Mallin sank down on a lounge chair, and mopped his forehead.

"Hot," he ejaculated. "Hot isn't the word. It's not strong enough. Didn't think you fellows would have the energy to discuss anything. Well, what is it?"

The matter was explained to him, and after he had given his verdict, Sir Roderick turned to the company with a humorous smile on his face.

"Most extraordinary thing happened at

my house last night," he said. "Hanged if I know what to make of it."

"Let's hear it."

"It was a burglary—the funniest burglary I ever heard of. Oh, don't cock your ears, Clyde. It's nothing in your line. I've been laughing over it ever since I discovered it."

"Nothing stolen?" asked Clyde.

"Well, that depends on how you look at it," replied Sir Roderick. "Whoever he was, the thief must have been an adept at the game, for not a single soul in the house was disturbed. All right, Clyde, I'll tell you what's missing, on condition you don't laugh too heartily—a single clipper, a pair of silk braces, a tooth brush, a cake of soap, and a pair of boot-trees. Furthermore, the thief snipped a collar into halves, presumably with a pair of scissors, and ripped up one sleeve of a dressing-gown. And, in addition, he did this."

Pausing again, Sir Roderick turned over the left front of his tweed jacket, and showed that a small patch, about an inch and a half square, had been cut from the inside of the cloth next to the lining.

"There you are," he resumed. "What do you think of that? The patch is missing. I couldn't find it anywhere. The strangest part of it all is that the man did not take my watch and a small sum of money, though they were lying in plain view on the dressing-table with the mutilated collar. A queer business, isn't it?"

Some of the baronet's friends smiled, and others laughed. Clyde absently watched the smoke that was curling from the bowl of his pipe.

"A most eccentric burglar!" he murmured.

THE FOOTPRINTS.

"A PRACTICAL joker, perhaps," one suggested.

"By Jove, Mallin, fancy his spoiling a collar and a dressing-gown, and mutilating that beloved jacket of yours!" remarked somebody else. "And leaving your watch and money behind!

The fellow was out of his mind, I should think."

"Yes, I think so myself," Sir Roderick Mallin assented. He was more than eccentric. I daresay he was some prowling lunatic. That is the only feasible explanation."

Clyde nodded.

The conversation drifted to racing matters again, and one by one the party withdrew until Sir Roderick and the detective were alone.

"It is a curious affair, that burglary," Clyde said in a careless tone, as he tapped his pipe on his heel. "I am rather interested in it."

"From a humorous point of view, you mean," the baronet replied.

"Yes, exactly. And yet there may possibly have been some method in the man's madness. By the way, did he leave any traces of his visit? Were there any footprints in the garden?"

"I don't know, Clyde. I didn't look."

"There may be some footprints visible, as there was a fall of rain last night. I should like to have a look round myself, if you don't mind."

Sir Roderick glanced at his watch. "Very well," he said. "My car is outside, and I am going home now. Come along, Clyde."

The sun was still above the horizon when Sir Roderick Mallin and the detective reached Glengorm, a country dwelling that overlooked Dunoon from the slope of a hill, and was skirted on one side by woods. Clyde first went upstairs to the dressing-room, where he glanced at the mutilated collar and dressing-gown, and made a futile search for the patch that had been cut from the tweed jacket. Then he left the house with the baronet, and walked round to the side, where he paused beneath the dressing-room window.

Having looked up at the thick growth of ivy on the wall, and observed that some of the tendrils had been broken; he scrutinised the terrace at the base of the wall, and perceived several footprints that were fairly distinct. He pointed them out.

"Come along, Mallin," he said. "We will see if we can learn anything else."

They scanned the grass as they crossed the lawn, from which they passed by a gate in a hedge into a plantation that was in the direction of the town. Clyde took the lead, and when he had gone for several yards, his gaze bent on the ground, he stopped by a patch of damp earth.

"Look!" he explained. "More footprints!"

"Yes, I see them," Sir Roderick replied.

"They are the prints of two men, not of one," the detective declared. "The boots are of different sizes."

"Obviously they are, Clyde. One of the men was the burglar, of course."

"There can be no doubt of it. His footprints are here. They are identical with

the ones on the terrace. And here also are the clear prints of a second man who did not approach any nearer to the house than this spot. He was an accomplice of the thief, and he waited here for him."

A CHANCE MEETING.

"BUT why?" asked the baronet. "Your explanation makes the whole affair more mystifying than ever. Why should a second man wait here while the other collected the trumpery odds and ends he took from the house?"

"Why?" echoed Clyde. "That's exactly what I want to know. I think there was some method in the madness of the exploit."

"Pooh, Clyde," said Sir Roderick, with a laugh. "That's the worst of you detective fellows; you are for ever seeing mysteries in the commonplace."

"Exactly," retorted Clyde. "That's where we often score over other people. Now this——"

Clyde did not finish the sentence. He broke off, and dropped the subject. On returning to the house with Sir Roderick he accepted an invitation to stay to dinner, and while he sat at the table he chatted of one thing and another, making no allusion to the burglary. But when he left at a late hour to walk back to Hunter's Quay he was absorbed in the mystery.

Four or five days elapsed, and late one afternoon Derek Clyde walked over from Hunter's Quay to Glengorm, and met Sir Roderick Mallin in the road in front of the dwelling. The baronet had just turned out of a side-road that was close by. He wore a rough walking-suit, and had a thick stick in his hand.

"Hello, Clyde!" he said. "What have you been doing with yourself? I haven't seen anything of you for some time."

"I have been in Glasgow for a day or so," the detective replied, "inquiring into the mysterious burglary at your place."

Sir Roderick looked at him in bewilderment. "Indeed?" he said. "You have been making inquiries in Glasgow? What was the idea? I thought you had dropped the matter."

"Far from it. I came to the conclusion that there was some subtle purpose at the bottom of the affair, and I am now satisfied that there was. I gleaned some very interesting information to-day."

"You surprise me, Clyde. What is the information?"

"You shall hear presently. Where is your yacht, by the way?"

"It is lying off Dunoon pier, where it always is."

"Are you sure it is there, Mallin? When did you last see it?"

"Not since yesterday afternoon. I went for a long tramp in the hills after breakfast this morning, as I felt the need of exercise, and I have just returned."

"So you have been absent all day? I think you had better slip down to Dunoon, and see if——"

Clyde paused. The butler had appeared from the dwelling, and was hurrying along the garden path, pale and agitated.

A STARTLING STORY.

THERE has been another burglary, sir!" he said breathlessly, as he reached the gate.

"What? Another one?" exclaimed Sir Roderick. "When?"

"This morning, sir, after you left," the servant answered.

"This morning? In broad daylight? What has been stolen, Wickham?"

"The photograph of yourself that hung over the desk in the library, sir, and one of the two brass candlesticks that were on the table. I missed them when I entered the room at ten o'clock. The thief must have got in by a window that was open."

"Anything else missing, Wickham?"

"Nothing else, sir, as far as I could tell. Your desk had not been disturbed."

Sir Roderick shook his head in amazement. "A photograph and a candlestick!" he muttered. "Extraordinary!"

Instantly Clyde was all action.

"We'd better go off at once," he said hurriedly. "There isn't a minute to lose if you wish to find your yacht at the moorings. Get your car out."

"It can't be used. It was damaged this morning—whether wilfully or not I don't know."

"Wilfully, I should say. Well, that makes speed more imperative; we'll hurry along on foot."

Clyde and the baronet hastened at a rapid pace along the road that led to Dunoon. A walk of a few minutes brought them to the town, and they were traversing one of the streets when they met a man in blue flannels and a cap who was one of the crew of the Cleopatra. He stopped short at sight of his employer, and stared at him in stupefaction.

"It—it surely can't be you, sir!" he gasped.

"What nonsense are you talking?" replied Sir Roderick. "What is the matter with you, M'Kerrow? Have you gone daft?"

"No, sir, I am only wondering how you can be here," the man answered. "It isn't long since you came on board of the yacht. Less than half an hour ago."

"I did? Nothing of the sort! I haven't been near the vessel since yesterday afternoon!"

"The gentleman was the very image of you, Sir Roderick, and he was dressed as you usually are. He sent all of the crew ashore, telling us we could have the evening off."

"What!" cried Sir Roderick, spluttering with rage. "The man was an im-

poster! Couldn't you have seen that, M'Kerrow?"

Clyde shrugged his shoulders. "It is just what I expected," he said quietly. "It was a clever trick Mallin. Come, let us be getting on."

They set off as fast as they could, accompanied by the sailor M'Kerrow; and five minutes later, heated and breathless, they reached the front, and looked at one another in consternation. The yacht was not at her moorings. She could be seen at a considerable distance to the south under full sail, gliding swiftly down the firth.

"There she goes!" raved the baronet. "That rascally impostor! The audacity of it!"

"I knew that was the game," said Clyde. "There are a number of them in it. But don't worry. They haven't got much of a start, and no doubt we'll be able to overtake them in a motor-boat. I know where one can be had. I have a revolver, though I don't expect trouble. I'll see that the boat is in readiness, Mallin," he added, "while you hurry to the police-station. Fetch Inspector Brice and one of his men back with you, and tell them to come armed."

The motor-boat was ready, and Clyde had obtained a stout rope with a grappling hook attached to it, when Sir Roderick Mallin returned with the inspector and a constable. In the presence of a number of curious persons, who did not know what had occurred, the little party of five tumbled into the craft, and darted away in pursuit of the Cleopatra, which was still dimly visible. The sun was low on the horizon, and a fair breeze was blowing.

"The wind is to the advantage of those rascals," said Sir Roderick.

"We shall catch up with them sooner or later," Clyde confidently replied. "I hope it will be before the light fades."

Minute after minute crept behind, and when an hour had elapsed it was evident that the detective's prediction was going to be fulfilled. He and his companions had been slowly but surely overhauling the yacht. It had passed between the Isle of Bute and the Great Cumbrae, and slipped by the Little Cumbrae, and was skimming like a bird down the broad firth. It was still well in the lead, however, its canvas shining white in the glow of the sunset.

A STERN CHASE.

FASTER, M'Kerrow, faster!" urged the baronet.

"We are doing our best, sir," the man answered. "We can't do more."

The shadows of evening fell. The breeze dropped, and the speed of the Cleopatra began to decrease. Yard by yard the intervening space dwindled. The race grew tensely thrilling. Three or four dusky

figures were seen in the deck of the yacht, gazing back. They knew that the motor-boat was in pursuit of them.

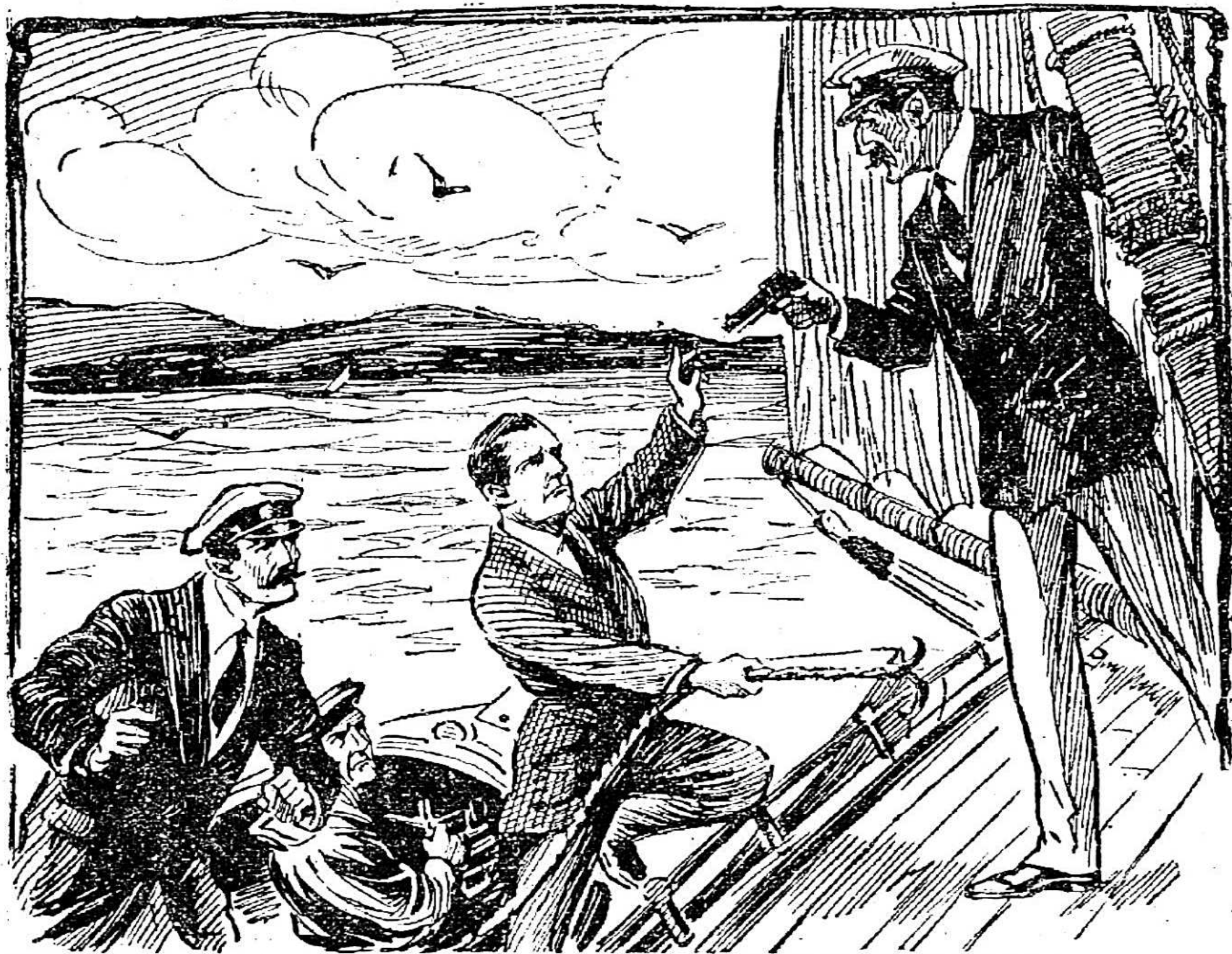
"Be ready," bade Clyde. "It won't be long now."

There was a puff of wind, followed by a dead calm. After a few moments later, as the *Cleopatra* was tacking, the boat sprinted alongside of her, and bumped gently. Clyde was on his feet, the rope in his hand. He tossed it up, and the grappling-hook had no more than caught when he ascended as nimbly as a cat. He glanced

plexion and a greyish moustache, wearing a yachting-cap, and a suit of tweeds that were of exactly the same pattern as the baronet's mutilated jacket. Clyde stepped to him, and, plucking at his moustache, he tore it from his lip.

"By heavens, it's Crombie!" sir Roderick cried in amazement. "James Crombie! The butler I discharged six months ago!"

"I am not surprised," Clyde said quietly. "I was sure that somebody who was familiar with your habits had hatched this cunning plot."



The grappling hook had no more than caught when Derek Clyde ascended as nimbly as a cat. He glanced above him and saw a man pointing a revolver straight at his head.

above him, and saw a man pointing a revolver straight at his head.

"Shoot if you dare, you scoundrel!" he shouted at him.

The man hesitated, and lowered his weapon; and in a trice Clyde was over the rail, his revolver in his grasp, confronting a little group of four men. The other end of the rope had meantime been made fast to the motor-boat, and the rest of the party promptly mounted by the aid of it, and joined the detective on the deck, where Sir Roderick Mallin's attention was at once drawn to a man who was his very double.

He was a tall man with a florid com-

"I am very sorry, Sir Roderick," the man whined. "I was led into it. I hope you will forgive me."

"You'll get no mercy from me," the baronet told him angrily. "You or your accomplices! What did you mean to do with my yacht?"

"We were going to take it abroad and sell it, sir," was the reply. "We didn't think you would discover that it was missing before morning, and by then we would have been out of reach."

"I daresay you would have been, Crombie, if it hadn't been for Mr. Derek Clyde here. You had him to reckon with."

At a word from the detective, Inspector Brice drew the bogus baronet's wrists together, and clicked a pair of handcuffs on them. Clyde turned to the other prisoners.

"Don't stand there idle," he said sternly. "Get to work. Run the vessel back to Dunoon."

The men sullenly obeyed, and a little later the *Cleopatra* had swung round, and was retracing her course up the firth, with the motor-boat trailing astern.

At a late hour that night, after the four prisoners had been lodged at the police-station at Dunoon, Derek Clyde told his story to Sir Roderick Mallin as they sat at supper at Glengorm.

THE MYSTERY EXPLAINED.

"I WAS baffled at first, I will admit," he said. "It was a difficult case—one with extraordinary features. I was convinced, however, that there was something unusual at the bottom of it. I pondered the matter, and finally came to the conclusion that the patch cut from your tweed jacket was the clue on which everything hung.

"I was aware that you were very fond of that jacket, and that you had worn it constantly through the spring and summer, even on the yacht, except when you were actually racing. I spent a day or so in Glasgow, making inquiries of different tailors, and at the establishment of Reid and Arden, in Queen Street, I got the information I wanted.

"A man who gave the name of Miller had called on them with the patch from your jacket, and at his request they promptly obtained some yards of the same material from the manufacturers with whom they dealt, and made a suit for him within the space of twenty-four hours.

"The man Miller took the suit away with him this morning, before I called at the tailor's. He was presumably one of Crombie's accomplices, and while he was in Glasgow to-day James Crombie stole the photograph and the brass candlestick from your house.

"I had already solved the mystery, and when I arrived at Glengorm this afternoon, and learned of the second burglary, I was

at no loss to account for it. It was obvious that the photograph had been taken so that one of the rogues could the more skilfully disguise himself to impersonate you. I did not suppose, though, that an attempt would be made to carry off the yacht until to-night at the earliest."

"I see," Sir Roderick replied. "It is quite clear. But why didn't Crombie take the jacket with him that night?"

"Because he could not have made use of it. It was necessary for the success of his plans that you should continue to wear it," Clyde answered.

"I see. But what of the other things—the slipper and the braces, the tooth-brush and the cake of soap, the pair of foot-trees, and the candlestick? Why did the fellow steal them? And why did he mutilate the collar and the dressing-gown?"

"To divert suspicion from his veiled motive, of course. To lead you to believe that he was an eccentric person, one not entirely responsible for his actions. His amazing behaviour was equivalent, in a way, to drawing a red herring across the scent of a fox."

"That also is logical, Clyde. There is another question. Why didn't Crombie go to my tailor's in Glasgow with the patch? He knew who they were."

"He would have been lacking in common-sense had he gone to them. He thought it likely, I daresay, that they would hear from you of the mutilation of your jacket."

Sir Roderick nodded. "It is as brilliant a piece of work as you have ever done," he declared. "But for you I should have lost my yacht. I am greatly in your debt, and I shall send you a cheque for your services."

Clyde shook his head. "No; send the cheque to some charity," he replied. "I won't accept payment. It was an interesting case, and I did not waste much time over it. As for James Crombie," he added, "it would appear from the statements he made at the police-station that his accomplices are crooks from the Midlands, that he was persuaded to join their gang, and that the plot which I frustrated was conceived by them. They are four clever rogues, and it will be a good thing for society if they are sent to prison for a year or so, as doubtless they will be."

THE END.

NEXT WEEK will appear another clever story of DEREK CLYDE'S thrilling adventures, entitled:—

THE CLUE OF THE SILVER BUTTERFLY!

(Continued from page 14)

jackets—men who were game enough for any adventure. After long inactivity, they were only too pleased to have something to do.

'Frisco Mike and his drunken gang were soon rounded up.

One or two of them caused a little trouble. They wanted to fight—but this desire was soon knocked out of them when they saw the determination of the Jack Tars.

The twelve men were not taken prisoners, but simply escorted back to the cruiser and sent below. They were now in the hands of the British Navy, and there was not the slightest fear of any further insubordination or violence. The captain of the cruiser was rather puzzled, because he could find no trace of Captain Hurricane.

The schooner itself was provided with a temporary crew.

And the officers were instructed to sail the vessel to the nearest port, and to hand her over to the United States authorities. This would be Los Angeles—and the Norbury herself would follow. Now that the British Navy had taken command there would be quick, decisive action.

'Frisco Mike was questioned, and although he was still suffering from the drink, he managed to tell a fairly connected story. And it was learned that Captain Hurricane, Seelig and Skinner had been set adrift.

And the cruiser commenced her search for that ill-fated trio in the open boat. The Norbury's captain knew that he was in fairly close proximity to the island, and he wanted to get there as soon as possible. But he delayed somewhat in his efforts to locate the open boat, steaming round in wide circles, scanning the sea, and sweeping it in all directions with searchlights.

That drifting boat could not be very far distant, but no sign of it was discovered.

It seemed that the little cockleshell had been lost, and probably nothing more would ever be heard of it, or its murderous occupants. Not that it would matter much, in any case.

But, although the cruiser failed to locate her quarry, that little boat was still drifting—a mere, insignificant spot on the vast surface of the Pacific—a tiny atom which rose up and down with the swells, sometimes poised on a crest, and sometimes down in the long, sweeping trough of the sea.

And, within her, crouched the three victims of 'Frisco Mike's revenge.

Hours had passed, and dawn was at hand. Captain Hurricane was sitting in the stern, his eyes feverishly bright, his lips and tongue already showing signs of becoming swollen.

Amidships was Mr. Seelig, sitting down on the floor of the boat, and resting his head on the hard woodwork. And Skinner lay sprawling in the bows, moaning and wailing and cursing.

Already the three were suffering intensely.

That salt water which had been forced down their throats had resulted in a thirst such as they had never before known. At

that moment they would have given everything they possessed for a mere sip of fresh water. But there was none. Around them lay the endless sea—and within the boat itself there was not even a biscuit.

Their position was dire, indeed.

These men had tortured their slaves for weeks—for months. Many of these pitiful wretches had been whipped and ill-treated until they died. Each member of the trio was a murderer.

And this torture was deserved—retribution had come.

It would have been shameful if such vile creatures had escaped without paying the penalty for their dastardly crimes. Hanging would have been too good for them—but the ghastly torture they were now suffering was perhaps the worst punishment in all the world that could have been adopted.

Daylight came.

And then, soon afterwards, the sun—not very powerful at present, but growing in intensity with every minute that passed. And each man sat there, refraining from any kind of conversation. Their thoughts were enough. And in the course of this one night they had become changed men.

Their cheeks had sunken in, their eyes expressed the dull horror which possessed them. And grey hairs were beginning to show. They could see nothing ahead but hopeless death—and the worst death of all.

What chance had they of being picked up?

There was not one likelihood in a thousand that any ship would come within sight. And it was the refinement of torture just after the sun had appeared. For, far away to the southward, a smudge of smoke could be seen.

Captain Hurricane was the first to notice it.

He stood up, his eyes gleaming strangely.

"Gosh!" he snarled thickly. "There's a ship down there!"

"A ship!" shouted the others, springing up.

"Gosh-ding it! Do you want us to capsize?" raved the skipper, as the boat rocked dangerously. "Sit tight, and don't be such blamed fools! Wait till we get on the next crest."

They waited, and, sure enough, they all three saw that well-known smudge. There was a ship there—just hull down on the horizon. And hope came to these poor brutes.

But it was a hope that came to nothing.

For after a while that smudge of smoke grew fainter and fainter. And, finally, as the morning advanced, there was no further sign of it. It was the cruiser Norbury that had come so near to locating its quarry. But it passed on, and Captain Hurricane and his two companions were left alone.

As the morning advanced, the heat grew. The sun beat down pitilessly—a blinding, blazing heat that made the metal work of the boat burning hot to the hands—a heat that blistered the paint, and even made the seats too hot to touch.

The sufferings of Captain Hurricane and the other two men were ghastly.

Before noon their tongues were so swollen that conversation was almost impossible. They could only utter thick, unintelligible croaks. Their eyes were wild, and their skin was becoming burned and blistered.

There was no relief—utterly no escape from this torture of tortures.

And then, while the sun was at its highest, came the first tragedy. Mr. Skinner, who was laying in the bows, happened to move one of the floor boards. He did so, hoping that the board might afford him some measure of protection from the burning sun.

He gave a cracked exclamation as he stared down into the cavity which had just been revealed. He sent the loosened board whirling away, and clutched at a flask which was lying there, swilling about in the water which had percolated through the rotten seams.

It was a spirit flask—a glass one—and, within, the flask was three parts full of whisky! Mr. Skinner's eyes half closed as his fingers gripped the flask. His first impulse was to shout aloud, but he caught himself in time.

The others hadn't seen—he would keep this for himself!

The flask had a screw stopper, and Skinner vainly attempted to unscrew it. It was fixed tight, and he tried again and again. And then came a bellow from the stern. Captain Hurricane, watching listlessly at first, had bent forward—his burning eyes fixed upon the movements of Skinner.

And, suddenly, he saw—he caught a glimpse of the flask.

The half-maddened man uttered a thick, awful roar. He blundered towards the bows, caring nothing for Seelig, who was sprawling in the middle of the boat, half senseless with exhaustion and suffering.

"Whisky—whisky!" croaked Captain Hurricane. "You doggone skunk! That's mine—mine! Give it to me, or——"

"It's mine!" screamed Skinner. "I found it—— Ugh!"

Without giving the man a single chance, Captain Hurricane brought his fist round with deadly force. The blow caught Skinner under the chin. He gave a wild grunt, and the flask fell from his nerveless fingers. By a freak of fortune it clattered upon the floor boards without breaking.

And Skinner himself, with a choking scream, blundered backwards, and tipped over the side into the sea. The boat rocked wildly and drifted on. And Skinner, rising to the surface near by, made frantic attempts to swim.

He failed.

Captain Hurricane, in the boat, paid utterly no attention to the terrible sound, which came from the sea near by—sounds which grew smaller, and finally died away. Mr. Seelig had raised himself up, and was staring over the gunwale of the boat—staring fixedly—with horrid fascination. He

had seen Skinner go down, and was watching for him to come up again. But Seelig watched in vain. The villainous Skinner had paid the full penalty.

And Captain Hurricane was cursing madly, tugging at the stopper of the flask. And just as he was about to smash the neck off—an expedient he had not dared attempt in case the bottle broke—the stopper became loosened.

Captain Hurricane gave a gurgle of mad joy. And Seelig half rose to his feet, with murder in his heart. He would have some of this spirit, too!

And then the skipper seemed to go raving mad. He screamed with rage—he cursed incoherently. For the flask contained nothing but brine—horrible, bitter brine that had been tinged in order to resemble whisky.

It was one of 'Frisco Mike's ghastly jokes!

He had suspected that this flask would be found, and he had chuckled over the terrible disappointment that would follow.

Captain Hurricane, believing that some measure of relief was about to be his, went really crazy. He saw Seelig's face staring at him. It enraged him for some unaccountable reason.

And he dashed the flask at Seelig with true aim.

It broke, shattering to fragments against the mate's face—gashing him horribly, and turning him into a second maniac. And then the pair fought—screaming and cursing. They fought for no purpose.

And ten minutes later Captain Hurricane was alone in the boat.

On every side of him stretched the sea—bare of every kind of object. Two of the infamous trio had gone. Only Captain Hurricane remained. And he was a sight that no normal human being could view without a feeling of repulsion and horror.

His fight with Seelig had marked him so much that his face was almost unrecognisable. His skin was scratched and torn. His eyes protruded from his head, and his lips were swollen, blistered and black.

Truly, this man's punishment was complete!

And he had no relief. He could not even bathe his wounds, for there was nothing but salt water. Captain Hurricane was mad now—his reason had snapped during that battle.

The open boat contained a maniac.

And as the day grew on, he lapsed into a kind of coma. His sufferings were such that he could not hold out against them. Man of iron though he was, this dreadful torture was more than he could bear.

And when night descended the boat slowly drifted on, apparently empty. But Captain Hurricane was stretched out on the floor boards, face downwards, still and silent.

But he was not dead.

With the coming of night itself he aroused himself slightly. The cool air was a relief. The burning rays of the sun no longer beat down upon him. And for several hours he

had been in a kind of stupor—not a sleep, but something nearly approaching it.

And, in a way, he was refreshed. He felt stronger—the man's wiry frame recuperated under the cool sky of night. And just as he was arousing himself, and attempting to get into a kneeling position, a curious thing happened.

For some time Captain Hurricane had heard something in his ears—something which aroused indistinct memories. It seemed that he was dreaming—during the last hour or so all sorts of visions and hallucinations had passed through his fevered mind. And this seemed to be one of the dreams.

But he could hear the beating of surf upon a sandy beach—he could hear the waves breaking. It was this, indeed, that had caused him to arouse himself. For the sound seemed too real to be a dream.

And, as he was attempting to rise, the boat was lifted high. He felt it shoot forward, and then came a soft, grinding thud. Captain Hurricane staggered wildly to his feet.

He gazed upon a shore—a sandy strip of beach ending in a rocky slope. And beyond lay a steep hill. Just over to the left was a bay—and in that bay lay a vessel—the Wanderer!

Fate had played a strange trick. For Captain Hurricane had drifted on to the beach of Dorrimore Island!

CHAPTER VI.

THE END OF CAPTAIN HURRICANE!



"WELL, we'll soon be off now, young 'uns," said Lord Dorrimore genially. "Our troubles are at an end, an' we shall be sailing off into the deep blue

within an hour."

"Fine, sir."

"Rather!"

"We've had enough of this blessed island!"

The crowd of juniors agreed heartily. They were standing on the Wanderer's deck, and Lord Dorrimore was idly lounging in an easy chair, indulging in one of his best cigars.

It was late evening.

The good old Wanderer was absolutely herself again. The crew had been at work in earnest, and the whole ship was looking spick and span. Her decks gleamed white, her brasswork glittered like so many mirrors. Everything was shipshape and tidy. And Captain McDodd had soon got the crew into just the same orderly routine as ever.

All the extra stores had been taken on board, and there was now practically nothing left on the island. According to present plans we should leave almost within the hour. There was just one little thing that Nelson Lee desired to do. He wanted to take a walk to the top of the island and

take some snapshots of the bay and the great chasm.

The light for these photographs was to be provided by a great display of a hundred starshells that Dorrie was to send up. Lee had taken many photographs by daylight, but he thought these night views would be of great interest. For, of course, on returning home, journalists would swarm round, asking for material and photographs. The story of our adventures would be a sensation.

The light cruiser, Norbury, had been, and had gone.

Her commander had reported picking up the schooner, and taking off 'Frisco Mike and the eleven men. All those remaining on the island—the ex-slaves and some more members of Hurricane's gang—were taken on board the cruiser. She was going straight to Los Angeles, where a full inquiry would be held.

Mr. Hawkins had gone, too—for he was one of the chief witnesses. Later on, no doubt, he would become a member of the Wanderer's crew.

After the departure of the cruiser, a few final things had been done, and now it merely remained for us to sail away in the Wanderer. Our party was just the same as it had been when we started. We had no prisoners on board, no outsiders of any description. The cruiser had relieved us of all that bother.

The pit in the centre of the island, containing the gold mine, was now empty and barren. There was something about that place that brought a shudder to anybody who went near.

Nelson Lee had intended going on his snapshot trip alone, but at the last moment I determined to go with him. It was fortunate that I did so. He started off cheerily, and full of excellent spirits, carrying the camera, and me with a few accessories under my arm.

"Well, gov'nor, things have worked out fine, on the whole," I declared. "Rather a pity we've heard nothing about Captain Hurricane, but I suppose the poor beggar is dead by now. Although he was such a murderous brute, I can't help feeling a bit sorry for him. It was a ghastly thing to set him adrift in an open boat."

Nelson Lee nodded.

"Yes, Nipper; but can we really blame the men who did that act?" he said. "We do not know a quarter of the tortures they suffered. And, after all, it was natural for them to make their torturers suffer in return. The best thing we can do is to forget the matter completely."

"Yes, I suppose so, sir," I agreed.

We were climbing the hill, and had completed about a third of the journey. And then, almost without any warning, a figure appeared from behind a boulder. It rose up, and both Nelson Lee and I paused.

"That's queer, sir," I muttered. "I didn't know anybody was—"

And then the words froze on my lips, for that figure just above uttered a croaking cry—a wild, screaming sound that was utterly inhuman. And with two ape-like bounds the creature hurled himself at Nelson Lee.

The camera went flying, and Lee was fighting for his life. I stood there, dazed for a second. And I realised that this thing of the night was a madman. No sane human being could utter such awful cries.

And, furthermore, I recognised him as Captain Hurricane—not by his voice or his features—but by his general figure. And before I could make any attempt to help the gov'nor, he was beaten.

In spite of Nelson Lee's great ability as a fighter, he had been unable to withstand this sudden, violent attack. For Captain Hurricane had armed himself with a heavy piece of rock.

And this he brought down upon the gov'nor's head with such force that Nelson Lee was hopelessly stunned. He now lay in Captain's Hurricane's arms, the prisoner of this raving maniac.

And Hurricane was screaming with maddened joy. I rushed up, scared out of my life. The skipper saw me coming, and he delivered a kick which caught me in the chest—for I was on a lower level—and sent me reeling over.

The hillside was steep just there. Battered by contact with the rough rocks, I was nearly breathless as I rolled over and over. When I finally checked my downward progress, I was thirty yards away. And Captain Hurricane was rushing up the hillside, with Lee in his arms. The maniac carried Nelson Lee with apparently no effort. And as he ran, he shouted. The tense excitement had brought his voice back to him.

"Over the chasm you go, you scum!" he shrieked. "Revenge—revenge!"

Only for a second did I stand there.

I knew that it was utterly impossible for me to do anything alone. And as I gazed back towards the Wanderer I saw the first of the starshells going up. I ran madly towards the beach, shouting for help at the top of my voice.

And by the time I reached the sand a boat was just grounding, with Lord Dorrimore and Mr. Barry and two or three others in it. They leapt ashore. Dorrie was carrying a long length of rope.

"All right, young 'un—we've seen!" he shouted. "This way!"

Those shells, bursting high above, and filling the island with radiance, had revealed to all on board the gov'nor's plight. And Lord Dorrimore, with instant action, had come ashore.

"It's Hurricane!" I panted. "He's raving mad!"

"Don't talk Nipper—don't talk!" said Dorrie grimly. "It's all right—we'll save Lee. Don't worry!"

"But—but the gov'nor's stunned!" I sobbed. "And that maniac means to hurl him down into the chasm."

I was nearly off my head with horror and alarm. But Lord Dorrimore said nothing further; he scrambled up the rocky hillside with the speed of a deer. I had great difficulty in keeping pace.

For Lord Dorrimore knew well enough that the only chance of saving Lee was to act instantly. Possibly the gov'nor might be able to do something himself, but it was no good relying on that. He had been caught by surprise, and was senseless—a baby in the hands of this madman.

There was no longer any darkness.

The fireworks were going up in one continuous succession—sending out sprays of dazzling fire which illuminated the whole island. And even as we climbed we could see Captain Hurricane above us, still clinging to his burden.

Dorrie was within fifty yards, and already his revolver was in his grip. He was even taking aim when Captain Hurricane raised Nelson Lee high above his head. And there he stood, with Nelson Lee poised on the edge of eternity.

For the chasm lay at Captain Hurricane's feet.

He had gone to the extreme edge—his feet were even protruding over. The slightest movement might cause him to overbalance, and go hurtling downwards with his victim.

And it was practically five hundred feet to the bottom!

It was a sheer drop down the face of the precipice to the rocks below. That fall would mean instantaneous death. And as I stood there, staring, my heart was in my mouth. I felt sick with horror. Indeed, I nearly fainted.

For it seemed to me that no power on earth could save Nelson Lee from destruction. There he was, held in Captain Hurricane's demoniacal grip—held high above, as though he weighed but a few pounds. The maniac was possessed with strength such as nobody can imagine.

And on the very edge he stood, laughing like some devil from another world.

Lord Dorrimore was as pale as a ghost. He couldn't fire—he knew it. For to shoot the madman would mean Nelson Lee's death. If Captain Hurricane crumpled up on this spot, nothing could save Lee from toppling over.

The position seemed so dire that no human power could save the gov'nor. And then it was that Lord Dorrimore acted. To rush forward would be fatal, for the maniac was capable of leaping into the chasm with his victim. To shoot was equally fatal.

But there was one way—just one flimsy hope.

Almost subconsciously, I noticed that Dorrie had been swiftly coiling the rope. And, suddenly, it left his hand. The rope whirled through the air. It was only pos-

sible to take one shot. There would be no chance of a second attempt if the first failed.

Dorrie knew that, and his nerves were like steel. And he had had much practice with rope throwing. His aim was as true as a die. The rope whisked through the air, the loop aiming straight for Nelson Lee.

Captain Hurricane gave a wilder scream than ever as he saw.

With all his strength he hurled Nelson Lee from him—out over that sheer, awful drop. I screamed as I saw, and shut my eyes.

But the rope beat the skipper's move by a sheer second.

For as Nelson Lee was hurled outwards, the rope coiled over his feet. Dorrie saw, and gave a yell of joy. With one swift, lightning jerk he drew the loop tight—even as Lee was falling.

"Hold—hold!" yelled Dorrie madly.

Mr. Barry and I grabbed at the rope with all our strength. There was a jerk, and we felt a dead weight on our hands. And we knew the truth. Lee had fallen only a few feet over the edge, and was now suspended there, head downwards.

And Captain Hurricane stared dully, failing to understand for the moment.

He saw us hauling at the rope. And then he gave another scream as he realised what had happened. He saw him dash to the edge, and lean over, with the intention of loosening that rope and letting Lee hurtle downwards.

The next second it was all over.

For the edge of the cliff crumbled under Captain Hurricane's foot. He staggered sideways, giving a cry that chilled us to our very marrows—a cry that we shall hear for many a year.

Clutching at the air, screaming, Captain Hurricane vanished over the edge. I rushed up, hardly knowing what I was doing. Mr. Barry and Lord Dorrmore were still hauling at the rope.



For as Nelson Lee was hurled outwards, the rope coiled over his feet. Dorrie saw, and gave a yell of joy. With one swift, lightning jerk he drew the loop tight even as Lee was falling.

And as I reached the edge I heard a faint, far-away thud. It made me shiver.

Captain Hurricane, too, had paid his last account!

CHAPTER VII.

THE RACE FOR HOME!



DORRIE gave a queer little laugh.

"By gad!" he exclaimed. "Look at my hand! I'm hanged if I'm not as shaky as an old man of ninety! Fairly got the

shivers!"

He held out his hand as he spoke, and it was, indeed, shaking as though with the ague. And Dorrie was not alone. Both Mr.

Barry and I were in exactly the same position.

The reaction was terrible. We felt sick and faint. But there, lying in front of us, was Nelson Lee. We had hauled him up, and the gov'nor was now stretched out on the ground.

We had discovered an ugly bruise on the side of his head—a bruise that would be there for weeks. Dorrie's brandy flask had been brought into operation, and the gov'nor was just showing signs of returning consciousness.

Within five minutes he was capable of speaking and understanding. But he knew nothing of what had taken place. The last he remembered was his fight with the mad captain on the hillside. We were pleased, for even Nelson Lee's iron nerve would have been strained if he had been conscious during those ghastly moments while poised on the edge of the chasm.

He heard all about it, of course, and thanked Dorrie in his own quiet way for having saved his life. But his lordship gruffly told him not to be an ass. And then, gently, Nelson Lee was helped down to the beach, and on board.

There was a sensation when all the fellows heard the story. Our departure was delayed until the next morning. I went to bed with the rest of the *Remove*, feeling strangely exhausted.

But I awoke, and went on deck just in time to see a grim-looking party coming down the beach. Mr. Barry and twelve men had been lowered down into the pit. They had performed the last services on all that remained of Captain Hurricane.

The boat had been found, too, but with no sign whatever of Skinner or Seelig. They were certainly not on the island, but we knew what had happened to them. They were out somewhere in the Pacific, where they would never be seen by human eye again.

And thus ended our adventures with Captain Hurricane on Dorrimore Island. Considering all the startling adventures we had gone through, we felt extremely lucky that we had all come unscathed.

And now our thoughts were all of home.

Before the morning was very old, the *Wanderer* was steaming away at full speed from the island—making an attempt to reach Los Angeles in record time. We didn't know anything of this at first—we thought we were going out into the Pacific, en route for home, according to our original plan.

But Dorrie soon "put us wise."

Nelson Lee was on deck, lounging in an easy-chair, with his head heavily bandaged. He was looking a bit pale, and he would be rocky for a day or two. But he made light of his injury, and declared that he would soon be quite himself.

"You see, young 'uns, it's this way," explained Lord Dorrimore. "We reckoned to spend only a day or two on this island,

but we've been here for weeks—two weeks, anyhow. And that's put the tin hat on goin' home by the way we planned."

"How do you mean, sir?" inquired Reggie Pitt.

"Well, we should get back to England two or three weeks after the beginning of the new term at St. Frank's," replied Dorrie. "That wouldn't do at all."

"We shouldn't mind, sir."

"Not a bit, sir."

"Perhaps not," grinned his lordship. "But I've got an idea that Dr. Stafford might make a few objections, an' I should probably come in for a large-sized row. In fact, I should be hauled over the coals pretty badly."

"But what's going to be done, sir?"

"Well, the new term starts in a little under three weeks," said Dorrie. "That doesn't give us much time, does it? But Lee and I have been diving into shippin' booklets, an' all that kind of thing, an' we find that the *Morganic* leaves New York for Southampton in just under two weeks—in ten days, to be exact."

"But we'll never catch that, sir."

"That's just it," said Dorrie. "We might—an' we're goin' to try—at least, you are. If we can get to Los Angeles in time, you'll be able to take the overland train, an' get to New York at the end of five days. So you'll be able to arrive in England the day after the term starts—so that won't be late. Dr. Stafford will forgive a few hours like that."

"Oh, rather, sir!"

"The original plan is put aside," declared Dorrie. "It's rather a pity, but we can't go too far—we mustn't try Dr. Stafford's patience any more. So Mr. Lee's goin' to rush you home as fast as he knows how. I shall stay in Los Angeles, and do all the dirty work—that is, give all the information concernin' Captain Hurricane, an' 'Frisco Mike, an' the rest. You youngsters won't have anythin' more to do with that matter at all. As far as you're concerned it's over."

"But we want you to come back to England with us, sir," said De Valerie.

"Don't you worry; I'll be there before long," promised his lordship. "An' then I'll look you up at the school, an' we'll have a good time together. We haven't had such a bad holiday, on the whole."

Just as Dorrie had planned, the *Wanderer* reached Los Angeles Harbour in good time. Wireless messages had been sent out in advance, and we found sleeping accommodation reserved for us on the first available train.

We went back across America on the Union Pacific to Chicago, via Salt Lake City, and from Chicago to New York on the Grand Central Railroad. It was a most interesting journey, and we had much to entertain us all the way across—for we went

back by a totally different route to the one we came by.

Nelson Lee was with us, and by the time New York was reached, he was fully recovered from his injury. We had bade a fond farewell to Dorrie and Umlosi and the rest, and had left everything in Dorrie's hands.

We only had a single day in New York, and then we gladly went on board the great liner, *Morganic*, one of the fastest boats in the Atlantic service. And scarcely one fellow in the *Remove* was sorry to leave.

We had seen a great deal of America. But the general opinion of the *Remove* was that old England was the one really bright spot on earth. California may have tons of sunshine and fine weather, but the beauty of a country doesn't rest entirely with weather! It was England for us!

And it can easily be understood that our feelings were joyful as the liner ploughed her way across the Atlantic. Every turn of her propellers took us nearer and nearer to the shores of the dear Old Country.

Being early September, the weather was still quite summery, and we had a really excellent voyage. Only on two days was the sea inclined to be a little rough, and the huge *Morganic* hardly felt it.

By the time we reached Southampton, every fellow in the *Remove* was feeling fit and well, and eager enough to get back to St. Frank's. And it was indeed a welcome sight to see the familiar English shores.

As we came up Southampton Water, all the fellows were lining the promenade-deck, gazing out to the sunlit shores. It was in the forenoon, and we reckoned that we should be off the ship soon after twelve.

And this was only the second day of term!

St. Frank's College had opened, after the long summer vacation, the previous day. Considering what we had been through, we had done wonderfully well to get back almost on time.

For just one day made little or no difference.

"Of course, it's a bit of a pity, having to buzz straight to school," remarked Jack Grey, with a note of regret in his voice. "We had hoped to be home two weeks or ten days beforehand, so that we could spend a bit of time with our people."

"Yes," agreed Reggie Pitt. "We've been away a good long time."

"All the same, we mustn't grumble," went on Jack. "We've had a glorious holiday, and it's only right that we should go straight to St. Frank's. I shouldn't be surprised if crowds are waiting for us."

"Fathers and mothers, you mean?" grinned De Valeric.

"You bet—and brothers and sisters as well."

"Oh, rot!" said Handforth. "It'll be a bit thick if my pater's come down! Of course, he's all right in his own way—a

chap has got to be decent to his pater. But it's rotten being treated like a giddy kid! I think we ought to be allowed to go home for a day, anyhow."

"Well, there's no telling," said Bob Christine. "Perhaps our people will get together, and it's just likely that we may have a day. It really depends upon Mr. Lee."

But it didn't. It so happened that a telegram was received on board the *Morganic* before any of the passengers were landed. It was from Dr. Malcolm Stafford, the headmaster of St. Frank's, and was addressed to Nelson Lee.

I was with the gov'nor when he read it.

It was a very cordial message, heartily congratulating Nelson Lee upon getting the *Remove* back safely and promptly. Dr. Stafford also complimented Lee for having come out of the difficult position with such flying colours.

But it was the latter portion of the Head's message that was so interesting. Under the very exceptional circumstances, he gave his permission for the *Remove* to go straight home upon landing—and to spend a clear week with their people. But the whole *Remove* had to be at St. Frank's at the end of this period.

"That's fine, gov'nor!" I said enthusiastically. "I say, what a brick! And you're at liberty, too?"

"For a week—yes."

"Gorgeous!" I said delightedly. "Shall we go straight to Gray's Inn Road?"

"I imagine so."

"Hurrah!" I yelled. "So we shall see dear old London again—have a week there before we get back to the school. Good old Head! I knew he was a sportsman, but I never thought he'd come up to the scratch like this!"

I rushed out along the promenade-deck and blundered into Handforth & Co., and a crowd of others.

"Heard the news?" I asked breathlessly.

"No—anything good?"

"Yes—we've got a week's extension!"

"Eh?"

"What?"

"A week's extra holiday?"

"Yes!" I grinned. "The Head's turned up trumps, and he's wired the gov'nor that we can go straight to our various homes—and all turn up at St. Frank's a week from to-day. That is, next Tuesday."

"Hurrah!"

"Oh, ripping!"

"Great Scott! He's a sport!"

"Rather!"

"And we're all going straight home!"

"Absolutely!" said Archie Glenthorne. "The news, as you might say, is the kind that makes a chappie's tissues fairly bulge with energy. I mean, it's a dashed priceless piece of information—what?"

"Not much good to me, though, by jings!" said Jerry Dodd ruefully.

"Why not?" asked Handforth.

"Why, my people are in Australia," said Jerry. "I've got nowhere to go, anyhow. I suppose I shall have to get back to St. Frank's, and live a life of solitude in the Remove until you chaps turn up."

"Absolutely not!" said Archie stoutly. "Kindly accept, dear old onion, an invitation from Archie. I herewith beg to tender a somewhat huge and hearty invite to the good old ancestral pile."

Jerry Dodd shook his head.

"Thanks all the same, old man, but nothing doing!" he said.

"What? I mean to say, which?"

"Jolly decent of you to offer it, Archie, but your people will want you to themselves," said Jerry Dodd thoughtfully. "They won't want any stranger butting in. Besides, I shall be all right at St. Frank's."

"Of course you will," said Clapson, of the College House. "I'm coming, too."

"To St. Frank's?"

"Yes—my people are away in Italy," replied Clapson. "Didn't I have a wire in New York? It's no good my going home, because the place is closed up. So we shall be companions in that solitude you spoke of."

"Good!" said Jerry. "They'll have one Remove chap in each House."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

But it transpired that there would be two Remove fellows in each house. For Justin B. Farman, the American junior, was also going straight to the school, for his people had been left behind in the United States. And Freeman, of the College House, reported that his parents were on a trip to India, Freeman's pater holding an important Government appointment in Bombay.

So the Remove, at least, would be represented practically from the beginning of term. And it was only natural that the quartette should decide to travel to St. Frank's together.

They reported to Nelson Lee, who gave them full instructions, some cash, and was quite satisfied that they would look after themselves and arrive safely.

And that's how it came about.

After we had docked, and had gone ashore, there was all the usual commotion. Baggage to look after, Customs' officers to see, the boat train to catch, and all the rest of the hey-do-you-do.

But, at length, we were off. As for Jerry Dodd and Farman and Freeman and Clapson—they went by means of a local coast train. For St. Frank's College, after all, is not so very far from Southampton, along the Sussex coast.

It was fairly late in the afternoon when the train pulled up in Bannington Station. It was one of those clear September days that Sussex enjoys so frequently. And the countryside was looking fine.

"My hat! Isn't it great?" said Clapson, as he looked out across the station plat-

form down into the hollow where the town nestled. "Just the same as ever—not a stick altered, not a giddy leaf changed."

They stood there for some minutes, gazing eagerly, forgetting that the local train was on the other platform, waiting. There was nothing at all remarkable in the appearance of these four juniors, and scarcely anybody took particular notice of them.

But they, themselves, were enraptured.

For the last month or so they had been looking at New York, at Chicago, at the small, uninteresting towns of the Middle West. They had been travelling in California, with all its newness, its temporary-looking apartment-houses and wooden bungalows.

And here they were back in rural England once more—in the quiet, sleepy old town of Bannington, with its quaint, old-fashioned houses, its historic castle, and air of peaceful tranquility.

Somehow, there was something solid and secure to look at—the juniors had a feeling that here they would find real law and order. In America they had never got rid of the half-formed fear that all was not secure. Perhaps it was the newness of the United States, as compared to the old, stable serenity of England. And they looked upon Bannington with loving eyes.

Not that Bannington was so very sleepy, after all.

For, as the juniors watched there, they saw the busy railway yards—Bannington being an important junction. They saw the local motor-buses passing to and fro. They could see the big, important new shops in the High Street—real, up-to-date places that could compare with anything in American towns of much bigger population.

"We're not so far behind, after all," grinned Clapson. "And, when you come to think of it, there's something fine about the look of Bannington. I've a good mind to go out and walk through the town—"

"By jings!" gasped Jerry. "The guard's just waving his flag."

They had no time to decide, but made a dash for the small local train which would carry them to Bellton. And soon they were on board, assuring themselves that they would visit Bannington within a day or two.

But as they sat in their compartment they felt very happy indeed. It was their first afternoon in England after being absent for many weeks.

And they felt—good.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GREAT J. B. B.



AFTERNOON lessons were over. St. Frank's was carrying on in just the same old calm, sedate way. The great public school was unchanged. The grass and the flowers and the hedges had grown

somewhat during the summer holidays, but in every material sense there was no alteration.

The old Triangle was wearing its usual appearance of sedate beauty. Grass was peeping up profusely between the big flag-stones of the paths. The central fountain was surrounded by grass, too. But these were mere details. The big college itself stood there, looking imposing and handsome in the bright afternoon sunlight.

The old grey stone buildings, with the quaint leaded windows, and the big, imposing clock-tower over the Ancient House—all wore the same peaceful atmosphere of solidity and genuine charm.

On the Ancient House steps, just outside the lobby, a group of Fifth-Formers were discussing the one topic of the day. The whole of St. Frank's, from the smallest fag to the most lordly prefect, was talking about the adventures of the Remove.

For days the newspapers had been full of the story.

Every little incident and detail of the trip to Dorrimore Island had been told. Many of the juniors' photographs had been reproduced, and all the big newspapers had made the most of an excellent story.

"All this fuss and bother!" said Chambers of the Fifth. "When those kids come back they'll all have swelled heads! I wouldn't have allowed anything like this if I'd had any say."

"Oh, it can't be helped!" said Bryant. "After all, the Remove has been through a pretty wonderful time——"

"You don't believe all that piffle in the papers, I suppose?" asked Chambers disdainfully.

"Why not?"

"Well, you know what these reporters are——"

"But Mr. Lee vouches for the whole story," put in Philips. "I'm jolly certain that the whole thing's true. Dash it all, there's no need to be uppish, old man. I think it's up to us to give the kids a rousing welcome when they turn up."

"Hear, hear!" said Bryant.

"Oh, well, of course, if you want to make them more swanky than ever—leave me out of it!" said Chambers, with a sniff. "Those Remove kids are bad enough at the best of times."

The other two Fifth-Formers grinned, and winked at one another. They knew Cuthbert Chambers. When the time came, he would be the first senior to go and heartily congratulate the Remove—at the same time using his very best fatherly manner. Chambers was right enough at heart.

"In my opinion the Remove's going to get a bit of a surprise when it gets here," continued Phillips. "Those new chaps in the College House seem to be capable of stirring up some trouble. I've talked to one or two of them, and they're a regular set of young bounders!"

"You mean those chaps from Kendis College?"

"Of course," said Phillips. "But there's no reason for us to worry our heads. By the way, the Remove crowd won't be here until next Tuesday. It seems they've been given a week's extension."

"Lucky young beggars!" said Chambers gruffly. "Now, that's what I call unfair! They go on a tour round the giddy world, and even that's not enough. They've got to have a week extra. And we—the Fifth—are stuck here at school! I've a jolly good mind to get up a protest to the Head!"

Again Phillips and Bryant grinned.

And then, at that minute, four figures appeared in the imposing gateway of the school. They had just entered from Bellton Lane. And there they stood, inside the Triangle, taking in the scene.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Phillips. "Farman—Dodd! Look at 'em! And two Remove chaps from the College House! They've come to-day, after all!"

With one accord the three Fifth-Formers dashed across the Triangle. But the newcomers had also been seen by a big crowd of Third-Formers. In a few seconds the four Removites were surrounded by a yelling mob.

"Hurrah!"

"It's the Remove!"

"Gimme your fist!" roared Chambers enthusiastically. "Jolly glad you've turned up safe and sound, my lads! If you behave yourselves this term, we shall probably get on well together."

"Thanks!" grinned Clapson. "My goodness! I never thought St. Frank's was as nice as this! It's only after you've been away a long time that it looks so jolly good! And not changed a bit, either!"

During the next five minutes the arms of the four Remove fellows were worked like pump-handles. The juniors shook hands until they ached. Everybody wanted to congratulate them. And, finally, they were escorted towards the Ancient House by a cheering mob of fags.

And then Mr. Crowell appeared. The Remove Form master was very cordial and genial. As a rule, he was a somewhat severe man, and many members of the Remove had been frequently heard to describe him as an old beast. But to-day, at all events, Mr. Crowell was as nice as any man could be. He was all smiles—all geniality—with an abundance of humour.

"So it seems, boys, that we shall have to get along together for a whole week, eh?" he asked, after a good deal of talk. "Well, the Form-room will not be so empty, after all."

"There'll only be four of us, sir," said Freeman.

"No—ten, Freeman," corrected Mr. Crowell. "And ten, after all, is not such a small class. Nothing near the usual amount, of course—and I shall have quite an easy

week. You will have time to settle down—"

"But there aren't any other chaps coming, sir," said Clapson.

"No—they are already here, my boy," smiled Mr. Crowell. "You see, it so happens that six new boys have come at once this term—six juniors for the Remove. It is rather unusual for us to have such a number in our particular Form. Generally, it is the Second or Third that gains a whole batch at once."

"My hat!" said Jerry Dodd. "Six new fellows, eh? In our House, sir?"

"No—in the College House."

"Oh!" said Clapson, intensely interested. "Ours, eh? What sort of chaps are they, sir—and where do they come from?"

Mr. Crowell chuckled.

"Considering that the young gentlemen only arrived a few hours ago, I really have not delved deeply into their characters," he said drily. "You will meet them very shortly, my boys. They all come from one school—an exceedingly exclusive establishment, known as Kendis College, and situated in Richmond. But Kendis College is no more, having failed owing to an unfortunate lack of patronage. The various pupils have been distributed among other public schools—and we have secured six. The College House, as you know, has not been full for several terms past. But we must now go to the Head. I am sure Dr. Stafford is most anxious to see you."

And while the four juniors were being escorted to Dr. Stafford's study, a party of six juniors talked together in the lobby of the College House.

They were the new arrivals from Kendis College.

In most respects they looked very similar to any of the ordinary Remove fellows—except, perhaps, that they were rather more dandified in their general attire. They were all dressed in well cut Etons, with creases down their trousers that spoke well for their tailors. Their linen was spotless, and they were altogether well groomed.

They wore the St. Frank's caps, and seemed to be perfectly at home—although, as a matter of fact, those caps had only just been handed to them, and they were really quite strange to their surroundings.

One boy in particular was noticeable.

He was apparently the leader of the six, who naturally clung together, seeing that they had all come from the same place. This one boy was slightly bigger than the rest.

That he was muscular was obvious. He had big, square shoulders. He had a powerful chest, and there was a certain squareness about the jaw that told of a strong character and a powerful will. Otherwise, his face was fresh and engaging. His complexion was quite fair, and freckles were in abundance. His nose was of the snub variety, and his eyes were hazel.

And, above all, he was surmounted by a well-groomed head of startlingly red hair. It was simply glaring—it shouted at you. And the owner of all this was blessed with the somewhat striking name of John Busterfield Boots.

He was destined to become a big power in the Remove.

Busterfield had been the name of his grandfather, and he was proud of his surname because it was unusual. Among his own friends he was familiarly known as "Buster." And it was a name that suited him to perfection.

His five companions were not so distinctive. They were ordinary fellows for the most part, but they looked self-assertive and full of cool confidence. There was not the faintest sign of that "new kid" touch about them.

Their names were Horace Crowe, George Webb, Albert Crooks, Walter Denny, and Percy Bray. And they were all fully-fledged members of the College House. It remained to be seen whether the College House was the richer or the poorer.

"Well, Buster, not so bad, eh?" remarked Crowe critically. "Better than the old show, anyway. We can spread ourselves here, and make things hum generally. What do you say?"

John Busterfield Boots nodded.

"My sons," he replied, "we're going to startle the natives. You can take it from me that there'll be big doings at St. Frank's this term. When the Supreme Six take command of anything it means a display of fireworks."

"You bet it does!" agreed Crooks.

"We haven't been told anything about studies yet," said Denny. "What are we going to do, J.B.B.? It's up to you, you know? You're the leader. We're waiting for you to get busy."

"I'll get busy when it pleases me!" said Buster Boots languidly. "I shouldn't be at all surprised if some of these St. Frank's fellows kick up a fuss—but we'll deal with that when it comes."

The red-haired fellow moved gracefully away from the lobby, and proceeded to make a systematic examination of the Remove passage. Every study was looked into, criticised, and weighed up.

"Jolly lucky for us that the Remove hasn't turned up yet," remarked J.B.B., as he paused in one of the studies. "We're able to take our pick without any bother or question."

"The bother will come later on," grinned Webb.

"My son, it will—but you can leave it all to me," replied Buster Boots. "I don't think I shall have any trouble with this crowd. Well, it strikes me that Study Q is the best of the lot. Bigger, brighter, and better furnished. It's mine!"

The leader of the self-styled Supreme Six made this statement as if there was no

question about it whatever. He had calmly taken possession of Bob Christine's study—the study that belonged to Christine Yorke and Talmadge, the recognised leaders of the College House section of the Remove.

"What about us?" asked Bray, with interest.

"You'll divide up, and occupy the two studies on either side," replied Buster Boots. "Crow and Webb will be in Study P, and Crooks and Denny will be in Study R. You'll be with me, Bray."

"Good man!" said Percy Bray. "Just the same as old times."

Buster Boots and Bray had been study mates at Kendis, and they were determined to remain room companions now. But it was the high-handedness of this newly arrived crowd that was amazing.

Without consulting anybody, they had calmly appropriated the three best studies in the Remove passage for their own use. And it was quite out of the common for only two fellows to share one study. There were always three in each at St. Frank's.

J. B. B. looked round at his companions and nodded.

"Yes, we'll stick together," he said calmly. "You'll be handy, in case of sudden necessity. I like to have you fellows on either side of me. That's just the same arrangement we had at Kendis, and we'll carry on like it."

There came the sound of footsteps in the passage.

Clapson and Freeman had arrived.

CHAPTER IX.

BUSTER LAYS DOWN THE LAW!



LEN CLAPSON was feeling very elated.

"The Head was a brick," he said warmly. "I never knew he was such a good old sort. It looks as though we shall

have a pretty easy time until next week. My hat! Won't it be ripping to go into good old Study Z again?"

"Study O, you mean," said Freeman.

"Well, that's a matter of opinion," grinned Clapson.

He shared Study Z with Harry Oldfield and Billy Nation, his own two special chums. And Freeman shared Study O with Dallas and Steele. The pair marched along the corridor, eager to see their old rooms.

And then suddenly they paused. The door of Study Q was open, and Bob Christine's own particular den was pretty well full up. And what was more, it was full up with strangers.

"Hallo!" said Clapson, coming to an abrupt halt.

"Hallo!" said the Supreme Six, staring.

For a moment or two the six newcomers regarded the two old timers. And it was Clapson who finally broke the silence. He



Nelson Lee was on deck, lounging in an easy chair, with his head heavily bandaged. He was looking a bit pale, and he would be rocky for a day or two. But he made light of his injury, and declared that he would soon be quite himself.

walked into the study, examining the new boys with great interest.

"I suppose you're the six new kids?" he asked.

"Unnecessary questions are tiresome," said Buster Boots, with a yawn.

Clapson stared.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed. "Talking to me?"

"My former remark applies equally well," said J. B. B. "My son, you can easily see that we are the six new fellows. How do you do? Pleased to meet you, old fellow. Hope we shall get on all right."

"Same here!" said the five dutifully.

Clapson and Freeman stared harder than ever. The red-haired boy spoke as though the whole thing was a nuisance, but one that couldn't be avoided. And he was gazing at the two juniors with an air of tolerant indifference. Clapson's ire arose at once.

"You'll have to change your tone a bit, my lads!" he said grimly. "It's not my way to be nosey with new kids, but let me give you a word of warning. When the

Remove turns up, you'd better change that tone of yours!"

"Oh!" said Buster. "Does the tone offend you at all?"

"Well, a bit!" replied Clapson tartly. "You're too jolly self-satisfied for a new kid. You'll simply be asking for trouble if you keep on like that. You've got to efface yourself a bit and be meek. Any new kid who throws his weight about gets something in the neck!"

Buster Boots smiled.

"Of course, there are rules in everything," he replied. "And you probably know that every rule has an exception. I happen to be an exception. I don't crawl to anybody."

"You—you cheeky rotter!" snorted Clapson indignantly. "Just wait till Christine comes—that's all! Just wait till Christine gets here!"

Buster Boots looked mildly interested.

"And who, may I ask, is the great Christine?" he inquired politely.

"Bob Christine's the leader of the Remove on this side," put in Freeman. "He'll jolly well shove you in your place in about two seconds. We can't do much—because we're only two against six. But when the others show up there'll be the dickens to pay!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The Supreme Six laughed in unison—a kind of prepared affair.

"Yes, you can cackle!" snorted Clapson. "And what are you doing in this study, anyway? This is Christine's study——"

"Wonderful!" said J. B. B. "That's a fine piece of news!"

"You'd better go along to Mr. Crowell, and ask him where you're going to hang out!" went on Clapson gruffly. "I expect he'll shove you into either U V, or W—they're all empty. There'll be three of you in each."

Buster Boots yawned.

"We have already looked over Study U and Study V and Study W—and they don't seem quite suitable," he said calmly. "We've selected these three here."

"You've done what?" asked Clapson blankly.

"We shall occupy Study P, Study Q, and Study R," proceeded Buster smoothly. "They strike us as being the best three in the passage. This one, as you know, is Study Q. From now onwards, it's mine. I share it with Bray, the young gentleman on my left."

"You—you funny idiot!" said Clapson. "If you think you can pinch Bob Christine's study you've made a mistake!"

"Indeed!"

"Yes, indeed, you cheeky rotter!" roared Clapson, exasperated. "I never heard such nerve!"

"Neither have I!" exclaimed Freeman warmly. "New chaps, too! Why, you'll jolly well be wiped off the map when the Remove turns up! Bob Christine himself will slaughter you!"

"The prospect seems to be alluring," said Boots languidly.

"And as for having three studies between the six of you, the idea's ridiculous!" went on Clapson. "There's always three fellows in every study here, and it's not likely that you're going to make any alteration!"

"But it so happens that we've made it," said Buster Boots. "I've already told you that this is my study, and I'd like to remind you that you're intruding!"

"Intruding!" gasped Clapson.

"Exactly!"

"You—you blessed madman!" roared Clapson. "I can walk into Bob Christine's study as often as I like, and——"

"This is really becoming monotonous," interrupted J. B. B. "You annoy, boy! Go out!"

Clapson staggered back.

"You're telling me to go out?" he shouted hotly.

"Yes—and I advise you to take some good advice."

"Just for that I'm going to biff you!" roared Clapson. "If your pals interfere they're nothing but cads! You've asked for this, and you're going to get it! Take that, you cheeky bounder!"

Len Clapson was thoroughly exasperated. The attitude of these new fellows was beyond all bearing. And Clapson simply went for John Busterfield Boots baldheaded.

Somehow, something went wrong.

Clapson was quite a fair boxer, and that first punch he lashed out was well directed. But it went right past Buster's head. And the next moment Clapson found himself in an iron grip.

"I hate doing this sort of thing, but it seems to be necessary," said Buster Boots, with regret. "You annoy me—you're too noisy! I think this is the way outside!"

With apparently no effort, he gave Clapson a terrific swing, and hurled him out into the passage like a sack of coal. Clapson hit against the opposite wall of the corridor with a thud and descended to the floor in an inverted position.

"You, too, if you please!" said Buster Boots politely.

Freeman was fairly gasping for breath. But he wasn't going to see Clapson treated like that without retaliating. He dashed at the new boy, and J. B. B. grabbed him.

"Sorry!" he said. "But lessons must be learned!"

Crash!

Freeman flew out of the doorway, and met with the same fate as Clapson. And the door of Study Q closed quietly and sedately. The two juniors sat up in the passage and gazed at one another dazedly.

"Great guns!" breathed Clapson. "The chap's as strong as an ox!"

"He picked me up like a feather!" breathed Freeman amazedly.

They rose to their feet, dusty and sore.

For a moment they thought about dashing back into the study—but they both decided that such a course would have been unwise. Discretion was required here.

"By Jingo!" muttered Clapson. "We'll stand it, Freeman—we'll just stick it for the week! But when Christine comes back——"

"Yes, and all the other fellows!" said Freeman. "There'll be ructions then! The nerve—the awful, unadulterated nerve! Calmly taking Christine's study and appropriating it for himself!"

"It's—it's too much to believe!" breathed Clapson.

They passed down the passage until they arrived at Study Z. And there they discussed the matter with rising indignation. In the meantime, John Busterfield Boots was languidly dusting himself down.

"It's a nuisance, chucking fellows out like that," he said. "But what else could I do? The idiots would interfere!"

Percy Bray grinned.

"My aunt!" he exclaimed. "You gave those chaps a surprise, J. B. B.! I'll bet they never had such a shock in their lives before! And you'll surprise the rest of the Remove, too!"

"Rather!" echoed the others.

"I've got an idea," said Boots, "that the Remove is booked for a nice little shock. And now that we've got the opportunity, I want to talk to you seriously."

"Go ahead!"

"Well, never forget that we're the Supreme Six," said Buster.

"Never!" echoed the others solemnly.

"At Kendis we ruled the roast," continued the red-haired new boy. "We held complete control. We, the Supreme Six, were the cheese, the whole cheese, and nothing but the cheese!"

"And nothing but the cheese!" echoed the rest dutifully.

"And it's got to be the same at St. Frank's," continued John Busterfield Boots. "I think we shall like this place. It's miles better than Kendis, and we shall have room to develop. Within a few weeks we shall be the leaders of the Remove—so we might as well start right away."

"We shall!" vowed the rest.

"Naturally, we shall meet with opposi-

tion," said Buster. "I've heard that the College House has been underdogged for years. The Ancient House has always led the junior school. That, of course, is going to be altered. Henceforth, the College House will take the lead in everything."

"The College House will take the lead in everything!" declared the other members of the Supreme Six.

"There's a fellow named Nipper," said J. B. B. "I've heard of him—a pretty lively kind of customer. He's the captain of the Remove, and the recognised leader. He'll soon be knocked off his perch."

"Absolutely!"

"And I shall take his place," proceeded Buster. "We, the Supreme Six, will rule the destinies of the whole Remove. We have stuck together in the past, and we shall stick together in the future."

"Glue," said Bray, "isn't in it!"

They solemnly shook hands—but not in the usual way. They stood in a circle and crossed arms as though they were about to sing "Auld Lang Syne." With clasped hands, they deliberately shook.

"The Supreme Six—supreme in all!" they chanted mysteriously.

And then they separated, and John Busterfield Boots nodded.

"The vow is taken," he said calmly. "Wait until the Remove turns up! There'll be trouble, and there'll be strife. But we shall gain the day. You are now looking at the future captain of the Remove!"

"We see him!" said the others gravely.

"Good!" said J. B. B. "Of course, it won't all come at once. But I'll guarantee that it won't take me long to occupy the position of Boss. I was boss at Kendis, and I shall be boss at St. Frank's. And I rely upon you, my faithful five, to support me."

"We're with you—to the end!" declared the faithful five.

And soon afterwards the Supreme Six strolled out, as confident and as languid as ever.

And the Remove was still absent. It appeared that when all the fellows returned to St. Frank's, a bit of a shock was waiting for them. And there was no question at all that large trouble was in store.

John Busterfield Boots would see to that!

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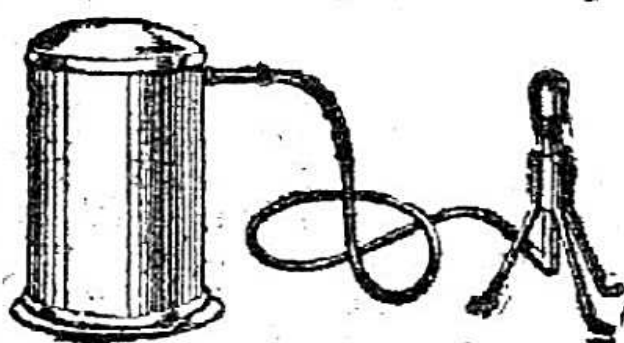
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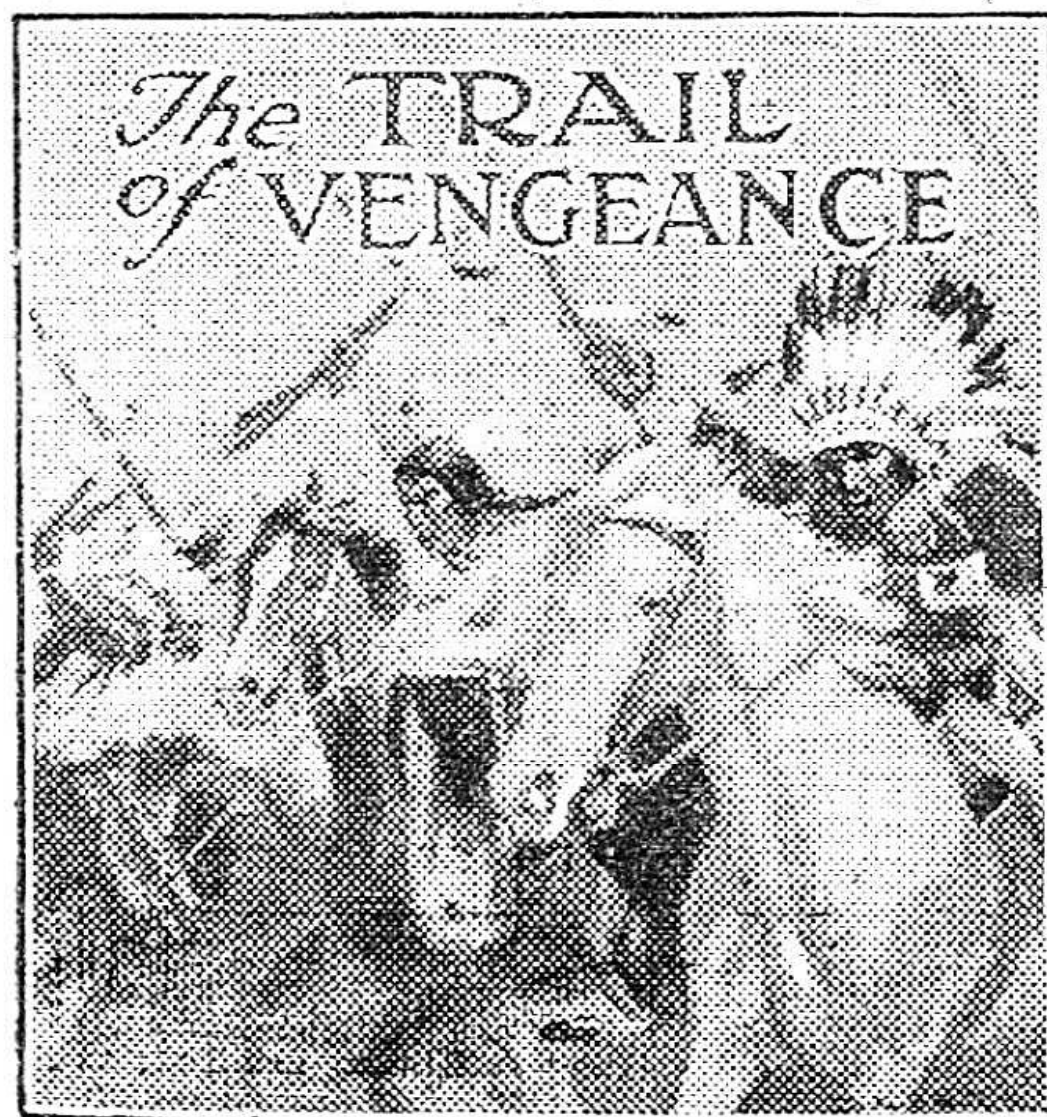


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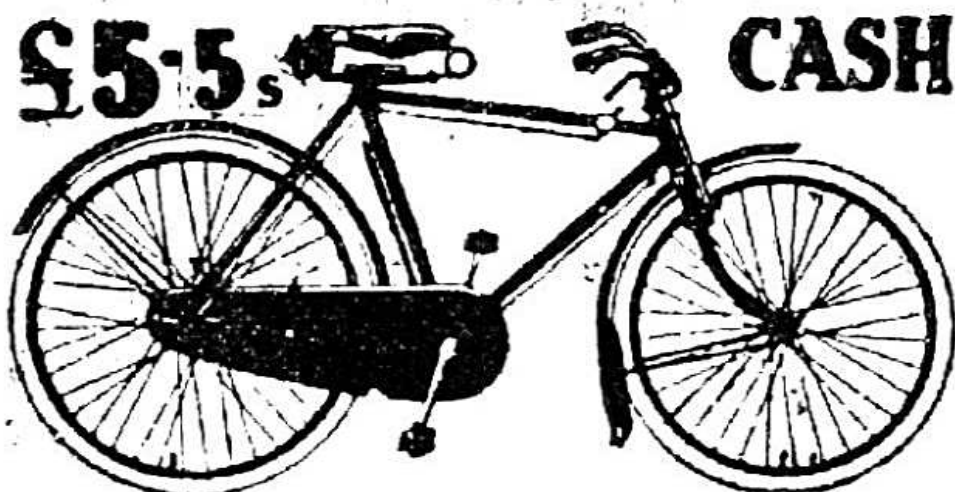
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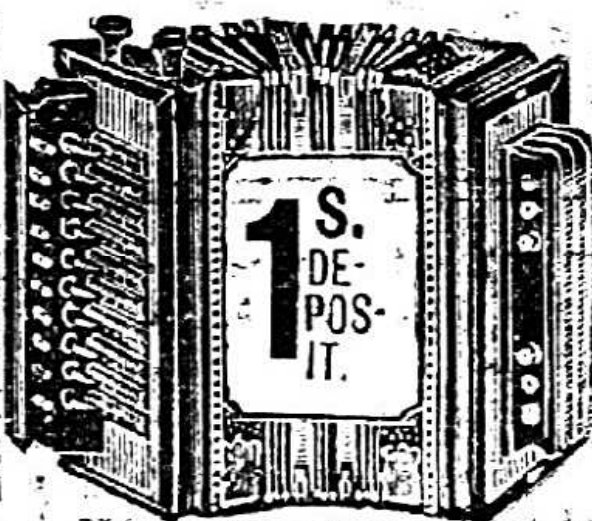
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