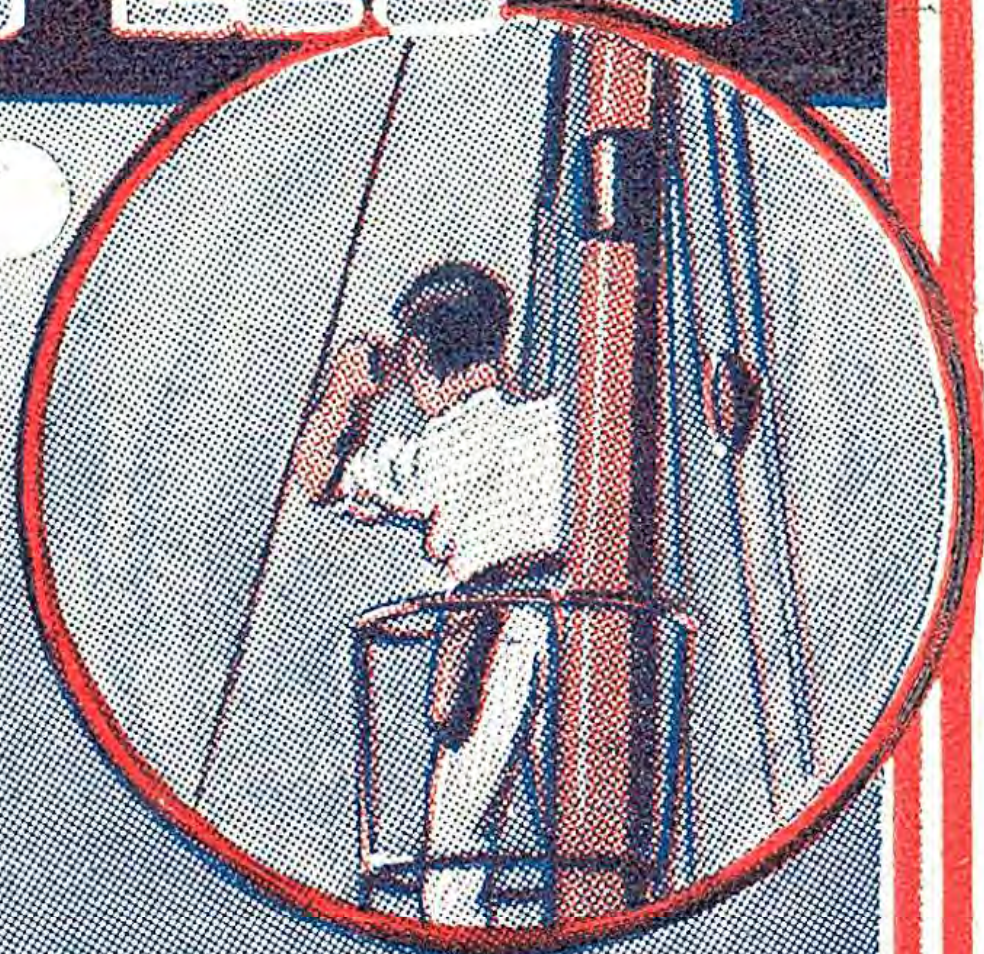


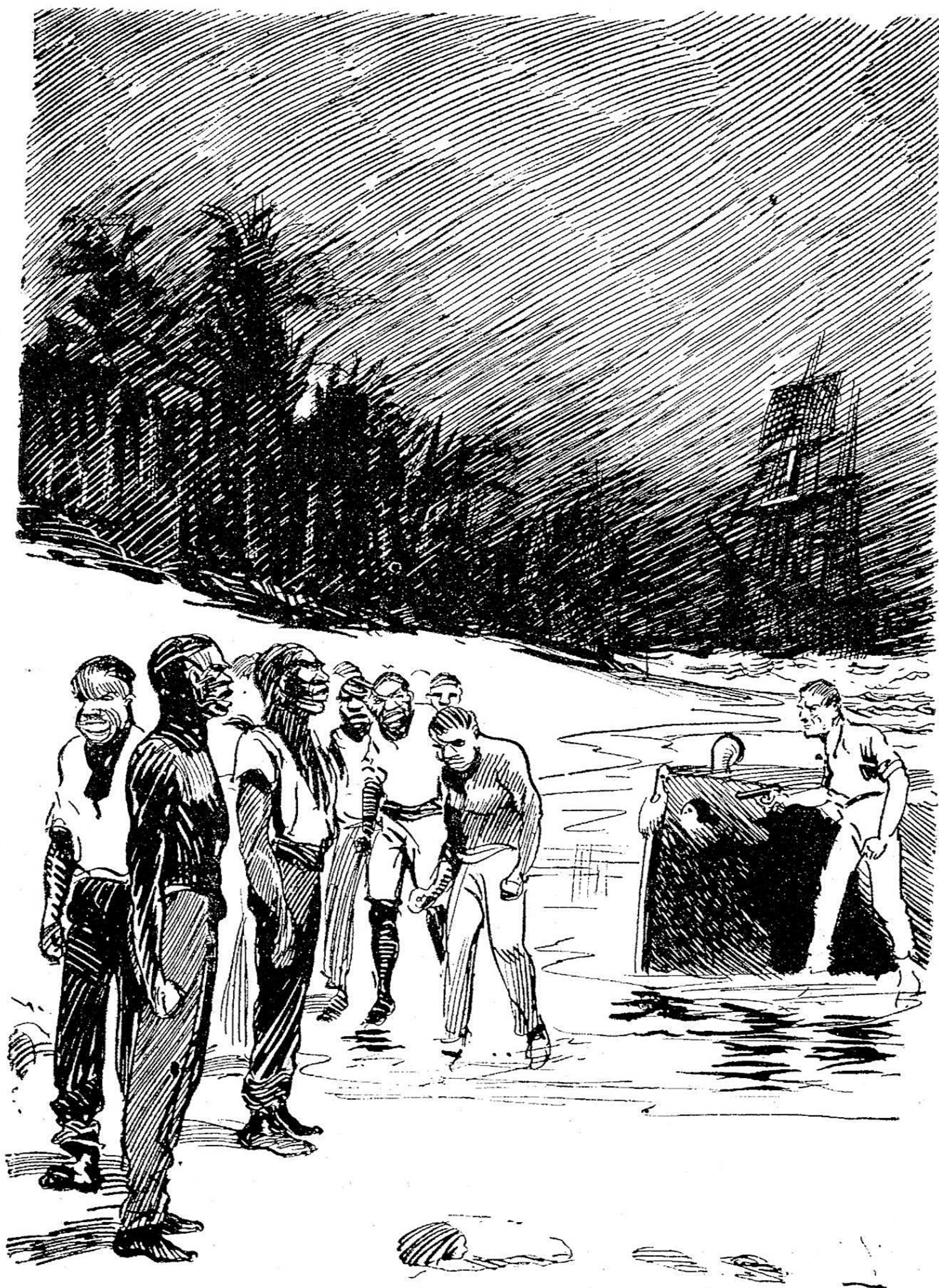
THE ST. FRANK'S WEEKLY

The NELSON LEE 20 Library



The ISLE of CORAL

An extra long story of the wonderful adventures of the Boys of St. Frank's with Lord Dorrimore in the South Seas.



The entire contingent of natives had been conveyed ashore. They were excited and alarmed, in spite of repeated assurances on Captain Hawke's part that they would come to no harm.



A grand, extra long story of the wonderful adventures of the Boys of St. Frank's in the South Seas, introducing **NELSON LEE, NIPPER, LORD DORRIMORE, UMLOSI**, and many other old favourites.

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

CHAPTER I.

AMID TROPIC GLORIES.

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH straightened his back, and brushed the perspiration from his brow.

"Buck up with those canes!" he roared. "How much longer have we got to wait? And what about some more bamboos? Are we expected to wait all day?"

"Cheese it, Handy!" protested Church. "We haven't been stopped for more than two ticks, and a bit of rest is welcome."

"Rats!" retorted Handforth gruffly. "Anybody might think we were working according to ca canny rules! Hi!" he went on, raising his voice again. "What about those bamboos?"

The famous leader of Study D was enthusiastic over the task in hand, and his energy was stupendous. It mattered nothing to him that the tropic sun was blazing, that the scent-laden air was hot and close. He was working on a settled task, and any enforced pause annoyed him.

If somebody had come along and told him to buck up with the work, he would have instantly downed tools. But with Church and McClure urging him to take a rest, he was compelled to adopt the opposite tack.

"Here they come!" remarked Reggie Pitt cheerfully. "Canes by the score! Now we shall be able to get a move on. With luck, we ought to get the house completely finished within a couple of days."

"Within what?" demanded Handforth. "Why, you ass, this place has got to be finished by to-night—or I'll know the reason why."

He stood back, and surveyed the work that had already been accomplished. The skeleton of a primitive dwelling was taking shape. It was rather a flimsy structure, but considering the nature of the location, adequate enough. The building was mainly composed of bamboos and canes, and the four walls were beginning to take definite shape.

No less than a dozen St. Frank's juniors were working on the house—all of them attired in running shorts and cotton shirts—and practically nothing else. Bathing costumes would have been more comfortable, but they wouldn't have looked so business-like.

Paradise Island was a lovely place, but, as Archie Glenthorne observed, the heat was somewhat scaly at the edge. The sun beat down relentlessly, and the warm trade wind of the Pacific brought comparatively little relief.

But it was afternoon, and in the tropics nearly all sensible people take a siesta—at least, they do no work. The St. Frank's juniors snapped their fingers at a trifling thing like heat. They were busy on their shore camp, and it struck them that the afternoon was a fine time to get ahead with the task.

But they were paying for their enterprise by a free loss of perspiration. A number of other fellows were in the densely wooded grove, armed with hatchets and saws, cutting canes and bamboos. These were being conveyed to the building site for immediate use.

The juniors, in fact, had seen no earthly reason why they shouldn't live ashore. The delights of this coral atoll were so numerous that it seemed a downright shame to remain on board the stuffy yacht. The Wanderer was in the lagoon now—stately and picturesque at her anchorage in the deep water. She would probably remain there for a week or two, and the fellows thought it a first-class idea to fix up a camp.

This was the Crusoe business in earnest!

For Paradise Island was a lonely atoll in the Southern Pacific—absolutely uninhabited, but nevertheless gorgeous. It was well-named, for the lagoon and the inner beach and the groves formed a true earthly paradise.

The island was uncharted—a tiny speck in that section of the Pacific where ships seldom venture—well beyond the reach of all trade routes. It had been discovered, originally, by Mr. Warner Russell and his son. And now they were back again, brought by Lord Dorrimore. And the main object of the visit was—pearls.

Dorrie had been bringing his summer holiday party to the South Sea Islands in any case, so it had meant no alteration in the plans to come direct to this lonely island.

The adults in the party were rather amused by the juniors. If they chose to set up a camp, they were welcome to do so—and this applied, also, to Irene Manners, and all the other girls. But Lord Dorrimore and Nelson Lee and Mr. Stokes were frankly astonished.

The Wanderer was the most wonderfully equipped private yacht in existence—a millionaire's floating mansion. Ice-cooled saloons and lounges, luxurious state-rooms, and everything that modern science could devise for comfort. The yacht was replete with a thousand-and-one aids to comfort.

And yet the boys and girls preferred to camp ashore!

They preferred the heat of the island, the discomfort of the insects and the rough-and-ready freedom of camp life, to all the yacht's advantages. And it wasn't particularly surprising.

The boys, after all, were energetic, and it was totally against their nature to laze about on the yacht doing nothing. They required an outlet for their young spirits, and here was the finest outlet of all. The girls shared their exuberance—and were certainly not going to be beaten in a venture of this kind!

Thus, two camps were already established.

The girls had taken possession of Mr. Russell's original house—the primitive dwelling he and Clive had built many months earlier, when they had been cast on the island after the wreck of their ship. For Irene & Co. the task was simple.

Sailors, acting on the instructions of Mrs. Stokes—who was nominally in charge of the girls—had brought loads of things ashore. Irene & Co. were provided with cooking utensils, camp beds, tents, and everything necessary for complete comfort. Furthermore, three of the stewardesses had been told off to act as general assistants in the camp. So the girls were having an easy time of it.

The boys, on the other hand, scorned any assistance. They were building their own house, and were determined to fend entirely for themselves. They were quite willing, however, to take advantage of the conveniences that the yacht could provide—camp beds, tents, cooking facilities, and so forth. These would be brought ashore as soon as the house was completed.

But for the moment work was the order of the hour.

CHAPTER II.

THE ISLAND OF WONDER.



ACTIVITIES of another kind were afoot.

While the younger members of the party were intent upon enjoying themselves, and obtaining all the joys possible, the adults were engaged in a very different enterprise.

A camp had already been set up on the north-east shore of the lagoon, where the water was shallow, and where the pearl fishery was situated. But this camp was of a very business-like character.

Paradise Island was a gem of the Pacific—an unusually large coral formation, with densely wooded stretches. The island itself formed a kind of ring—a great horseshoe, with the lagoon in the centre. It was, in fact, an immense coral reef, with the ceaseless surf of the Pacific pounding upon its outer shore.

There was a small break in the reef, with deep water, enabling any ship to slip

through into the perfect harbour of the lagoon. The Wanderer was anchored nearly a mile within the horseshoe mouth, where the water was of great depth.

From end to end, measuring the lagoon also, the island was about five and a half miles across. But as the lagoon itself was between three and four miles from inner shore to inner shore, the land measured scarcely a mile across at any given point. In some places, indeed, it dwindled away to a mere reef, less than a quarter of a mile from outer beach to inner beach.

Both Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore were convinced that the atoll was formed on the summit of a submarine mountain range. There were hills on the island, and densely wooded valleys and glades. And the soil was not all of coral sand formation. At some remote period in the history of the world, this place had been a series of mere crags, jutting up out of the depths.

And time, throughout centuries, aided by the active work of the coral insect, had wrought this miracle. The island was now a wonderland of tropical magnificence, with every conceivable kind of verdure and delight.

The great lagoon was a wonderful lake of crystal water—deep near the break in the reef, but running shallow towards the north-east section of the island. Indeed, due east there were many patches of exposed coral, where the water was so shallow that even a dinghy had to be rowed with caution.

To the west of the island the beach was perfect.

The white coral sand extended all the way along the picturesque shore, in and out of the little inlets. And all along the palm trees grew almost to the water's edge, bending their graceful tops over the lagoon, as though anxious to see their reflections.

The girls' camp was situated in front of the deep woods—one of the few spots on the island where the reef broadened out into a really respectable piece of land. Behind the camp the trees grew in profusion—with running streams of fresh water, and many other advantages. But there were no wild animals to be wary of. The island was quite free from this peril.

Of natives there was not a sign. Indeed, it had been conclusively proved that this island had never been inhabited in the whole course of its existence. It had been left to the birds and the insects and the lesser animals.

Towards the north-west, on the further shore of a deep inlet, the juniors were building their own camp. It was fully two miles from Irene & Co.'s pitch—but considerably further than this if one followed the sandy beach all the way round.

The inlet itself was an ideal bathing spot

—and the boys had already set up a number of small tents. Within the inlet, the water was shallow, with an unbroken sandy bottom. Bathing was safe and delightful.

While the younger people were thinking of their own pleasures, Mr. Russell and Nelson Lee and Dorrie were intent upon the business side of the expedition. Divers were already getting to work in the shallows, and Mr. Russell, at least, was anxious in the extreme.

He was convinced that the immense stretch of oyster shell on the north-east bed of the lagoon would yield a fortune in pearls. And he had not come to this conclusion without reason. During his earlier stay on the island, Mr. Russell had secured a number of wonderful specimens.

"I will admit that pearling is the most uncertain business in the world," he declared, while discussing the matter with Nelson Lee and Dorrie. "One may find a veritable bed of shell, and secure a pearl at the first dive. And after that a hundred tons of shell may not yield another pearl worth looking at. On the other hand, the searcher may find a small fortune within a few weeks."

"It largely depends upon the lagoon itself, and the nature of the oyster-bed," said Nelson Lee. "Judging by your former experience, Mr. Russell, I believe we are in the presence of a fortune. You secured at least six pearls by primitive methods, and after bringing only a few shells to the surface. We will see what scientific methods can produce."

And the divers were preparing to get to work.

This north-east camp was composed of picked members of the yacht's crew—men who had volunteered for the work, and were energetic and skilled. Lord Dorrimore could trust every member of his crew, from Captain Burton down to the oiliest stoker.

His lordship had shipped the latest type of diving machinery and apparatus. He was determined to use intensive methods in bringing up the shell, and wrenching its treasure from it. The shell itself was valuable, and would all be stowed away in the Wanderer's holds. But it was pearls that the adventurers desired to obtain.

Not that Dorrie himself was in the slightest degree interested in the financial result. Clive Russell had saved his life several weeks earlier, and he was doing all this for the sake of the boy's father. If the pearls were obtained, they would be Mr. Russell's. But Mr. Russell had already sworn that a big percentage should go to the crew of the Wanderer. He was no money-grabber, and he was anxious for everybody to participate in the spoils.

But were there any spoils? Only time would prove.

CHAPTER III.

PROFESSOR TUCKER ON THE SCENE.



PROFESSOR SYLVES-TER TUCKER, the science master of St. Frank's, fanned himself rather feebly with the book he had been reading. It was a highly technical work on astronomy, and for once this subject had failed to hold the professor's attention.

"Dear me!" he murmured. "This heat is truly appalling! Something must be done about it. Something must certainly be done!"

The professor was on deck, and, in his usual absent-minded way, he had quite overlooked the fact that he was sitting in the full glare of the afternoon sun. The heat rays beat down swelteringly.

Professor Tucker knew that he was hot, but that was all. The idea of descending to the ice-cooled lounge never occurred to him. It stood to reason that the deck must be more pleasant in this sultry weather. So the professor sat there, and stewed.

Lord Dorrimore and Nelson Lee came along the deck, talking earnestly. They were about to set off in the motor-launch for the fishing camp. And the trend of their conversation was of a grave nature.

"Personally, old man, I'm not particularly worried," Lord Dorrimore was saying. "We're first in the field, and the island is ours. Strictly speakin', it's Russell's, an' I'll dispute his rights with any outsider who cares to come along."

"Disputing is one thing, Dorrie, and maintaining our position another," Nelson Lee reminded him. "I'm not altogether sure that we have the slightest bit of authority for annexing this island——"

"Annexin' be hanged!" interrupted his lordship gruffly. "There's only one flag that's been hoisted here, and that's the Union Jack!" he added, pointing to the Wanderer's mast. "This atoll is not even charted, so no fool gunboat or cruiser can come along—no matter what Power it belongs to—an' claim it. It's ours—or, in other words, it's now a pin-point of the British Empire."

"But are we justified in taking the pearls, if we find them?" argued Nelson Lee. "Will Mr. Russell be allowed to keep them? We couldn't possibly defy the right of authority——"

"My dear old man, you're talking nonsense!" interrupted Dorrie frankly. "There's not one chance in a thousand that any cruiser will come along. An' after we've lifted the pearls, we can sail away, an' report the presence of this island to the nearest British Station. Then it can be shoved on the next official chart. As for robbin' anybody by takin' these pearls, the

idea's fantastic. We shall only be robbin' the oysters an' the lagoon."

"Then there's Prescott," said Nelson Lee thoughtfully.

"Now you're talkin'," said Dorrie, tossing his cigarette end away. "If we've got to guard against anybody, it's this blighter, Prescott. He may roll up any day, an' we shall have to be prepared to give him a rousin' reception."

"The man's an utter scoundrel," said Lee, frowning. "After promising to finance Russell, and fitting up an expedition, he repudiated all knowledge of his partner, and went back on his compact. Russell discovered that the signed agreement was a fake, and he was left stranded in San Francisco, penniless."

"It's a good thing I got hold of him," said Lord Dorrimore grimly. "The rummy thing is that Prescott wasn't on this island before us. He sailed from 'Frisco a month ago."

"Exactly," agreed Nelson Lee. "But he sailed in a comparatively slow schooner, and it was his stated intention to cruise among the islands, recruiting labour with great care. He only wants men who have no knowledge of pearling—who won't realise the nature of the task they are engaged upon. To such Kanakas, coloured glass beads will be of far more value than pearls. Prescott's task is naturally a slow one. And as he thinks that Russell is helpless, he is taking his time."

"Well, let's hope we've cleared the lagoon and shifted ourselves completely from the island before Prescott's schooner arrives," said Lord Dorrimore. "I'm not keen on a row with that ruffian."

"It would be decidedly awkward," said Nelson Lee. "The presence of the boys and girls makes our position delicate. We can't afford to risk any dangers. Not that Prescott would be mad enough to start any fighting. When he finds us in possession, he'll probably go away in disgust."

"One moment, gentlemen—one moment, please!"

They paused as Professor Tucker broke in upon their conversation. They were standing just beneath the welcome shade of the canvas awning. But the professor was in the full sunlight.

"You look hot, professor," said Dorrie, grinning.

"Hot?" repeated Professor Tucker. "My dear sir, I am literally perspiring from every pore. It is most unaccountable! An hour ago, I felt no such discomfort."

"The sun has shifted his position during the last hour," chuckled Dorrie. "Why not come into the shade, professor?"

The professor rose to his feet, and started.

"The shade?" he repeated. "Good gracious! Is it possible—— Upon my soul! An excellent idea, Lord Dorrimore—a most welcome suggestion! Strange that it should not have occurred to me!"

"What you need, professor, is a bathe," smiled Nelson Lee, as he regarded the absent-minded gentleman's sweltering condition. "A bathe would refresh you considerably——"

"A bathe?" said the professor. "Certainly not! I could not think of diving overboard into this sea! I have been informed that sharks have been seen in the vicinity of the island."

"There is a properly equipped bathing beach over on the north-west shore," smiled Nelson Lee. "Take my advice, professor, and come with us. We'll land you near the boys' camp, and call for you again later. The exercise will do you all the good in the world."

"Splendid!" said Professor Tucker, nodding. "That, of course, makes a great difference. I shall be delighted, Mr. Lee, to take advantage of your invitation. Yes, certainly, we will go by all means."

CHAPTER IV.

THE JOYS OF BATHING.



A FEW minutes later, the launch was ready, and the three men were preparing to descend the accommodation ladder. It would only mean the loss of a few minutes to set the professor ashore at the boys' camp, before the launch continued her trip to the pearl fishery.

Two elegant figures loomed up from the other side of the deck. They were both attired in spotless white drill, and Panama hats adorned their heads. They were William Napoleon Browne and Horace Stevens, of the Fifth.

"Pardon the intrusion, Brother Lee, but did I not hear some mention of bathing?" inquired Browne, as he halted. "The scheme strikes me as being particularly juicy."

"We're just going off to the fishery, Browne, and we're going to see Professor Tucker ashore at the boys' camp on the way," replied Nelson Lee. "If you care to come——"

"Enough, Brother Lee!" interrupted Browne. "Between such brainy persons as ourselves, half a word is ample. Brother Horace and myself will be delighted to take advantage of your generosity. We will do you the honour of gracing the launch's most comfortable seats with our presence."

"Don't take any notice of him, sir," said Stevens, with a grin. "Any place in the launch will do for us."

They all descended, and there was ample room for everybody. And the little craft was soon cutting smoothly across the amazingly crystal water. Azure blue, it stretched away from shore to shore, too

beautiful for any mere description. In places, the breeze ruffled the surface, changing the shade of colour in the most entrancing manner. So clear was the water that one could gaze far down into the depths—and in the shallows the boat's shadow could be distinctly seen on the lagoon bed.

"While approving of bathing as a healthy exercise, I must confess that the time seems somewhat inappropriate," observed Browne. "In the early morning, a bathe is indicated as the best of all possible tonics. But in the afternoon one is inclined to view the proceeding somewhat askance."

"There is plenty of shade at the bathing beach, old man," remarked Dorrie. "That's the beauty of it. Those boys had sense when they set the dressing-tents up in that little cove. The palm trees grow all along the shore, and at this hour of the afternoon you can wallow in the water, in perfect shade. I've a bally good mind to join you!"

"You have relieved me, Brother Dorrie," said Napoleon Browne benevolently. "I shall certainly indulge in the water cure. Indeed, it is essential that I should—it is imperative. My presence will be necessary, in the interests of Brother Tucker."

"How's that?" asked his lordship.

"I fancy we are all aware that Brother Tucker is inclined to wander from the straight and narrow path," replied the captain of the Fifth. "It would be by no means remarkable to see Brother Tucker attempting to swim across to the opposite side of the lagoon, under the mistaken impression that it was the nearest way home. It is possible that he might tread upon an unwary octopus, or invite the investigations of a playful shark. My presence is necessary to counter any of these minor disasters."

Nelson Lee chuckled.

"If such disasters were possible, Browne, you boys wouldn't be allowed to bathe at all," he remarked. "The north-west section of the lagoon, however, is absolutely safe, so bathing is possible."

The launch soon approached the boys' camp. This was just back of the beach, beneath the shade of a dense cluster of towering palms. Beyond, the land seemed wooded and immense. Yet, as a matter of fact, it was barely a quarter of a mile, in a direct line, to the outer edge of the reef—where the Pacific rollers thundered unendingly upon the growing coral.

"Hallo! Visitors!" remarked Nipper, as he paused in his work. "The gov'nor and Dorrie—and those two Fifth Formers."

"To say nothing of Professor Tucker," added Tommy Watson.

"It's a pity they can't leave us alone!" growled Handforth. "We didn't want 'em to come until the house was completely built. Just like Browne and Stevens to come nosing round. Anyhow, we'll show these silly seniors that we know how to work!"

The launch grounded, and the occupants leapt on to the dazzling white coral sand—so perfectly white that it almost resembled salt. In the full glare of the tropic sun, the result was almost blinding.

"Splendid!" said Nelson Lee, as he strolled up into the shade. "You're getting on apace, boys. The house is already taking shape, and should be habitable by to-morrow."

"That's what we're reckoning, sir," said Reggie Pitt.

"To-morrow?" exclaimed Handforth. "This house is going to be finished to-night, or I'll know the reason why!"

"The reason why will be simple enough, Handforth," smiled Lee. "There are only so many hours in the day, and even the expenditure of such energy as I now see will not achieve the impossible."

"That's just what Handy won't admit, sir," grinned Church. "At least, he won't admit it until the darkness swoops down, and finds us only half-finished. Then he'll be as surprised as the dickens. He's always like that."

"Are you trying to run me down?" demanded Handy fiercely. "Look here, Walter Church, this house is going to be finished to-night! Understand? Finished! Finished to the giddy last rafter!"

Church nodded.

"All right!" he said cheerfully. "It'll be finished."

"Eh?"

"Of course it will—haven't you just said so?" asked Church.

"Well, you needn't be so jolly cocksure!" roared Handforth. "As far as I can see, we shall only get half done! It's like your silly nerve to suggest that we can do the impossible!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The other Fourth-Formers roared at Handforth's unconscious humour. He wasn't in the least aware that he was deliberately contradicting his own statements.

Nelson Lee and Dorrie inspected the building operations with interest, and then took their departure—leaving Professor Sylvester Tucker at the tender mercies of Browne.

CHAPTER V.

TROUBLE WITH MARMADUKE.



ideal spot.

THE bathing beach was situated round the bend of the little cove, a few hundred yards along the shore from the junior encampment. It was, indeed, an

There was a tiny bay, with the palm-trees growing right down to the water's edge—for coconut palms always have a liking for water, and on these Pacific islands they will cluster down to the very rim of the lagoon,

and even then bend over the water as though trying to get nearer still. A perfectly perpendicular palm-tree is a rarity.

The sand in the bay was smooth, and without any obstructions of coral. It was the same under water. For twenty or thirty yards out, the sand was unbroken, the water reaching the level of one's armpits. A more delightful bathing-place could not be desired.

Under the palms, just up the beach, a dozen small dressing-tents had been erected.

The place was a kind of miniature Brighton, in fact. Before setting out from England Lord Dorrimore had thought of all these details, and the Wanderer had been equipped with tents and other camping material of every possible description. Dorrie was nothing if not lavish.

"Remarkable—truly remarkable!" declared Professor Tucker, as he viewed the scene. "I confess I am eager to get into the water. I have seldom seen anything so enticing. Come, let us plunge in!"

"It's usual to get undressed first, sir," remarked Browne thoughtfully, as the professor made a dash for the lagoon.

"Dear me!" gasped the science master, coming to a halt. "Of course! Most forgetful of me! But—Good gracious! Surely we cannot disrobe here? I am under the impression that there are certain young ladies on the island—"

"They're about two miles away, sir," grinned Stevens. "But it wouldn't matter if they were only two yards—there are plenty of dressing-tents here. Pop in one, sir, and make yourself ready."

"But my costume?" protested the professor. "I cannot possibly—"

"On your arm, sir," said Stevens.

"So it is!" said Professor Tucker, with a start. "Extraordinary! I have no recollection of placing it there—or, indeed, of fetching it at all. I didn't even know I had a bathing-costume!"

"It's one of Lord Dorrimore's, Brother Tucker," explained Browne. "With his usual grace, he dived below and ransacked his wardrobe for your especial benefit. While deprecating the colour scheme, I must confess the costume catches my eye."

It was a brilliant affair of red and yellow, but the professor didn't mind. He went into the nearest tent, and was soon out again, ready for the plunge. Browne and Stevens were already in the water, enjoying themselves immensely. The professor splashed in, and for the time being forgot all about his beloved astronomy.

In the meantime, the work at the camp suffered a slight set-back.

It was really Marmaduke's fault—Marmaduke being Willy Handforth's pet monkey. The leader of the Third had brought Marmaduke ashore, with the intention of keeping him on a chain.

But the monkey had seemed so obedient, and had expressed such obvious desires to



climb the palms, that Willy had released him.

"You'll lose the little beggar!" declared Chubby Heath flatly.

"Don't you believe it!" retorted Willy. "I've got Marmaduke trained to perfection. If I like, I can make him jump through hoops. In fact, I've trained him nearly as well as my major! Even if he gets away, one of my patent whistles will bring him back."

"Your patent whistles?" repeated Chubby.

Willy made a ghastly noise with his mouth—a shrill, piercing sound which throbbed in Chubby Heath's ears appallingly.

"Hi, stop it!" he gasped.

"That's my patent whistle," explained Willy, allowing his mouth to resume its normal shape. "If Marmy doesn't come back when he hears that, I'll cheerfully allow you to throw me to the sharks. Anyhow, here goes!"

He slipped off Marmaduke's chain, and the pert little monkey gave a chatter of glee. He and his young master were standing just at the edge of the clearing where the building work was in progress. Marmaduke gave a couple of hops, just to assure himself that there was no trickery about this freedom, then he looked up at Willy and grinned.

"It's all right—you can dodge about, old man," said Willy.

Marmaduke chattered afresh, and ran round in a few circles. Then, appreciating the fact that he was as free as the air, he dodged over the sand, gave a swift leap into the air, and landed on Reggie Pitt's shoulder.

"Hallo! What the— Oh, it's you is it?" said Pitt. "Well, you can clear off, young man! Don't you think I'm hot enough as it is?"

Marmaduke chattered noisily in Reggie's ear.

"That's all very well, but I don't believe a word of it," said Pitt. "I can't work with you there—so buzz off!"

Marmaduke evidently realised that he was not required, for he gave a sudden bound, and made for Edward Oswald's shoulder. Unfortunately, Handforth moved at the moment, and Marmaduke landed on the top of his head.

"Hi! Whoa! Great pip! I'm caught by something!" roared Handforth, twirling round. "You—you— Get out of it, blow you!" he gasped, recognising Marmaduke. "Hi, Willy! Come and take your beastly animal away! You'll lose him now—and a good thing, too!"

He shook the monkey off, and "shooed!" him vigorously. Marmaduke seemed rather astonished, and backed away in alarm. Then he ran like a streak of lightning up the nearest palm-tree, followed by all eyes.

"There you are!" said Handforth triumphantly. "What did I tell you? He's gone now! You'll never see him again!"

Marmaduke reached out, picked a green



Handy stood back, and surveyed the work that had already been accomplished. The skeleton of a primitive dwelling was taking shape.

coconut, and hurled it with unerring aim. It caught Handforth on the top of the head, and he staggered back, dazed.

"Retribution!" said Willy severely.

CHAPTER VI.

A LITTLE INVESTIGATION.



"H A, ha, ha!"

The look of surprise on Handforth's face was so comic that the other juniors roared. He wasn't hurt much—but even a green coconut can inflict an unpleasant blow.

"Who—who did that?" breathed Handforth faintly.

"Only Marmaduke," said Willy. "It was your own fault, old man—you shouldn't have shooed him. He took it as an insult, and— Look out, there's another coming—"

Handforth dodged wildly as Marmaduke hurled another two coconuts. They both missed, but it had been a near thing. Handforth shook his fist up at the monkey with considerable anger.

"I'll skin you alive when you come down!"

he roared. "Just you wait, you young rotter! It's a pity you can't teach that animal better manners!" he added, glaring at Willy. "He'll start chucking nuts at you next."

"Never!" grinned Willy. "He's got better manners!"

Crack!

Willy staggered back, and swayed dizzily. Whether Marmaduke had done it deliberately, or whether it was a misfire, the others didn't know. But Willy certainly received a coconut fairly on the top of his panama.

"My goodness!" he breathed. "He's chucked a coconut at me—me! Hi, Marmy! Come here, blow you!"

He gave his patent whistle, but it failed to have the desired effect. Instead of obeying, Marmaduke swung himself deftly from palm to palm, scurried down a distant tree, and vanished into the cane-brake near by. The canes were all of twenty feet high, and the wind caused them to rustle together with a peculiarly musical swish.

"Catch him!" roared Willy desperately.

There were two or three juniors in the cane-brake, gathering material for the building. But they didn't even see Marmaduke. He vanished apparently into nothingness.

"All right—say it!" growled Willy.

"Say what?" asked Chubby.

"Weren't you going to say 'I told you so'?" exclaimed Willy. "But you needn't worry—Marmaduke's only gone on a tour of investigation. He's bound to come back when he's tired. It's this sudden freedom, you know—it's got into his blood!"

"You'll never catch him again, my lad!" snorted his major. "That blessed monkey only stuck to you because it could get grub. But now he can find as much as he wants—this wood's filled with bananas and coconuts and berries. Marmaduke'll have the time of his life—and he'll go wild. Good riddance to bad rubbish!"

Handforth didn't really mean it—he was almost as concerned as his minor about Marmaduke's disappearance. But he considered it right and proper that he should adopt a severe attitude. After a monkey has hurled coconuts at one's head, a certain amount of sternness is necessary.

Willy pretended to be indifferent.

He continued his work with a will, assuring his own chums that the monkey would come back before nightfall. But Willy was bothered by a tiny doubt. He was beginning to regret releasing Marmaduke from his chain.

The monkey was hugely enjoying himself, however.

Having passed through the cane-brake, he found himself confronting a green stretch of grass land, with artu and breadfruit trees swaying in the wind beyond. Birds of every conceivable colour caught Marmaduke's eye, and enchanted him. They were brilliant—red, yellow, bright blue, and almost every variety of shade. And the colours were intensified by the brilliance of the sunshine.

Marmaduke came to the conclusion that these birds were a bit of a swindle. They looked pretty enough, but they didn't even know the first rudiments of singing. Indeed, they uttered no sounds at all, except the fluttering of their wings. Marmaduke had been accustomed to watching the birds at St. Frank's, and had often listened intently to their singing. He didn't know that these tropical birds, although much nicer to look upon than their British brethren, were practically voiceless.

Continuing his investigations, he came upon a banana-tree. This claimed his attention for some little time. He wasn't at all interested in the wild vine, whose tendrils wandered in all directions. He paid no attention to the chapparel trees, and was even disdainful of the mammee apple. Marmaduke was intensely fond of bananas, and he recognised them at once.

Leaping up, he perched himself in the tree, plucked a banana, and proceeded to peel it. Then he took a bite, and chattered with glee. It was quite ripe, and undoubtedly the best banana he had ever tasted. It was altogether luscious, and more delicious than any banana he had tasted previously.

As he ate he displayed an interest in the immense leaves of the banana-tree. Marmaduke had never seen anything like them before. They struck him as being too ridiculous for words. For some of the leaves were fully six feet long, and half as broad. They weren't like leaves at all—they were enormous tarpaulins.

Having satisfied himself with two more bananas, Marmaduke felt rather heavy. He jumped to the ground, and then proceeded to swarm up a huge rope of wild convolvulus. The flowers he plucked and tossed away gaily on the breeze.

Wherever he went he came upon fresh wonders.

He had never been in a place like this before, and he meant to make the most of it. Pausing to drink at a little brook, he then went on, and once again found himself near the beach. But he had come out through the palm grove in the centre of the little bathing bay. Immediately in front of him were the green dressing tents.

Marmaduke eyed them thoughtfully.

CHAPTER VII.

HARD LUCK ON THE PROFESSOR.



THE monkey's natural tendency was to closely investigate everything he came in contact with. He always wanted to know the ins and outs of any fresh discovery. He wasn't satisfied by a mere glance. If necessary, he would even destroy. Indeed,

it was one of his favourite occupations to annex an exercise-book, or a Latin grammar, and to systematically tear it into little pieces.

He couldn't very well tear these bathing tents to pieces, but he could at least have a look inside it. Marmaduke hated a mystery. If there was a place to get into, he wanted to get into it.

He hopped nearer, and then paused.

An uncouth splashing from the sea made him gaze in that direction. William Napoleon Browne, in fact, was lying flat on his back and kicking his feet in the air. Stevens was near by, protesting. And a short distance further on Professor Tucker was immersed up to his neck—perfectly still, and dreamingly enjoying the coolness of the water. Indeed, it seemed most probable that he would take his afternoon nap in this position.

Marmaduke came to the conclusion that he was in no peril from this quarter. And to go away without having a look inside these tents was unthinkable. He hopped up to the first one in the line, lifted the canvas, and squeezed through.

He made a wonderful discovery.

Neatly piled on the sand was a heap of clothing. Marmaduke had a perfect passion for clothing. He had been known to tear a cap to shreds in three minutes, and he had even swallowed a couple of school badges on one occasion.

He regarded the heap of clothing with joy.

But Marmaduke was wary. He instinctively knew that it would be dangerous to remain in this tent long. It would shortly be invaded by one of those splashing individuals from the water. It was necessary, therefore, to remove his booty to a less conspicuous spot.

It was the work of a moment to drag the clothing out of the tent, and to drop the canvas into place again. Marmaduke then vanished amid the trees, hauling the clothing after him. By the time he had vanished, a sock, a shoe, and a shirt were left strewn behind.

But Marmaduke lost no time in remedying this omission. He shortly reappeared, gathered up the remnants, and vanished again.

Behind some bushes he gathered up his spoils and gloated over them. After performing a kind of war-dance all round the heap, he took Professor Tucker's silk shirt and tested its strength.

It ripped beautifully, and tore swiftly from tail to collar. Within two minutes the shirt was a mass of shreds, and Marmaduke was having a kind of wrestle with the remains.

Growing tired of this, he proceeded to make an awful hash of the trousers. As a means of destruction, Marmaduke was more efficient than a steam laundry. The latter,

at least, take their time. Marmaduke, however, was a hustler. He liked to see the result of his handiwork without any delay.

In the meantime, Professor Tucker came to the conclusion that the lagoon wasn't quite so ideal as he had at first imagined. Without any warning, something had sent a terrific shock through his leg. Immersed there, dreaming of a survey of the heavens as soon as darkness came, the professor suddenly gave a violent leap.

For some moments he had been subconsciously aware of a curious kind of tapping on his limbs—not knowing that his stationary position had attracted a few of the small fish to his side. These had been butting against him to find out the nature of the obstruction.

But when an electric eel abruptly discharged its energy into the professor's right leg he considered that it was high time to depart. He wasn't hurt—the electrical shock was sufficient to protect the eel against any small enemy, but it only gave the professor a brief spasm.

"Good gracious!" he gasped. "Cramp! Without question I am attacked by cramp. I have remained too long in the water—this is the only explanation. My only course is to withdraw."

He waded to the shore hurriedly, colliding with a couple of enormous jelly-fish on the way. The professor was not wearing his glasses, and without them he was nearly as blind as the proverbial bat. Through a kind of haze he detected several green blobs ahead, and knew that these must be the tents.

"The old boy's had enough, evidently," remarked Stevens, as he looked round. "Shall we go out, too, old man?"

"I have no desire to hamper your activities, Brother Horace, and you have my permission to leave the water," replied Browne gracefully. "As for myself, I shall remain submerged for a further period. I must confess the bathing of this resort is par excellence."

"All right—I'll wait for you," said Stevens.

Professor Tucker had a vague notion that his tent was the end one. He wasn't quite sure, and his movements were more or less unconscious. When he managed to get into the tent he knew that he must be wrong. He had wasted at least a minute in attempting to open a flap that wasn't there, but at last he was inside. And a few gropings convinced him that the tent was empty.

He wandered out, and almost went down into the lagoon again. But he suddenly remembered that he had already bathed, and turned back. This time he entered the second tent and groped again.

"Splendid!" he murmured. "Absurd of me to go into the wrong tent first. I am refreshed—amazingly refreshed. It is necessary, too, since I have some important

observations to make to-night. A clear mind is absolutely essential."

The professor was wildly excited about the tropical skies. Never before had he had such an orgy of star-gazing as now. He would spend hours nightly with his beloved telescopes, and would appear in the saloon agog with excitement over some fresh astronomical discovery.

Thinking deeply on the subject of the Southern Cross, he proceeded to attire himself in William Napoleon Browne's clothing.

CHAPTER VIII.

HARDER LUCK ON BROWNE.



PROFESSOR TUCKER was a biggish man, and as he dressed he occasionally had a vague sort of idea that something was wrong. But he didn't pause to worry over such trifles. The stars were much more important.

For some strange reason, his shirt fitted him tightly—Browne being, of course, a youth of slim, elegant figure. By the time the professor had got the shirt on, it was stretched tightly round him, and gaping in one or two places.

The drill trousers were more unruly. In the first place, they were too short, and the professor was obliged to pull them on until they were like tights. But even now he suspected nothing, and to such an absentminded man this was by no means remarkable.

For one thing, his mind was filled with other matters, and, for another, he had it firmly fixed in his mind that the clothing was his.

"Extraordinary!" he murmured absently, as he gazed down his legs. "The air, no doubt—a certain amount of shrinking has taken place. I must change my clothing as soon as I get on board."

Except for this one lucid spell, the professor gave no further thought to the clothes. And presently he emerged into the sunlight, a perfectly ludicrous spectacle. He didn't quite know where he was. His glasses were missing, and he had groped in vain.

Stevens, happening to glance towards the beach, nearly had a fit.

"Great Scott!" he gurgled. "Look—look at that!"

"Why this affliction of the throat, Brother Horace?" asked Browne. "You remind me of a dying whale— But stay! What is this? Upon the whole, I will excuse you!"

They both stared blankly at the figure on the sands.

The two Fifth-Formers were accustomed to Professor Tucker's eccentricities, but the

spectacle he now presented was rather too much for them.

The professor looked very much like a comedian in a pantomime.

His trousers ended just above his ankles, and they were stretched so tightly round him that it would have been a very perilous proceeding to stoop. His jacket was unbuttoned, for the simple reason that, under no circumstances could it be made to meet. The sleeves were short, and the lack of material across the shoulders was so acute that the jacket was one mass of tucks from top to bottom. Finally, the panama hat was perched on the top of the professor's large head in the most ludicrous fashion.

He wandered off amiably, conscious only of the fact that he was dressed, and in some way or other he had to reach the yacht. He had completely forgotten that Nelson Lee had promised to call back with the launch, and that he was supposed to wait.

He didn't even know where the Wanderer was, so he ambled round the beach, intending to get somewhere. Browne and Stevens watched him go with broad grins on their faces—until Stevens suddenly thought of something.

Then the grin vanished, and he turned pale.

"I say!" he gasped blankly.

"Say on, Brother Horace—say on!" commanded Browne. "You will have noticed that I am always ready to give an ear to your childish prattle. Am I mistaken, or do I detect the light of alarm in your hazel eyes?"

"The professor!" panted Stevens hoarsely.

"You will observe him toddling away——"

"I know that, you ass!" roared Stevens. "But he's made a mistake. He's not wearing his own clothes."

"I trust not," said Napoleon Browne gravely. "It would give me a considerable spasm amidsthips if I thought for a moment that our learned friend was in the habit of wandering abroad in that remarkable attire. As you say, Brother Stevens, he is not wearing his own clothes."

"Then they must be ours!" hooted Stevens.

Browne started slightly.

"I must confess I am somewhat staggered," he said slowly. "But, nay, Brother Horace, surely you are in error—not ours, but yours. Under no circumstances can I associate myself with those atrocities. Yours, Brother Horace—certainly yours."

"I'll soon see!" shouted Stevens desperately.

He raced out of the water like a frightened stag, tore up the beach, and plunged into his tent with such violence that he nearly knocked the entire thing over. One glance, and he heaved a sigh of relief. His clothing

was neatly piled on the sand, as he had left it.

"Thank goodness!" he breathed fervently.

Then his alarm vanished, and he grinned with appreciation. Now that he knew positively that it was Browne who had suffered the loss, he could enjoy the humour of the situation. Until this moment he had regarded the whole affair as ghastly.

He took one look into Browne's tent—although he knew he needn't have done so—and then walked down the beach again. William Napoleon Browne watched him coming with a kind of clutching sensation at his heart. There was something serene about Stevens' walk which boded ill.

"It's all right!" said Stevens, with relief. "They're safe!"

"Forgive my impatience, Brother Horace, but may I inquire which are safe?" asked Browne firmly. "I have personal reasons—"

"My clothes!" replied Stevens. "They're not touched."

"Splendid!" said Browne, nodding. "I am charmed. At the same time, I cannot help feeling that you are concealing something from me, Brother Horace. I trust I am wrong, but a cold perspiration is beginning to form in beads upon my delicate skin. I repeat, I trust I am wrong in assuming that you are concealing—"

"It's no good, old man—you might as well know the worst," said Stevens, grinning with an appalling lack of sympathy. "Those clothes on the professor are yours. 'He's pinched your entire outfit!'"

Browne went all limp.

"Alas and alack!" he moaned. "It is even as I feared! Stand by me, Brother Stevens, for I am undone!"

CHAPTER IX.

BROTHER HORACE RALLIES ROUND.

 STEVENS chuckled. "Sorry, old son, but excuse my smiles," he observed. "After what you said about those clothes, I can't help it. The professor ought to be boiled for running away with your togs."

"I could name a more fitting fate," said Browne, with feeling. "There are, I believe, sharks in the other side of the lagoon. But we will not allow our thoughts to stray into such revengeful channels. We must be calm, Brother Horace—we must learn to forgive and forget. The professor is absent-minded, and so he has a modicum of excuse. In passing, however, I may mention that my feelings towards him at the moment are of the most violent nature. I would not normally throw a fellow-creature to the sharks, but it would give

me excessive pleasure to see Professor Tucker fairly and squarely in the centre of the consommé."

"You'll look rather decent in his clothes," said Stevens calmly. "Of course, he's a fairly big man, and I dare say you'll have to take a reef in here and there—"

"Talking of reefs, may the professor wander across this reef, and plunge into the vortex of the Pacific surf," said Browne fervently. "We are in the presence of tragedy, Brother Horace. The stark finger of horror has laid itself upon us."

"Upon you, you mean," interrupted Stevens.

"A quibble, brother—a quibble," said Browne. "Charming as this lagoon appeared to me five minutes ago, it now seems drab and dismal. The sun has lost its glory, the air is no longer balmy. I cannot help remarking, however, that the professor is!"

"Well, take my advice, and get dressed as quickly as you can," said Stevens. "The old chap's only wandering along the beach, and we might be able to overtake him. Then you can make him swop on the spot."

Browne's eyes gleamed for a moment.

"There are occasions, Brother Horace, when you are almost human—when you closely approach the point of being sane," he said kindly. "I must confess the suggestion is brainy! Come! We will encircle ourselves in these garments and give chase to the criminal."

"Good!" grinned Stevens.

They hurried up the beach, and Stevens plunged straight into his own tent. The next moment he heard a dismal wail from next door. Then Browne tore the tent flap aside and thrust a flushed face within.

"Come, brother!" he panted. "The tragedy is greater than we first supposed."

"Eh?"

"The professor's tent is empty."

"Of course it's empty, you ass—"

"Entirely empty!" said Browne significantly. "There is not even so much as a darned sock. I can only conclude that the professor has dressed himself twice!"

"What!" yelled Stevens. "Impossible! His clothes must be in another tent! They're here somewhere—"

They rushed from tent to tent, but their search was fruitless. Not only were Browne's clothes gone, but the professor's as well. The situation was becoming more strained every minute.

"Well," said Stevens, "this is a go."

"I have no wish to belittle your vocabulary, Brother Horace, but to describe one of life's tragedies as a 'go' is decidedly inadequate," exclaimed Browne mournfully. "You realise, no doubt, that I am now doomed to wander forth in this single garment?"

"Well, it's a covering, anyway," said Stevens.

"But think, brother!" urged Browne. "Pause! Imagine the captain of the Fifth Form returning to the Wanderer without his clothing! In the forgotten limbo of the past several ancestral Brownes have fallen on the battlefield, have doubtless been hanged at Tyburn, have languished in dungeons deep—but never has a Browne been cast upon the world in a bathing costume! I am laid low, Brother Horace!"

Brother Horace failed to respond.

"No need to make such a fuss about it, old son," he chuckled. "It's a bother, but you can get back to the yacht all right."

"Alas!" sighed Browne sorrowfully. "Occasionally, Brother Stevens, I have despaired of you—and I do so again. You merely describe this predicament as a bother. You merely——"

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Stevens, staring out across the little inlet. "There's a boat coming! And, what's more, some of those girls are in it! I'll bet they mean to land here! You'd better get back into the water—not that it matters, anyhow!"

Browne scorned this simple advice.

"I appreciate the fact that all is well, but the knowledge that I have no clothing appals me," he replied. "It is my only course, Brother Horace, to vanish into the undergrowth. If you should not see me again, farewell! I go into the mysterious depths of the primeval forest!"

He dashed into the coconut grove, and a moment later had gone. Stevens dressed at lightning speed, for it was his intention to follow. When he emerged, the boat had grounded on the beach, and Irene & Co. were ashore.

There were four of the girls—Irene Manners, Doris Berkeley, Marjorie Temple, and Violet Watson. They waved cheerily to Stevens as he came out of the tent.

"Didn't we see Napoleon with you?" asked Doris, as she approached.

"Yes; but the poor chap's lost his clothes!" said Stevens. "Professor Tucker went off in 'em, and there's a mix-up. Goodness knows how it happened, but the professor's togs have completely vanished!"

The girls laughed.

"Poor old Napoleon!" smiled Irene. "Do you mean to say he was afraid of us? Did he really dash off into the woods?"

"Yes."

"Then you'd better hurry after him," said Irene. "There are all sorts of insects under the trees—and he's barefooted. He may be even bitten by a snake, or something. Buck up, and bring him back. We'll row him across to the Wanderer."

"Good idea!" said Stevens. "I told the ass it was all right."

He hurried off at full speed.

CHAPTER X.

THE VERY LATEST.



WILLIAM NAPOLEON BROWNE paused, a thoughtful frown on his brow.

Before him was a banana tree, and he was contemplating the enormous leaves. The glimpses of yellow, indicating the ripened fruit, failed to attract him. He was also interested in the myriad creepers.

"I wonder?" he murmured slowly. "I wonder?"

It was hot where he stood—not the blazing heat of the sunshine, but the humidity of the forests. Browne stood in a kind of deep twilight, for the surrounding trees completely shut out the sunshine with their dense foliage. Near him was a great breadfruit, tall and stately, a perfect natural arbour. There were ropes of wild vine twining from tree to tree. And the scarlet hibiscus flowers were in profusion, with any amount of convolvulus blossoms and orchids.

"I wonder?" repeated Browne slowly.

Usually, he had an eye for any kind of beauty, and this scene would have enchanted him, with its glory of tropical languor and charm. But he had caught sight of more than one crawly thing, and he was painfully aware of the fact that his legs and feet were bare. He expected at any moment to find a scorpion investigating his ankle, or a centipede running up his leg. The sensation was not exactly alluring. In such circumstances, one is apt to overlook the mere beauties of scenery.

"Something," declared Browne, "must be done. It is necessary to return to the sands at all cost—but modesty compels me to acquire a little more clothing. And what of the homely banana? Surely these leaves were not intended to be wasted?"

With some difficulty, he wrenched one of the enormous leaves off. It was slightly smaller than the average, and, being young, was flexible. Even so, it was over five feet long, and nearly two feet wide.

"By no means worthy of scorn," declared Browne.

He proceeded to wrap the leaf round himself, and it formed an excellent robe. Unfortunately, there was no means of securing it. But at this moment, Horace Stevens appeared.

"Oh, there you are!" he exclaimed, as he plunged through some bushes. "I've been looking everywhere—What on earth—Well, upon my word! That's not a bad substitute for your white drills, old man!"

"A similar thought was passing through my own masterly mind," admitted Browne. "If you'll be good enough to wrench off a few of these creepers, we might be able to improve matters considerably."

"Yes, that'll do the trick," grinned Stevens.

A number of creepers were soon torn away. They were as strong as cord, and by the time Stevens had done, Browne was wrapped from head to foot in banana leaves, and although he wasn't exactly comfortable, he was at least clothed.

"The girls are waiting for you," said Stevens.

"The girls?" repeated Browne. "I realise, of course, that my charming personality is always an attraction for the fair sex. But I must confess this is hardly one of those moments——"

"They've offered to row you back to the yacht," explained Stevens.

"Good! Then we will proceed to the beach," declared Browne firmly. "Under the circumstances, I must swallow my pride and face the battery of sparkling eyes and maidenly giggles. There are times, Brother Horace, when we must be brave."

They moved away, and then discovered that they didn't quite know the way back to the beach. They had completely lost themselves. Not that it mattered. Even in this broad part of the island, the distance from inner beach to outer beach was little over a mile. They were bound to come out on one shore or the other before long.

They entered a small clearing, and Stevens suddenly paused. Amid the grass and flowers near by were the tattered remnants of a silken shirt. A little further on was a shoe—in fact, two shoes. These, fortunately, were unharmed. But in close proximity lay the ribboned remains of some white drill trousers.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Stevens. "The professor's clothes! What on earth's happened to them?"

"I can only assume, Brother Horace, that these woods are haunted by a ferocious tiger," said Browne. "There is no question that the professor's clothing has been put through the mangle somewhat severely. It has even become caught in the cogs. But the shoes, I see, are wearable. Splendid!"

He soon donned them, and felt more comfortable. Then they plunged through the trees once more, and presently came to a cane brake. Skirting this, they were soon in another of the inevitable coconut groves, with signs of great activity near by. The camp of the Fourth-Formers was just to their left, with the juniors as busy as bees on the erection of their house.

"Hallo! What on earth's this?" ejaculated John Busterfield Boots, looking up. "Great Scott! What the——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"It's old Browne!"

"He looks like the Old Man of the Sea!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors paused in their work, and yelled. They had only recently almost ex-

hausted themselves by laughing at Professor Tucker. He was still within sight, along the sands. But Browne's appearance eclipsed the professor's hollow. He was a mass of green leaves and twining creepers from beneath his armpits to his knees. His bare arms, and bare legs, with a pair of shoes twice the size for him on his feet, completed a vision which the juniors hailed with joy.

"Alas, Brother Horace, we have fallen among Philistines!" sighed Browne sadly. "I was prepared to nobly face a few feminine giggles—but I must confess this blast of juvenile hilarity grieves me deeply. Let us away!"

"Too late, old man," grinned Stevens. "They're all round us!"

CHAPTER XI.

WILLY ON THE WARPATH.



FORTUNATELY, succour arrived a moment later for both Professor Sylvester Tucker and William Napoleon Browne. To be exact, the motor-launch came gliding across the lagoon, with Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore in the stern. True to their promise, they had come back to fetch the professor.

"Somethin' seems to have gone wrong," chuckled Dorrie, as they approached. "Either the professor's been bathin' with all his clothes on, an' they've shrunk, or he's wearin' somebody else's!"

"I think they must be Browne's," smiled Nelson Lee. "Browne, you will observe, is encased in banana leaves!"

"A foolish proceedin'," said Dorrie. "The professor's suit may have been too large for him, but even that was preferable to banana leaves. No doubt we shall learn the full facts presently."

Browne, in the meantime, had good-naturedly stood the chaff from the juniors. And he and Stevens explained how the disaster had occurred—although neither of them could account for the professor's clothing being scattered about in the woods, in shreds.

While Browne and the Professor were being taken on the launch Irene & Co.'s boat came into view, and the unfortunate Napoleon did not even escape those "maidenly giggles" he had referred to. The girls didn't merely giggle, they laughed with much heartiness. Until Browne reached the yacht, and viewed his reflection in a pier glass, he couldn't quite appreciate the joke.

However, the hapless bathing incident was over, and the girls landed on the beach opposite the junior camp while the launch sped towards the Wanderer. Irene & Co.

had been making for the camp when they had first spotted Stevens.

"We've just come along to see how you boys are progressing," explained Doris. "My goodness! That's not half bad!" she added, eyeing the growing house. "I'm afraid it'll be a bit draughty, though."

In its present state, the house was a mere skeleton—a mass of bamboo and cane, and so airy that the warm wind blew completely through it. But it was taking definite shape now.

"We don't mind a few draughts in this kind of weather," remarked Nipper drily. "But give us a chance, Doris. Wait until the house is built. When we've finished, it'll be sturdy enough to withstand a cyclone!"

"I think it's wonderful," said Irene enthusiastically. "I suppose you're going to complete the roof of these bamboos and cane, and then cover everything with leaves?"

"That's the idea," replied Nipper. "There are tons of leaves in the woods—particularly banana leaves. They're first-class for thatching, because each leaf is six or eight feet long. We shall tie everything down with creepers, and make the roof rain-proof. Just you wait until we're through with it."

The girls remained for some little time, watching. And Handforth, who had begun to slack off a bit, but on so much speed that Church and McClure were in despair. For when Handforth speeded, they were supposed to maintain the same pace. If they didn't, lots of trouble resulted.

"Cheese it, old man!" gasped Church. "There's no need to go at this pace! The girls won't think any more of you if you work like this——"

"The girls?" repeated Handforth, with an elaborate air of surprise. "Oh, are they still here?"

"You ass! They're watching us!"

"That's nothing," said Handforth. "We want to get this house done. Just as if I'm working faster because of the girls! You're dotty!"

Handforth was acutely aware of the fact that Irene was standing close by, and it was his aim to impress her. He wanted her to thoroughly understand that he was the most important fellow on the job. And in work of this nature, Edward Oswald was certainly a giant. Unfortunately, he was so impulsive that he occasionally caused more work than he performed, but on the whole he did wonders.

And it exasperated him afresh to find that his minor had mysteriously vanished. Until

the arrival of the girls he had kept a strict eye on Willy, and had forced him to keep up to scratch. But the hero of the Third had now disappeared.

As a matter of fact, he was fairly close by, in close consultation with Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon. All three fags were attired in shorts and shirts, and nothing else, except for their shoes. They were grubby and hot, and Willy's bosom chums were glad of the respite.

"This isn't a rest, you asses," said Willy, as he recognised their manner. "We're going off into the woods to search for Marmy."

"Marmy?" repeated Heath. "Do you mean mamme? They've got some fruit on the island called mamme apples——"

"Grub again!" snorted Willy. "You've been gorging yourselves with bananas all the giddy afternoon! I said Marmy—old Marmaduke! We're going to find him."

"They always say that optimists are incurable," remarked Juicy.

"I'll admit I'm an optimist, and you'll see that I'm right about Marmy," retorted Willy. "We're going to find him. Didn't you hear what Browne and Stevens said about Professor Tucker's clothes?"

Chubby started.

"You don't mean——" he began.

"Exactly," said Willy, nodding. "It's as clear as daylight. After old Marmy chucked those cocoanuts at us he must have buzzed into Professor Tucker's tent, and pinched his giddy clobber. Then he tore it to shreds. We can't allow that sort of thing—he's getting beyond control!"

"I should think he is!"

"He might even pinch my clothes next!" said Willy thoughtfully. "So it's absolutely necessary that we should capture him. We'll search these blessed woods until we locate the young beggar."

And Willy & Co. went on the warpath.

CHAPTER XII.

UP TO HIS OLD TRICKS!



IT was very peaceful as the fags ventured into the depths of the wood. It was just that period of the afternoon when everything was languid and sleepy. The very air was heavy, and the hum of insects was incessant.

The Third Formers were not particularly keen on flowers as a rule, but the luxuriance of the tropical verdure entranced them. The trees, the creepers, the gloriously coloured birds—everything helped them to forget their purpose.

Not that Willy did forget.

He had come out to look for Marmaduke, and he meant to search high and low. But just as he and his chums were breaking

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through a stretch of dense shrub, Willy paused, and sniffed the air.

"Funny!" he murmured, frowning.

"What's funny?" asked Juicy. "I say, let's pick some of these berries——"

"Blow the berries," interrupted Willy. "Can't you sniff something?"

As a matter of fact, he had detected the faint odour of cigarette smoke, and he knew that Marmaduke's bad habits did not descend to cigarette smoking.

But Willy was rather puzzled. He knew that Nelson Lee and Dorrie were on the Wanderer by this time, and it was hardly likely that any members of the yacht's crew would be ashore at this spot. Many of them had leave, and were taking a spell ashore, but this north-west part of the island was tacitly reserved for the juniors.

"Something rummy here," declared Willy.

He went cautiously forward, and came within sight of an opening amid the trees. It was rather a high spot, and beyond it the outer beach could be glimpsed, with the surf pounding upon the reef. Standing within sight was Ralph Leslie Fullwood, serenely indulging in a surreptitious smoke.

"Fullwood!" exclaimed Chubby. "Well, of all the rotters——"

"We'll give him a surprise!" interrupted Willy grimly.

He was rather pained to see Fullwood acting in this manner. There was something unpleasant in the idea of Ralph Leslie stealing away, so that he could smoke in solitude. Of late, the cad of the Fourth had shown a big improvement. Constant association with healthy companions had improved his outlook on life, and he had shown signs of something better in his make-up.

And here he was, drifting back!

Probably, he had annexed some of Lord Dorrimore's cigarettes—for Dorrie was notoriously careless in that respect, leaving boxes of cigarettes in the saloon and lounges. No doubt Fullwood had indulged his habit of smoking ever since the yacht had left England.

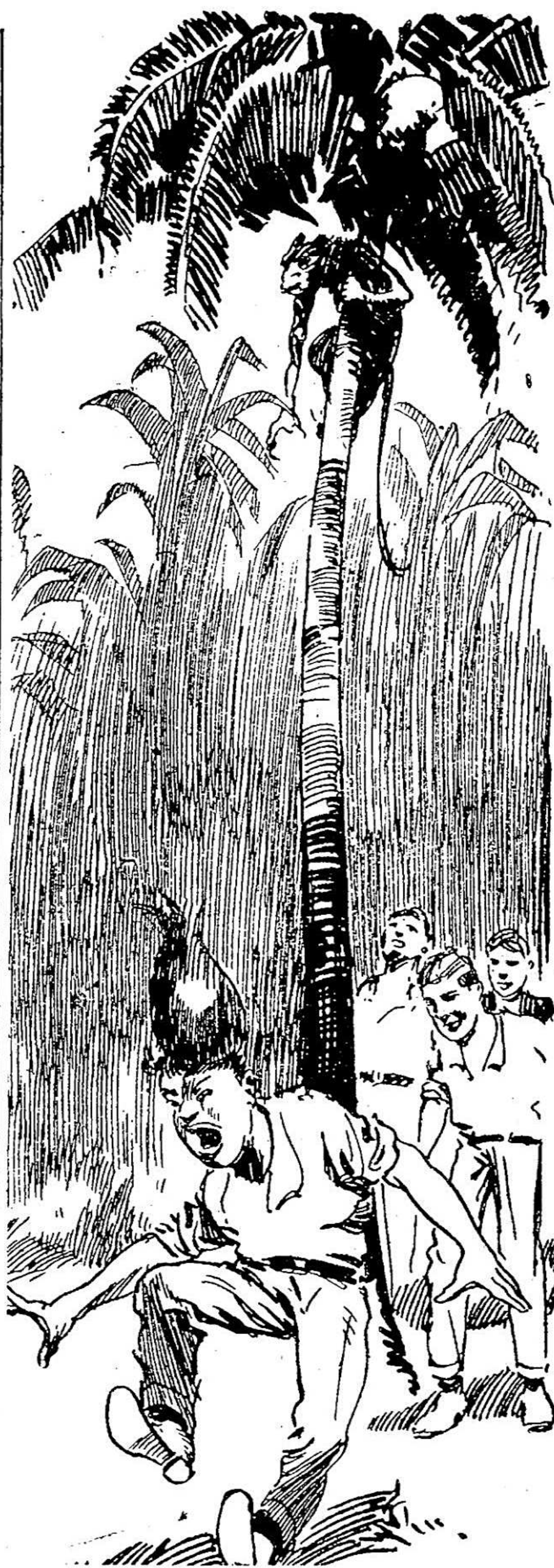
"We'll jolly well show him we know, anyhow," declared Willy. "The rotter—sneaking off like this for a smoke! It's a pity he can't leave that sort of thing alone on this glorious island!"

Chubby Heath happened to tread on a dead piece of wood as they approached, and Fullwood suddenly twirled round. For a second he looked startled as he saw the three fags approaching. Then he flushed slightly, and assumed an air of carelessness.

"Just having a look round for twines, an' things," he remarked casually. "We shall be gettin' to the roof soon——"

"You can't spoof me," interrupted Willy tartly.

He observed that Fullwood's cigarette was no longer in evidence. Ralph Leslie had his hands in his pockets, and he was looking



Marmaduke hurled the coconut with unerring aim. It caught Handforth on the top of the head, and he staggered back, dazed.

quite at ease. The momentary embarrassment had passed.

"What do you mean—can't spoof you?" he demanded.

"You've been smoking, you rotter!"

Fullwood laughed.

"You cheeky young sweep!" he retorted.

"You don't know what you're talkin' about! I came here to look for some creepers an' bushes. What next will you imagine? An' you'd better not sneak, either——"

"Sneak?" interrupted Willy. "You've given yourself away, my lad! If you hadn't been smoking, you wouldn't have thought of a thing like that. Besides, do you think my nose is only for ornament?"

"Ornament?" sneered Fullwood. "There's two opinions on that point!"

Willy turned red.

"You leave my nose alone!" he roared.

"A minute ago I smelt tobacco smoke—you can't kid me!"

"And you can't kid us, either!" added Chubby and Juicy.

"It isn't a habit of mine to attempt to kid kids," said Fullwood pleasantly. "If you like to think these silly things, that's your trouble. An' whatever you say, I shall deny it. You can't prove anythin', my young sparks! You can all go to the dickens!"

He walked away, and the fags made off in the other direction.

"Still the same as ever!" growled Willy. "He doesn't improve a bit—except on the surface—now and again. It's a pity he came along! Nerve! Talking about my nose like that!"

They soon forgot Fullwood and his bad habits. The splendours of the wood claimed their attention. And something else claimed their attention, too, five or ten minutes later.

Willy's keen eyes, searching every bush and tree, suddenly became fixed. He was staring up at a tall palm. Slowly, his face broke into a grin, and he gave vent to a soft chuckle.

"Hallo! What are you cackling at?" asked Chubby, staring.

"Look up there!" replied Willy, pointing. "Don't make a noise, or you'll disturb it! My hat! Of all the young bounders!"

The next moment Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon gave forth a combined yell of laughter. And the sight was certainly worthy of their amusement. Marmaduke was perched in the palm-tree.

Round his neck he was wearing Professor Tucker's collar and tie, and perched upon his face were the professor's missing glasses. The monkey's appearance was so extremely funny that the fags howled.

"No wonder the professor couldn't find his giddy windows," grinned Juicy. "And I expect that's all that's left of his clothes! What are you going to do, Willy? Marmaduke ought to be boiled for this!"

"Boiled?" gasped Willy. "He deserves a medal! Why haven't I got my camera, so that I can snap him? This is one of the funniest things I've ever seen!"

Then he became stern, gave his patent whistle, but only succeeded in disturbing about fifty birds of all sizes and colours. Marmaduke remained perched in the palm-tree, impassive and indifferent.

CHAPTER XIII.

MARMADUKE SURRENDERS.



CHUBBY HEATH grinned.

"Mr. Clever!" he said scornfully. "I thought you told us you could make Marmy do anything? When it comes to the test, he won't even look at you! As old Adams would say, he regards you as two cents!"

Willy frowned.

"None of that, my lad!" he said severely. "If you adopt that tone with me, you ass, I'll push your face into the nearest prickly bush! Marmaduke is a bit excited—that's all. Who wouldn't be, suddenly released in a place like this? He'll soon obey orders when he calms down."

"He looks calm enough now," remarked Juicy.

This, indeed, was the truth. Marmaduke was perfectly motionless in the palm-tree. There was a bloated, self-satisfied look about him, and even his eyes were lacking in their usual brilliance. It is to be feared that Marmaduke had eaten not wisely, but too well.

"Marmy!" shouted Willy sternly. "Here!"

Marmaduke deigned to move his head slightly.

"Now, then," roared Willy, "come here, I tell you!"

Marmaduke shifted his position, hesitated, and then vanished amid the palm fronds. Willy turned slightly red, and his chums chuckled.

"You see?" asked Chubby blandly. "That's the result of training! We can do anything with our pets, ladies and gentlemen! One word from the young master, and the animal flies to do his bidding!"

"I don't think!" grinned Juicy. "Here, I say! Look out, you ass——"

Biff! Crash!

Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon sat down with sudden violence.

"Any more funny remarks?" asked Willy tartly. "You're worse than Marmaduke! I'll show you who's master! Marmy—Marmy! I'll give you twenty seconds to come down!"

Willy was exasperated beyond measure. It was one of his proud boasts that he could always make his pets obey him. Taking everything into consideration, Juicy Lemon

and Chubby Heath had been thoroughly justified in their facetious remarks. And Willy's prompt methods of correction had been somewhat severe.

"Come on, Marmy!" he went on, changing his tactics. "Come on, old man! You're not going to be naughty, I suppose?"

There was something soothing and enticing in his voice now. It wasn't a trick to get the monkey down, and then punish him. One sample of that sort of thing, and Marmaduke would never have trusted his master again. Willy had no intention of punishing the little animal. He was broad-minded enough to realise that the circumstances were exceptional, and that Marmaduke had momentarily lost his head.

To the amazement of Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon, Marmaduke came crawling slowly down the palm-tree. That soothing note had done it. He loftily ignored demands, but he obeyed a caress. As a matter of fact, he was feeling decidedly unwell, and needed sympathy. Willy had struck the right note.

"Come on, old man!" he urged softly.

Willy certainly had a way with him. It was the same with all his pets—he could make them do almost anything he liked. Occasionally they would elude his magnetism, but he never failed to win them over sooner or later.

Marmaduke reached the ground, paused for a moment, with both his hands on his stomach, and then ran towards his young master. He leapt into Willy's arms, and snuggled close against his neck, chattering feebly.

"There you are!" growled Willy, glaring at his chums.

"Well, I'm blessed!" they ejaculated.

"I know what it is, Marmy—all right, old man!" said Willy soothingly. "Tummy ache, eh? Too many bananas, I expect! You'll soon get over it—a good rest is what you need!"

The monkey snuggled up closer, and pawed at Willy's shoulder. A moment later the three fags were on their way back, Marmaduke quite happy. He had spent one of the most interesting afternoons of his career, and all was well. Except for the internal trouble, the monkey was himself.

"I hope he's not poisoned!" said Willy, with concern. "Just before we met Fullwood you mentioned something about some berries, Juicy. Let me warn you against all berries! There are some crimson ones on these bushes—arita berries, they call 'em, I believe."

"What about them?" asked Juicy.

"They're horribly poisonous—that's what about 'em!" retorted Willy. "Eat one of those, my lad, and you'll never wake up again! I hope Marmy hasn't had a sample! Stick to bananas and things you know."

"My hat, I will!" declared Juicy Lemon.

As they made their way back to camp, Willy picked up one or two specimens. He had a box slung round his middle for this

very purpose. He secured some scorpion-like creatures which made his chums shudder.

"You're not collecting insects again, are you?" demanded Chubby wrathfully. "I thought you'd given that up! I thought you were keen on animals now! For goodness' sake don't go back to spiders and——"

"I can't resist these," declared Willy. "I don't suppose I shall do much collecting, but just a few samples won't do any harm——"

He broke off as they came upon a sandy stretch of ground. Basking in the sunshine, and directly in front of them, lay a little golden lizard. Willy was naturalist enough to know that it was a harmless specimen; but it was so quaint that he couldn't pass it by.

"Just a tick!" he murmured.

With one dive he succeeded in grasping the lizard by the tail, and in a moment it was popped into his box.

"Rather close quarters, but it won't come to any harm," said Willy cheerfully. "It might come in useful later on."

"It might poison somebody!" growled Chubby. "I don't like you playing about with those giddy things. One bite, you know, and it'll be all up."

"Rats!" retorted Willy. "It's non-poisonous!"

"How do you know?"

"I do know—and that's enough!"

His chums said no more, and soon afterwards they entered camp. It was approaching the time when the fellows would return to the Wanderer for dinner—for the real camp hadn't yet started, and couldn't until the house was completed. And most of the workers were welcoming the rest. Their labours had been hard, especially in that sultry heat.

CHAPTER XIV.

GREAT LIZARDS!



A RCHIE GLEN-THORNE was thoroughly enjoying himself.

He didn't know it, but he was. Stretched out full length on the sand, in the shade of a clump of graceful palms, he was sound asleep. That's why he didn't know it. And Archie knew no greater enjoyment than indulging in his celebrated "forty of the best."

But the charge of laziness could not be laid at his door. During the greater part of the afternoon he had worked with a vengeance, fetching and carrying, and helping with the general constructional work until he was almost limp.

But at last, when the slackening-off time came, he felt that he had earned a brief respite. No sooner was he on the sand than

he fell into a dreamless sleep. The other juniors were standing about in groups, discussing the work, and making plans for the morrow.

"Can't do much more to-day, anyhow," declared Nipper. "The launch will be coming along presently—the girls have been taken on board already. It'll be our turn next."

"I thought the girls were in camp?" asked Tommy Watson.

"So they are—but Mrs. Stokes won't let 'em sleep on the island," replied Nipper. "They can spend all day ashore, but when night comes they've got to get back. Quite right, too—there's never any telling in these latitudes. A sudden cyclone might swoop down and drench everybody. We could stand it, but the girls are different."

"But we're going to sleep ashore after to-night," declared Reggie Pitt. "I agree that the girls ought to go back to the Wanderer every evening, but I'm blessed if we will! Once our house is complete, we shall make it our headquarters. Besides, Umlosi's going to be with us."

"We don't need a better guard than old Umlosi," replied Nipper cheerfully. "Yes, there's the launch starting out now," he added, as he shaded his eyes with a hand, and gazed far across the lagoon.

Two miles away, the Wanderer was lying at anchor; but in that extraordinarily clear atmosphere she seemed much nearer. There were two launches, and the larger of them was just setting out.

"Rot!" growled Handforth. "This is potty! We were going to finish the giddy house to-day, and now we're dished!"

"Can't do everything at once, old man," said Church. "We shall be able to work heaps better in the early morning, before the sun gets hot. I vote we go to bed directly after dinner, and get up at dawn."

"That's the idea!" agreed Bob Christine.

Nobody took much notice of Archie Glen-thorne during these minor discussions. He was not the only fellow who was lolling on the sand, asleep. Several others were also taking advantage of the quiet lull in the activities.

But Archie suddenly gave a violent start, and sat up.

"What-ho!" he exclaimed. "Good gad! I—I—"

Something had suddenly caused a sharp nip on his right leg, just on the fleshy part of his calf. Unknown to him, the leg had been sprawled out. He sat up, still feeling the effect of the pain.

And at the same instant he caught sight of a little golden object, moving over the sand. To Archie it seemed a most repulsive creature—a kind of horrible reptile. As a matter of fact, it was one of the golden lizards which were generally to be found inland.

"Odds adders and vipers!" he gasped. "A

dashed crawling horror! The bally thing might have—"

He paused, and turned a shade paler. He suddenly remembered that nip on his leg. The lizard had been running away from him—and was even now vanishing from sight. Archie let out a terrific howl.

"Help!" he roared. "Phipps! I say, laddies, kindly rally round with stimulants! I'm absolutely bitten!"

"Hallo, what's up with Archie?" asked Pitt, looking round.

"Yoicks!" shouted Archie desperately. "Tally-ho, and all that sort of rot! Help, dash you! Rescue the good old Fourth! Phipps! Dash it all, where's Phipps?"

"Phipps is on board, you chump!" said Handforth, walking over. "What's the matter with you? What are you making this din for?"

"Laddie, I've been bitten!" said Archie tragically.

"Bitten?"

"Bitten by an adder!"

"Great Scott, an adder!" yelled Handforth.

"Well, one of those bally crawling things!" amended Archie, in distress. "A lizard, I believe—but those frightful things are sometimes as poisonous as snakes! In Mexico, about five hundred and sixty-three people are killed every dashed year by lizards!"

"We're not in Mexico!" shouted Handforth.

"Absolutely not, but this lizard was here," retorted Archie. "Good gad! Look at my frightful leg! I mean to say, this is getting absolutely poisonous! The whole situation is ragged at the edge!"

Archie was staring at his leg in a fascinated kind of way. By this time a number of the other fellows had gathered round. Willy Handforth and his chums were particularly concerned. They looked on with grave, serious faces.

"Anything wrong, old man?" asked Willy earnestly.

"Wrong, dash it!" bleated Archie. "I'm dying!"

He was still staring at his leg with a glassy expression in his eye. There was no doubt about it—there was an ugly mark there. Just where he had felt the pain there was a fiery red spot, and all round it the flesh was of a bluey-purple hue. It was enough to make anybody alarmed.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Handforth, aghast. "I thought you were spoofing. But that's a poisonous bite all right—you're properly in the cart now, old man. We might as well give up hope."

Archie groaned.

"Absolutely!" he said feebly. "But, dash it, I'm the chappie to give up hope! I mean, as far as you're concerned, life still seems with throbbing joy, and all that sort of stuff!"

He lay back, and it seemed that the end was near.

CHAPTER XV.

NEAR THE DASHED EDGE.



MOST of the juniors were thoroughly alarmed.

They knew there were no wild animals to fear on the island, but it was necessary for them to be wary of insects and small reptiles. They had all been warned by Nelson Lee. But it is to be feared that the majority of them had been quite careless. It needed something of this sort to remind them that the danger of being bitten was ever-present.

"I say, it looks bad!" muttered Church. "That black patch isn't getting any worse, but there's no telling what's going on underneath."

"You silly ass, it's got twice as big while we've been looking at it!" said Handforth promptly. "His leg's swelling, too—it's nearly half as big as it ought to be!"

Archie moaned again.

"I don't want to alarm you, old man, but you might as well know the worst," went on Handforth comfortingly. "How did it happen, anyhow? Were you playing with the blessed thing?"

Archie sat up again. Handforth's suggestion gave him a moment of indignant strength.

"Playing with it?" he repeated with a show of spirit. "Good gad, no! I mean to say, I wouldn't play with a bally lizard, old scream. Absolutely not! In fact, absolutely not with removable brass fittings."

"But you must have touched the thing somehow," insisted Handforth.

"It was the bally thing that touched me!" explained Archie. "The fact is, I was indulging in a few of the brightest and best—"

"You were asleep, you mean?"

"Absolutely!" said Archie faintly. "There was I, positively adorning the sands with my willowy figure, when suddenly—zip!—the last of the Glenthornes was absolutely bitten!"

"How do you know you were bitten?" demanded Edward Oswald.

"Cheese it, old man!" protested Church. "Can't you see it? What's the idea of this third degree business?"

Handforth eyed him coldly.

"Am I conducting this investigation or not?" he asked stiffly. "I'll ask you to keep your remarks to yourself, Walter Church! When I want your advice I'll ask for it—and that'll be never!"

He turned to Archie again.

"How," he asked, "do you know that the thing bit you?"

"Good gad!" groaned Archie faintly. "I saw the dashed thing strolling away with a chunk of my leg in its mouth! And there

—there," he added tragically, pointing to his calf, "is the evidence! I mean to say, it wouldn't have been so bad if I had been awake. But imagine the frightful thing stealing up and having a feed off my calf while I was asleep! That sort of dashed thing isn't absolutely done."

Nipper began to get suspicious.

"For a chap who's dying of poisoning, you seem pretty lively, Archie," he remarked. "You've been bitten, but I don't expect it's very serious. The launch is just coming, anyhow—we'll soon have you on board."

"Better take him down to the lagoon and wash him at once," suggested Handforth briskly. "Then we'll grab his leg and squeeze the poison out. That's the best thing to do with a wasp sting—so I expect it's the best thing to do with a lizard bite. Come on—lend a hand!"

"Help!" gurgled Archie. "Desist, laddie! Odds ruffians and hooligans! I mean, this is going too dashed far! I refuse to be flung into the lagoon and washed! Dash it, I'm not dirty!"

"Wash your wound, I mean!" snorted Handforth.

"Oh, well, of course— But certainly not!" said Archie. "I need liniments, antidotes, and what not. Good gad! Are you going to keep me here until I die? It'll be too late by the time I get on board. Kindly rally round with a few yards of antidote!"

Nipper looked round, and saw that the launch was just about to ground on the beach. And, to his satisfaction, he also saw that Nelson Lee was present. The school-master-detective had come along to see how the house was progressing, for he was keenly interested in the activities of the boys.

"Hi, guv'nor!" roared Nipper. "Please come quickly!"

"Archie's been poisoned, sir!" roared Handforth.

"Help!"

Nelson Lee, hearing these alarming calls, lost no time in hurrying to the scene. He arrived just as Archie was at his last gasp—according to his own statement. The unfortunate junior was breathing heavily, and his eyes were more glassy than ever.

"Laddies, kindly say good-bye to Phipps for me!" he murmured. "Tell the dear old lad that I wanted him by my side at the last. He may have my gold fountain-pen, and all the cash in my pocket-book—"

"What is the matter here, boys?" asked Nelson Lee crisply.

"Poor old Archie is at his last gasp, sir!" replied Handforth. "He was bitten by an adder—"

"An adder?" repeated Lee. "Nonsense!"

"I mean a blue lizard, sir," said Handforth. "It stole up to him while he was

asleep and bit his leg. He saw it walking away. Just have a look at the place, sir—it's getting worse every minute."

Nelson Lee looked very concerned as he dropped to his knees in the sand. One glance at Archie's leg alarmed him intensely.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE END OF A STRENUOUS DAY.



"THIS looks bad—very bad!" said Nelson Lee grimly. "I warned you boys against bites, but we won't go into that now. You needn't be alarmed, Glen-thorne. I shall be able to pull you round."

Archie looked up with hope in his eyes.

"Good gad! Really, sir?" he breathed.

Nelson Lee was about to reply when he paused. He was in the act of whisking out his pocket medicine-case. Instead, he bent closer and examined Archie's leg with keener attention.

"Oh!" he murmured. "Dear me!"

He felt the spot, pressed his finger all round it, and then looked at Archie.

"Is it paining, my boy?" he asked.

"Frightfully, sir."

"Are you sure?"

"Well, dash it—I mean— It's my pain, sir!" protested Archie. "If anybody ought to know—"

"You are absolutely certain that your leg is hurting you?"

"Odds aches and pains!" ejaculated Archie. "I mean to say, the old limb is positively throbbing like a dashed motor-bicycle! The ag. is simply teriff!"

"I can only conclude, Glen-thorne, that your imagination is highly developed," said Nelson Lee dryly. "I can cure you in a very short space of time—indeed, in a mere second! Watch!"

He slightly wetted his handkerchief, and then rubbed it swiftly over the ugly-looking discolouration on Archie's calf. As though by magic, the place had entirely disappeared, leaving the skin unmarred. Another rub, and Lee looked at his handkerchief with amusement.

"Well?" he asked with a twinkle in his eyes.

"I say, what on earth—" began Nipper. "But—but there's nothing there at all, sir! There's no bite!"

"There never was a bite."

"But, I say. I mean, I say!" protested Archie. "That is, I say! But look here! That frightful bite, sir. A moment ago—"

"Do you still feel the agony, Archie?" laughed Nelson Lee.

"Odds miracles and magic!" ejaculated Archie. "Absolutely not, sir! The pain

seems to have buzzed off in one fell moment. Thanks frightfully, sir. I mean, you're one of those chappies that old Umlosi talks about—a magician! You cure the bite in a dashed flash!"

"Considering there was no bite at all, my powers as a magician were not really called into play," laughed Nelson Lee. "Cheer up, Archie! Somebody's been playing a trick on you!"

"A trick?" roared Handforth. "Then—then it wasn't anything serious at all? By George, that's rather rich, you know! One of the funniest things I've heard for years! And old Archie was spoofed like the dickens!"

Handforth roared, and as soon as the others realised that there was nothing wrong they roared with him. Archie rose to his feet frigidly, acutely conscious of the fact that he had made a frightful ass of himself.

"A striking example of what the imagination can do," commented Nelson Lee. "You thought you were bitten, Archie, and the impression was so powerful that you even felt a pain in your leg."

"But, gadzooks, I DID feel pain!" protested Archie. "I mean, there was absolutely a nip! It positively woke me up, sir!"

"I have not the slightest doubt that you are right," agreed Nelson Lee dryly. "But I think I'll let you boys puzzle it out for yourselves. There is one here, at least, who knows quite a lot about this incident."

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Handforth.

He was enjoying the joke hugely.

"One of the richest things I've ever struck!" he gurgled. "It took a chap with brains to think of a joke like that! It's just the sort of thing I might have done! Just imagine Archie thinking he was bitten by a lizard! Why, I don't even believe there was a lizard."

"Yes, there was," put in his minor promptly.

"Eh? How do you know?"

"Because I put it there," replied Willy sweetly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" howled Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon hysterically.

"You put it there?" roared Handforth with sudden suspicion.

"Exactly," grinned Willy. "Archie looked so calm and peaceful, lying on the sands, that I couldn't resist the temptation. But, of course, I did something else first."

"What did you do?" asked Nipper curiously.

Everybody listened eagerly. Archie was gazing at Willy with a somewhat dazed expression on his face, and Handforth was gradually growing more and more stern. Somehow, the joke didn't seem to be so funny to him now.

"What did I do?" repeated Willy. "Why, I got a little juice from some of these

harmless berries and rubbed it on Archie's leg. First the red spot and then that purple stuff. Only juice, you know—perfectly wholesome and harmless."

"Good gad!" breathed Archie.

"And then?" asked Nelson Lee with mock severity.

"Then I popped the lizard out and gave Archie a nip with my finger and thumb," grinned Willy. "And I didn't even nip him on that spot, either! He just woke up in time to see the lizard scuttling away, but he didn't see me!"

"He wouldn't!" agreed Nipper. "You can beat any lizard when it comes to

chuckled Willy. "You can't get out of it now, Ted—you can't eat your own words. As a matter of fact, I did it as a lesson."

"A lesson?" roared the Fourth-Formers.

"Exactly," replied Willy. "You've all been so jolly careless about insect bites that I thought I'd better give you a scare. After this you might be more cautious. Anyhow, it was a good joke, and as I've got Marmaduke back, we can call this the end of a strenuous day!"

Nelson Lee had gone off, chuckling, and Archie Glenthorne was chipped unmercifully until he got on board the yacht—and even then the yarn spread, and caused general

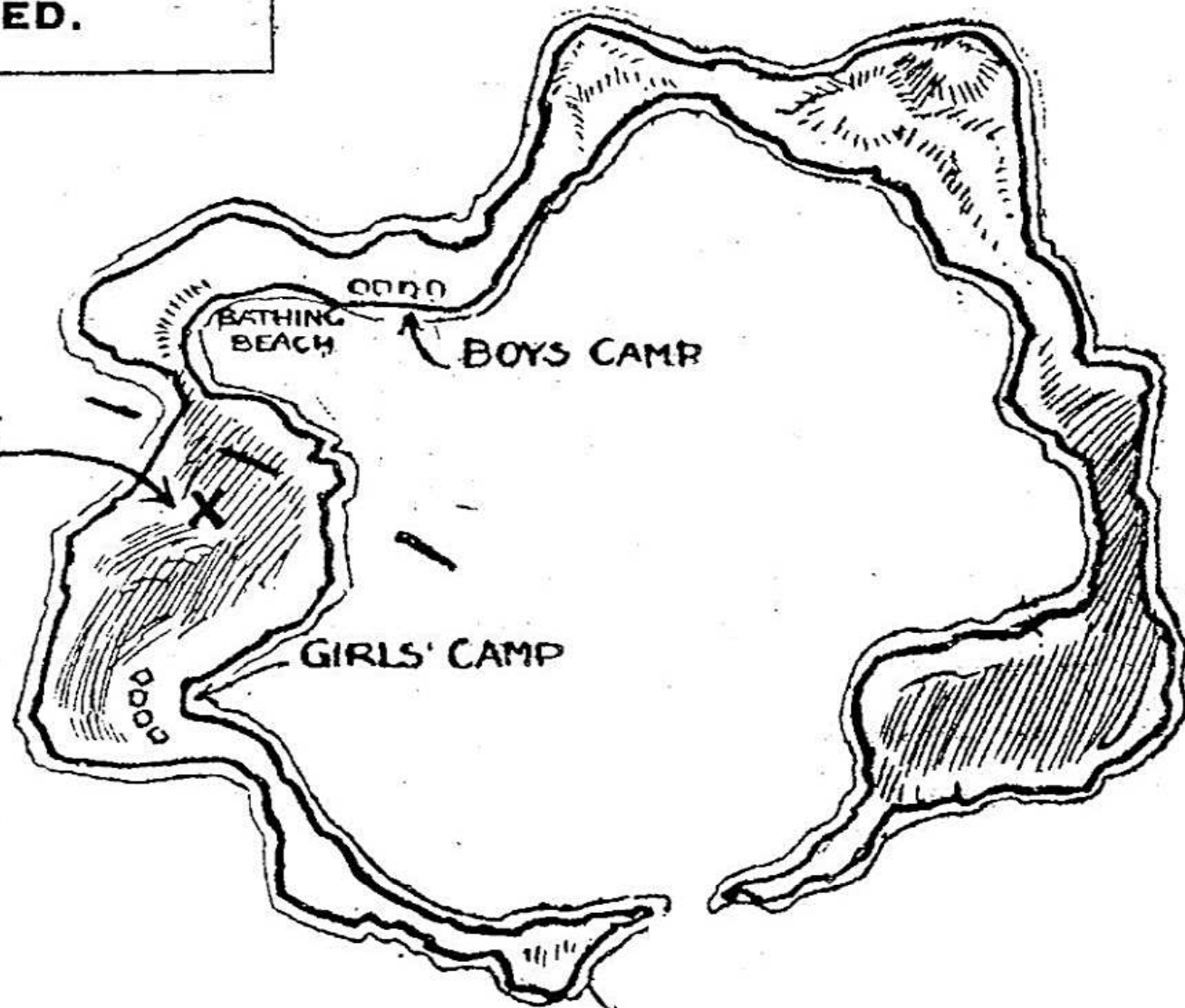
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scuttling, my son! Well, I'm jiggered! So all Archie received was a nip from your finger and thumb! You young spoofer!"

"Archie doesn't bear me any ill-will—do you, Archie?" chuckled Willy, slapping Archie on the back.

"Laddie, it was a frightfully ripe scheme, not to say poisonous—but on the whole I forgive you," replied Archie stiffly. "However, dash it, kindly understand that I regard you as a bally young blighter!"

"He ought to be tanned!" snorted Edward Oswald. "And does he call that a joke? I've never heard of such a dotty idea!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Well, thank goodness I had your true opinion before you knew who did it,"

amusement. It was rather cruel that the victim should get all the brunt of the laughter and the perpetrator the admiration.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE REEF BY NIGHT.



DINNER was over, and the Wanderer was agleam with electric lights from end to end. Here was a strange contrast between the primitive and the ultra-modern.

The lagoon and the island—Nature in its unadorned beauty—and the sumptuous

steam yacht, with every marvel that civilisation could provide.

The two were direct opposites. Yet there seemed nothing very incongruous in the Wanderer lying at her anchorage in the lagoon. She harmonised with the peaceful surroundings.

It was cooler now. The wind had freshened a little, and the promenade deck was exceedingly pleasant. Nearly everybody was walking up and down, or leaning over the rails. The boys and girls were in groups, laughing and chatting over the plans for the morrow.

"Listen to the reef," said Church, lifting up a finger.

He and Handforth and McClure were against the rail, and they listened for a moment. On the soft wind came the roar and thunder of the surf. There was something fascinating about that sound—rising and falling, but always continuous.

The Wanderer herself was lying in placid water—as though she rested in a mere pool. Scarcely a ripple came through the break in the reef to disturb the lagoon's placidity. And at night the reef seemed altogether more mysterious and alluring. The sound of it was more pronounced—owing, no doubt, to the fact that other sounds were subdued.

"They say the outer beach is a wonderful sight at night," remarked McClure. "There's all sorts of phosphorescence, and you can see other things, too. It's a pity we can't go and have a look."

"Why can't we?" asked Handforth. "Both the launches are at the foot of the ladder. I suggest that we take the small one and go ashore. Then we can cross over the land and get to the outer beach."

"But we shan't be allowed," said Church dubiously.

"Rats! We're not at school now," said Handforth. "We've only got to ask Dorrie, and he'll give the word to the skipper to have some men told off for the job."

"It's an idea, anyhow," said Church eagerly.

Again they listened to the reef—and the lulling sound of the surf seemed to fill the whole night. And as they watched, the ripples in the lagoon increased. At first they had been hardly apparent, but now they were becoming more so.

The tide, in fact, was coming in. And, somehow, the lagoon looked bigger under the starlight. Overhead, the sky was a roof of soft, purple velvet, studded by an amazing array of sparkling diamonds. Never before had the juniors seen such stars. Professor Tucker was having the time of his life with his observations.

"Look at that!" said Church, pointing.

Something in the water below cut the surface, and there was a sudden dull splash. A great fish had leapt up, and was once again disappearing into the limpid depths. At night all sorts of strange and

wonderful things seemed to go on in the lagoon.

The moon was low so far, but it was gradually creeping up, and would increase its strength hour by hour—to the detriment of the stars.

Reggie Pitt and Bob Christine joined the chums of Study D.

"How about going ashore again?" suggested Pitt. "What sayest thou, O chiefs?"

"Why, it's my idea!" declared Handforth. "I suggested it two or three minutes ago. Let's go and ask Dorrie if we can have the launch."

"If you only thought of the idea three minutes ago you were late," smiled Pitt. "It was Browne's suggestion, and he made it ten minutes ago. As a matter of fact, I think he's asking Dorrie now. A lot of the fellows want to go across to the outer shore and watch the tide coming in."

Handforth & Co. were eager. And everybody was pleased, a few minutes later, when Dorrie announced that the fellows could do as they liked. There was no danger ashore—the woods were practically as safe by night as by day. And it wouldn't be necessary to penetrate the woods to get to the other side of the reef.

More than half the juniors participated in the adventure, and Browne and Stevens and Fenton and Morrow were included. The girls took Mrs. Stokes' advice, and remained on board—although Doris and one or two others badly wanted to go.

The launch was soon off, and that trip across the lagoon in the soft starlight was a journey to be remembered. The party was rather sorry when the beach was reached. They leapt ashore, and were soon on their way across the tiny strip of land near the bathing beach. At this point it was only two or three hundred yards from the inner shore to the outer shore. And almost before they knew it, the fellows were out of the trees, and facing the tossing, incoming surf.

It was a wonderful sight.

Far out, the rollers were breaking in a smother of foam and spray, and the snowy-white surf, laden with ozone, came tumbling in, smothering the coral, and sending an occasional puff of spray into the faces of the watchers as they stood.

"Pretty wonderful, isn't it?" said Nipper presently.

"I venture to suggest, Brother Nipper, that the English language, adequate enough for all ordinary purposes, is singularly lacking in suitable words for the present occasion," exclaimed Browne gently. "Of all the beautiful scenes, I have seldom—"

"I shouldn't go into poetry about it, old man," suggested Morrow, of the Sixth. "Just look at that phosphorescence. All the foam seems to be luminous as it comes in—shimmering and glistening like molten silver."

"Who's poetic now?" chuckled Fenton.

"Eh? Oh, sorry!" said Morrow. "You can't help it, you know."

"Rats!" said Handforth. "There's nothing to shout about. Not a bad scene, but I'd rather do a bit of fishing."

Handforth had no soul for scenery, and it rather pleased him to speak to the Sixth-Formers as equals. At St. Frank's they were lordly seniors, and had to be treated as such. But on holiday they were just fellows, the same as all the others.

"By Jove!" ejaculated Nipper suddenly. "What's that?"

"What's what?" asked two or three others.

"That!" said Nipper, pointing.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE RESULT OF CARELESSNESS!



ALL eyes were centred upon the direction in which Nipper pointed. He wasn't indicating anything out to sea—but something over towards the south, in a line from where they were standing.

They found themselves looking over the dense patch of woodland where the island widened out.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Handforth abruptly.

"My goodness!"

"What the dickens can it be?"

There was a lurid, ruddy glow showing. It was reflected hazily in the sky—and appeared to be in fairly close proximity. The glow rose and fell in a flickering manner. There could really be little doubt as to the actual cause of it.

"It's a fire!" exclaimed Pitt tensely.

"You—you don't think our house is being burnt down?" gasped Church. "Everything was all right when we left——"

"No; it's in a different direction to the house."

"It might be the girls' camp," panted Bob Christine. "Some of those girls are jolly careless, you know, and a dropped match——"

"No, it can't be the girls' camp," interrupted Nipper tensely. "It seems to be somewhere between the two—in the dense stretch of woods. Anyhow, we're wasting time here. Let's hurry off, and see what we can do."

"A brainy suggestion, Brother Nipper," declared Browne. "Ere long the entire island might be blazing from end to end, and I fancy I am echoing a general sentiment when I observe that being roasted alive is scarcely the ideal conclusion——"

Nobody waited for the long-winded Napoleon to finish.

Nipper and all the others were hastening back into the trees, bent upon investiga-

ting this mysterious flare. It might mean a trifle, or it might mean something exceedingly serious. There had been no rain for a good many days, and if the fire spread with sufficient energy, it would sweep through the island with appalling ferocity.

Fortunately, there was practically no wind. The breeze had died down, and the night was calm. But for this, the affair might have been grave, indeed.

As the juniors plunged through the woods, Willy Handforth grabbed Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon. They ran on in this fashion, and Willy was looking even keener than usual.

"Just thought of something," he exclaimed. "Don't say a word to the others, you chaps, but I've got my suspicions about this fire. It seems to be in the heart of this belt—and a good distance from the place where we were building the house."

"What about it?" panted Chubby.

"Remember what happened this afternoon?" went on Willy keenly. "Remember how we came upon Fullwood, smoking?"

Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon were startled.

"What!" gasped Juicy. "You—you don't mean——"

"Yes, I do!" said Willy grimly. "When we first spotted the rotter, he was smoking, and a second or two later there wasn't any sign of a cigarette at all. I'll bet a month's pocket-money he chucked the lighted cigarette down, and it probably dropped into a patch of dried creeper, or something. It might have smouldered for hours."

"It's possible," admitted Chubby. "I don't think it's the right explanation, though. In any case, it wouldn't be fair to blame Fullwood without any better evidence."

"Exactly—so we'd better keep mum," declared Willy.

Nevertheless, he was convinced in his own mind. Five minutes later, Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon were convinced, too—in spite of Chubby's recent difference of opinion.

For the fire, when the crowd came upon it, was in precisely the spot where Ralph Leslie Fullwood had been caught in the act of smoking. A patch of dense undergrowth was blazing furiously, and the tongues of flame were leaping up towards the surrounding trees. So far, the conflagration was not alarming—but it might easily become so unless something drastic was done.

"My hat!"

"It's—it's getting worse every minute!"

"What the dickens can we do?"

The crowd of fellows, panting and breathless, gazed at the fire with a queer feeling of helplessness. It was confined to the little clearing. A good proportion of grass had burnt itself out, and now the bushes were

crackling and roaring as the flames ate them up. Lurid, flickering tongues of fire were leaping skywards.

A sudden wind would drive these flames towards the surrounding groves of big trees. Once they got alight, there would be little or no hope of saving this part of the island from destruction. And the thought was appalling. The tropic beauties of this paradise were in danger of being wiped out.

"It's no good looking at it!" shouted Fenton briskly. "The lagoon isn't far—let's rush there and fetch some water!"

"That's a good idea; but what are we going to fetch it in?" asked Nipper. "As far as I know, there isn't anything that'll hold water. Even our hats are useless. We'd better signal to the Wanderer, and get them to bring buckets and things of that kind."

And a general rush was made for the beach of the lagoon. But even now the alarm was general, the yacht was two miles distant, and the delay might prove too great.

CHAPTER XIX.

FIRE!



RALPH LESLIE FULLWOOD had not accompanied the shore party. He wasn't particularly interested in the reef, and he didn't care a jot about watching the surf.

He thought it would be rather good to be left to himself, more or less—and there were plenty of secluded spots on the Wanderer's ample decks.

Fullwood, in fact, had been feeling rather lonely of late.

He had plenty of company, but it wasn't the sort of company he had been accustomed to. He thought it would be rather ripping to have Gulliver and Bell on board, to say nothing of a few more of his questionable acquaintances.

"Gad, I'm getting a bit sick of this," he grunted. "I wouldn't even mind old Wellborne, of the River House. He and his gang would be as welcome on board as the flowers in May! As it is, I can't even get a little gamble when I feel like it."

He leaned over the rail, and stared moodily over the lagoon. This section of the deck was quite deserted, for most of the others were below. The girls were all in the lounge, and Lord Dorrimore and the other men had taken possession of the smoking-room. Things were rather quiet.

A sudden shout from forward rather startled Fullwood. The officers and crew of the yacht had been very little in evidence of late. Steam was maintained, but the Wanderer was allowed to lie at anchor, placid and undisturbed. Except for the watch, there were none of the ordinary men on duty.

But that shout was one of alarm, and Fullwood glanced round curiously. He caught sight of somebody pointing out towards a distant shore of the lagoon, and he automatically followed the direction of this pointing arm.

"By gad!" he muttered, with a start.

He could see the lurid glare from the fire. Until a few minutes ago it had been invisible. The undergrowth had probably been smouldering, and had now burst into flame. There was no doubt that something was blazing fiercely.

The effect was impressive from the yacht.

The quiet lagoon, reflecting the myriad stars, seemed wonderfully peaceful. The distant shores, with the densely wooded belts, were mysterious and shadowy. And in that one spot the ruddy glow rose and fell. It was the kind of thing one might have expected to see on a savage island. It hinted at the presence of cannibals—savages, preparing a feast round the fires.

But Fullwood knew that this was a mere fancy of his. The island was uninhabited, save for themselves. He recognised the spot—it was in that dense stretch of woodland between the girls' camp and the new house which the Fourth-Formers were erecting. And a second later he felt a tiny quiver run down his spine.

A thought had occurred to him—a thought which caused him to stare across the lagoon with wide-open eyes. The fire was just at that spot where he had been smoking!

His thoughts were rapid.

Upon seeing Willy and Co., he had flung his lighted cigarette down—had tossed it, indeed, into that dense patch of dried grass. At the moment he had acted automatically. As he had walked away, he had remembered the lighted cigarette, and had half hesitated. Should he go back and see if everything was all right?

Even at the time Fullwood had felt a little qualm. But he had dismissed his uneasiness, and from that moment to this he had not thought of the matter again. But now that he saw the glare in that very spot he was filled with apprehension. Instinctively, he knew that he was the cause of the fire.

Acting on the impulse, he fled to the main staircase, and fairly flew down. A moment later he burst into the smoking-room, where the electric lights glowed, and where the atmosphere was deliciously cool and filled with fragrant cigar-smoke.

Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore and Mr. Stokes and Mr. Russell were playing a rubber at bridge. They all looked up at Fullwood's dramatic entry.

"Quick, sir!" panted Fullwood. "The island's on fire!"

All four men were on their feet at the same instant.

"Good glory!" ejaculated Dorrie. "What on earth—"

"Come and look, sir!" gasped Fullwood.

"I spotted it just now! I believe somebody's gone to tell Captain Burton—"

They didn't wait for Fullwood to continue. The game of bridge was forgotten, and they all hurried on deck. Captain Burton and the first officer were already there, standing against the rail, and gazing across the lagoon.

"Some carelessness, I'll warrant!" exclaimed Lee grimly. "It isn't so bad as I feared—but it might spread."

"Perhaps it's those youngsters?" suggested Dorrie. "They're ashore now, you know. It may only be one of their larks—"

"I think not," interrupted Nelson Lee. "They wouldn't be reckless enough to deliberately light a fire in the middle of that wood. We'd better get across there as fast as the launch can take us. Half a dozen patent fire-extinguishers ought to subdue the blaze—although it would be advisable to take a number of buckets also."

And within three minutes the Wanderer was bustling with activity. There was every indication that the fire would be subdued before it gained a good hold, and that no serious consequences would result.

Yet that fire was nothing less than fateful.

Caused by Fullwood's carelessness, and apparently trivial, it was to have one effect which no soul on the island bargained for. It was, indeed, to change the entire situation for the adventurers on Paradise Island.

CHAPTER XX.

ENTER MR. JONATHAN PRESCOTT.



UNKNOWN to the holiday party, certain all-important events had been happening in the vicinity of the island during the past hour or two.

Just before sundown, the schooner Samoa, sailing before a light, but favourable breeze, had altered her course a point or two to the westward. A look-out had been stationed at the masthead, and all hands were on the tiptoe of expectation.

Two men were standing on the poop as the sun sank in a golden ball below the horizon. The Pacific was shivering towards the west like a great sea of molten gold. The sky reflected the sunset, the mellow rays reaching to the very zenith.

"Well, Mr. Prescott, I guess we're somewhere near the spot now," remarked the skipper, as he knocked his pipe out on the poop-rail. "If that guy of yours was telling the truth, the island ought to be right here. That's according to his figures."

Mr. Jonathan Prescott threw his cigar away. He had only just lighted it, but his

anxiety was such that his action was almost automatic.

"By heaven, Hawke, if Russell gave me false figures, I'll—I'll— But it's impossible," he went on gruffly. "I'll stake my life the man was in dead earnest. I'm a good judge of character, and Russell was straight."

Captain Hawke smiled slightly.

"You ought to be a good judge of a straight man, Mr. Prescott," he observed, with a faint touch of irony. "I guess you needn't worry. Maybe it'll take us a day or two to find the exact location, but the island's here. These cursed atolls are liable to elude you. They want a durned lot of finding—even when you've got the right figures."

But Mr. Prescott was not very comforted. He paced up and down the poop, and continually gazed at the distant horizon. He was growing tired of this voyage. To him it had seemed endless—and, being an energetic man, he was vastly impatient to set foot on dry land.

"I was a fool to come in this slow old tub," he grunted. "The job was worth chartering a steam-driven ship. By golly, Hawke, if we're becalmed again I'll go mad! Three solid weeks of it was nearly enough to send me crazy. This latitude is infernal!"

He paced up and down again, and Captain Hawke refilled his pipe. He was accustomed to his employer's irritable outbursts. They had been growing worse for a week or two, and the skipper would be heartily glad when the island was reached.

Originally Mr. Prescott had suggested going to the island first—in order to verify its existence. But Captain Hawke had been against this suggestion, as it would have meant sailing nearly a thousand miles out of their course—for, in order to recruit the necessary labour, it was essential to visit many of the other islands.

Mr. Russell's coral atoll was not one of a group, although it was possible that another small atoll or two would be in the vicinity. It was situated many hundreds of miles out of the usual trade routes, and a special journey there would have wasted weeks.

Moreover, Captain Hawke was convinced of its existence. He was a man who had sailed among the islands practically all his life, and he knew the South Seas by heart. On more than one occasion he had heard rumours concerning an extra large atoll in this latitude—an uninhabited isle, which was occasionally visited by whalers for water supplies.

From the very first he had recognised the atoll from Prescott's description. Indeed, it was Hawke's knowledge that had largely induced Mr. Jonathan Prescott to set out on the venture. It is doubtful if Prescott would have relied upon Mr. Russell's unsupported word.

The schooner had been cruising for weeks, picking up natives at various islands—until

there were two hundred of them on board. The vessel, indeed, was practically converted into a passenger boat. Her holds had been converted into sleeping and living accommodation, and she was low in the water with tons of stores and gear.

Mr. Prescott was a wealthy man—to say nothing of being a scoundrel—and he had spent a small fortune on this venture. But he had only done so on the strength of what he would gain in return. Mr. Russell's sample pearls had fired his greed, and he had been convinced that he was on a certainty.

The time had dragged on so long, however, that he was beginning to have doubts. He felt that he ought to have come to the island first—before recruiting all this labour and spending all this money—to satisfy himself that the pearl oysters were actually there.

What if the island proved to be barren? What if there was no island at all? Doubts of this sort were constantly cropping up, and now that the schooner was in the exact latitude, Mr. Prescott's nerves were utterly raw. The suspense was making him haggard.

"Fool!" he muttered fiercely. "Hawke, I've called myself a fool a thousand times! And why? Because I took notice of you! I tell you I ought to have come here first! I don't believe there's any such island! That infernal Russell double-crossed me!"

Captain Hawke spat viciously.

"Say, I'm just about tired!" he exclaimed curtly. "Owner or no owner, you'd best not to talk to me that way! A fool for taking my advice, eh? See here, Mister Prescott—"

"All right—all right!" muttered Prescott thickly. "Forget it, Hawke—forget it! I'm jumpy. I'll admit I'm jumpy. But, for the love of Mike, get busy and find that island."

"Mebbe you'll tell the wind to freshen up?" retorted Captain Hawke sarcastically.

Jonathan Prescott moved away, and leaned moodily over the rail. Usually, he was a bluff, hearty man, with a boisterous manner. He concealed his true character beneath a cloak of breezy humour. Men who did not know him inwardly believed him to be as honest as the day.

But during the last few weeks Captain Hawke had been permitted to see his employer's character in its true light. At times ordinary conversation had been out of the question, for Prescott had been ready to curse at the first opening.

The captain himself was no novice at cursing. He was a man of fifty—lean, sun-dried, and wiry. He hadn't knocked about the South Seas all his life for nothing. Somehow, his clean-shaven face very fittingly resembled his name, for he had an immense hooked nose and thin lips, and was almost as brown as a Kanaka, himself.

With the sunset, the breeze freshened slightly, and the Samoa—a well found, well

equipped vessel—filled her sails joyously, and glided onwards at an increased pace.

But in all directions the horizon was blank.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE GLARE IN THE NIGHT.



DARKNESS fell with the abruptness of the tropics. The last flicker of the sunset died out, and the stars twinkled with dazzling brilliance in the purple sky.

It was so clear that even now the horizon could be distinctly seen, a clean-cut line separating the sea from the sky.

Indeed, the stars were twinkling and bright right down to the water's edge—an immense canopy of diamonds. Such a sky as this can only be seen in these latitudes.

"I've kept quiet for a whole hour, Hawke!" exclaimed Jonathan Prescott, as he came up from below. "But I can't keep quiet any longer. Where's that island? You told me it ought to be here—"

"So it ought, Mr. Prescott," interrupted the skipper. "But you don't need to go off the deep end again. Maybe we'll make the atoll before morning. It depends on the wind. There's a fairish bit now—"

"Man alive, it's hardly enough to fill the sails!" snapped Mr. Prescott. "We're not moving more than four or five knots!"

"And don't need to," said the Captain gruffly. "Say, do you want me to pile this old hooker on the reef? When a ship's near one of these coral atolls, it needs to go slow. You're right on the top of the durned things before you realise it. I guess it's not so bad in clear weather, because you can hear the surf for miles—but when there's a bit of a blow I'd rather be on the safe side and wait for daylight."

"To blazes with your infernal caution," growled Mr. Prescott. "There's no blow now, Hawke—there's scarcely a breeze. And haven't you altered your course again? What's the big idea?"

"Say, who's navigating this ship, anyway?" roared Captain Hawke, with a sudden burst of indignation. "You'd best get below, mister, before I let fly some language! How the thunder do you think I can find the island unless I cruise around?"

"All right, captain—you needn't get violent —"

"Gee! I guess you're enough to make a man sweat!" snapped Hawke. "What's the good of me sailing straight ahead? We're right on the spot, I tell you, and by making a direct line we might miss the blamed thing. We've got to cruise around."

"On the spot!" muttered Mr. Prescott. "I knew all along! Russell fooled me—Russell deliberately—"

A sudden abrupt hail came from the masthead—from the look-out. The shout cut through the clear atmosphere with startling loudness. Both the men on the poop stared up, their hearts leaping.

"There's a glare two points away to starboard!" shouted the look-out, in response to the captain's sharp query. "Can't quite make it out, sir. A ship afire, mebbe—"

"It's the island!" panted Mr. Prescott huskily.

"Like as not!" agreed Captain Hawke.

He gave some brief instructions to the man at the wheel, and the schooner again altered her course. There followed an anxious hour. The breeze still held, and the ship crept nearer and nearer.

The glare was now quite clearly seen from the poop. It flickered up and down eerily, and might easily have been caused by a ship on fire. But those on the Samoa were still in a state of uncertainty.

She held to her course, and gradually the glare died away—until, finally, it vanished altogether. And with the dying of the fire Mr. Prescott's spirits drooped.

"I guess it was a ship, after all," he muttered. "She's sunk now—that's why the fire's out."

"Looks mighty like it," agreed the captain. "I'm not so sure, though. Say, can you smell anything?"

"Smell anything?"

Captain Hawke stood there, sniffing and dilating his nostrils like a retriever. The other man flung his cigar away, and sniffed the air, too. At first he detected nothing. Then, after the last whiff of the cigar smoke had completely dispersed, he started.

Faintly, mysteriously, the very breeze seemed to be laden with perfume. It was so imperceptible that Mr. Prescott would have noticed nothing had he not been told. He looked at the captain sharply.

"There's a kind of faint perfume hanging around," he said.

"That means an island," nodded the skipper. "They're mostly like that—as you ought to know. We should get it real strong if the wind was blowing direct. Sure enough, mister, we're mighty near. That island isn't visible, but I'll swear it's within a three hours' sail."

For the first time, Mr. Prescott became excited.

He was like a cat on hot bricks. As the time passed, he paced up and down, and gazed continuously ahead until his eyes ached. Then he drew his breath in sharply as another hail came from aloft.

"Land-ho!" droned the look-out.

"Land!" shouted Prescott hoarsely. "By glory! Then—then—"

He wanted to spring up into the rigging himself, but was afraid to. The skipper, however, was up at the masthead in no

time. For an hour he had known that the island was close by. He could even faintly detect the low thunder of the surf on the reef. The island was nearer than Mr. Prescott imagined.

But Captain Jason Hawke received a shock.

At the masthead, the low-lying atoll was within view—although invisible from the deck. It was still a good distance away, but in that crystal atmosphere the island could be discerned as a distinct smudge along the horizon line. But there was something else—twinkling lights!

In a moment, the skipper's telescope was to his eye, and certain objects sprang into prominence. He could faintly discern the white of the foam on the reef—the indistinct palms—and something else.

"By gosh! A ship!" he ejaculated breathlessly.

CHAPTER XXII.

A STARTLING DISCOVERY.



CAPTAIN HAWKE was so surprised that his heart thumped heavily against his ribs. Without any doubt whatever, this was the big atoll they had been looking for. It was the pearl island!

But, instead of being utterly deserted, as they had anticipated, a vessel was lying at anchor in the lagoon! Not a chance whaler—not a trading schooner—but a big steam yacht, twinkling from stem to stern with electric lights! It was a stupendous shock.

The skipper almost fell down the rigging, and his first move was to give the man at the wheel some swift orders. As the schooner heeled round on another course, the captain yelled out for all lights to be doused.

Mr. Jonathan Prescott was startled. A minute later, the schooner was swinging through the water like a black shadow, with no lights of any kind. And the captain gave fresh orders.

The Samoa, in fact, was hove to, and motionless. And at last the owner had a chance to have a word with Captain Hawke.

"What's the idea?" repeated the skipper grimly. "Say, I'll tell you! The island's right ahead—an' we ain't the first to find her!"

"What the—"

"There's a steam yacht in the lagoon—a blamed great thing, ablaze with electric lights!" snapped Hawke. "What do you think I outed our own lights for? We don't want those guys to know that we're near. The chances are they haven't spotted us yet."

"Another ship in the lagoon!" muttered Mr. Prescott hoarsely. "What does it

mean, captain? Who are they? What the blazes are they doing in that lagoon? If they've found those oysters——"

"It's not a bit of good making any guesses," interrupted the captain. "My idea is this. We've got a motor-boat slung amidships, and we'll launch her at once. She's all ready and trimmed—I had that attended to yesterday, in case of emergencies.

"You mean—visit the island secretly?"

"Well, yes—and no," replied the skipper. "We won't exactly visit the island—we'll kind of skirt round the reef. I'd like to get a closer look at that steam yacht. Then,

And this steam yacht was in the lagoon itself!

It was a startling discovery, and for the moment Mr. Prescott was utterly at a loss. He couldn't imagine why the yacht was there, what nationality it was, and who it belonged to. Such a modern vessel couldn't have come to the island for water—for it was bound to have its own plant on board.

Captain Hawke's plan was good for two reasons. Firstly, it gave Prescott something to do, so that he couldn't worry too much—and secondly they might be able to learn something definite.

In less than fifteen minutes the motor-

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OUT ON FRIDAY!

PRICE FOURPENCE EACH!

mebbe, we can form an opinion, and make some fresh plans."

Mr. Prescott was thoroughly excited. The knowledge that the island was an actuality, and that it lay within a stone's throw, so to speak, stirred him deeply. All his fears and doubts of the last few weeks were at an end. The tension of suspense was over.

And now, right on the top of the relief, had come another shock.

The island was there, but another ship was in the lagoon! Every one of Mr. Prescott's plans came crashing down in a heap. The whole success of the enterprise depended upon uninterrupted solitude. The presence of any other ship was death to the scheme.

boat was overside, and the engine was purring musically. The air was filled with the smoky, oily exhaust fumes. For'ard, the entire schooner was alive and noisy with chattering Kanakas. They knew that something was happening, but were practically in the dark.

Two hundred of them—two hundred of the strongest, wildest fellows that Jonathan Prescott had been able to get hold of. He had chosen this type deliberately—for it was essential that he should have the most ignorant of all natives. The less they had had to do with the white man, the better. Many of them were from the interior of the islands, and a more villainous-looking crowd could hardly have been imagined.

There were none of the finer types of natives to be found here—and it was rather an insult to refer to them generally as "Kanakas." They were of a much lower type.

The noise created by these savages, therefore, can be well imagined. They were in charge of native guards, and were tantamount to prisoners. Captain Hawke had found that it was the only way to deal with them. Quite a large proportion were Solomon Islanders with Cannibalistic tendencies, and with a weakness for head-hunting.

The Samoa was left in charge of the first mate—a reliable man who could be trusted to keep the schooner in the same position. It didn't matter much if the vessel shifted, for with such a light breeze, the motor-boat would be able to overtake the parent ship with no difficulty.

Practically invisible on the surface of the sea, the motor-boat set out across the water. She seemed to be going out into the vast ocean, for there was no indication of an island. But after half-an-hour's fast run—and the boat could move swiftly—the atoll seemed to loom ahead like an immense ghost. The roar of the surf was now clearly audible.

In Captain Hawke's skilful hands the boat skirted round the island, well clear of the reef. When it came opposite the break—the entrance into the lagoon—the boat was slowed down.

Through a powerful telescope, both Captain Hawke and Jonathan Prescott took observations. The Wanderer was in full sight, although two or three miles away. In that clear air every line of her could be distinguished. She was obviously a big yacht, and just as obviously a luxurious one.

Any further details it would have been impossible to discover. There was a flag at her masthead, but the breeze was so slight that the hunting failed to flutter. The men in the motor-boat were unable to determine the stranger's nationality. But that this yacht was a determined intruder there could be no doubt. There were many signs that she was in the lagoon for a long stay.

An hour later the motor-boat was again back at the Samoa, and without delay the schooner unfurled her sails, and silently vanished into the night.

Mr. Jonathan Prescott was already busy with fresh plans!

CHAPTER XXIII.

WHAT THE BREEZE TOLD.



THUS, while the St. Frank's fellows were busy with that minor fire, and interesting themselves in the coral reef, Jonathan Prescott was much nearer than anybody on the island believed.



His head was uplifted, and his nostrils were wide. There was something of the highly-trained animal about his attitude—it was tense, alert, and concentrated.

Indeed, Prescott's arrival or proximity was not even thought of at this period. A continuous watch was being kept, and the approach of any vessel would be at once reported. By day it would be obvious at once, and by night her riding-lights would never fail to reveal her position.

But Ralph Leslie Fullwood's carelessly discarded cigarette had made all the difference! A trivial thing—yet an enormous thing!

For that glare in the sky had revealed the island to the schooner while she was still hull down—and while her lights were invisible from the island. When she might have been visible, all lights had been extinguished. So the Samoa had remained near by, her motor-boat had investigated at close quarters, and she had disappeared again without any inkling of her presence being guessed at.

But that is scarcely true.

One member of Lord Dorrimore's party, at least, suspected. And that member was Umlool. The giant African chief possessed senses that were more acute than most men's. And the incident occurred shortly after the fire had been extinguished in the woods.

This had not been a very difficult task.

Armed with the patent apparatus, Nelson Lee and several members of the yacht's crew had hastened to the scene. They had arrived in time to find the boys making strenuous efforts to carry water to the spot from the lagoon.

The flames were leaping high, and within a short half-hour the conflagration would have been completely out of hand—resulting, possibly, in the complete destruction of this, the most beautiful section of the island. But the fire-fighters were in time.

They quenched the fire before it obtained a powerful grip.

At first the task had seemed impossible, but prompt methods and skilful handling had done marvels. Within the hour, the fire was not only subdued, but extinguished to the last spark. And all that remained was a small blackened patch, which was not even visible until one penetrated into the very heart of the wood.

It was still far from late, and the boys were keen upon finishing their interrupted survey of the reef. And the conditions were better now, for the moonlight was stronger. Quite a crowd of them stood looking out at the tumbling surf, and they were joined by Nelson Lee and Umlosi.

"It's hard to believe, guv'nor, that all this rock is due to a sea insect!" said Nipper thoughtfully. "It isn't even credible."

"Yet it is a fact, Nipper," said Lee.

"An insect?" repeated Handforth, who was near by. "Oh, cheese it, Nipper! Are you trying to make out that these rocks are insects? Why, this reef is absolutely solid——"

"We are not denying that, Handforth," interrupted Nelson Lee. "The reef is solid enough—it is the result of countless years of toil on the part of a sluggish kind of seaworm, known to science as the reef-building polypifer, or coral polyp. The familiar sea anemone really belongs to the same family of organism."

"It's pretty wonderful, sir," said Reggie Pitt, with interest.

"It is, indeed!" agreed Nelson Lee. "Naturally, there is no such thing as a coral insect—that is more or less of a fable, and I should be wrong in allowing you to harbour that absurd impression. It has sometimes been said that this amazing coral insect is astonishingly industrious."

"I heard that years ago, sir," said one of the juniors.

"Then you heard wrong," laughed Nelson Lee. "The coral polyp is one of the laziest creatures imaginable. As I said before, he is quite sluggish, and has the power in some way, to extract lime from the seawater. This he uses to build up the familiar coral reef—but you must imagine millions and billions of these polyps working together, over a period of millions of years. This atoll is one of the results."

"Rome wasn't built in a day, sir," grinned Pitt.

"Neither was a coral atoll built in a thousand years," replied Nelson Lee. "Although some of them are destroyed within a few seconds—when a submarine eruption or earthquake takes place. These polyps do not actually build the reef—the seawater does that. The creature itself only attracts the elements from the water, and when he dies, the tiny structure remains, and so it goes on."

"And what about all this sand, sir?" asked Handforth.

"It is coral sand, young 'un—all part and parcel of the same process," replied Nelson Lee. "On this reef the rock is the outcome of the work of coral polyps during the ages. And, what is more, the entire reef is more or less alive."

"Alive!" ejaculated several of the others.

"If such was not the case, the average atoll would not be able to resist the sea for more than twelve or fifteen years," said Lee. "The interior of the island is dead—but all the reef, where the breakers crash, is still alive—still growing. Your only chance of seeing these polyps alive is to venture far out into the surf, where the rocks are nothing but honeycombs of coral—with the cells filled with living polyps."

"The whole process is continuous. The polyps die; they are devoured by fish, and killed by the sea and the sun—particularly the sun. They expire almost at once if they are left exposed. But still they increase, and carry on. But I am afraid all this is a trifle dull."

"My hat; no, sir!" protested Bob Christine. "It makes a chap think when he realises that he's standing on an island that's practically alive—that's growing all the time—that can sustain a wound and heal itself like any other living thing. It's a bit impressive, sir!"

"It is, indeed," said Nelson Lee. "These reefs——"

"Wau!" came a rumble from Umlosi. "Methinks something moves out yonder, N'kose. See! Far beyond the foam where the sea is black, and where the moonlight fails to fall. Gaze, my master!"

And Umlosi pointed straight out across the crashing breakers.

CHAPTER XXIV.

UMLOSI'S WARNING.



attention.

"I must confess, Umlosi, that I see nothing," he said slowly.

"Neither can I, sir!" said several juniors.

"Mayhap 'twas but an imagination," said Umlosi solemnly. "And mayhap 'twas not:

NELSON LEE gazed out searchingly. For the moment he had forgotten his discourse upon coral, and he wondered what it could be that attracted the black giant's

Yet I will swear by my fathers that I did detect a moving shape—low, small, but, nevertheless, a reality. 'Tis no longer within my vision now—”

“I'll bet I know!” interrupted Handforth triumphantly. “A whale!”

“I hardly think so, Handforth,” smiled Nelson Lee. “It may have been some other fish—we cannot tell. You must remember that Umlosi's eyesight is far keener than ours.”

“The old beggar can see in the dark like a cat!” said Nipper. “What's he up to now? What are you doing, Umlosi?”

Umlosi had stepped farther down the reef, and the surf was splashing over his ankles and knees. His head was uplifted, and his nostrils were wide. There was something of the highly-trained animal about his attitude—it was tense, alert, and concentrated.

The breeze was coming softly in over the reef—directly from the north-west. It was warm and gentle—just a faint, steady current in the air.

“I smell foul smells!” said Umlosi gruffly.

“You smell which?” grinned Nipper.

“Wau! 'Tis the noisome odour of burning,” replied the black giant. “It is even as the smell of the great bowels of our own floating palace. It is even as the smell of the great red carriages of London that move without horses.”

“I suppose you mean the motor-buses?” grinned Pitt.

“It is even as thou sayest, young master.”

“And the bowels of the great floating palace is another way of referring to the engine-room,” chuckled Nipper. “By all this, I deduce that you can smell oil-fumes or petrol-fumes. I'm sorry I can't agree with you, Umlosi. My nose seems to have gone on strike.”

They all sniffed the air keenly, but detected nothing. Their senses only absorbed the ozone from the breaking surf.

“I think you must have been mistaken, Umlosi,” said Nelson Lee. “On the very face of it, there could be no oil or petrol fumes coming on this breeze. It is blowing straight from the north-west—directly from the open sea. There are a thousand miles of emptiness between us and the nearest big land.”

Umlosi shook his head.

“Try thou again, O Umtagati!” he said softly.

He was using his own nostrils as energetically as ever. But although Nelson Lee and the boys tried again and again to detect the fumes, they failed to do so. It really seemed as though the Kutana chief was allowing his imagination to have free play.

“It's impossible, Umlosi,” said Nipper. “If the breeze was coming off the island, I could understand it—if it was even coming off the lagoon it might be feasible. But you say these fumes are coming in from the open sea.”

“Can you still smell this odour?” asked Nelson Lee.

“Ay, even so,” replied Umlosi solemnly. “'Tis fainter now—'tis dying away. Perchance it is in some way connected with the strange shape I saw upon the sea's surface a few moments since. Who knows?”

“Well, putting two and two together, one would say that a motor-boat was cruising past the island,” smiled Nelson Lee, little realising how Umlosi's marvellous senses had discovered the truth. “But that's out of the question. There can be no motor-boat out there.”

“Thou art a man of great learning—a giant amongst wizards,” replied Umlosi; “but thou art wrong, Umtagati, in this. My senses do not lie. And methinks my snake tells me that strangers are near.”

“He'll begin to smell blood in a minute!” chuckled Handforth.

“Jest not, young white master!” rumbled Umlosi. “Mayhap it is even as thou sayest. I have spoken.”

And Umlosi, with his usual obstinacy, refused to say any more. Most of the juniors forgot all about the incident by the time they returned to the Wanderer, but Nelson Lee couldn't help feeling vaguely uneasy.

He told Lord Dorrimore all about it while they were indulging in a final cigar in the latter's state-room. The ship was practically asleep, and outside the Pacific was gleaming with the brilliant moonlight. Not a sail was to be seen in any direction.

“It isn't like Umlosi to imagine things,” said Dorrie slowly. “But it doesn't seem possible that he's right this time. As for petrol-fumes an' a motor-boat—well, we can't believe that, can we?”

Nelson Lee shook his head.

“It seems incredible, but Umlosi's a queer customer,” he replied. “He swears he saw something; but we saw nothing. He swears he smelt foul smells; but we smelt nothing. Under the circumstances, I can only conclude that Umlosi was wrong. But how often have we thought him wrong, and how often has he proved right?”

“Dozens of times,” replied Dorrie promptly.

“It may be so in this case, although I can't for the life of me see how,” went on Lee. “Think of it, Dorrie—a motor-boat out beyond the reef! Why, it's too impossible for words! Where could such a boat come from?”

“It's no good askin' me,” said Dorrie helplessly. “I'm no good at riddles—an' I'm bally tired now, too. That's not a hint for you to clear out, but you understand what I mean.”

“I can only assume that Umlosi saw a fish of some kind,” said Lee thoughtfully. “As for the burning oil, there is just a faint possibility that a great tanker has been on fire some hundreds of miles away, and the almost imperceptible odour may have been carried all this distance. But it's very unlikely.”

His lordship yawned.

"Anyhow, it's a good explanation—good enough for me," he said wearily. "By gad, this air makes a fellow infernally lazy, old man! So frightfully relaxin', you know. I think we'll try the North Pole next time!"

Nelson Lee soon went to bed, but he still had that vague sense of uneasiness.

CHAPTER XXV.

CAPTAIN HAWKE'S CUNNING.



DAWN found the Samoa nearly thirty miles due west of Paradise Island. She had been sailing throughout the night, and now the wind was freshening considerably, and the schooner was bowling along smartly. She was a fast craft for her size, and one of the best in Jonathan Prescott's fleet.

For in San Francisco Mr. Prescott was a big man—a merchant of high standing, and the owner of many trading vessels. He had come personally upon this venture because it held out the prospects of a fortune.

"Are you sure you're right, Hawke?" he asked, as he stood on the poop by the skipper's side.

"No, I'm not," replied the captain. "I'm only goin' on what I heard, but we shall soon prove the truth of it or not. I guess there's no reason why it shouldn't be a fact."

"You really think there's another atoll?"

"Why shouldn't there be—these seas are smothered with 'em," replied Captain Hawke. "Say, mister, I don't want you to start worryin' an' cussin' the same as you did before. I'm runnin' this ship—"

"All right, Hawke—don't make a noise over it!" interrupted Prescott gruffly.

They had both been up all night, for sleep, under the circumstances, was out of the question. The discovery that their pearl lagoon was occupied by a strange steam yacht had upset every one of their calculations. And they were seeking for a fresh plan.

"I've met two or three guys—whalin' men, mostly—who've spoken of this atoll of ours," said Hawke presently. "Queer thing, but they've all referred to another atoll near by—about thirty miles due west. If this pearl island of yours is the one, then we ought to come across his little brother durin' the next hour. That's how I look at it—as I've told you more than once."

"But the sea is absolutely barren," protested the other.

"Mebbe, but you can't go by that," said the skipper. "This second atoll is just nothin'—a bit of sand stickin' up out o' the sea, with a couple of palms on it. There's big atolls an' little atolls—there's some of 'em sixty miles long an' twenty

miles broad. An' there's some no bigger than a blamed dinner plate, as you might say."

They went down to breakfast, and Mr. Prescott was anxious. If this second atoll existed, it would be of immense value. Much, indeed, would depend upon the next hour or so.

The two men had scarcely finished their meal before the first officer called them up. And there, sure enough, a ragged group of coconut palms were coming into sight above the horizon, straight ahead.

"Gee, this is good!" declared the captain. "I was right, you see. It don't matter how small the thing is—it'll suit our purpose. Our game is to trick them guys on the big island, and this'll allow us to do it."

They watched the palms with eager interest.

As the schooner came nearer, the land took shape. It was a mere baby atoll—an absurdly ridiculous spot of land amid all these thousands of miles of ocean. For all Captain Hawke knew, there may have been other specks of this type within the hundred-mile radius, but as the sea was uncharted, he couldn't be sure.

The island was of a similar type to Mr. Russell's—a true lagoon island, with an interior lagoon. Actually, it was scarcely more than a living coral reef, with none of its ground more than a foot or so above sea level. It was so flat that but for the palms it might have been passed unnoticed at close quarters. It was the type of atoll which has proved the death-trap of many a gallant ship, for at night, with the least bit of a sea, it would be under a vessel's bows before the look-out knew a thing.

The only trees were palms—one or two little groups, dotted here and there round the lagoon. All the rest was sand, with the surf thundering round the reef on all sides.

Captain Hawke decided that he wouldn't risk an entry. There was a break in the reef, but the lagoon was probably shallow—a mere sandy floor, with a film of crystal water over it. It would be better to go ashore in the long boat.

Unlike Paradise Island, this atoll was extremely uninteresting. A kind of sand-bank, with a few palms. There wasn't even a drain of fresh water. Any unfortunate mariner marooned here would undoubtedly perish of thirst unless the rains came to relieve him.

Operations started at once.

The schooner anchored opposite the break in the reef, and to begin with the motor-boat made its entry into the lagoon. Captain Hawke's judgment was sound—the lagoon was shallow. In one or two places the land extended for three or four hundred yards—a mass of undulating sand. But mostly the reef was composed of cruel, razor-edged coral.

Having made this preliminary survey, the motor-boat went back, and the long boat was loaded up with blacks. It made two or three journeys, until the entire contingent of natives had been conveyed ashore. They were excited and alarmed, in spite of repeated assurances on Captain Hawke's part that they would come to no harm.

Some of the men, indeed, refused to enter the boat, but a little revolver play on Hawke's part, involving a couple of shattered arms, soon cowed the others. Hawke was quite callous. He declared that there was only one way "with these durned niggers."

At last the schooner contained nothing but her normal crew. Her holds were battened down, so that the temporary living quarters were concealed from inquisitive gaze. To all intents and purposes, the *Santoa* was again an ordinary trading ship.

And, leaving the dismayed savages on the island—with plentiful supplies of food and water, however—the schooner pulled up her hook and sailed off. Captain Hawke was cunning, and there was trickery in the air.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CRUSOE CAMP.



LORD DORRIMORE nodded approvingly.

"Thunderin' good!" he said with admiration. "I'm hanged if I should have had the patience to help in buildin' a structure of this sort! You've done wonders, boys, an' you have my blessin'."

"Care to come and live with us, Dorrie?" grinned Nipper.

His lordship bowed.

"If it's all the same to you, old man, I'll still make shift with the *Wanderer*," he replied dryly. "These palatial places are a bit too much for my robust constitution—I prefer to rough it."

The Fourth-Formers chuckled. Lord Dorrimore's present idea of "roughing it" consisted of indulging in the thousand-and-one comforts that the yacht provided. The primitive house he was now inspecting was an entirely different proposition.

In short, the building operations were completed.

It was late afternoon, and the juniors had been hard at it all day. The bush fire of the previous night was forgotten, and Umlesi's warning was forgotten, too. Any possibility of danger in this earthly paradise seemed too ridiculous for words.

The boys, at least, were making the very most of their time—and, if it comes to that, the girls were running a close second. For Irene & Co.'s camp was going strong.

The girls were having the time of their lives in their own way.

Lord Dorrimore's admiration was unstinted—and with good reason. Without doubt the juniors had performed valiant work. The house they had built was extraordinarily good. It was big, airy, and delightfully situated under the palms.

All traces of bare bamboo and cane had now vanished. The walls and the roof were covered with great leaves; the thatch, indeed, was so effective that it would require exceedingly heavy rain to penetrate it.

There were several windows—or, rather, window openings, for in this climate it was unnecessary to have any protection. There was a big door in the front, with a strongly constructed porch in front of it. And on either side, stretching along the whole frontage of the house, was a wide extension of the roof, forming a very effective veranda, so that the sun could never shine through the window-openings and heat the interior. The shade under that veranda was delightful.

Inside there were three compartments, for the whole place was commodious. One was a kind of general living-room, another provided excellent sleeping quarters, and the third was utilised as a store-room and kitchen. Fatty Little was the president of the latter.

"I expected you boys to do something ambitious, but hardly as magnificent as this," remarked Nelson Lee, after he had made his inspection. "It is truly a splendid tropic home."

"And we can stay here, can't we, sir?" asked Handforth. "Some of the chaps have been saying that we shall have to go back to the yacht every night—the same as the girls. They can't rough it, of course, but it'll be a bit thick if we've got to do the same."

"It is sad, but true," sighed Lord Dorrimore. "My poor old yacht is scorned—absolutely regarded with contempt."

"If you were a boy, Dorrie, you'd be just the same," chuckled Nelson Lee.

"Gad, I believe I would!" chuckled his lordship.

"Of course you would," said Lee, smiling. "There's something adventurous about this camping affair—living in Crusoe style on the island. Well, boys, there's no reason why you should come on board. You can remain ashore if you want to—"

"Hurrah!"

"Thanks awfully, sir!"

"The island is perfectly safe, and, barring insect bites, and other minor casualties, you can't come to much harm," proceeded Lee. "I think we'd better just leave you to yourselves, and just let you do as you please."

"You couldn't come to a better decision," said Nipper heartily. "In any case, you'll

be too busy to bother about us once you start the pearling operations."

"We've started already, young 'un," put in Lord Dorrimore. "At least, the men are fixin' up the camp over on the north-east shore. But that's over two miles from here, so you won't worry us. We'll get on with our job, an' you can play at Red Indians, or somethin' of that sort."

"Thanks, awfully, sir!" said Pitt. "We've got marbles, too!"

Dorrie laughed.

"Well, you know what I mean," he said cheerfully. "I'll warrant you'll find plenty of useful things to do."

"Leave it to us, sir," said Willy Handforth calmly. "I've got all sorts of ideas, and you'll be surprised soon. Naturally, you can't expect these Fourth-Formers to do much——"

"Dry up, you cheeky fag!"

"Chuck him in the lagoon!"

"Naturally, you can't expect these Fourth-Formers to do much," continued Willy, as though there had been no interruption. "They built the house, I'll admit. But who can't build a house? When it comes to something special, they'll have to apply to the Third!"

"You—you——"

"Grab him!"

"Pitch him into the lagoon!"

A dozen indignant Fourth-Formers seized Willy, swept him down to the lagoon, and hurled him with considerable force far out into the water. Willy descended with a splash, and appeared with a smiling face.

"Lovely!" he announced. "That's just what I wanted! I was too hot to walk down, and I knew the trick would work. You don't know how nice it is to be chucked in like that!"

He was only wearing a cotton shirt and shorts, and as he lived half in the lagoon and half on dry land in this garb, it didn't matter. He calmly sat down and splashed the water over him.

The Fourth-Formers retreated, hot, but fairly satisfied. And at this moment Chubby Heath came pelting up. He appeared from the trees, and he was tremendously excited.

"Quick!" he gasped. "Come and have a look! There's a ship coming!"

"What?"

"There's a sailing ship in sight!"

"My only hat!"

"A ship!"

"Well, I'm blessed!"

A buzz of excitement went round like lightning, and Chubby Heath was fairly grabbed. The fellows had regarded Paradise Island as so isolated that the possibility of another ship arriving had never occurred to them.

"Are you sure?" demanded Handforth keenly.

"Sure? Of course I'm sure!" yelled Chubby. "Haven't I just seen with my own eyes? She's sailing straight for the island. Come across to the outer beach and have a look for yourselves."

There was a rush at once.

The juniors scampered through the trees in a swarm. At this point the island was very narrow—less than a quarter of a mile from inner shore to outer shore, with only a brief strip of woodland along the centre. The outer beach was long, reaching far down into the surf.

In a very few minutes the reef was crossed, and the crowd found itself staring out over the Pacific. Incidentally, Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore had followed close on the heels of the boys. They, too, gazed out at this unwelcome sail, for a ship of any kind was unwanted when such a project as pearling was in the air.

"There she is!"

"By jingo, Heath is right!"

Several fellows pointed. Still a long way off, the ship could be seen—not in full, for she was partially hull down on the horizon. But her wide spread of canvas was gleaming in the sun like dazzling snow—a salt-white patch against the background of intense blue.

She was coming straight for the island, and there could be no doubt that she intended calling. While the juniors discussed the vessel, Lord Dorrimore and Nelson Lee looked at one another rather gravely. The same thought had occurred to them both.

"Jonathan Prescott, eh?" said Nelson Lee grimly.

"I shouldn't be at all surprised," nodded Dorrie. "In fact, I'd bet ten to one that she's the Samoa—that's the name Russell mentioned, isn't it?"

"Yes, the Samoa is Prescott's schooner," replied Nelson Lee. "Well, we half-expected him to come, so we're prepared. He's brought a shipload of Kanakas, but, in my opinion, he'll be docile. When he sees us in possession he'll have no other course but to go away."

"Exactly," agreed Lord Dorrimore. "I say, it's a bit queer, isn't it?"

"What is queer?"

"Remember what you were tellin' me last night about Umlosi?" asked his lordship. "I wonder if there was anythin' in that story of his—that he saw somethin' near the island?"

"A motor-boat, eh?" mused Nelson Lee. "I hardly think so, Dorrie—unless Prescott— But that's ridiculous. The schooner is just arriving. She couldn't have been here last night."

"Umlosi seems a bit moody this afternoon, too," went on Lord Dorrimore, stroking his chin. "Talks about his bally snake, an' seein' red mists, an' all that sort of

thing. I'm hanged if I quite like it! He's an uncanny beggar, an' although his fairy tales don't always come off, they have an infernal knack of bein' near the mark on the average. If we're to judge by Umlosi, this is the beginnin' of a gory conflict."

Nelson Lee made no reply.

He was thinking in the same strain, but could hardly believe that Jonathan Prescott would dare to make any trouble.

He accompanied Lord Dorrimore back across the reef, and they set off for the Wanderer—to be there with Mr. Russell, in

readiness to meet the new arrivals when they came on board.

There was a kind of tension in the air, but every member of the party was quietly confident. A great deal of this confidence would have been destroyed had they known of the trick which Mr. Jonathan Prescott and Captain Jason Hawke were preparing to engineer!

To be exact, the enemy was not ready to accept defeat, and Umlosi's predictions were destined to prove uncomfortably near the true mark. Exciting times were ahead for the inhabitants of Paradise Island!

THE END.

THE RIVAL EXPEDITION PARTY UNDER JONATHAN PRESCOTT HAS JUST REACHED PARADISE ISLAND. A FULL ACCOUNT OF THE EXCITING EVENTS WHICH FOLLOW WILL APPEAR IN NEXT WEEK'S STORY:—

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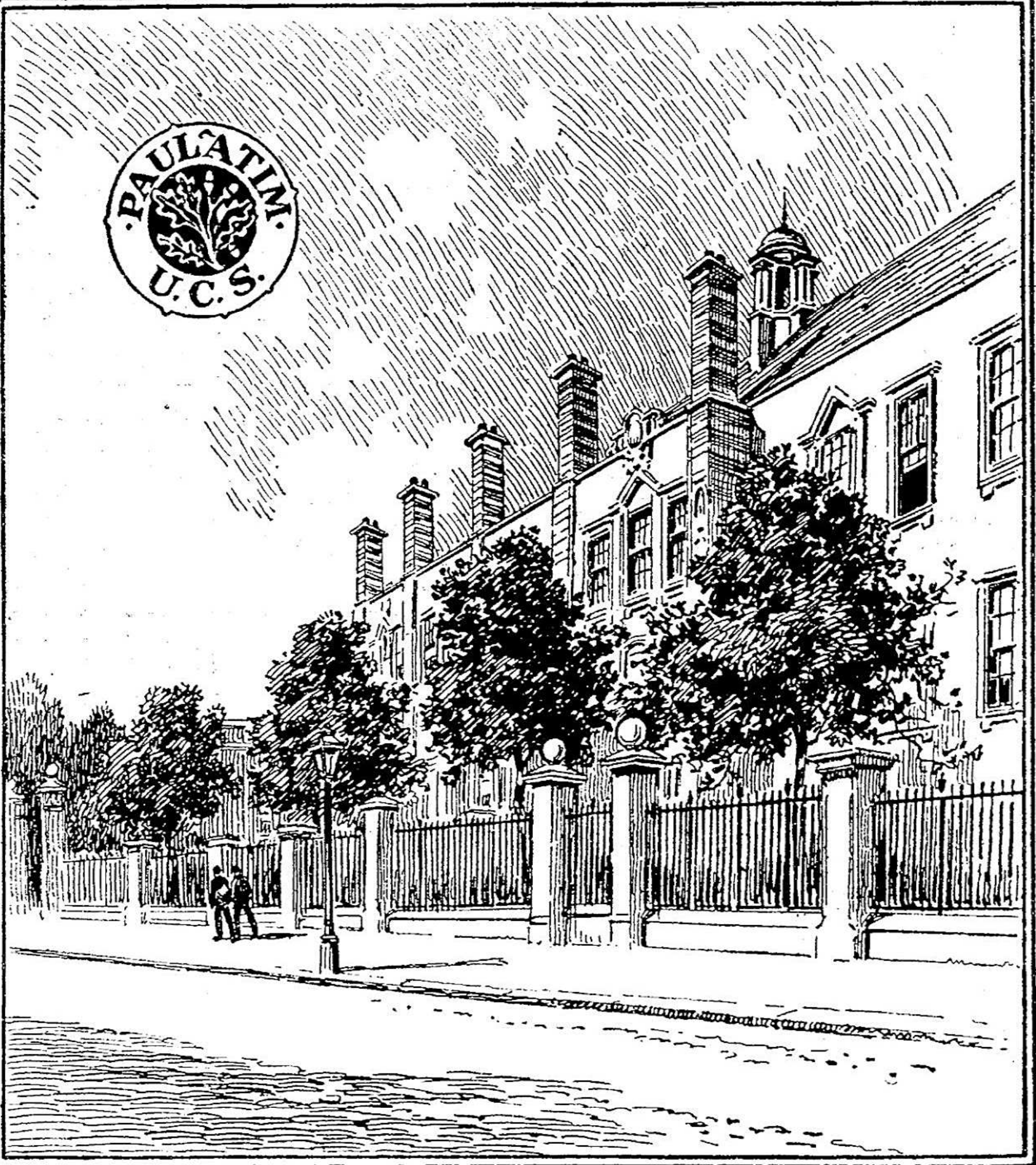
“BETWEEN OURSELVES.”

Present a copy of this issue to a likely new reader and you can become a member of the St. Frank's League.

Full particulars on Page iii of Cover.

OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Special Sketch by Mr. Briscoe, for "The
Nelson Lee Library," of
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE SCHOOL



University College School, as "The London University School," was founded in 1830, adopting its present title in 1865. The school was transferred from Gower Street, London, to its present fine new buildings at Hampstead in 1907, which were formally opened by King Edward VII. There are about 500 boys in the Senior School, and 220 in the Junior School. Rugby football is played.

IN THE DAYS OF THE ARMADA

By W. MURRAY GRAYDON

(Continued from Last Week.)

CHAPTER XXXV.

IN WHICH SENOR DE RICA CONFESSES TO AMAZING DEEDS.

TRENT and the lads looked meaningly at one another. Though De Rica's offer was evidently prompted by base cowardice, they felt no hesitation about accepting it, since so much was at stake. The wretch seemed to be in a state of terror, and it was not likely that he would attempt any deception.

"Your neck shall be safe, Master Spaniard," said Trent, "and your worst punishment shall be imprisonment; we swear it. So now make haste with your story, and let it be as brief as possible, for time presses."

Just then Baillie burst into a torrent of threats and profanity against his treacherous companion, and when all other means of quieting him had failed a dirty rag was stuffed into his mouth by one of the fishermen.

"There is but little to tell," began the Spaniard, at a sign from Trent. "You will remember that in the reign of Queen Mary, when England was at war with France, Spain and the Netherlands were your allies. At that time the Spanish and Dutch fleets came to Plymouth, and their officers were splendidly entertained at Edgcumbe Hall by the father of its present lord. The Duke of Parma was of the party, and he was impressed by the house and its treasure of art and plate.

"When the recent invasion of the Armada was planned the duke determined to have Mount Edgcumbe. With that object in view, and so that the house should not be stripped while the Armada was approaching, he opened negotiations more than a year ago with the steward, Simon Baillie, through his envoy, Don Gonzales. The steward was to have been richly rewarded for his treachery. In fact, he has been acting as a spy in the service of Spain for more than a year.

"During the same period Don Gonzales and other Spaniards have been in England the greater part of the time. They were sheltered by a secret cellar under Edgcumbe Hall, the entrance to which is beneath ground, and leads from a thick clump of beech trees."

"Ay, I begin to understand various mysteries," interrupted Trent. "Tis clear now

why Simon Baillie hath eluded the men who were set to watch for him. But finish your story, Master Spaniard."

"The rest may be briefly told," De Rica resumed. "I, Don Gonzales, and four other Spaniards have lain hidden in the cellar for more than a week. We knew that the Armada had gone up the Channel, and we were expecting a galleon to land its crew at any hour and take possession of Mount Edgcumbe.

"After dark last night the La Rosa slipped into the sound, and an envoy was sent up to Mount Edgcumbe. He was met at a place agreed upon, and was conducted to the cellar by Simon Baillie. He brought a letter from the Duke of Parma to Don Gonzales. In this letter the duke stated that the success of the Armada was looking doubtful, and he instructed Don Gonzales to pack up all the portable treasure that the house contained and have it taken on board the galleon.

"Without delay we acted on these instructions. Baillie and two others crept out into the grounds and stabbed the two disguised soldiers who were on duty. The rest of us entered the house from the cellar, bound and gagged the servants, and carried all the valuable property below to our place of shelter. Don Gonzales then sent me to the galleon to bring back the boats. But Fate willed otherwise, and I am now a captive. I have your sworn word that my life is safe."

"Ay, and that word shall be kept," replied Trent, "though you richly deserve death. But I'll warrant Don Gonzales and his ruffianly pack receive no mercy. Zounds! Never did I know of so base and daring a plot as this."

"It is truly strange that the power of baffling the knaves hath fallen into our hands," said Giles. "In a few more hours it must have been too late. And we want yet another service of the Spaniard if we are to intercede for his life. He must guide us to the cellar by the secret entrance."

"I will do that right willingly," De Rica replied, with a sickly smile, "provided you have a strong enough force at your back. The party in the cellar is well armed, and is six in number—for the duke's envoy is with them."

"Ay, I see," muttered Trent; "Don Gonzales and five more Spaniards. Are they likely to stir into the grounds?"

De Rica shook his head.

"It was understood," he replied, "that they were to remain in the cellar until the force from the La Rosa had arrived."

"Then we have several hours to spare," exclaimed Sydney, "and that is plenty of time. But what was to become of Simon Baillie after the sacking of the house?"

"He was to go to Spain," answered De Rica, "there to receive a rich reward and

to take service under the Duke of Parma in his palace at Madrid."

"And he will fall instead to the headsman's axe," exclaimed Trent, with a grim laugh. "Truly, a well-deserved fate! And now let us decide on a plan hastily, my lads," he added. "If a noise and stir be raised about this matter the knaves may get wind of it and escape. Also you must bear in mind that we are under orders to return at once up the Channel with stores and munitions."

"We can't well do both," Giles said thoughtfully. "I see but one way. If we can find a skilled pilot at Plymouth we can send him up Channel with the Redwing and its present crew. Then we shall be free to proceed to Mount Edgumbe."

"Nothing could be better," exclaimed Sydney. "It is true that we shall be evading our orders, but Sir Francis will not blame us when he learns the circumstances. And by to-morrow we may likely find a vessel to take us back to the fleet."

"You have well reasoned it out, my lads," said Trent. "Indeed, no other course were possible, save to have trusted the keeping of these knaves to strange hands. A dozen stout fellows will be sufficient to aid us, since we shall depend mainly on craft, and these we will quietly pick up at Plymouth."

"We are nearly there now," cried Giles; and so it proved.

During the past half-hour the Redwing had been driving along swiftly under the skilled management of her crew, and had made such good progress that the lights of the town were visible less than a mile ahead.

In order to avoid the excitement and crush that would certainly follow the arrival of a boat from the fleet, Trent gave orders to run straight up the harbour until the town was nearly passed. Then the smack sheered to the right, and a few minutes later it slipped into a quiet dock between Plymouth and Devonport. The locality was a secluded one, and it promised to serve admirably as a starting-point for Mount Edgumbe, since a number of small boats were seen moored close by.

Trent and one of the fishermen landed, taking Baillie with them. He struggled hard to break his fetters and to eject the gag from his mouth, but did not succeed. A cuff from the fisherman finally made him more tractable.

"I will see this rascal safely in gaol," said Trent, "and as quickly as possible I will hunt up a pilot and a dozen men—soldiers from the garrison, if possible. Meanwhile, do you remain here with the crew of the smack, and keep a safe hold on Master Spaniard until I return."

With this warning to the lads Trent and the fisherman hurried off in the darkness, hauling the reluctant prisoner along between them.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

IN WHICH THE NET IS SPREAD AROUND SIMON BAILLIE AND HIS EVIL CREW.

THE wait proved exceedingly monotonous to Giles and Sydney. They were on the outskirts of Plymouth, and they could hear plainly the hubbub and roar that rose from the main part of the town. No doubt great excitement prevailed, and the people were anxiously looking for news from Lord Howard's fleet.

Not for an instant did the lads relax their surveillance of the prisoner, a duty in which the five sailors of the Redwing zealously took a part. If any slight hope of escape had cheered De Rica during the cruise up the Sound, he was compelled to banish it now.

At the end of an hour Trent had not returned, and the lads began to feel uneasy. A few minutes later, however, footsteps were heard at a distance, and presently four figures stalked out of the darkness to the edge of the dock.

"Up with you, lads!" Trent called, in a whisper; "and make haste. Send the Spaniard first."

Some of the crew helped De Rica to scramble to the top of the dock, where Trent and the fishermen took charge of him, and slipped irons over his wrists. Giles and Sydney then climbed up, and now they recognised and greeted the two men who had come with Trent.

One was an elderly and retired sea-captain named Barwood, who knew every foot of the English Channel. The other was in the Queen's service as a contractor for naval stores, and was well acquainted with the coast. They at once lowered themselves into the smack, and the fishermen followed.

"Are you properly armed?" Trent asked of the lads.

"I have my sword and a loaded pistol," replied Giles.

"I have the same," Sydney added.

"We are fixed, then," said Trent, "and I have an extra pistol. All right," he whispered, stepping to the edge of the deck.

There was a brief delay while the crew hoisted sail, and hearty wishes for success were exchanged between those on shore and in the smack. Then the Redwing slipped out from her mooring and glided swiftly down the edge of the harbour.

"Is everything arranged?" Giles inquired.

"Ay, lads; I had rare good luck," Trent answered. "I ran across Captain Barwood and Master Garwood together on the Hoe. It seemed that the contractor had just received a quantity of powder and provisions, and he and the captain readily agreed to take them up the Channel on the Redwing. They are bound now for one of the town wharves, and as soon as they can load the stores they will be off."

"And what about the other men?" asked Sydney.

"They will be here shortly," declared Trent. "While I was hastening to the Hoe I stumbled on Captain Humphrey Jocelyn, who, as it so happened, had just been relieved from duty——"

"Humphrey Jocelyn?" Sydney cried, incredulously, and with a start.

"Humphrey Jocelyn!" echoed Giles.

He began to laugh.

"Ay, and why not?" growled Trent. "For one thing, there was no time to seek further, and then I have Master Rookwood's sworn word for it that the man is mixed up in no traitorous doings, in spite of that little affair on Dartmoor."

"And I repeat that he is not," Sydney declared earnestly. "How did he take the news?"

"Never did I see a man in such a passion," replied Trent. "He swore that he would have the lives of Simon Baillie and the Don, and he cursed them up and down until I fairly smelt brimstone. Then he eased off a little, and promised to hunt me up a force of men and bring them to the dock."

"I told him to pick them out of the crowd, since there was no time to go to the garrison. Then we parted company, and on the way up to the Hoe I turned Baillie over to a couple of the town guard. I hope the captain will arrive speedily, for he hath had fair time for his purpose."

"I doubt if he arrives at all," said Giles. "What think you, Sydney? Is his word to be taken?"

"It would not greatly surprise me if he broke it," Sydney answered, in a troubled tone. "And yet——"

"They are coming now," interrupted Trent, and even as he spoke the quick, regular tramp of feet was heard close by.

A moment later a body of men, marching by twos, hove out of the gloom and down to the dock. Captain Jocelyn was at the head, and his force numbered nine, exclusive of himself—four pikemen and three arquebusiers of the garrison, one man of the town guard, and a pompous-looking bailiff.

Captain Jocelyn was plainly in too great a rage to feel any embarrassment in the presence of Sydney and his companions. In fact, he at once called the lad aside, and they conversed in whispers while Trent was briefly explaining to the men what they were expected to do.

Then three row-boats were torn from their moorings without leave of license—an act which the circumstances warranted—and a little later the whole party had embarked and were moving rapidly across the Sound.

The passage was made quickly and safely, and with the utmost caution the march was begun up through the grounds of Mount Edgecumbe. Trent and Jocelyn led the way, with De Rica between them. The

beech wood lay close to the south wing of the house, and it looked to be impenetrable by reason of the dense bushes that grew under the trees.

But the Spaniard wriggled in on his stomach, and the rest followed one at a time. After penetrating for several yards a sort of passage was reached, hemmed in and covered by hedge-like rows of prickly scrub. Here it was possible for two men to crawl abreast on hands and knees, and in this fashion the party advanced with much twisting and turning, to the very middle of the wood.

The passage now emerged on a small clearing, surrounded by trees and bushes, which was barely large enough to contain the fourteen persons. By the dim light from the sky overhead a square slab of stone could be seen in the centre of the clearing.

De Rica, whose wrists were still fettered, made signs to Trent and Jocelyn to lift the slab. It proved to be much lighter and thinner than it looked, and when it was lifted to one side a square aperture was revealed in the ground, down which led a flight of rude steps.

"The date or purpose of this secret exit is unknown, even to the master of Edgumbe," said the Spaniard, in a whisper. "Simon Baillie found it by accident several years ago. The steps lead to an underground gallery, which runs straight for one hundred yards to the secret cellar. The latter is entered by a door of thin planks."

"And are the knaves all there now?" asked Captain Jocelyn.

"Assuredly," replied De Rica; "there is no danger that any of them are lurking within earshot."

"Then, with caution, we can creep to the far end of the gallery without being detected?"

"Yes; and the light shining under the door will show the way. You will see it from the foot of the steps."

"Hold on," whispered Trent, as a sudden thought occurred to him. "You said that this secret cellar communicates with the mansion, Master Spaniard. Am I right?"

"It joins the main cellar through a hole in the wall," declared De Rica, "and from there one can ascend to the house by several ways."

"This is important," said Trent, turning to his companions. "Our better plan is to attack the knaves from two sides. Jocelyn, do you take the Spaniard and half of your men, and creep back through the wood. Enter the north wing of the house by a window, and then the Spaniard will guide you below to the hole that enters the secret cellar."

"Ay, that will be best," admitted Jocelyn; "but our position will require a longer time to reach."

"We will wait until you give a shout," replied Trent. "Then we will break down the door and pour in from one side at the

same time that you attack from the other."

This was agreed to, and a moment later De Rica, Captain Jocelyn, and five of the latter's force crawled away through the wood. But first the Spaniard had asked and obtained a promise that his life should be protected while the fight was going on.

Trent and the lads were now left with three pikemen and the bailiff, and they at once descended noiselessly into the yawning hole. From the bottom of the steps they saw a glimmer of light far ahead, and they crept toward it along the gallery, which was broad and high enough for the party to walk three abreast.

Trent halted his force within ten feet of the door, and, crawling forward, he put his eyes to a crevice. Laughter and voices could be heard plainly. It was evident that the conspirators suspected nothing.

Trent quickly returned to his companions.

"The cellar is full of plate and other

property," he whispered, "ready packed in chests to be taken away. The knaves are all there—the Don and five more Spaniards. They are eating and drinking, and are armed only with swords. Over in a corner lie the bodies of the two Queen's officers who were sent down from London. They shall be well avenged."

"Did you see the entrance to the other cellar?" asked Giles.

"Ay; it lies right across from the door, and is hung with a curtain. Silence now, all. Jocelyn and his force may be expected shortly."

It was not a long wait, though the suspense made it seem so. Five minutes slipped by while the little party gripped their weapons in readiness for the final rush. Then, from beyond the cellar where the entrapped wretches were gathered, a lusty shout rang out suddenly.

(Continued next week.)

THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE

(All communications to the League should be addressed to the Chief Officer, The St. Frank's League, c/o The Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.)

My dear Leagueites,

There was some delay, I regret, in getting off the first batch of Members' Certificates, and, in consequence, many early applicants were beginning to fear that they had been forgotten. I offer my most humble apologies for keeping these pioneer members—including the Organising Officers—waiting a week or so longer than they expected. The trouble has been that the printing of the certificates could not be executed as quickly as we had hoped, and this has held up everything else. If these certificates had been printed in one colour, as I had originally intended, much time might have been saved. But the extra colour is such a decided improvement that I feel sure no one will grumble at having to wait a little longer for the certificates. Now that everything is all ready to meet the big demands for membership, we shall deal with the applications as soon as they come in without any more delay.

If there are any readers who have not yet sent in their applications for membership, I trust they will lose no more time in qualifying. We want many more members before we can start organising local clubs and many of the other schemes connected

with the League. You can reach the 10,000 membership required in one week, if every reader makes up his mind to join at once. Therefore, pull together, Leagueites and others, and see what a wonderful rally you can make between now and next week. Remember that the League is going to be a real friend and help to you in many ways, and that every reader who joins up is doing a service to his fellow-reader as well as benefiting himself.

A special souvenir prize of a handsome Sports Knife has been presented to Leslie Marcantonio, 37, Robsart Street, Brixton, London, S.W.9, for the unique distinction of being the sender of the first envelope opened containing an application for membership.

In case some readers are still under the impression that they have to obtain a new regular reader to qualify as a member, I repeat that this is now no longer necessary. All you have to do is to introduce the Old Paper to a likely new reader by presenting him with a copy and to send in the two application forms filled in as directed in the instructions to show that you have complied with these simple conditions.

For the benefit of new readers and to refresh your memories, I publish again below some of the advantages of joining the League:

- (1) Getting to know your fellow-readers from near at home to the most distant outposts of the Empire.
- (2) Joining local sports and social clubs affiliated to the League.
- (3) Entering for competitions run for the benefit of members.
- (4) Qualifying for various awards by promoting the growth of the League.

- (5) Opportunities for contributing short articles, stories, and sketches to the League Magazine.
- (6) Space for short notices and free adverts. for members in the above Magazine.
- (7) Advice on choosing a trade or calling in life, on emigration to the colonies, dependencies, or abroad.
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Your sincere friend.

THE CHIEF OFFICER.

AS SIMPLE AS A B C.

INSTRUCTIONS.—Reader Applying for Membership: Cut out TWO complete Application Forms from TWO copies of this week's issue of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY. On one of the forms fill in Section A, crossing out Sections B and C by running the pen diagonally across both Sections. Then write clearly your full name and address at bottom of form. The second form is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A and B, and writes his name and address at bottom of form. Both forms are then pinned together and sent to the Chief Officer, The St. Frank's League, c/o THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, Gough House, Gough Square, London, E.C.4.

Member Applying for Bronze Medal: It will be necessary for you to obtain six new readers for this award. For each new reader TWO complete forms are needed, and these must be taken from copies of the latest issue of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY at the

time when the forms are sent in. On one of the forms fill in Section B, crossing out Sections A and C, and write your name and address at bottom of form. The other form is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A and B, and writes his name and address at the bottom of the form. Now pin both forms together and send them to the Chief Officer, as above. One new reader will then be registered against your name, and when six new readers have been registered, you will be sent the St. Frank's League bronze medal. There is nothing to prevent you from sending in forms for two or more new readers at once, provided the forms are taken from the latest issue of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY at the time when the forms are sent in.

These Application Forms can be posted for $\frac{1}{2}$ d., provided the envelope is not sealed and no letter is enclosed.

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ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE APPLICATION FORM No. 7. Aug. 8, 1925.

SECTION

A

READER'S APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP.

Being a regular reader of "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY" since(give date), I desire to become enrolled as a Member of THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE, and to qualify for all such benefits and privileges as are offered to Members of the League, I hereby declare myself to be a staunch supporter of "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY" and THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE, and that I have introduced Our Paper to one new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. Will you, therefore, kindly forward me Certificate of Enrolment with Membership Number assigned to me.

SECTION

B

MEMBER'S APPLICATION FOR BRONZE MEDAL.

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SECTION

C

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