

WITH THE BOYS OF ST. FRANK'S IN THE SOUTH SEAS!

The Nelson Lee

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In the lurid glare, Hawke saw that both hatches were being shattered by blows from below, and half-naked forms were already beginning to appear. The cannibals were escaping.

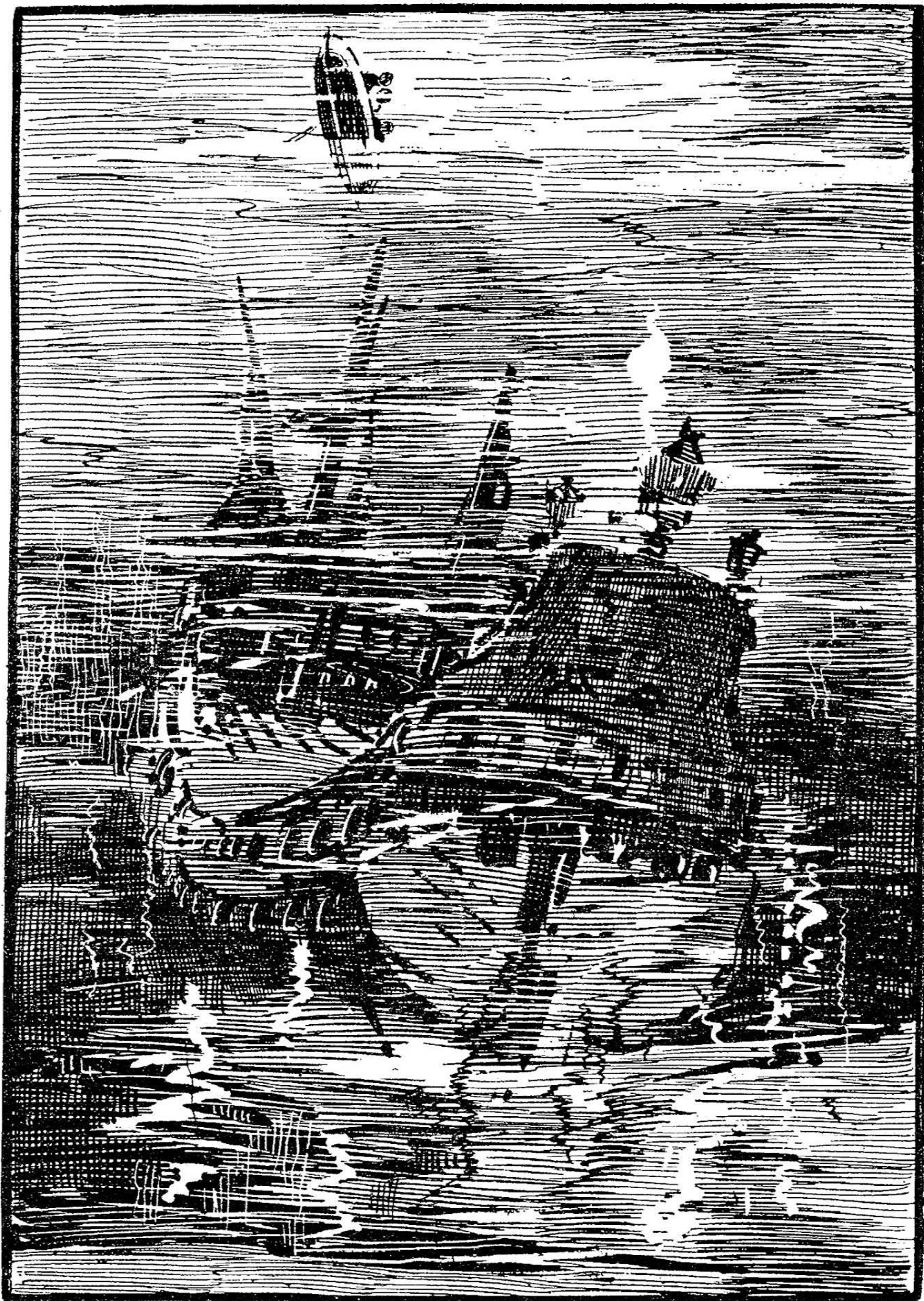
THE SECRET OF THE LAGOON

Another extra long story of the Boys of St. Frank's with Nelson Lee and Lord Dorri-more in the South Seas.

No. 533.

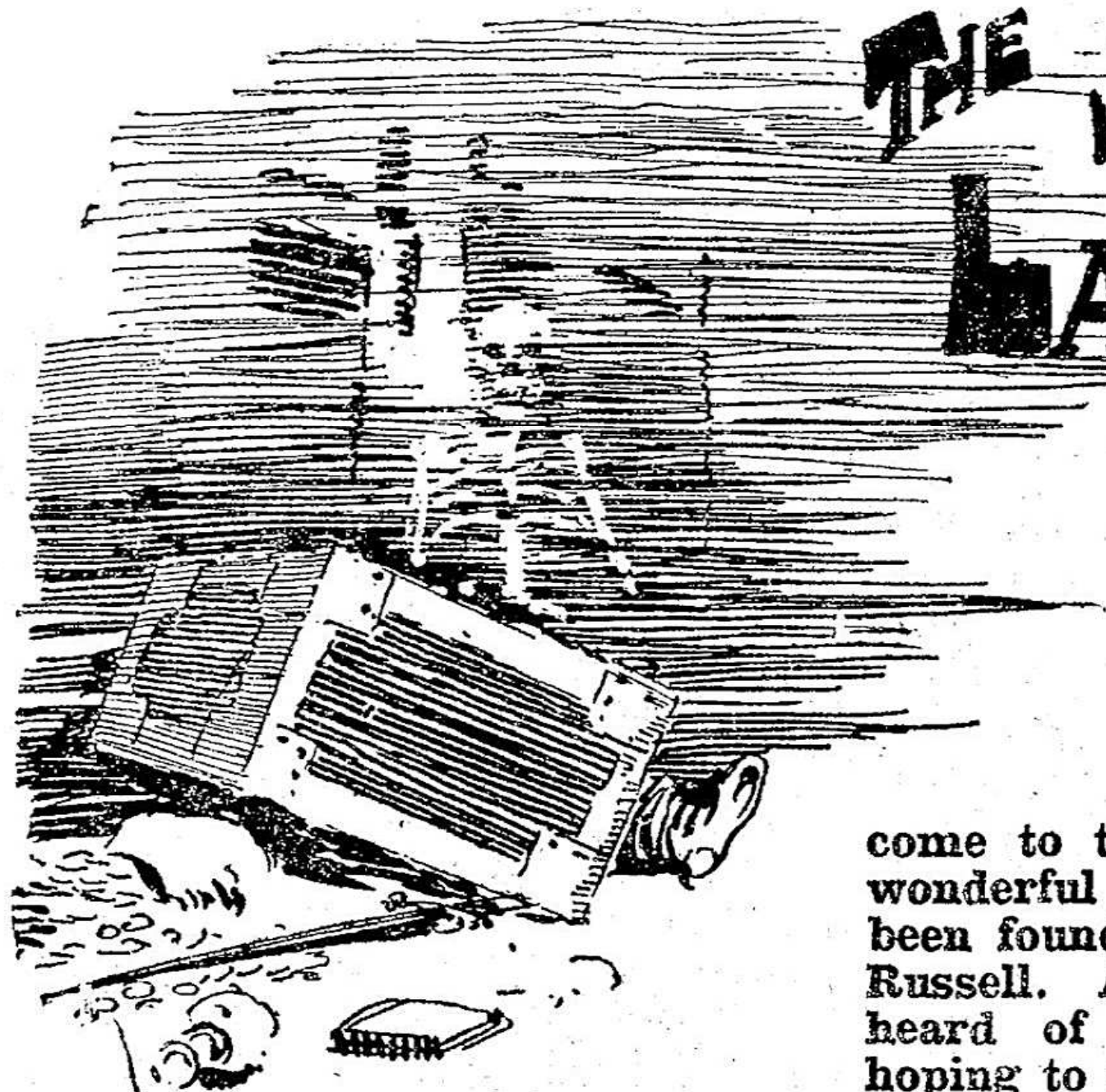
OUT ON WEDNESDAY

August 22, 1925.



A ship lay beneath them—a ship perfect in every detail, except for the missing masts. She had a curiously high prow, and her general outline was vaguely familiar to the boys.

THE SECRET OF THE LAGOON!



made to drive off Lord Dorrimore's party, and this leads to a desperate fight against the newcomers, which is described in this week's story.

THE EDITOR.

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

CHAPTER I.

THE NIGHT ALARM.

ARCHIE GLENTHORNE yawned. "Much ado about nothing, what?" he said languidly. "I mean to say, isn't it about time we returned to the old hammocks and laid our weary heads to rest? I'm about thirty-five winks short of the prescribed forty!" "Never mind your forty winks, Archie," said Reginald Pitt. "We're not going to bed again until we're satisfied that everything's all right with the Wanderer."

"Hear, hear!"

"That's the idea, Reggie!"

"Oh, absolutely!" agreed Archie resignedly. "But I was under the impress, old scouts, that the excitement was somewhat over. I mean, there's positively nothing moving in the stilly night. All's well, as it were."

"I'd like to believe you, Archie," said Nipper grimly. "But I'm not sure that all is well. The yacht seems quiet, and there's no indication of strife; but I want

to know something more definite before we turn in again."

"I should think so!" agreed Handforth gruffly. "For all we know, Dorrie and old Barry Stokes and all the girls and Mr. Lee are being murdered in their giddy sleep! They might even be dead!"

"If you go on at that rate, old man, they'll be buried by the time we investigate," said Church tartly. "Personally, I think everything's all right. It wasn't an attack at all. Old Prescott came back to the island for another reason."

The St. Frank's juniors were standing in groups along the white coral strand of the lagoon on Paradise Island. The big stretch of water lay before them like a sheet of glass—motionless, except for an almost imperceptible undulation—caused by the tide as it came through the break in the reef from the Pacific. Behind, and all round, the island itself lay enshrouded in the darkness of night.

The dazzling tropic stars were invisible for once, the sky being hidden by a veil of misty clouds. The air was sultry and

heavy, but with no indications of changing weather. With dawn, no doubt, the sky would clear, and the morrow would be as blazingly hot and brilliant as ever.

But to-night the darkness was almost impenetrable.

Across the lagoon lay Lord Dorrimore's famous steam yacht, *Wanderer*, the glow of a few electric lamps being reflected like golden ribbons on the placid water. As Nipper had said, everything was quiet, and there seemed to be no cause for alarm.

"Perhaps we raised the alarm for nothing," ventured McClure. "Anyhow, we made enough noise——"

"Don't be an ass!" interrupted Handforth. "Didn't Prescott's schooner creep into the lagoon with all lights doused? Didn't we hear sounds of machine-gun fire, and scores of revolver shots?"

Nipper, anxious as he was, couldn't help grinning.

"No need to exaggerate, old man," he said drily. "We fancied we heard one or two cracks that might have been revolver shots; but we can't even be sure of that. As for machine-gun fire——"

"Oh, well, there's no need to be so precise!" interrupted Handforth. "When we were clinging to Mr. Lee's boat, ten minutes ago, we all heard those cracks, and both Mr. Lee and Dorrie were certain that shooting was going on. And here we are, all in the dark!"

"We shall soon know the truth, one way or the other," said Nipper patiently. "In any case, there's no need to get into a panic. I think the gov'nor has got matters in hand all right. But it'll be a good idea, perhaps, for two or three of us to take the small boat and have a look round."

"Wouldn't one of the canoes do better?" suggested Pitt.

"Yes—you're right," agreed Nipper. "Easier to handle, and we shan't be heard if we paddle silently."

The camp was provided with two boats and several canoes. Dorrie had thoughtfully purchased the latter before leaving England, guessing there would be plenty of opportunities for the holiday party to use canoes in the South Seas. Since the boys had been on Paradise Island, these canoes had proved useful every hour of the day. They were handy, quick, and just the things for getting about the lagoon.

The juniors were not alarmed without reason.

Some rather remarkable things had happened during the past hour. The affair had really started when Reggie Pitt, suffering from a few internal pains, caused, doubtless, by Fatty Little's too excellent cooking at supper-time, had crossed over to the outer beach. Jack Grey had accompanied him while the rest of the camp slept.

To their surprise they beheld a dim, shadowy shape creeping towards the island, intent upon entering the lagoon through the break in the reef. And this shape was nothing less than the schooner *Samoa*, owned by Jonathan Prescott, and skippered by Captain Jason Hawke. Taking them all round, they were probably the most rascally pair within a two thousand mile radius.

Lord Dorrimore had brought his party to this lonely Pacific atoll in order to prove the truth of Mr. Warner Russell's story concerning a wonderful pearl oyster bed. The bed was certainly there, and had already yielded promising results.

And Prescott and his henchmen were intent upon the pearls, too. Without doubt, he had crept into the lagoon on this particular night with the object of making a surprise attack. But had that attack succeeded?

Judging by the peace and quietness, it hadn't.

The juniors were in a state of doubt and anxiety, and the very idea of returning to their hammocks before ascertaining the full truth was dismissed on the spot. They were the only members of the party ashore. All the rest, including three or four St. Frank's seniors and the Moor View School girls, were on board.

The juniors, therefore, felt rather isolated. They seemed to be out of the run of things at night, and although it didn't matter when everything was normal, there was a certain tension in the air when an occasion like the present one arose.

Prescott's schooner, the *Samoa*, had slipped into the lagoon without showing a single light, and for some time there had been mysterious movements in the gloom—the passing of boats, and the dim, indistinct sounds of scuffles and shouts.

Yet, as Nipper and the others gazed across the lagoon, there seemed to be no cause for alarm. The *Wanderer* was lying as sedately as ever, her lights gleaming, and with everything quiet.

The canoe was soon carried down the beach and slid into the water. Nipper and Reggie Pitt took their places in it and it glided off. All doubts would soon be set at rest.

CHAPTER II.

IN THE HANDS OF THE ENEMY.



MR. JONATHAN PRESCOTT moved his cigar from one corner of his mouth to the other, and stuck his thumbs into the armholes of his waistcoat.

Arrogance and triumph fairly exuded from the man.

"Well, folks, I'm sorry to have acted like this, but I guess it was the only way," he said genially. "The yacht's mine, and I'll be obliged if you'll regard yourselves as my prisoners. That's clear, isn't it?"

Nobody answered, and Mr. Prescott chuckled.

"Dumb, eh?" he went on. "Well, I'm not surprised—mebbe you're struck of a heap. You thought I was a thousand miles away, I take it? Jonathan Prescott isn't the kind of man to throw up the game that way. When I start a thing, gents, I finish it!"

Prescott seated himself on the corner of the table, and looked over his prisoners with a contemptuous glance. They were all in the big, sumptuously appointed saloon of the *Wanderer*. The lights were full on, and the place was crowded.

Prescott himself and two companions were making a big display of revolvers, and they had already proved that these weapons were not merely for ornament. More than one member of the *Wanderer's* crew was receiving attention for more or less serious bullet wounds.

One side of the saloon was occupied by Lord Dorrimore, Nelson Lee, Mr. Beverley Stokes, Mr. Warner Russell, Umlosi, and the bulk of the officers and crew of the yacht. They formed a big crowd—most of them frowning with inward rage and helplessness. But they knew better than to risk any attack on these three men.

Prescott's assistants were Captain Hawke and the *Samoa's* first mate, a tall, lean rascal known as Sweeney. At the saloon door stood a fourth guard, and he was equally as heavily armed.

"You are talking of this affair being finished, Mr. Prescott?" said Nelson Lee, at length. "Are you seriously telling us that this act of piracy on your part is in grim earnest?"

"What did you think it was—a joke?"

"I am under the impression that you have attacked us for the purpose of gaining the upper hand," replied Nelson Lee. "But I am not wrong, I presume, in assuming that it is merely a temporary arrangement?"

Prescott nodded.

"Mebbe you're right there," he acknowledged. "Let me make this thing clear. As long as you folks obey my orders and cause no trouble—well, I guess you can have the run of the ship, and carry on in much the same way as usual. But you've got to understand that I'm boss. I'm not the kind of man to take advantage of a position of this sort. I've come here for those pearls, and if I get them I'm satisfied. When I'm through I'll quit, and you can continue your cruise. But while this pearl fishing goes on, I've got to do all the ordering."

"It's very generous of you, Mr. Prescott, to be so pleasant about it," said Lord Dorrimore drily. "But this happens to be my yacht, and neither I nor Captain Burton will tamely submit to your infernal authority!"

"Say, you're a fool!" retorted Prescott contemptuously. "Good gosh! I've had you disarmed—every man of you. You haven't got a gun between the whole crowd. So what's the good of that bunk? I'm boss, as I said before. The sooner you get that straight the sooner we can fix things."

"If you're attempting to make a bargain——"

"Bargain nothin'!" interrupted Prescott. "But we might as well be friendly like. Get me? I've got a real high opinion of you gents, and I'm willing to take your word. I'm out for peace—every time. There's nothing I hate worse than hitting a man when he's down. So it's just up to you to give me your parole that you'll obey orders, and attempt no monkey tricks. I'll accept your word, and you can move around the yacht just as though nothing had happened. How's that?"

Captain Burton was nearly purple with rage.

"You impudent rascal!" he shouted. "You come on board this ship, and give your orders, and force your advantage at the point of the pistol. For the moment you hold the upper hand; but——"

"Don't get excited, Captain," interrupted Dorrie, laughing. "We needn't be afraid of Prescott—he'll do himself no good by this sort of nonsense. I'll admit he's gained the first trick; but the fight isn't over yet."

"What's the idea?" asked Prescott.

"There's no particular idea; but you needn't think we're knuckling under," said his lordship. "It would be very simple, Mr. Prescott, if we gave you our parole. Nothin' nicer, eh? You'd be boss, an' we'd be bound by honour to stand tamely by, lookin' on. In your own words, nothin' doin'!"

"Hear, hear!" said Nelson Lee and the others.

Prescott scowled.

"You'd best think twice about this!" he snapped. "It's going to be a whole lot easier for everybody if you act sensibly. I've got the drop on you, and if you've got an ounce of sense you'll realise it. Why not come across with that parole, and get the whole business over slick? When I'm through with those pearls I'll quit!"

"Unfortunately, Mr. Prescott, we can't accept your word," replied Nelson Lee quietly. "On the face of it, your statement is incredible. You would hardly leave this island in your schooner, knowing that we could overtake you and out-distance you without any trouble. We're not quite such fools

as that. I think I am speaking for everybody when I say that we prefer to fight."

"Yes, by gad!" agreed Dorrie promptly.

"Fight!" shouted Prescott. "How the thunder can you fight when you're my prisoners? You doggone fools! You'll just cause me a heap of trouble, and make your own position worse. Unless you give that parole, you'll all be locked below, and watched. Understand? You'll be watched day and night, and there'll be precious little chance of fighting."

His prisoners refused to say any more. They had made it quite clear that any kind of bargain was out of the question.

For the moment, the fortunes of war were with Prescott and his henchmen.

CHAPTER III.

INVESTIGATIONS.



"THERE'S another canoe following us," said Reggie Pitt softly. "What's the idea? We'd better slow down a bit, and wait for it to come up."

Nipper raised his paddle, and the canoe slid noiselessly forward over the lagoon. They were still a considerable distance from the Wanderer. The second canoe soon came alongside. It contained three figures.

"What's the idea of stopping?" came a loud whisper.

"By Jove, Handy!" said Nipper. "Look here, Handy, be a good chap, and buzz back. Pitt and I can do all the scouting that's necessary. Too many cooks spoil the broth, you know."

"Rats!" retorted Handforth. "I'm not being left out!"

The two others in the canoe were, of course, Church and McClure. They were both exasperated and excited—exasperated because Handforth was so obstinate, and excited on account of their mission.

"It's no good, Nipper—we tried everything we could to stop him," growled Church. "But he thinks everything'll go wrong unless he's on the spot."

"Oh, all right—you'd better come," said Nipper gruffly.

Much experience of Handforth had taught him that it was better to accept the situation. Edward Oswald would create endless trouble if he was asked to return to camp. In his own opinion, he was the one fellow needed for any kind of scouting or investigating work.

"Thanks for nothing!" he growled. "I'd like to see you chaps try to send me back! As a matter of fact, I came because I couldn't trust a delicate job of this sort to anybody else. We've got to make certain that the Wanderer's O.K.—then we can go back to bed."

Without further argument, the two canoes

continued their journey to the yacht. Nipper was uneasy, but he wasn't exactly alarmed.

His state of mind would have been different if he could have seen what was happening on board at that moment. Jonathan Prescott was taking drastic action. His prisoners had proved obstinate, so he was turning nasty. He meant to show them who was boss.

It exasperated him, because it would mean much more trouble. A simple parole from Nelson Lee, Dorrie, and Captain Burton, would have enabled him to leave practically no guard on the Wanderer—for Prescott knew well enough that he could accept such a parole with safety.

But it had been refused—and there was only one thing to be done.

Most of the yacht's crew were locked away for'ard, and placed under guard. The captain and officers were taken to another part of the ship, and also placed under guard. Nelson Lee, Dorrie, and Mr. Russell were allowed the saloon, but there would be no escape from it. By distributing his prisoners in batches, Prescott felt that they would be easier to handle and control. Mrs. Beverley Stokes and the Moor View girls were being left severely alone in their own quarters. Prescott regarded them with contempt. No interference could come from that direction.

Sweeney, the mate, was left on guard outside the saloon—and he was the kind of man who would shoot at the slightest provocation. This act of piracy—for the seizure of the Wanderer was nothing less—had affected Prescott and his men, and they were already reckless and thoughtless of any possible consequences. The intoxication of victory had gripped them.

"It's a blamed nuisance, Hawke," said Prescott, as he went on deck, after seeing that everything was going on smoothly. "These guys are going to be a heap of trouble. We shall need practically all our men to keep the fools fully guarded."

"Well, mister, it's the only way," said the skipper. "We've took this step, and we can't back out of it. We'd best get busy on blocking up the decks. We'll keep each bunch to themselves, I guess. As long as they're separated, we haven't got much to fear."

"And there's the schooner, too," said Prescott thoughtfully. "We've got all those blacks under the hatches—two hundred of them, Hawke. I guess they're getting a bit impatient by this time. We shall have to let them out before long. What do you propose?"

"Let 'em loose on the island," replied Hawke promptly. "They can't get away—and the island's so small that if they run loose we can soon round 'em up. Anyway, they've got to be took out of the holds. It ought to be the next thing, boss."

Prescott looked away over the lagoon.

"There was a big fire on the beach over there when we came through the break in the reef, he went on. I understand that a number of boys are ashore. We shall have

to get hold of 'em, Hawke, and put them with the others—"

"Say, best leave the kids alone," interrupted Hawke. "They can't do us no harm. Let 'em run loose. It'll be less trouble, mister. We've got all we can deal with aboard without any more—especially kids."

"There's something moving," said Prescott suddenly. "Look here, captain, what do you make of that— A boat of some kind— No, a canoe! Say, who's that down there?" he added, leaning over the rail and shouting.

Nipper and Reggie Pitt, creeping up to the Wanderer in their canoe, ceased paddling. Until this moment they hadn't been sure of the truth. But they were no longer in any doubt. However, Nipper wasn't going to show that he guessed.

"It's all right—only us," he called up cheerily. "Couldn't sleep very well, so we're having a paddle round. Everything all right up there, officer?"

Captain Hawke laughed harshly.

"You bet it's all right!" he replied. "You young guys had best get back to your camp, and stay there. This part of the lagoon ain't healthy no more!"

Another canoe glided up.

"Where's Dorrie?" demanded Handforth's voice. "You rotters! What have you been doing? What's happened to Mr. Lee and Captain Burton and all the men?"

"Say, you want to know a whole heap, sonny!" said Prescott pleasantly. "I guess you might as well go back happy. This yacht is now in my hands, and all your friends are prisoners. How's that?"

CHAPTER IV.

AN UNEXPECTED DEVELOPMENT.



HANDFORTH could hardly believe his ears.

"Prisoners!" he echoed. "Great Scott, you must be dotty! Mr. Lee and the others wouldn't surrender

to you, you rotten pirate! Hi, rescue! Come on, the Fourth!"

"Dry up, Handy—it's no good getting excited," interrupted Nipper anxiously. "These rotters have pinched the yacht, and made everybody prisoners. It's what we feared at first!"

"What about Irene, and all the others?" asked Handforth fiercely. "If these beasts have hurt anybody—"

"You don't need to worry, kiddies!" interrupted Mr. Prescott. "Everybody on this yacht is being looked after properly. But, take my tip, and keep away—that's all! Any interference from you, and you'll be sorry for it. We've got no time to waste on you young—"

Prescott paused, and sniffed the air.

"Say, what's that?" he went on sharply.

"Can't you smell a queer kind of burning, Hawke? It's mighty queer—"

"That blamed fire, I expect," interrupted the captain. "It's been put out by now, but I dare say it's smouldering."

There was certainly a distinct odour of fumes in the air—pungent fumes which stole up unseen on the slight wind. But even Hawke looked anxious as he stared over the lagoon. The wind wasn't coming from the direction of the boys' camp, where the bon-fire had recently subsided. The fumes were oily and heavy, and contained more than a suggestion of tar and paint. They came from the direction of the Samoa.

"Gosh! Mebbe one of those guys aboard the schooner has been careless," went on Hawke quickly. "Say, we'd best take the boat and get over there. It's high time I was aboard, in any case—we've got to give them Kanakas some air. We only left two men in charge— By thunder! That burning smell is getting worse!"

Both he and Prescott had completely forgotten the two canoes by now. They stared through the darkness towards the Samoa, which stood out as a black blur amid the surrounding gloom. She was drifting slightly, for her anchor had not been dropped. Prescott had deliberately neglected this usual procedure as quietness had been the order of the hour.

Nipper and Handforth and the other juniors found themselves looking towards the schooner, too. The fumes were increasing in volume every second—until, indeed, the whole air was permeated with them.

"Look here—we'll get on board!" said Handforth tensely. "I don't mean on board the schooner, but on the Wanderer. We can sneak below, and release everybody!"

"It's a praiseworthy thought, old man, but I'm afraid it's impossible," said Nipper. "You forget that Prescott's men are all armed—and that they've probably been instructed to shoot. No; we can help better by sticking to the island. Prescott looks upon us with contempt—and that's all the better."

"Contempt!" echoed Handforth, aghast. "He regards the Fourth with contempt! Why, the—the beastly rotter—"

"Don't you understand, you ass?" hissed Church. "The more contempt Prescott's got for us the better! He doesn't want to collar us at all—he doesn't mind if we stick to our camp. Well, we can get out some plan tomorrow, and show these brutes what the Fourth can do!"

"My idea, exactly!" agreed Nipper softly.

"Same here," murmured Pitt.

"By George!" said Handforth, his voice quivering. "Let him think we're a lot of duffers, eh? Take him at his giddy word! That's it—we'll pretend to be meek and mild, and helpless! Then we'll bring off a terrific surprise, and turn the tables! All right, you can leave it to me!"

"The first thing is to get back—"

Nipper paused as a waft of acrid fumes caught him in the throat and set him coughing. Above, Jonathan Prescott and Captain Hawke had forgotten the existence of the canoes. Under any circumstances they would have regarded the Fourth-Formers with a kind of pitiful amusement. At present, there was something more important to think about.

The fumes were now not only trebly pungent, but the Samoa herself was half-concealed by a blurry haze—which came gently and mysteriously on the night air. The schooner was lying nearly a quarter of a mile away, without a single light showing, and with no noticeable sound. She might have been deserted, for all the signs she gave.

"I'd best get back!" said Hawke tensely. "There's something amiss there, or I'm no ship-master! You'd best stay here, Mr. Prescott. We can't afford to take risks."

Hawke prepared to depart at once.

The Samoa's motor-boat was lying at the foot of the ladder, and she could be started up at a moment's notice. But before Hawke could move far, a sudden clamour of sound broke out on the night air—a sound which brought the rascally skipper to a standstill.

"What the blazes——" he began.

It was like nothing on earth—a rising crescendo of shrieks and cries, and so wild in their notes as to seem scarcely human. It was as though pandemonium had broken loose among a crowd of demons.

And then, as Hawke felt his heart beating rapidly, something appeared on the schooner, and it was something which forced a hoarse, inarticulate cry out of the captain's throat.

A slow, lurid tongue of flame, which licked lazily upwards amidships!

CHAPTER V.

PANIC!



ALTHOUGH Jonathan Prescott and Captain Hawke had inwardly suspected the truth, the sudden revelation of it stunned them.

There could be no other explanation of that ominous tongue of flame—following, as it did, upon the drifting volume of acrid smoke.

"By heaven, Hawke—the schooner's afire!" gasped Prescott, running up heavily. "Quick, man! Get aboard and see what you can do! Take all the men——"

"Sure!" rapped out Hawke. "And what then? What about these guys? What's going to happen if we take our men away? Gee! This is sure tough! Just when things were going kinder smooth, too!"

Prescott stood there, helpless.

This development was not only unexpected, but positively alarming. To let

the schooner burn was out of the question, and to take all his men off the Wanderer was equally out of the question. On the horns of such a dilemma, Jonathan Prescott was bewildered.

On the one hand, he had to lose the schooner, for she would certainly be a total loss unless swift action was taken, and on the other hand all his carefully laid plans must go by the board. If he withdrew all his men from the Wanderer now there would be no guards to watch over the prisoners. It was certainly an awkward position.

"Curse those fools!" snarled Prescott harshly. "Why couldn't they give their parole? You'd best take three men at least, Hawke, and do what you can. By hockey! Look at those flames now. The old tub'll be blazing like a torch within another five minutes!"

"And listen to them Kanakas!" growled Hawke. "Two hundred of 'em—bunched up in the holds and unable to get out. Gosh! Once they get loose, they'll be beyond all control!"

Neither man could guess how the fire had started, and it was probably a point which would never be cleared up. Carelessness, no doubt—a smouldering cigar end, or a recklessly thrown match—one of a hundred causes was possible. The schooner was as dry as tinder, and once fairly alight it would be impossible to do anything to save her.

"Say, wait!" panted Prescott. "What about this yacht? There'll be hoses—fire hydrants! Maybe we can get the whole apparatus working, and do the trick——"

He broke off again, staring hopelessly. In the course of the last minute an alarming change had taken place. The original lurid flame was now a roaring, flickering column, which licked upwards and revealed every outline of the schooner's masts and rigging. Frantic shouts were coming from the vessel, and the mad clamour from the imprisoned blacks was increasing into a heartrending din.

"It's too late!" panted Prescott. "For the love of Mike! We'll never get that fire under control, Hawke—she's doomed!"

The captain said nothing. He was too startled and frightened. When he had brought his men to the Wanderer, he had never dreamed that he would never set foot on his own ship again. There was not much sentiment in Captain Hawke's composition, but he possessed all the ship-master's love for his own craft.

To see his schooner burning like a torch before his eyes was bad enough. But there was something else—something a hundredfold more staggering. Under the Samoa's hatches were two hundred South Sea Islanders—black fellows, who had been collected from various islands for pearl diving. And they were helpless—packed

down like sardines in the schooner's holds, and imprisoned beneath the battened-down hatches.

The men were not really Kanakas, for well over half of them were natives of the Solomon Islands, and men, moreover, who had mostly come from the savage interior, and who were as wild and uncivilised as the most bloodthirsty cannibal of the earlier days.

"We've got to do something!" said Hawke hoarsely. "Gosh, we can't leave them niggers to frizzle up! We must give the poor devils a chance of life! Say, mister, this is tough—blamed tough!"

Although he instinctively felt that he could do nothing to save the schooner, Hawke dashed down the ladder, jumped into a motor-boat, and was quickly away.

He sped across the lagoon, no longer hampered by the need for secrecy. And the recent darkness was being destroyed by the yellow, flickering tongues of flames, which were increasing in strength with every second.

The two canoes, containing the five St. Frank's fellows, had pulled aside. They were watching the development of this unexpected adventure with breathless excitement.

Hawke reached the schooner's side, but before he could climb up, two men came swarming down. They were the pair Prescott had left in charge. Both were inarticulate with fright, and Hawke raved at them in vain.

The heat from the schooner was awful, and the flames were accompanied by a roaring, hissing, sizzling sound which was awful to listen to. The entire vessel amidships was ablaze. And the captain had no doubt that the flames had started in the saloon. One of these panic-stricken fools had been responsible, had probably overturned the lamp, or some such piece of idiocy.

But it was no time for conjectures.

Hawke leapt on board and stood there, hesitating. He had intended releasing the hatches, so that the imprisoned natives could have a chance of life. But the scorching heat was so intense that he staggered back, protecting his face by his crooked arm.

"Suffering cats!" he gasped. "I can't do it!"

He wasn't a coward, but it would have meant almost certain death to carry out his project. To get anywhere near the hatches without becoming scorched and blinded in the process was well-nigh impossible.

And in the lurid glare Hawke saw something else which decided him.

Both hatches were being shattered by blows from below, and half naked forms were already beginning to appear from the first. The men were escaping. Desperation had given them the strength to force



Mr. Prescott's leg was hooked from under him, and in some extraordinary way he found himself lying flat on his back.

an exit. Help from an outside source was unnecessary.

Hawke fled.

To be caught by those islanders at such a moment as this would be worse than death. Frantic, panic-stricken, the poor brutes were probably of the opinion that they had been deliberately placed in the holds in order to be roasted. Hawke would certainly have been flung into the heart of the fire.

He managed to get back into the motor-boat, and speed away.

And in the meantime the natives, screaming madly, began to stream out.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LAST OF THE SAMOA.



"GOOD gad!" said Archie Glenthorne, as he stared across the lagoon. "I mean to say, good gad! This is somewhat frightful, laddies. The bally ship is blazing like anything!"

"Never mind the ship, Archie—what about those men on it?" said Bob Christine. "It's awful—it's ghastly! Hark at those yells. The poor beggars must be fighting for life!"

"Odds flames and smoke!" said Archie. "Absolutely! And when they dash into the lagoon the jolly old sharks will whizz hither and thither, picking up the remains. Can't we do something?"

"It's not for us to do anything," said Nicodemus Trotwood, shaking his head. "At the best, we've only got a few canoes and a boat, and the schooner's two miles away if it's an inch. But the yacht's near by, and ought to lend a hand."

From the lagoon shore the spectacle was an impressive one. By this time the Samoa was blazing with such intensity that she was obviously doomed. The entire centre portion of the schooner was ablaze, the flames licking up, and making the night ruddy. The masts and rigging were ablaze, too, and dense volumes of smoke rolled away on the wind.

If the spectacle was impressive from the shore, it was terrifying as viewed from the Wanderer. Indeed, there was not a little danger for the big yacht. The sparks and smoke were being blown over her, and if the schooner drifted nearer there was a chance that a double disaster would take place. And the consequences of this would be too awful for contemplation. For it would literally mean that both the parties would be marooned on this isolated atoll, beyond all reach of the outside world. And there might be no ship in these latitudes for years.

Prescott acted wisely in the emergency.

He rushed for'ard and released a dozen members of the yacht's crew. They were unarmed, and were not likely to cause much trouble. And they were kept busy by the work which was vitally necessary. To move the Wanderer from her anchorage at such short notice was impossible; but the men were able to deal with any possible fire emergency and quench it.

Mercifully the imprisoned natives managed to escape.

Once the hatches were broken, the men poured out in a continuous stream, yelling with panic and frightened to a terrible degree. They dived overboard and swam for it. But they had only themselves to thank for their lives. But for their own efforts they would certainly have perished.

Any danger from sharks was remote.

The fire itself was sufficient to banish any possible sharks from the vicinity. All the men were expert swimmers, otherwise they would not have been engaged for pearl diving. Once in the lagoon they struck out for the nearest shore.

This was the belt of woodland in the south-eastern corner of the island, exactly opposite the boys' camp, and so three or

four miles distant. Nothing could have happened better. The islanders were not likely to move far from their new haven, but would probably stick to the dense groves.

The yelling and screaming ceased after the last man had left, and only the commotion in the lagoon marked the course of the swimmers. And this, too, vanished in due course.

"By golly, I'm glad they got away!" said Prescott huskily. "Those men are valuable, and apart from that I wouldn't like the crowd to be burned to death. But the old hooker's gone, Hawke. She's sailed her last voyage this time."

"You're sure right," agreed Captain Hawke, with a melancholy air.

The burning schooner was an impressive sight.

Unchecked, the flames had now spread from stem to stern. Her masts had fallen, and she was just one body of flame. The island was illuminated from end to end, and in the lagoon the light was almost as bright as day. The heat swept over the Wanderer in blistering clouds, and for a time it seemed that the danger of a second fire was very real.

But the wind veered round slightly, and the smoke and heat were now being swept more towards the north, leaving the Wanderer comparatively clear. The schooner was still drifting, too. Caught in a slow current, the flaming vessel was slowly taken towards the centre of the big expanse of water. And here she decided to remain.

At this point the lagoon was shallower, and when the Samoa sank she touched the coral bottom before she was completely submerged. The last sight was probably the most impressive of all.

When she was fairly alight to the water's edge—one roaring mass of flame—she suddenly heeled over by the bows and plunged. The result was almost like an explosion.

There was a roaring tumultuous cloud of steam. As though by magic, the glare vanished, and nothing was left but a dense cloud of vapour which drifted across the island. In the vicinity of the sunken schooner the lagoon seemed to boil and hiss.

And when the smoke and steam cleared nothing was left but a few smouldering remains of the stern, which still jutted out of the water.

The Wanderer, although her paintwork was slightly scorched and blistered, had come through without any real damage. But this disaster to the Samoa altered the whole nature of the situation.

"Well, she's gone, Hawke," said Mr. Prescott grimly. "An hour ago she was lying over there, as sturdy as ever. Now

she's at the bottom, a charred hulk. We're not getting everything our own way."

"The schooner's gone, but we're in command of this yacht," said Captain Hawke cunningly. "Say, are we going to let this thing beat us, Mr. Prescott? The schooner was our only way of getting back. Well, what's the matter with this swell yacht? Who's boss here, anyway?"

Prescott started.

"You're right, captain—dead right!" he muttered. "Maybe the loss of the schooner is all for the best, after all. My idea was to hold this yacht until the job was done. But you mean to stick to her, eh? By all the stars, it's the one thing we've got to do!"

It had been a fateful night.

The Wanderer's crew were captives, and Lord Dorrimore and his guests were captives, too. Only the St. Frank's fellows retained their freedom. But was it freedom, after all? Prescott knew well enough that he took no particular risk. On the island, the boys were harmless.

And there were the two hundred natives, too. They were on the island now, and if the schoolboys ran foul of them there would probably be fresh trouble—the very worst of all trouble.

Upon the whole, the outlook was not healthy.

CHAPTER VII.

MASTERS OF THE ISLAND.



HANDFORTH snorted with disgust.

"Well, here's a nice state of affairs!" he grunted. "We're sticking here and doing nothing, and the yacht's in the hands of those rotters! In my opinion, there's only one thing to do—make an attack!"

He glared round defiantly. Dawn was breaking, and the mists were dispersing. The day promised to be as brilliant as any of its predecessors. Paradise Island was beginning to wake up. But its human inhabitants had had no sleep.

The St. Frank's fellows had not thought of returning to their hammocks. After the sinking of the Samoa there had been a number of excited discussions. All manner of impossible plans were suggested—wild and fantastic schemes for "doing old Prescott in the eye," as Handforth tersely put it.

But all these suggestions were turned down upon mature consideration. It wasn't so easy to defeat a man who was in possession of the yacht, and who had two hundred savages at his command.

"Make an attack!" repeated Handforth firmly. "That's the only thing! Prescott looks upon us as a crowd of helpless kids. The giddy nerve! It's up to us to show him where he's wrong!"

"But look here, Handy——" began Church.

"I'm not going to look there, and I don't want any of your rot, Walter Church!" interrupted Handforth. "We've got canoes, and we've got a boat. We'll all go out to the yacht, climb on board, and overpower Prescott and his gang. It'll be easy."

Nipper shook his head.

"That's the worst of being a confirmed optimist—everything seems easy to him in theory," he exclaimed. "He makes all sorts of light-hearted plans, but when it comes to carrying them out, it's a horse of another colour!"

"Who's talking about horses?" demanded Handforth, glaring. "Of all the fatheaded remarks! I'm suggesting an attack on the yacht, and all you can do is to jaw about horses! There's not even a donkey on the island!"

"No?" said Pitt politely. "Sorry! I thought there was!"

"Eh?" said Handforth, staring. "Don't talk rot! How could you think there's a donkey here? It strikes me you're all going off your giddy rockers!" he went on, without being aware of the implied insult. "I make a perfectly sensible suggestion——"

"My dear old fathead—think!" interrupted Nipper. "If there's anything inside your cranium, use it! Altogether, there are about twenty of us here, and we've got one small boat and four canoes. At a pinch, the canoes will hold three fellows each, and the boat might take six. Where does your big attack come in?"

"Easy!" replied Handforth promptly. "According to your own showing, we can carry eighteen. The other two chaps can stay here on guard."

"But canoes are useless!" argued Nipper. "Prescott's men have only got to stand by, and they can tip every canoe over before we can do a thing. Besides, what's the good of attacking in full daylight? We're up against a superior force. Our only policy is to lie low and resort to stealth."

"Stealth?" repeated Handforth slowly, rather liking the sound of the word. "Stealth, eh? That's not bad, you know."

"The first thing is to impress old Prescott with the fact that we're harmless," went on Nipper. "We won't even bother him to-day—we'll stick to our beach, and carry on as usual."

"Wouldn't it be better to be scared and frightened?" suggested Pitt.

"That's not bad," nodded Nipper. "We needn't go as far as that—we'll just affect indifference, as though it doesn't matter two-pence to us who's in control and who isn't. We want old Prescott to get the idea that we're as tame as a bunch of kittens. Then, one night, when everything's ready, we'll strike. And if the St. Frank's Fourth can't strike effectively, you can call me a duffer!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Nipper's right!"

"Caution's the only watchword!"

"All right—I agree," said Handforth, as though everything rested upon his decision.

"But there's one bit I don't quite like. Just now you said something about 'one night,' Nipper. That's rot! We've got to strike to-night—while the iron's hot!"

"That's just where you're wrong," said Nipper. "The iron won't be hot by to-night—it'll take more than one day to heat it to the necessary pitch. The very success of this plan will depend upon waiting. The longer we wait, the more certain we shall be of success. The best thing we can do now is to get some sleep. Four hours at least—and then we'll carry on in just the same way as usual."

The general approval of this scheme was so unanimous that Handforth was obliged to submit. He began to realise, too, that his policy of direct action was a wrong one. To attempt anything before the time was ripe would merely show Prescott that the boys were determined, and would put him on his guard against them.

So, very sensibly, the juniors returned to their hammocks, and slept. After the excitements of the night, they were ready for some rest.

In the meantime, Jonathan Prescott was on the deck of the *Wanderer*, talking to Captain Hawke. During the last three or four hours, intensive work had been going on aboard the yacht. Not only Prescott's men, but many members of the *Wanderer's* crew had been forced into service—the latter at the point of the gun.

"Everything's going well, Hawke," Prescott was saying. "We're the masters of the island, and the loss of the schooner isn't so bad as I first thought it. We've got the yacht—and I guess it's a good exchange. But there's one thing we've got to do right now."

"Them blamed Kanakas?" said the skipper.

"You've hit it!" nodded Prescott. "We've got to get them in hand without a minute's delay. They're probably skulking in the bush, still panic-stricken. The first thing is to round 'em up, and get 'em under control. Once that's done, we can begin to move."

"You certainly said something, Mr. Prescott," said the skipper promptly.

CHAPTER VIII. GETTING SHIPSHAPE.



A PARTY of six landed on the island in the south-eastern area, where the reef widened out into a considerable patch, thickly covered with coconut groves and other tropical growths.

The party consisted of Mr. Prescott, Sweeney, the mate, and four men. Captain Hawke remained on board the *Wanderer*, in full command.

Prescott was uneasy about the two hundred natives.

He knew what it meant to leave such men alone, and undisciplined. The ordinary half-civilised islanders of to-day would have caused no trouble. But these fellows were different. They had been carefully selected, in twos and threes, and had been picked from a dozen different islands. In nearly every case they were savage brutes from the interior—men with no knowledge of the value of pearls.

A big percentage were natives of the Solomons, and were quite good fellows when properly looked after and disciplined. In many respects they were like a lot of children—irresponsible, lazy, and full of pranks. But once allowed complete freedom, they were liable to run riot. And two hundred of them loose on the island was not exactly a healthy proposition. At all costs they had to be roped in.

Prescott paused in front of the coconut grove which grew almost to the water's edge.

"The chances are, we shall find the brutes scattered about in groups," he said, frowning. "We'd better stick together, and have our guns ready. After what happened last night, they may be in an ugly mood—and I guess they're a tough bunch, anyway."

"More like they'll be scared stiff," said Sweeney. "If you ask me, boss, they'll be as easy to deal with as sheep. They've got over their fright by now, and we don't need no guns."

"You're a fool, that's what you are!" said Prescott curtly.

But soon afterwards he felt rather foolish himself—for Sweeney's words turned out to be perfectly true. The mate said nothing, but Prescott noticed a half-smile on his face which exasperated him.

Just through the first grove, and in a clearing, the entire contingent of Kanakas was found. Most of the men were sprawling full length, fast asleep—exhausted by their frantic exertions to get free from the burning schooner, and the resulting swim.

Those who weren't asleep were nursing their wounds—for at least a dozen of the unhappy fellows were seriously burned. Two, indeed, were practically unconscious, and in mortal agony. And it later transpired that three were missing altogether—having obviously perished in the flames.

As Sweeney had said, there was no trouble.

The natives were in no fighting mood. Their experience had terrified them, but a reaction had set in, and they were listless, nervous, and ready to meekly obey all orders.

There was one fellow—a huge Solomon Islander with repulsive features—who seemed to be a kind of leader. The others looked to him for guidance, and generally obeyed his commands. And this man, who answered to the name of Jat, was capable of speaking a very indifferent kind of English. He could understand all that was said to him, and could give brief replies.

"Plenty rest to-day," said Prescott, pointing to the whole crowd. "No work, Jat—heap play. Lay around and get well."

Jat nodded.
"Fellers heap tired," he grunted. "No work."

"That's all right," agreed Prescott. "We'll see about bringing you tents and food. Obey orders, and you'll be safe now. Savvy?"

"Heap savvy," nodded Jat.

Prescott soon appreciated the fact that the natives were comparatively happy. After their long voyage in the schooner—in close quarters—the island was very welcome to them. They didn't mind what kind of work they were put to as long as they were allowed to remain here.

And during the morning tents and stores were brought ashore, and the native camp was established. The wounded men were attended to, and made comfortable. This, alone, did much to settle the minds of the others.

"They'll be all right," said Prescott, as he discussed the matter with Hawke later on. "I'm infernally glad. At one time I thought the brutes would cause trouble. But there's no danger of that now."

"Sure there isn't," agreed Hawke. "We've got things shipshape aboard here, too. Between you and me, mister, I guess the whole thing's pretty soft. We'll have them Kanakas on the pearlin' to-morrow, and, with a big bunch of workers like that, we ought to be through inside of a month."

Prescott laughed.

"It doesn't matter whether we take a month, or six weeks, or even two months," he replied genially. "We're all set now, and our time's our own. As long as we hold this British bunch in check, we're safe. And when we quit, we can leave the whole darn gang on the island."

"And take the yacht?"

"Sure."

"Sounds easy, but it won't be," said Hawke dubiously. "Steam ain't in my line, mister, an' my crew don't know a thing about engines and such like. Besides which, we ain't got enough men. We shall have to think of something better than that—"

"Well, it doesn't matter now—plenty of time," interrupted Prescott. "We can deal with the problem when it needs to be dealt with. For the present we'll get busy on the pearling stunt."

CHAPTER IX.

A BRUSH WITH THE ENEMY.



NIPPER lowered his binoculars.

"Yes, there's plenty of activity going on," he said grimly.

"There's a huge crowd on the pearling ground—practically all those natives are diving like a

lot of porpoises. They're swarming round the raft continuously."

"I wonder why Prescott is using these native divers instead of the up-to-date methods?" said Tommy Watson. "There are all those diving-suits being neglected, and they're a lot quicker—"

"He understands the primitive method better, I suppose," said Nipper. "He's brought these islanders, and he might as well use them. Besides, old Dorrie's professional divers might have refused to work. Anyhow, the pearling is going on at full swing."

"Rather, old boy," agreed Sir Montie Tregellis-West. "But the whole thing's frightfully upside down. Instead of Dorrie bein' at the head of affairs, this bally Prescott is holdin' the reins. It's all wrong."

"And we're so jolly helpless," added Watson, with a grunt. "It wouldn't be so bad if we could do something. We've just got to stay here, or moon about the lagoon, and look on."

"Our chance will come—don't worry," said Nipper grimly. "There's a purpose in our pretended indifference. It's working already. Prescott isn't taking any notice of us—he thinks we're not worth counting. The longer he thinks that the better."

Nipper and his two chums were floating in one of the canoes a little distance off the lagoon shore, and they had just been examining the north-eastern shallows through the glasses. The pearling was going ahead at full speed.

Practically in the centre of the lagoon lay the charred remains of the Samoa, only her stern appearing above the placid surface. It formed an ugly contrast to the blue of the lagoon.

It was afternoon now, and the juniors were still undisturbed. Prescott had taken no action in regard to them. And they, for their part, knew that nothing fresh had happened. The passing to and fro of the steam launches, the shifting ashore of stores and provisions, all proved that Prescott was in full command of the Wanderer.

The juniors were left in a state of uncertainty regarding the fate of their friends. They didn't know what had happened—except the one all-important event of Prescott's successful coup.

But what of Nelson Lee and Dorrie and Captain Burton and the others? What of Mrs. Stokes and Irene & Co.? What of William Napoleon Browne and the three other seniors? Where were they all? These were problems which the juniors were puzzled and worried over.

It was inconceivable to suppose that anything had happened. Everybody had been made prisoner—that was the only explanation. They were all being kept on the Wanderer, probably under lock and key.

None of the juniors could settle themselves to the ordinary routine. There were

no expeditions into the groves, no trips to different parts of the island. Since the moment of rising, all the fellows had kept their eyes upon the Wanderer—hoping for some welcome sign. But none had come, and they were getting impatient. And Prescott and his men ignored them. In Nipper's eyes, this was an advantage—but the others didn't feel complimented.

A kind of meeting was going on when Nipper's canoe returned to the beach. Handforth was getting excited.

"Are we going to stand this any longer?" he was demanding. "Are we going to stick here, and twiddle our giddy thumbs? We're ignored—left to ourselves like a lot of infants! It's nothing but an insult!"

"Hear, hear!"

"And everybody on board the Wanderer is a prisoner," went on Handforth fiercely. "Think of old Dorrie and Mr. Lee! Think of the girls! They're in the hands of those brutes, being starved and tortured!"

"At it again, Handy?" asked Nipper, as he joined the throng. "I thought we'd decided to wait in patience? We can't make any move until after dark at the earliest."

Handforth glared.

"We can't wait until then!" he retorted. "I'm urging the chaps to back me up. We'll sweep down on the Wanderer now, get on board, and chuck these pirates overboard to the sharks! That's the scheme!"

"Bally good, too!" said Archie Glen-thorne approvingly. "That bit about the sharks is somewhat fruity. I mean, poetic justice, and all that sort of rot! At the same time, a dashed good theory is not always workable."

"Archie's got the right idea," said Nipper, nodding. "It's one thing to talk about throwing the pirates to the sharks, Handy, but you know as well as I do that it couldn't be done."

"And even if it could, we shouldn't do it," added Reggie Pitt. "Two wrongs don't make a right, Handy. If Prescott and his men are acting like hooligans, there's no need for us to copy their example."

Handforth turned red.

"Are you calling me a hooligan?" he roared.

"No, fathead!" said Pitt patiently. "I'm merely asking you to remember that the St. Frank's Fourth is famous for clean fighting. It wouldn't be quite the thing to chuck these fellows to the sharks. In a way, that sort of thing isn't done in the best society."

"You—you are a babbling ass!" said Handforth, exasperated. "You know I don't mean it literally! I can't open my mouth without you fellows jumping down my throat!"

"That's the worst of having such a big mouth," said Pitt blandly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"That was one against you, Ted," grinned Willy. "But I've got to admit you

asked for it. Chaps who suffer from deformities generally keep quiet about them."

"Deformities?" repeated Handforth hoarsely.

"Your mouth, old man," explained Willy. "Strictly speaking, it ought to be put on exhibition in the Wembley Amusement Park. When you've got it open it always reminds me of the entrance to the Black Wall Tunnel."

In order to save Willy from being annihilated on the spot, half a dozen fellows seized Handforth and held him back. And in the midst of the commotion Fatty Little appeared in the doorway of the bamboo house—set well back under the shade of the palms—frantically waving a frying-pan.

"Hallo!" said Willy. "Tea!"

But he was wrong.

"Look out, you chaps!" bawled Fatty. "While you're scrapping there, the enemy's approaching! Haven't you got any eyes?"

They had, and they turned them towards the lagoon. The big motor-launch was speeding up, with Mr. Jonathan Prescott in command.

CHAPTER X.

NOTHING DOING.



EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH completely forgot his minor in the stress of this new emergency.

"Now's our chance!" he said tensely. "We'll capture old Prescott, and hold him to ransom! We'll make him a prisoner, and refuse to give him up unless everybody on the Wanderer is released!"

"By Jove, that's a good idea!"

"Hear, hear!"

"You can trust me to think of good ideas!" said Handforth promptly. "What do big generals plan in times of war? The capture of field marshals and commanders-in-chief! You can't do better than strike at the top!"

"Good for you, Handy!"

But Nipper put a damper on the sudden enthusiasm.

"At first sight it seems a good idea—but it's a bad idea," he said grimly. "I'll admit that we could capture old Prescott with ease. But do you think his men would take a thing like that lying down? Do you think they'd release Dorrie and Captain Burton and the rest?"

"They'd have to—or we'd stick to Prescott," said Handforth.

"Rats!" retorted Nipper. "Pardon my bluntness, old man—but rats! By collar-ing Prescott we should simply bring down an attack. Prescott's men would probably get that swarm of natives, and they'd make one swoop, and wipe us up. Prescott

would be freed, and where should we stand? Nowhere!"

"And old Prescott would realise that we're dangerous," added Pitt.

"By George!" said Handforth, staring. "I hadn't thought of that!"

"That's just your trouble, old man—you never do think the obvious things," said Nipper grimly. "My idea is to treat Prescott with contempt. If he orders you about—ignore him. If he tries any of his monkey business—chuck him in the lagoon. Show him that we don't care a jot. But it'll suit our policy to act like irresponsible kids."

They all watched the motor launch approaching.

It contained Mr. Prescott and two other men. The San Francisco ship-owner had been to the oyster-beds, and had found everything going smoothly. Instead of returning direct to the yacht, he was making a detour. He wanted to have a look at these schoolboys at close quarters, and see what they were like.

In fact, he had virtually decided to round them all up. They were a distraction. There was plenty of room on the Wanderer, and it would be better to have all the prisoners in one place. He told himself that the schoolboys would obey all orders.

The launch dug her nose into the white sands, and Prescott sprang ashore. He was full of confidence and self-importance. The juniors crowded round, and failed to conceal their obvious animosity. Most of them were airily attired in running shorts, open-necked shirts, and panamas. With their bronzed complexions they looked a healthy group.

"Well, boys, I thought I'd just look you up," said Mr. Prescott genially. "May be you've been wondering about your friends, eh? Everything's O.K. with them. They're safe on board the yacht—"

"Yes, your prisoners, I suppose?" interrupted Handforth gruffly.

"Sure thing!" agreed Mr. Prescott. "You're all my prisoners, if it comes to that. I'm boss now, and you young guys had better get that fact fixed into your heads. A regular camp, eh?" he went on, looking at the creeper-covered house beyond. "Say, that's sure swell! I just hate to take you away from it."

"But we aren't going away, are we?" asked Nipper.

"You bet you are!" said Prescott. "You'll pile into this launch and come aboard. I want you youngsters under my eye. You look a bright bunch, but all boys are a darn sight too tricky!"

Nipper laughed contemptuously.

"Sorry, Mr. Prescott, but there's nothing doing," he replied calmly. "You surprised the Wanderer, but you haven't surprised

us. We're not taking any orders from a pirate."

"Absolutely!" said Archie Glenthorne.

"A bally buccaneer, what?"

Prescott scowled.

"Say, cut that stuff out!" he said curtly. "Get down into that launch, an' make it snappy!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors, taking their cue from Nipper, burst into a yell of derisive laughter. They were treating Prescott's orders with scorn, and their voices were full of defiance and contempt.

"By Jiminy!" roared Prescott. "What's this? Are you defying me, you young fools?"

"Bo', you said a mouthful," grinned Reggie Pitt. "Gee, can that dope and beat it, you poor simp! In other words, go chase yourself!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Prescott turned red with fury.

"Are you going to obey me or not?" he said angrily.

"Absolutely not!" beamed Archie.

"You can collar the Wanderer, but you can't collar us!" bellowed Handforth. "We don't care a fig for you, or all your giddy hooligans! We're sticking to this camp, and you can go and boil yourself!"

For the first time, Prescott dimly realised that these schoolboys weren't so easy to handle. At the same time, he could see that they quite failed to appreciate the true position. They were just an irresponsible set of youngsters with thoughts only for themselves. At least, that's the conclusion that Mr. Prescott arrived at.

"Enough of this!" he shouted furiously. "Get into that launch, or I'll know the reason why! Here, you! Lead the way!"

He grabbed hold of Willy Handforth, not because Willy was the nearest, but because he seemed to be the smallest. A little display of force might put an end to this uncomfortable situation.

Exactly what happened next, Mr. Prescott hardly knew.

He was under the impression that he had grasped a human being, but rapidly came to the conclusion that he was an eel. Willy gave a side movement, a downward dive, and a forward thrust all in the same second. Mr. Prescott's leg was hooked from under him, and in some extraordinary way he found himself lying flat on his back. And Willy was calmly regarding him with a smile.

"Now it's your turn!" he said sweetly. "I've shown you one of my ju-jitsu tricks, and now show me one of yours!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good for you, Willy!"

Jonathan Prescott looked round dazedly. If this small boy could perform such tricks, what could the others do?

CHAPTER XI.

FLUNG TO THE SHARKS!



"THIS is what comes of swank," said Willy severely. "You push in here, thinking you can order us about, and see what you get! You may be bossing things on the yacht, but you're not rajah of the giddy island yet! This is our territory, and you're not wanted!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Chuck him into the lagoon!"

Prescott struggled to his feet, quivering with rage. He was a big, broad-shouldered man, and he towered high above the juniors. It seemed perfectly absurd that his orders should be flouted so contemptuously. Prescott had been accustomed to seeing big men quail before his voice. And here were these British schoolboys jeering at him!

"Gosh darn it!" he thundered. "Are you going to obey or not? Either you go quietly or I'll order my men to fetch you by force! Jonathan Prescott has never been defied yet!"

"No?" asked Nipper calmly. "Then it's high time he was. We'll look into the matter, Mr. Prescott. A man is liable to get too big for his boots if he's never defied!"

"Good!" said Pitt. "Let's throw him to the sharks!"

"Hurrah!"

"To the sharks—to the sharks!"

"All together—grab him!"

Prescott backed away, now thoroughly alarmed. He had never dreamed that he would place himself in a position of danger by coming ashore. And these excited young fools were quite capable of throwing him into the lagoon. He realised it to the full now.

"All right!" he bellowed. "I'll quit! But, by gosh, you'll pay for this later on—"

"Yah! Bully!"

Prescott had been unwise to threaten, after consenting to depart. It aroused the juniors to a higher pitch of warlike activity than before. They simply fell upon Jonathan Prescott like a pack of hungry wolves upon a bone.

For a few seconds there appeared waving arms and legs. Muffled curses rose upon the air, accompanied by grunts. Then it was all over. Prescott lay on his back, half-buried in the sands, with St. Frank's juniors clutching at every inch of him.

"We'll teach him!" panted Handforth. "Get the boats, you chaps. We'll shove him in, row him out into the lagoon, and drop him to the sharks!"

Mr. Prescott heard this sentence with growing horror. These boys didn't realise the awful dangers! He tried to shout, but was instantly silenced. The boys swamped him.

As a matter of fact, they only wished to give Prescott a scare. A shark or two might exist over in the deep water, but this north-western section of the lagoon was quite clear of any dangerous fish. Even a quarter of a mile out the bathing was safe.

Half a dozen juniors fetched the boat and launched it. The camp was provided with several canoes, too, but these were not wanted for the moment. Helpless in the grasp of his captors, Prescott was whirled down the sands and dumped in the boat. He was rapidly becoming purple with alarm.

His men in the launch were afraid to move. They knew they would stand no chance against this crowd of boys. They waited, watching with mixed feelings. On the whole, they weren't exactly sorry to see their chief having some of the stuffing knocked out of him. He had been getting too big for his boots ever since the Wanderer had been captured.

The boat was pushed off and the juniors rowed out—a number of others holding Prescott down. An escort of canoes led the way. And three hundred yards from the shore a halt was called.

"In with him!" roared Handforth.

"Stop!" shrieked Prescott. "The sharks! You young idiots! I'll give you anything if you—"

"Rats! All vermin goes to the sharks!"

"In with him!"

In spite of the man's protests he was raised up, and the boat rocked violently, threatening to precipitate everybody into the lagoon. But at last the juniors managed to tip their victim out.

Splash!

Prescott descended into the crystal water, there was a wild commotion, and he rose, gasping and spluttering.

"Help!" he screamed. "The sharks'll have me!"

"Good gad!" gasped Archie. "There's a shark there now!"

"Eh?" said Pitt, startled.

"Absolutely!" replied Archie. "This foul blighter of a Prescott, laddie!"

"Oh, rather!" agreed Pitt, grinning. "He's a shark all right!"

Prescott, nearly distracted with terror, was plunging about wildly. But he needn't have worried. There were no sharks, and his launch was near at hand. A moment later he was grasped by his slacks and

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dragged on board. A perfect howl of derision went up from the juniors.

"That's only a taste!" bellowed Handforth. "Come back again, you rotter, and see what you'll get!"

CHAPTER XII.

PRESCOTT'S DECISION.



"WELL, that's given him a bit of a shock, I'll bet!" remarked Pitt, when he stood on the sands once more. "My hat! The rotter actually thought that sharks were about!"

"We couldn't have treated him better," said Nipper approvingly. "The chances are he'll leave us to ourselves. He'll think we're not dangerous, but just mischievous. And when he's completely fooled himself that we're not worth noticing, we'll strike."

"By George! That's the idea!" agreed Handforth. "I say, why couldn't we strike to-night? It'll be all dark—"

"You're a fine chap in a scrap, Handy, but you're a bit too impulsive," put in Nipper. "By acting prematurely, we shall defeat our own ends. Our one chance of success is to bide our time."

"But I don't like biding!" growled Handforth.

"Don't you fatheads want any tea?" roared Fatty Little from the house. "Everything's been ready for over a quarter of an hour. Tea's more important than that Prescott rotter, isn't it?"

In Fatty Little's opinion food was the only thing that really mattered. It amazed him that anybody could attend to other matters after the gong had gone.

And while the juniors set about their evening meal, Jonathan Prescott reached the Wanderer—a sorry, dishevelled figure. He had started out resplendent in faultless white drill, tailored and pressed in the most exquisite manner.

Now he looked like a wet rag—limp, bedraggled, and with tousled hair. Ninetenths of his arrogance had vanished. He was one of those men who rely mainly upon bluff. Stripped of his trappings he was very ordinary.

Captain Hawke met him at the top of the ladder.

"Had a bit o' trouble, I guess?" said the skipper with a faint grin on his leathery face. "Doggone it, them kids seem kind o' fresh!"

"Fresh?" snarled Prescott. "Listen, Hawke! They're the freshest bunch I ever come across! Took no more notice of me



Umlosi lifted Nillsen off his feet in one clean rush. As an exhibition of strength it was one of the finest things Nelson Lee had ever seen.

than a brick wall. Treated me like two cents, darn them!"

Hawke nodded.

"So I saw," he replied. "You'd best leave 'em alone, mister. Them young guys don't count, anyway. They're safe on the island, and, if I were you, I'd leave 'em there."

"I'll have 'em aboard!" vowed Prescott. "I'll have the whole crowd under guard, by gosh!"

"Well, you're boss, so I'll say nothing," went on Captain Hawke. "But when you bring them boys aboard, you'll bring trouble! We can trust the men to accept the situation and keep calm—and the girls don't count. But that parcel o' boys is a different proposition. They'll give us trouble from mornin' till night."

"I'll think about it!" snapped Prescott harshly.

He went below, and thought of it all the time he was changing. And—exactly as Nipper had foretold—he came to the conclusion that the schoolboys weren't worth bothering about. Hawke was right. They'd cause more trouble than all the prisoners put together. Not any sort of trouble that mattered, but petty, irritating interference.

Those boys would require watching like so many monkeys.

"I guess you're right, cap," said Prescott when he returned to the deck. "One taste of them young demons is enough. We'll leave 'em be. As you say, they can't do no harm on the island."

Hawke nodded.

"I thought mebbe you'd see it when you was cooled down," he replied. "We've got everything in trim now, Mr. Prescott, and it would sure be a pity to make any changes. All our prisoners are helpless, and we've fixed everything so that we can guard 'em day and night—with relief watches. If you brought those boys aboard we shouldn't have enough men."

"Let's see what you've fixed," said Prescott bluntly.

He went round the yacht on a tour of inspection, and was highly satisfied. Big alterations had been made. For'ard, the Wanderer's crew were kept apart from everybody else. This section of the ship had been barricaded off, and four armed guards were fully capable of keeping order. The Wanderer's men knew that shooting would start at the first sign of mutiny.

It was the same in other parts of the ship.

The promenade-deck had been divided off and further barricades had been built. The yacht's captain and officers were allowed here, with the lounge and the smoking-room for their use. It was impossible to reach any other part of the vessel.

Further aft, Nelson Lee, Dorrie, Umlosi, Professor Tucker, Mr. Russell, Mr. Stokes and the four seniors were again placed to themselves. They had the saloon and the opposite part of the promenade-deck for their use.

Mrs. Stokes and the girls were permitted to keep their own state-rooms on the deck below, and they had the full use of a writing-room and another lounge. And all parties were guarded.

By sectioning off the various groups of prisoners, Captain Hawke had made a wise move. There was no chance of combined action. No single group was sufficiently strong to break free, and none of the groups could possibly come together. Under these conditions, the Wanderer could be held with little or no trouble for weeks on end.

"It's sure good!" said Prescott, at length. "You're right about the boys, Hawke—we'd best leave 'em on the island. We've got 'em all fixed this way. Gee! I'm feeling good."

He strutted about, from section to section, like a feudal lord over-riding his serfs. The sense of power had taken hold of him, and he regarded himself as a little monarch. The yacht was his—the pearl fishery was his—the whole island was his!

CHAPTER XIII.

BROWNE ISN'T SATISFIED!



"WITHOUT wishing to grumble, Brother Stevens, I must nevertheless remark that the present arrangement strikes me as being somewhat blistered," said William Napoleon Browne, as he lounged over the starboard rail. "In fact, I might even go far enough to say that something ought to be done."

Stevens, of the Fifth, grunted.

"We're all saying that," he replied gloomily. "But what can be done? Tell me that, Browne, and I'll be obliged."

"Alas, Brother Horace, I'm afraid you expect too much," sighed Browne. "After I have brought my massive intellect into play, there may be some concrete results. But you must learn to have patience——"

"You're right about the concrete," said Stevens tartly.

Browne winced.

"I have occasionally heard my cranium referred to as solid ivory, but never as concrete," he said, in pained surprise. "I fear you are somewhat peevish, Brother Horace. And I fancy I detect a certain amount of pessimism in your usually careless tone. Under the circumstances, we will forgive and forget."

"Well, just think of the position, old man," said Stevens miserably. "What on earth can we do? What on earth——"

"Nothing on earth, brother, but possibly something on this yacht."

"Don't quibble, you funny ass!" growled Stevens irritably. "We're all divided up into pens—like cattle in a market-place—and it's impossible to get the better of these ruffianly crooks. What are we going to do? Put up with it like lambs?"

Browne shook his head.

"Under no circumstances should I describe you as a lamb, Brother Horace," he replied. "A disgruntled hog, possibly—but we need not descend to personalities. Something, as I observed previously, must be done. I have an inkling that our merry young friends of the Fourth are having the best of everything."

"That's what I think, too," agreed Stevens. "They've got the freedom of the island, at least. Not that it'll last long," he added. "They're bound to be brought on board during the day."

"There, Brother Horace, I must disagree with you," said Browne gently. "It pains me that our master minds should not trickle along as one, but we'll see what can be done in that direction. Let me point out a few facts which have obviously escaped your attention."

Stevens grunted.

"The facts which haven't escaped my attention are enough for me," he growled.

"Everything's wrong. Prescott's got the yacht, and there's not one chance in a thousand of us whacking him."

"I will admit the outlook is somewhat mottled," said Browne, nodding. "But you must remember that every cloud is lined with silver. We may not always see it, but it is nevertheless there. At the moment our silver lining appears to be corroded."

"You do talk!" said Stevens tartly.

"Alas, it is my one failing," sighed Browne. "But let us resume our interesting theme of a moment ago. We were, I believe, lightly touching upon the subject of the young stalwarts of the Fourth. I have a mind, Brother Horace, to join them in their revels."

"Good!" said Stevens sarcastically. "I've a mind to kick Prescott off this island. Any more funny jokes?"

Napoleon Browne shook his head.

"Correct me if I am wrong, Brother Horace, but I feel that your tone is slightly sarcastic," he said. "I urge you to drop this vein of irony and become sensible. Trust to me, and ere long we shall be disporting ourselves in the midst of the——"

"Soup?" suggested Stevens.

"Nay, it is not my intention to wallow in the oxtail," replied Browne. "We shall be disporting ourselves in the midst of the Swiss Family Robinson, ashore. I have a feeling that they need a guiding spirit among them. And who am I to deny them such a necessary want?"

Stevens was becoming exasperated.

"Look here, you funny ass!" he said tartly. "You're generally amusing—it gives me a kick to listen to you. But just now I'm not in the mood for your particular kind of humour. Talk sense, and I'll listen. But you know as well as I do that we can't leave this yacht!"

Browne sighed deeply.

"It has been written that a prophet is of no account in his own country," he observed. "I believe it, Brother Horace—I have received evidence of the fact. Let me urge you to grasp one fact—and to grasp it firmly, and with all your muscles tensed. Determination can do anything."

"I suppose determination can get us off this yacht?"

"It can, brother—and what is more, it will!" replied Napoleon Browne calmly. "In our own case, coolness and assurance must be coupled with determination. Nerve is our watchword! We must display a large amount of nerve, and the battle is won."

"And what if it is?" growled Stevens. "Supposing the impossible happens, and we do get ashore? We shall only be yanked back with all those Fourth-Formers before the end of the day! Prescott'll have 'em all on the yacht!"

"On that point I disagreed with you before, and on that point I must disagree

with you again," replied Browne. "If you ask me, Brother Horace, our genial host has his unclean hands quite full as it is. Imagine the tragic results of adding twenty members of the Fourth Form to our number. Nay, the juniors will be left alone. In common parlance they are what one would call a tough bunch. I venture to suggest that Prescott would rather juggle with hot bricks than interfere with the Fourth."

"H'm! Something in that!" admitted Stevens slowly. "The kids can't do anything ashore, so they might as well be left there. Look! There are two or three of the canoes coming out now. They've got a nerve!"

Browne's eyes brightened.

"Fortune favours the brave," he murmured. "Unless I am decidedly in baulk, Brother Horace, the time for making our pot shot fast approaches. Be guided by me, and all will be well."

CHAPTER XIV.

DETERMINATION AND COOLNESS.



LORD DORRIMORE lit a fresh cigarette, and frowned.

"Prescott's a cunning' rascal," he admitted gruffly. "He's got us all fixed so that we can't lift a bally finger. Thank goodness he's got a few gentlemanly instincts left. We are allowed to live decently, an' with a certain amount of comfort. An' that's one thing."

"It's a very great thing," said Nelson Lee quietly. "It is obvious that Prescott wishes to maintain discipline—and, however much we condemn him in other ways, we've got to admire him for that. But there's precious little chance of a coup on our part, Dorrie."

"That's what I was thinkin'," said his lordship. "We might as well resign ourselves, old man, an' give the beggar best."

Umlosi, who was near by, uttered a grunt.

"Strange words from thou, N'Kose," he rumbled. "Art thou not a fighter—a warrior? And thou, Umtagati," he added, turning to Nelson Lee. "Wilt thou stand still and raise no hand?"

"We've got to be careful, Umlosi," replied Nelson Lee. "Prescott is acting with a certain amount of gentlemanliness at present, and we don't want to precipitate any violence. We have ladies on board, and their safety comes before all else."

"Wau! Give me permission to fight these dogs!" said Umlosi fiercely. "I need no spear—no weapon! With my bare hands I will rend them, my father! To be prisoners thus is but to be dead!"

Dorrie patted him on the shoulder.

"I admire your spirit, old coalbox, an' before long we may be able to get a move

on—but for the moment we've got to sit tight, an' pretend we like it," he said calmly. "Our only chance is to wait—lie doggo, as it were—an' jump into the scrap at the first opportunity. If you started any fightin' now, you'd practically be committin' suicide."

"Rather would I die than live in this way!" growled the black giant.

"I believe you—but you're more valuable to us alive, old man," said his lordship. "I'm afraid your bare hands wouldn't be much use against their infernal guns. They're armed to the teeth, the hounds, an' they'd shoot you down on the instant."

"Perchance," rumbled Umlosi, nodding. "And perchance I would slay several before their bullets entered my heart. But thou art wise, N'Kose, as always. I am but thy servant to obey thy commands."

"It's exasperating, Umlosi, but we can do nothing else but hold ourselves in check for the time being," said Nelson Lee quietly. "I'm rather worried about these boys," he added, as he looked over the rail. "They're getting a bit too venturesome."

"Good luck to 'em!" said Dorrie heartily. "By gad! It was worth quids to watch them duckin' old Prescott. I admire their spirit! There's no holdin' down the St. Frank's Fourth!"

They watched one or two canoes as they came nearer. Tea being over, Nipper and Pitt and Handforth and a few others had decided to paddle out to the yacht—just to see how things were going. They had little fear of being interfered with.

There were three canoes approaching, and a fourth further away. Captain Hawke, on the bridge, leaned over the rail, and waved his hand.

"Say, you kids—stand clear!" he shouted gruffly. "You'd best not get too fresh around this ship! Quit!"

"Go and eat coke!" roared Handforth violently. "Can't we use the giddy lagoon now? Have we got to ask your permission before we can take some of the atmosphere? Go and fry yourself!"

Captain Hawke scowled. Against this sort of repartee he was helpless. He couldn't very well indulge in a slanging match with schoolboys. And it was equally impossible to force the boys away.

"You've got plenty of lip!" he said grimly. "Well, I'm warnin' you. Best not try any funny business, or you'll be sorry for it. Keep clear o' the ladder, and don't try no tricks. That's all!"

"Thanks awfully!" said Handforth sarcastically. "Hallo, Browne! How goes it? Glad to see you looking chirpy, Stevens!"

"I urge you, Brother Handforth, not to judge by Brother Horace's appearance," called Browne. "I can assure you he's far from being chirpy. To be frank, he reminds me of a diving bear."

"Chuck it!" said Stevens, nudging his companion.

The canoes floated near the yacht, and greetings were exchanged with Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore and the others. The juniors were feeling much better. It was good to see everybody on deck—walking about at liberty. Although Jonathan Prescott held the reins, his prisoners weren't suffering the tortures many of the juniors had imagined.

"Things ain't so bad, after all!" said Handforth, as he dipped his paddle in again. "We ought to be able to do something after dark—"

"Shush!" warned Church. "They might hear you."

"Eh? Oh, rot!" said Handforth. "I was only whispering."

"Yes, but your whisper sounds like the shout of a hippopotamus," growled McClure. "Hi! Look out!" he gasped. "Don't try to swipe me here, you fathead! These canoes turn over in no time—and there are sharks about!"

Handforth desisted, and stared up at the top of the ladder with some astonishment. He certainly had reason.

For William Napoleon Browne was displaying some of that determination and coolness he had spoken to Stevens about. The latter was with him. During the past minute they had leisurely and carelessly strolled towards the gangway, where a man was on duty.

Just before reaching it, Browne leaned overboard.

"May I ask, Brother Nipper, if you have room for a little one in your canoe?" he asked pleasantly. "I observe you are somewhat lightly loaded—"

"Plenty of room for you in here, old man," called up Nipper.

"And for Brother Horace in the next canoe, no doubt," said Browne. "All is well. It is our pleasure to join you. Stand by, therefore, and be ready. We come!"

"Better go easy, old man," warned Nipper anxiously.

"That," replied Browne benevolently, "is exactly my intention. Going easy, Brother Nipper, is one of my watchwords in life. Come, Brother Horace, a burst of mild energy is indicated."

CHAPTER XV.

A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF TROUBLE.



CAPTAIN HAWKE leaned over the bridge rail aggressively.

"Say, you two guys!" he shouted. "None o' that business. Stay where you are, or you'll be sorry for it!"

Browne smiled kindly.

"I appreciate your natural excitement, Brother Hawke, but I fear this is one of those occasions when a slight attack of apoplexy may be your lot," he observed. "Much as it grieves me, we are about to tear ourselves away from your company."

Browne reached the gangway, and found the guard facing him. The man was a half-breed of some kind, and a villainous-looking fellow at the best. He pushed a revolver towards William Napoleon.

"Better stand back!" he grunted.

"These little annoyances are only to be expected, Brother Horace," said Browne gently. "It is a pity that we should be forced to suffer them; but no matter. Come!"

Stevens was about to say something, but he gulped. Browne was smiling as urbanely as ever, and he didn't seem to appreciate the fact that the guard's revolver was menacing him. He lifted up the barrel, gazed down the bore, and carelessly turned it aside.

"Very interesting, but crude!" he remarked coolly.

The man was so surprised that he stood there blinking for a moment. Browne calmly walked down the ladder, and Stevens followed him. From above Captain Hawke let out a bellow.

"Hey, stop those guys!" he roared. "What the blazes— Hey, you! Come back, doggone you! By thunder! Another step and I'll fill you with lead!"

"Come back, boys!" commanded Nelson Lee anxiously.

Browne turned on the ladder, and waved a hand.

"It pains me to disagree with your point of view, Brother Lee, but we feel impelled to join the lads of the village!" he replied.

"Have no fear. These gentry with the lead-supplies are barking to no purpose. You must surely realise they would never waste their precious metal upon us?"

The skipper danced with rage.

"Come back, durn you or I'll fire!" he bellowed.

Browne took no more notice of him than if he had been a street urchin. He was just displaying that determination and nerve of his. Outwardly urbane, he was inwardly quivering with intense excitement. Stevens was not able to control himself so well.

"They'll pot us, old man!" he muttered huskily.

"Courage, Brother Horace!" murmured Browne. "We are safe while we ignore them. It is just a slight matter of psychology. You may remember that I am an ardent student of psychology," he added reminiscently. "Ah, Brother Nipper, this is splendid!"

With the same air of deliberate carelessness, Browne seated himself in one of the waiting canoes, and it shot off. Stevens literally tumbled into the other, and it fortunately kept its balance, although Reggie Pitt himself was nearly tipped out.

"By the Lord Harry!" roared Lord Dorrimore from above. "Good luck to 'em! How's that, Captain Hawke? What about it, Prescott? You're pretty helpless against nerve like that, aren't you?"

"It was risky—terribly risky!" muttered Nelson Lee.

"Sufferin' cats!" panted Captain Hawke. "These blamed boys are worse than a shipload of apes! There's no handlin' 'em!"

The canoes glided off, and there was no firing. Browne had been perfectly convinced that the threatened revolvers were mere bluff. Prescott would never dare to fire upon his prisoners in cold blood. In a fight, perhaps, and in the excitement of a battle; but under no other condition. And Browne had had the courage of his conviction.

"I say, that was a bit thick!" said Nipper, as he plied his paddle. "What a nerve you've got, Browne!"

Napoleon Browne beamed.

"I will confess that for some moments my cuticle performed a shimmy," he admitted. "In other words, a certain amount of gooseyness attacked my downy skin. But all is over now. Brother Stevens and myself have decided to honour you with our distinguished presence."

"You're welcome, old man."

"But for a certain knowledge of that fact, I would not have ventured upon the mission," said Browne carelessly. "I realise that you were in need of a leader——"

"You'd better think again," interrupted Nipper tartly. "We're glad to have you with us, old son, but none of your leadership stunts. I think we'd better get straight back to camp."

The canoes sheered off, and Captain Hawke watched them with a glowering brow. It incensed him highly to realise that he and his display of armed force had been flouted. But, after all, they were only boys. There might have been a different sequel to this episode if Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore had attempted the same thing.

"It doesn't matter a cent!" said Prescott, when he joined the skipper. "Those boys don't count, anyway. Best thing to be rid of them. Two less for us to watch over."

Nevertheless, Prescott frowned heavily as he looked down at the lagoon. The other two canoes were still cruising about nearby—and their proximity annoyed him. From the very beginning, these youngsters were

displaying a total disregard of his importance.

And before long Mr. Prescott was due for another little shock.

CHAPTER XVI.

UMLOSI ACTS.



"REMARKABLE!" said Professor Sylvester Tucker. "In fact, quite extraordinary!"

The St. Frank's science-lecturer stood in a rather crouching attitude on the promenade deck. Before him was a tripod, and mounted upon this was his beloved telescope. The professor was getting ready for his nightly orgy of star-gazing.

It was a matter of little import to him who had command of the Wanderer. As long as he was left alone with his telescopes and his stars he didn't care. The absent-minded gentleman was dimly aware that something was wrong aboard, but he didn't bother his head to think deeply on the subject. He had his telescope, and evening was drawing on. Before long the short tropical twilight would snap out, and the stars would blaze.

The professor was just making a few preliminary observations, so that everything would be right later. He swivelled the telescope round on the tripod slowly, gazing at the distant horizon, where the sea and sky met in a thin, indistinct line. But through the telescope that line sprang into sharp distinctness.

"This—this is really amazing!" ejaculated the professor tensely. "Darkness! Utter darkness in a flash. I confess the phenomenon is absolutely new in my experience!"

It was certainly peculiar. For as the professor gazed, the whole scene was blotted out, and inky blackness descended. The professor decided that some extraordinary scientific factor must be responsible. But the truth was much more simple.

One of Prescott's guards on this deck had merely walked in front of the telescope, and was leaning against the rail, unconscious of the excitement he was arousing in Professor Tucker's breast.

It was really the professor's own fault. He shouldn't have fixed his tripod in the middle of the deck. A few feet nearer the rail and this blotting-out process would never have happened.

The professor felt constrained to call others to view this extraordinary occurrence. He wrenched himself from the telescope, and looked round eagerly. Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore were further down the deck, talking earnestly to Umlosi—

attempting to convince that warrior, in fact, that patience was the only necessary quality now.

And then the professor noticed that the evening sunlight was as strong as ever. He started, and a snort of anger escaped him as he observed the lounging guard near the rail. The explanation of the sudden darkness was obvious.

"The impudence of the fellow!" ejaculated Professor Tucker hotly. "Good gracious me! What next? Deliberately placing himself in the way of my observations!"

He marched forward with a grim expression on his face. He was particularly anxious to get his telescope in exact position before darkness fell. Astronomy was his great hobby.

"Just a moment, young man—just a moment!" said the professor, tapping the guard on the shoulder. "Are you aware that you are obstructing—"

"What's that?"

The man turned, scowling. He was a burly looking rascal, and on the Samoa he had had a big reputation for'ard as a bully. His name was Nillsen, and although it sounded Swedish, the man looked more like a San Francisco tough—which, indeed, he was.

"Say, what's bitin' you?" he demanded staring. "An' lay hands off me, old monkeyface! Get back to your plaything!" he added, with a contemptuous jerk of his head towards the telescope.

The professor listened in astonishment. He was so wrapped up in his own affairs that he had only a vague knowledge of what had recently been happening. He still had his meals, he still slept in the same bed, and he was not interfered with. As for the rest, he didn't care.

"Fellow, you are insolent!" he said sternly. "I shall report your conduct to—to— Good gracious! To whom?" he asked, blinking. "Let me see! There is, of course, Mr. Nelson Lee, and that excellent fellow, Lord Dorrimore. But surely this vessel has a captain?"

"You're dippy!" interrupted the man sourly. "Say, when did they release you from the asylum?"

"This is intolerable!" exclaimed the professor hotly. "I shall report you to— Yes, yes—exactly! To Captain Burton! He will no doubt fling you in irons, or whatever they do to such fellows as you!"

Nillsen laughed harshly.

"Report me to Captain Burton, eh?" he sneered. "Say, that would do a heap o' good. You're coo-coo—that's what's the matter with you, old timer! Gee! You don't even know what's been happening!"

"I know that you are impertinent, and that you are obstructing the view!" said the professor stiffly. "It is not my inten—"

tion to argue with a common sailor. Leave this spot at once, sir!"

"Aw, get back to your nursery!"

"Upon my soul!" gasped Professor Tucker. "This is beyond all endurance! I will soon show you how I deal with such behaviour!"

He seemed to have an idea that he was dealing with a schoolboy, for he rolled up his sleeves, grasped the rascal by the arm, and swung him round. Nilsen was so astonished that he lurched. Then he pulled himself up, and shouted an oath.

"Doggone you for a blamed old fool!" he snarled. "Get out' o' this! I'm on guard here, and I don't want any interference. Quit!"

He gave the professor a violent shove which the old gentleman was absolutely un-

was deliberately kicked, they found it impossible to contain themselves.

"By the Lord Harry," roared Dorrie, "did you see that, Lee? That brute's goin' to pay——"

"Leave it to me!" snapped Nelson Lee.

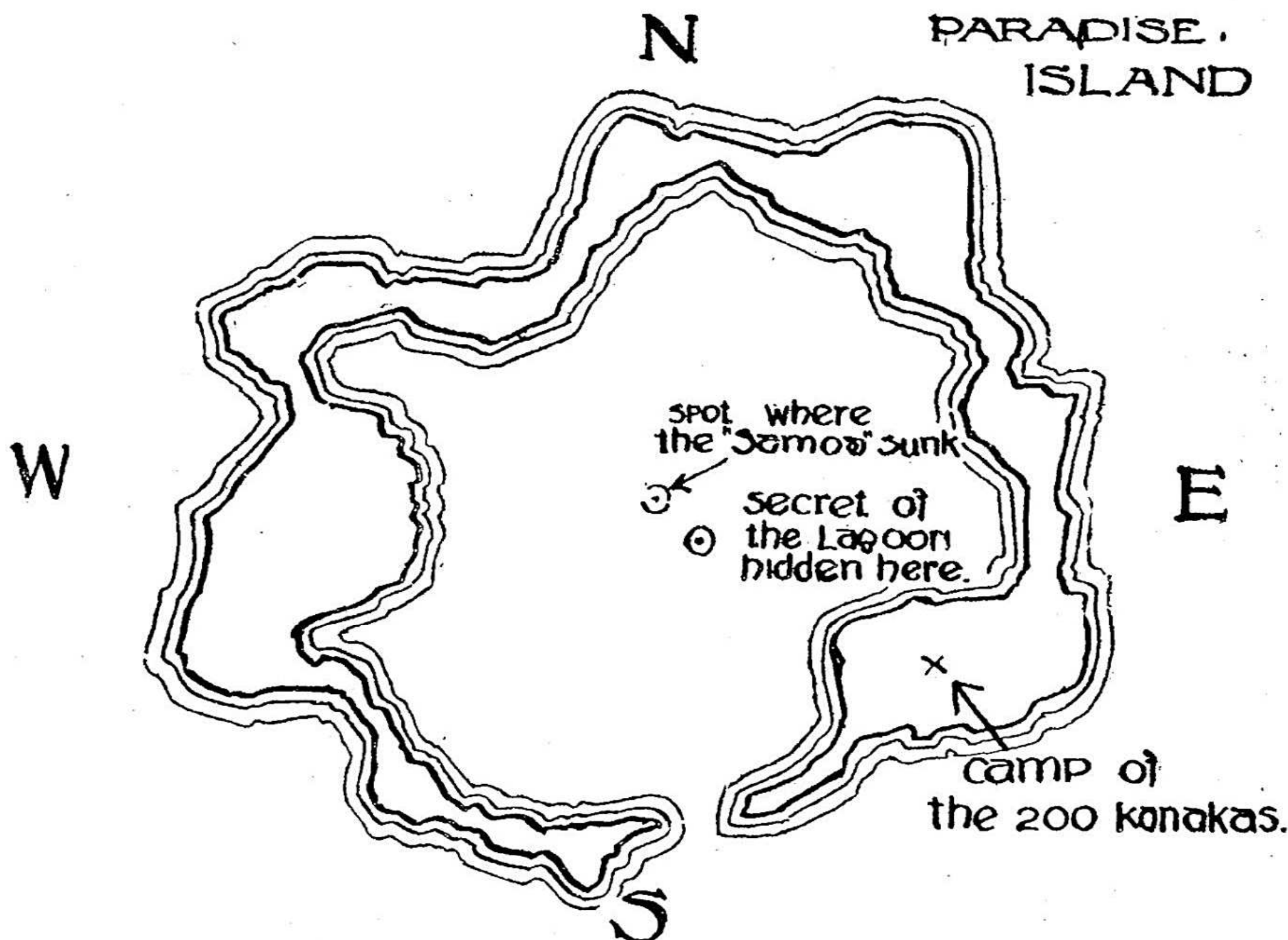
But before either of them could move forward, Umlosi acted.

CHAPTER XVII.

ANOTHER TWO!



LEAPING forward, the Kutana chieftain came face to face with Nilsen just as the latter became aware of the attack. In a flash the man's revolver was swung



prepared for. He staggered, lost his balance, and crashed heavily to the deck. It was such a heavy fall that the professor was badly bruised, and half stunned for the moment. He lay there, helpless.

"Now crawl away!" said Nilsen harshly.

He placed his boot contemptuously against the fallen man, and gave a heave. It was an action which brought forth three simultaneous exclamations of anger.

Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore and Umlosi had seen the professor flung over, and they all started forward. But when the professor

round, and alarm darted out of his ugly little eyes.

"Stand back!" he roared hoarsely.

"Wau! Thou scum!" rumbled Umlosi.

"Dog, and son of a dog!"

The man had no chance to draw trigger. Umlosi's attack was unexpected, and so swift that the whole thing was over in the space of two seconds. He lifted Nilsen off his feet in one clean rush. As an exhibition of strength it was one of the finest things Nelson Lee had ever seen.

Nilsen was swept up, and raised in

Umlosi's arms as though he had been no heavier than a sack of straw. Then, with a roar of triumph, Umlosi flung the man away from him. The burly tough flew through the air, hit against a stanchion, and crashed in a heap.

But Umlosi didn't have everything his own way.

Sweeney, the mate, had just come up the ladder, and with him were two other men. They took in the situation at a glance. Nilsen lay still upon the deck—unconscious.

"Mutiny, by thunder!" gasped Sweeney. "Get that nigger and tie him up! We'll make an example of the fool!"

They all rushed together, and Umlosi was taken at a disadvantage—for he was in the act of assisting Professor Tucker to his feet. The three men seized him from the rear, and swung him round.

"Now we'll see somethin'!" murmured Dorrie gleefully. "Leave him alone, old man—he can see to this all right. By glory, I didn't hope for an entertainment like this!"

Nelson Lee watched anxiously. He had a fear that Sweeney and his men would use their revolvers. Shooting a nigger was not a crime in their eyes. Filling Umlosi with lead was no different to potting a rabbit.

But the Kutana chief was ready in a flash.

At the first touch he swung round. Sweeney himself went staggering back from the effect of a glancing blow. The other two men were flung aside like ninepins. The affair looked like developing into a serious commotion.

And then something unexpected happened.

"Out of the way!" panted Sweeney furiously.

The professor, left alone, had blundered into the mate, and Sweeney was in no mood for gentleness. He gave the unfortunate science master a shove which sent him reeling against the rail. And the force of the contact was so great that the professor heeled over, clutched wildly at nothing, and lost his balance. He disappeared.

◆ Splash!

Dropping clear, Professor Tucker hit the water and plunged beneath.

"Sharks!" roared Dorrie. "Good heavens, we've got to——"

He broke off abruptly, for Umlosi had seen the professor's plight; and Umlosi knew the danger as well as anybody. The lagoon was free of sharks in the shallows, but here, where the Wanderer was anchored, the water was deep and treacherous.

"Thou jackals and pigs!" he shouted fiercely.

Sweeney received one direct blow which knocked him clean out—and, incidentally, he did not recover consciousness until two hours had elapsed. When Umlosi struck a blow, it was like the drive of a sledgehammer. He didn't wait to attack the others, but leapt clean overboard.

Umlosi's one thought was for Professor Tucker—to get him from the lagoon, and

bring him back on board. There were others, however, with the same idea in mind.

Two of the canoes were near by, and they acted promptly. As soon as the professor rose to the surface, a canoe was next to him, and he was hauled in and deposited in the frail craft. It was a ticklish business, for the canoe itself might have been overturned.

And Umlosi was treated in exactly the same way.

He, too, was pulled out of the water by the juniors. They were triumphant. Two more had been taken from the yacht! Lee and Dorrie, leaning over the rail, were gratified to see the canoes paddling away to the north-west shore, where the boys' camp was situated.

"An unexpected finish, old man; but the trouble's over now, anyway," remarked Dorrie. "Good old Umlosi! He went in after the professor like a brick! Those boys deserve some praise, too——"

He broke off as Jonathan Prescott came shouting down the deck.

"Confound your infernal nerve!" roared Prescott. "What's the big idea? Are you guys tryin' to work up a mutiny?"

"Keep your temper, Mr. Prescott," said Nelson Lee quietly. "The whole incident was precipitated by the action of your own men. Professor Tucker was brutally handled, and Umlosi went to his assistance——"

"You'd best stand quiet!" snarled Prescott. "Any more of this funny business, and you'll all be in irons! Get that—an' remember it! I guess I'm sick of this blamed trouble!"

He looked round at Sweeney, who was lying on the deck, apparently dead. Nilsen was just struggling to his feet, dazed and unsteady. The incident was over, but nothing could alter the fact that two more of the prisoners had escaped from the yacht—and were now enjoying the comparative freedom of the island in company with the St. Frank's boys.

In camp, the juniors celebrated. Professor Tucker and Umlosi had entered the sea unexpectedly, but they would certainly have been prisoners on the yacht again but for the timely presence of the canoes.

"It's a victory for us!" declared Nipper enthusiastically. "The stronger our party, the better for everybody in general! And Umlosi's going to be a tower of strength to us!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Absolutely!" said Archie Glenthorne. "The more the merrier, what? I mean to say, we might be able to grab a few more, as it were."

William Napoleon Browne nodded.

"The scheme is certainly free from blisters," he observed. "We only need Brothers Lee and Dorrie to make things hum in general. We must see to it at the first opportunity."

"To-night!" said Handforth promptly. "We'll steal round the yacht, get on board, and grab Mr. Lee and Dorrie. While we're

at it, we'll rescue Mr. Russell and old Barry Stokes, too!"

"I'm afraid it wouldn't work, Handy," said Reggie Pitt, shaking his head. "They'll be on their guard to-night—they'll have every available man on the watch. We shall have to leave it until they grow a bit lax."

And this was the general opinion. After all, a day or two did not matter. The boys could afford to bide their time. This battle of wits against Mr. Jonathan Prescott was developing well.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CAPTAIN HAWKE'S SUGGESTION.



JONATHAN PRESCOTT hung his cigar down with a curse.

"It's those boys, Hawke!" he said tensely. "Those boys—morning, noon, and night! They're like some infernal nightmare! I can't turn any way without meetin' 'em! A crowd of interferin' troublesome brats!"

Captain Hawke nodded.

"They're sure peppy!" he agreed. "We've got to hand it to them young guys that they've kept us pretty busy. And believe me, mister, they ain't done yet. Might as well have a pack of wolves on the island."

It was night now, and everything was quiet. The two men were in Captain Burton's luxurious cabin, and outside the tropical stars were gleaming, and the lagoon was reflecting the myriad points of light. The whole island was heavy with the perfume of night, and the surf boomed musically on the reef.

On board the *Wanderer* the prisoners were all in their quarters, and the guards were warned to remain strictly on the alert. Crusoe Camp was quiet, and the camp-fire had died out. But neither Jonathan Prescott nor Captain Hawke felt comfortable. After the events of the day, they distrusted the school-boys, and were in constant expectation of some fresh escapade.

"A pack of wolves, eh?" repeated Prescott harshly. "It wouldn't worry me a snap if they were wolves, Hawke. We'd soon deal with 'em. But these young guys are imps—demons of mischief. There's no tellin' what they'll do next. Darn my hide, I'm on the jump all the time!"

"See here, mister," said the skipper, nodding. "They've sure got us wonderin' what's going to happen next. Take my advice, and do something drastic. There'll never be peace unless you do."

Prescott swore again.

"Drastic?" he repeated impatiently. "You're mad, Hawke. We can't shoot those boys down. We're taking a big chance on this proposition as it is—without doing any unnecessary killing. I don't like killing—it's the last thing I want. I'm here for those pearls—not for murder!"

The skipper allowed his leathery face to crease itself up.

"I guess you're a queer man, Mr. Prescott," he said. "Who's talkin' about killin'? I know the risks of this job as well as you do—an' the easier we go, the better. The truth of the whole matter is, we've got too many prisoners on our hands to work comfortable. Most of our time is spent lookin' after 'em. And those boys on the island——"

"A score of trouble-makers!" interrupted Prescott snappily. "And now they've two of those older boys with 'em, and that loco professor and the black feller. Say, that African chief is sure dangerous! Sweeney's still 'out,' and don't look like comin' round, either!"

"Umlosi's a bright boy!" agreed Hawke.

"It wouldn't matter so much if we could control that crowd ashore," went on Prescott. "But we can't. They're only boys—and we can't waste our time fighting a pack of kids. That's the whole infernal trouble! What's to be done?"

"There's one way out," said Hawke slowly. "Strikes me as queer you haven't thought of it, Mr. Prescott. There's one way we can get rid of the whole bunch, and have a clear field."

"You're blamed smart!" growled Prescott.

"What's the matter with that little atoll, thirty miles from here?" asked Hawke coolly. "Steam's up on this craft, and we could make the atoll, dump the whole lot down, and be back here by dawn. Or, better still, leave it till the morning. I believe in daylight."

Jonathan Prescott looked at the other sharply.

"The atoll, eh?" he repeated slowly. "By thunder, Hawke, that's an idea!"

"I said it was."

"An idea!" repeated Prescott, pacing up and down. "You mean, take this crowd there? Lee, Lord Dorrimore, Russell, and the rest?"

"Sure thing!"

"We can leave a skeleton crew aboard," said Prescott grimly. "Just enough men to run the ship. They'll cause no trouble—we'll keep 'em down. Then we can come back and go ahead with the pearling, eh?"

"You've hit it first time," said Captain Hawke. "Our trouble is that these boys might raid the ship any hour. But if everybody is dumped on the other island, there'll be nothing to raid her for. And those young guys will just naturally fade away."

"As far as we're concerned, they will," agreed Prescott. "Hawke, it's a good suggestion. There's those girls, too—we can get rid of them in the same way. I guess this is no game for women—and the further they are away, the better. There are plenty of tents and camping goods aboard, and we'll make 'em all snug and comfortable. No need to torture the poor beggars! We'll leave them on the island with a full camp, water to last a month, and a similar amount of food. That'll give us plenty of time."



"Just what I was going to suggest," said Hawke. "Later on, of course, we can fetch 'em off—and mebbe they'll be in a different mood by then. Being marooned for a month on a sand atoll is no cinch, believe me! They'll be as tame as bunny rabbits!"

Prescott was the man to act.

For half an hour he and Hawke considered every point of view, and then they went down and had a look at the stores. The scheme was a sound one, in Prescott's opinion. In order to be unhampered it was necessary to get rid of these prisoners. And what better way than marooning them on the neighbouring island? There, without any boat, and with no prospect of being picked off by a passing vessel, they would be helpless.

And long before dawn the plan was cut and dried, and everything was in training.

CHAPTER XIX.

A SHOCK FOR CRUSOE CAMP.



"THE dawn appears to have broken to some considerable purpose, Brother Horace," observed William Napoleon Browne. "The sun shines, we have passed an excellent night, so all is well."

"I'm worrying about breakfast," said Stevens anxiously. "I'm afraid these kids are a bit slipshod, you know. They'll eat anything. They'll probably give us squiffy sardines, or something like that."

Browne nodded.

"I must confess the same subject has exercised my own mind since rising," he remarked. "But we must live in hopes, Brother Horace. We must pin our faith to Brother Little, and trust that the odour now issuing from the rear is a good herald of the feast to come."

Stevens sniffed the air and unconsciously smacked his lips. The odour of frying bacon was certainly appetising. Fatty Little, the chief cook of the camp, was already getting busy with his squad of assistants. The fellows took it in turns to do the necessary camp work.

A good many Fourth-Formers were already out, all of them airily attired in bathing costumes. Browne and Stevens were similarly equipped, having borrowed the garments for the occasion.

Bob Christine and Buster Boots came bustling out of the primitive cane and bamboo house which formed the camp head-quarters.

"Hallo, you Fifth-Formers!" sang out Boots boisterously. "Making yourselves at home? Race you into the water, Brownny!"

Browne winced.

"Much as I hate to correct you, Brother Boots, I feel that a little discipline is

necessary," he said, in a pained voice. "Allow me to remind you that my name is Browne—William Napoleon Browne, with the accent distinctly on the Napoleon. 'Brownie' is not only contemptuously familiar, but strangely reminiscent of a certain childish order of Girl Guides."

Boots grinned.

"I didn't call you a Brownie—I called you Brownny!" he chuckled.

"I appreciate the delicate distinction, but I fear it is one that can only be fully valued in print, Brother Buster," said Browne gently. "Kindly refrain from— But, stay! What do I see? What, Brother Horace, is this remarkable scene which unfolds itself before my manly gaze?"

He shaded his eyes with a hand, and looked out across the lagoon. He was not the only one who was startled. For Browne to break off in the middle of a sentence was almost unprecedented, and proved the importance of the occasion.

A rush of steam was issuing noisily from one of the Wanderer's exhaust pipes. At the same time, a low, clanking noise came across the lagoon on the still morning air.

"That's funny!" said Nipper, strolling up. "I wonder what old Prescott's up to? That's one of the donkey engines working!"

"You may be right, Brother Nipper, but it reminds me of an American motor-car," said Browne. "But we are not particularly interested in the working of the donkey engine. It would be more to the point to discover *why* it is issuing this plaintive, Ford-like clank."

"They're raising the anchor!" said Tommy Watson excitedly.

"Rats!"

"Don't talk rot!"

"You're dotty!"

"All right—I'm dotty!" snorted Tommy Watson. "But I tell you they've got steam up, and they're raising the anchor—"

"What's that?" demanded Handforth, bustling up with one shoe on and one shoe off. "Great pip! What's happening to the Wanderer? She's got steam up!"

Browne beamed.

"Congratulations, Brother Handforth, on your wonderful powers of perception," he said kindly. "Were it not unkind, I would give voice to the old proverb, and ask you to tell us something we didn't know."

All the juniors were getting excited. The activity on the Wanderer was considerable. Even at this distance figures could be seen on the bridge, and the musical clang of the engine-room telegraph came across the water. And presently the lagoon became churned into white foam at the yacht's rear.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Reggie Pitt, staring. "She's moving!"

"She's under way!"

"Oh, my goodness!"

"But—but why?" asked Stevens blankly.

"What the dickens are they shifting their

anchorage for? And why should they move from one part of the lagoon to the other? Perhaps they're getting nearer to the oyster-beds?"

Browne shook his head.

"If they are getting nearer by moving in the opposite direction, I will agree with you, Brother Horace," he said. "But it seems to me that our bosom friends are making a direct line for the break in the reef. It is a painful statement, but I believe we are being marooned."

"Marooned!"

"They're going away and leaving us behind!"

"Great Scott!"

we can't very well stop the Wanderer from leaving."

"But—but what about our plans for rescuing everybody?" roared Handforth indignantly. "How can we get everybody off the yacht if the yacht isn't there?"

Browne shrugged his shoulders.

"I am considered to be one of the world's greatest riddle experts, but I frankly give this one up," he replied. "I may further remark that this is hardly the occasion for asking riddles of any kind, Brother Handforth."

The last lingering doubts vanished. The Wanderer was now increasing her speed, and making off through the break in the

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The explanation of the mysterious activity hit the juniors with the force of a blow. But it was clearly obvious that Napoleon Browne's statement was the truth. The yacht was moving from her anchorage, and making for the open Pacific!

The surprise was a staggering one.

"I say, they're going!" exclaimed Handforth helplessly. "They're—they're leaving us behind! And they've got Dorrie and Mr. Lee and the girls and everybody on board! What can we do?"

"We can do nothing but watch," replied Nipper quietly. "Our canoes may be useful for paddling about the lagoon, but

reef at the full of the tide. She was leaving the island—and Crusoe Camp was aghast with consternation.

CHAPTER XX.

MAROONED!



LORD DORRIMORE paced up and down with his hands deep in his trousers pockets, his brow furrowed and his eyes blazing.

"The hounds—the filthy, confounded hounds!" he said fiercely. "By

glory, Lee, this is more than I bargained for. An' we're stuck here, unable to lift a finger. It's enough to make a man swear until he's blue!"

For once the usually placid Dorrie was worked up into a towering rage. Nelson Lee had seldom seen the sporting peer in a temper—about twice in a dozen years. But now his rage was startling. Dorrie was simply infuriated to a dangerous point.

They were shifting the *Wanderer*! They were laying their fingers upon her, and moving her from her anchorage! Already they were in the open sea, steaming westward.

And Lord Dorrimore was hardly able to control himself. His beloved yacht was not only in the hands of these rogues, but they were stealing her! They were taking her away to an unknown destination. Three times Dorrie had tried to force an interview with Jonathan Prescott, but the guards had kept him back. And Prescott remained on the bridge.

Nelson Lee was concerned, too—but in a different way. His chief anxiety was on account of the boys who were left on Paradise Island. They were beyond aid now, with a vengeance!

"Heaven help the youngsters if those two hundred savages gain the upper hand of their guards!" said Nelson Lee, frowning. "They were brought here as labourers, I know, but they're a primitive, savage lot. And their recent treatment has done nothing to make them respect the white man."

Dorrie grunted.

"No need to concern yourself about those Kanakas," he growled. "They're kept well in hand, and it wouldn't pay them to attack the boys' camp—even if they got loose. Where the deuce are we bound for? That's what I want to find out!"

His lordship paced up and down savagely.

"There's Umlosi, too!" he went on. "We haven't even got him with us—although, if it comes to that, he's better where he is. We can trust him to look after the boys. The main thing is—where are we goin'?"

"Prescott has some scheme in hand, no doubt——"

"Scheme?" interrupted Dorrie, coming to a halt. "What scheme? Man alive, we're a thousand miles from any kind of land! That means he's takin' us a thousand miles at the least! There'd be no sense in cruisin' out into the open Pacific if he didn't mean to make any port!"

"I'm afraid you're too upset to reason properly, old man," said Nelson Lee quietly. "To enter any port would be Prescott's last thought. What kind of explanation would he give to the port authorities? How would he account for our presence on board? And what should we say? No, Dorrie, stealing a ship is about the most difficult thing in the world, nowadays—and when the owner and crew of that ship are on board the difficulties are

insurmountable. Prescott would never dream of entering a civilised port."

"Then what's the idea of this infernal cruise?"

"I've no more idea than you have—but a little patience will doubtless bring in some reward," replied Lee smoothly. "Prescott isn't moving the *Wanderer* for the mere fun of it. He's got an object. And if we wait, we shall learn the explanation in the natural order of things."

Although Dorrie fretted and fumed, he knew that Lee's advice was good, and he managed to simmer down. But his exasperation was as great as ever. He knew that a few of the engineers and stokers had been forced into service, and the yacht was being run under protest by these staunch men—probably at the point of a revolver.

Everybody else on board was just as startled. Mrs. Stokes and the Moor View girls were thrilled and excited. Irene & Co. had been much in the background of late—owing to the fact that they had kept strictly to their own quarters ever since the yacht had been captured. There had been little or no opportunity for the girls to distinguish themselves. Perhaps their turn would come later, but at the moment they could do nothing.

The *Wanderer* was now skimming along at a fine speed. She was the fastest private yacht in existence—in fact, Dorrie was extremely proud of her. All out, she could almost rival a destroyer. Yet she seemed to glide through the water without the least effort.

Lee was the first to notice a slight diminishing of speed. He leaned over the rail, and gazed across the sunlit sea, straight ahead. Then he started. Was it fancy, or did he actually see one or two slender palms in the distance—apparently rising from the very sea itself?

The schoolmaster-detective was amazed. He had thought that Paradise Island was the only land in these seas. And yet, at no greater distance than thirty miles, palm trees were visible!

The *Wanderer* had covered most of those thirty miles already, and the palms in the distance were but a mile or two ahead. They had a strange appearance of unreality, for there seemed to be no land.

"Dorrie—Dorrie!" said Nelson Lee quickly. "Look over here—straight ahead! What do you see?"

His lordship leaned over, and uttered an exclamation.

"Ye gods!" he ejaculated. "Land!"

"We haven't had to wait very long, after all," remarked Nelson Lee smoothly. "Prescott's action in bringing the *Wanderer* out is not so incomprehensible as we first thought. There is evidently another atoll here—the baby brother of our own, so to speak. It seems to be a tiny, insignificant speck in the ocean. But it is land, nevertheless."

And soon afterwards they were able to gain a better view. The Wanderer dropped her anchor in fairly deep water, just opposite the break in the reef. The atoll lay before them—a mere ridge of sand and coral, rising no higher than fifteen feet above sea level at any point. A few palms grew, and there was a shallow lagoon—altogether too shallow to admit any ship.

Nelson Lee's eyes were grim.

"There's not much guess work necessary now," he said quietly. "Prescott's object is clear. He means to dump us down on this tiny atoll, and leave us here—marooned. Then he will return, and deal with the boys. Dorrie, things are beginning to look infernally ugly."

But Lord Dorrimore had no reply to make. The situation left him rather dumb.

CHAPTER XXI.

HANDFORTH & CO.'S DISCOVERY.



CRUSOE CAMP was strangely silent.

All the St. Frank's fellows were there, as usual, and there was plenty of activity. Some of the juniors were bathing in the lagoon, others were lying on the sands, and there were a few groups, talking together in low voices.

The usual noise and bustle was absent. Everybody spoke in hushed voices. And every face was grave.

"It's no good worrying ourselves," Nipper was saying. "The Wanderer's gone, and we don't know when she's coming back. But all the shouting in the world won't make any difference. We might as well accept the situation calmly."

"There's nothing else to be done," growled Tommy Watson. "We should need a giddy destroyer to chase the Wanderer. But what does it mean? Why has Prescott taken her away?"

"Goodness knows!" replied Nipper. "There's no land for hundreds and hundreds of miles, as far as we know. Even if there was, it's doubtful if Prescott would venture near it. In my opinion, this move of his is just a dodge."

"A dodge?" asked Bob Christine.

"Yes," said Nipper grimly. "We've been a bit troublesome to him, and he's taken the Wanderer away so that our teeth will be drawn. Perhaps he thinks that a day or two of solitude on the island will reduce us to submission. He expects us to be tame when he gets back."

This, indeed, seemed to be the only reasonable explanation—it was no use striving for any other. The marooned St. Frank's fellows could do nothing but make the best of their unexpected position.

There were two reasons for their subdued state.

The uncertainty about the Wanderer's movements gave them plenty of food for thought. And the very absence of the Wanderer altered the entire appearance of the island. The fellows would never have believed that the yacht's departure could have made such a tremendous difference.

Previously, their camp on the fringe of the palm grove had seemed rather jolly. It was quite ripping to be here, on this desert island, amid the glories of the tropics, and with the blue of the lagoon at their feet. There was a romantic touch about the whole business.

But—the Wanderer had been lying in the lagoon all the time. She had rested at anchor there, representative of everything that was modern and up-to-date—in direct contrast to the primitive island. The boys had always had the Wanderer to look at to assure them that their link with civilisation and the outer world was unbroken.

But with the yacht absent—

The difference was a thousand times greater than any of the boys would have believed. That link was gone—and the whole island looked different. It was still as picturesque, still as romantic, still as gorgeous. But instead of being just a holiday camp, it changed into a kind of prison. The sensation of being cut off from the world was intensified to a painful degree.

The island was just an uncharted atoll—far from all the trade routes, and unknown to shipping. It was a speck of insignificant coral in the vast Pacific. And the juniors, during that first morning of the Wanderer's departure, felt a kind of change creeping over them.

Many of them began to hate the island with a fierce, intense loathing. It had lost all its charm—all its glory. Their only desire was to get away. Others felt a strange, unaccountable lure in the place. They weren't so unhappy. They felt that it wouldn't matter very much if they were left here for all time.

It is generally the same with all people in the South Sea Islands.

One is either repelled, or attracted. And the longer one remains isolated, the stronger the feeling grows. In the course of a few years, indeed, a man either becomes a slave to the languor of the tropics, or he nearly goes mad with the clamorous, insistent call of civilisation.

The St. Frank's fellows, of course, felt none of these acute sensations. But the yacht's absence brought home to them the infinite possibilities. They were alone—and the thunder of the surf on the reef sounded like a voice, telling them of their complete isolation.

Handforth was probably the least affected of all. After his first anger and indignation had died down, he became calm. He felt none of the sensations of

the others. Edward Oswald was a practical matter-of-fact youth, and he took a plain view of the situation.

"They'll come back before long, of course," he declared. "We don't know what Prescott's game is, but he wouldn't leave the island for long. He's after those pearls, and the rotter wouldn't dodge off and leave 'em behind."

And this, when it was analysed, was a really common-sense point of view. Handforth took a direct course to the root of things, and although his conclusions were sometimes wild, they frequently hit the mark.

"I believe Prescott's forsaken the pearls altogether," said Church gloomily. "He's pinched the Wanderer instead. The yacht's worth a fortune, you know, and the pearls are a bit of a problem, at the best—"

"Rats!" interrupted Handforth. "What's the good of pinching the yacht? Prescott couldn't do anything with her. She's famous—she's known in every giddy port. There's no part of the world Dorrie hasn't been to in the Wanderer. No, my sons—he'll come back. Prescott, I mean. He'll turn up to-morrow or the next day. In the meantime, we'll get ready to give him a warm reception."

The chums of Study D were in their canoe, paddling idly along the lagoon. And while Handforth was calm and unconcerned, Church and McClure were already falling victims to that one great terror of the South Seas—loneliness.

And at this point, fortunately, they made a rather astonishing discovery. For it enabled them to forget their present predicament—it provided the whole camp with a new thrill.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SPANISH GALLEON.



"LET'S climb on this old hulk, and explore," said Handforth briskly.

Their canoe had drifted near the wreck of the Samoa—the charred, pitiful remains of Jonathan Prescott's once-proud schooner. The stern of the vessel was well out of the water, for in this part of the lagoon the sea was comparatively shallow. "All right," said Church listlessly. "Might as well."

The canoe was edged against the Samoa's side, and made fast. Handforth & Co. climbed up, and were soon standing on the steeply sloping deck. Rather to their surprise, the wreck wasn't such a burnt char as they had imagined. Indeed, the stern was only scorched. The deck planks were as solid as ever, and even the paintwork of the hull was only blistered.

"Pity this giddy ship was burnt up and sunk," said McClure. "She was a neat

craft, and if she had remained afloat, Prescott might have allowed the Wanderer to stay where she was. The sinking of the Samoa made all the difference."

"Don't keep talking about the Wanderer," growled Handforth. "You chaps make me tired. She'll be back this evening or to-morrow morning—mark my words! I don't think anything about it—I know!"

"How do you know?" demanded Church.

"Never mind that!" said Handforth tartly. "If you want a black eye, Walter Church, you'd better say so! I know what I'm talking about, and I don't want any of your rot!"

Church managed a faint grin.

"Oh, all right, we'll let it go at that," he said. "The good old Wanderer will be back either to-night or to-morrow morning. Fine! We might as well get ashore, and prepare for the celebration."

Handforth frowned.

"If you're going to be sarcastic, my lad, I shall have something to say!" he remarked sternly. "You fellows are getting a bit out of hand, I've noticed! That's one of the results of being away from Study D! Unless I'm careful, you'll get beyond control before the new term!"

"The new term!" said McClure dreamily. "My hat! This South Sea business isn't such a wonderful adventure, after all! I'd give anything to be back at St. Frank's—and walking across the Triangle, and dropping into Mrs. Hake's tuck shop."

"And dodging into the common-room," said Church reminiscently. "The playing fields, too—cricket and football! There'll be changes at St. Frank's when the new term starts, too—new Houses, and all sorts of improvements. By jingo! I wish we were back!"

Handforth breathed hard.

"You—you babbling idiots!" he snorted. "What's the good of talking like that! We're stuck here, on this rotten island, with about one chance in a million of ever getting off! They've pinched the Wanderer, and we shall never see her back again! We're marooned here, and we shan't get back to civilisation until we've grown whiskers!"

Church and McClure stared.

"But I thought you said the Wanderer was coming back to-night," said Church.

"Eh?" said Handforth, with a start. "Look here, that's enough! You fellows egged me on, and made me say all sorts of things I don't mean! Another word, my lads, and I'll biff you both into the lagoon!"

He leaned over the Samoa's side, and stared down into the crystal water—indignant with himself for having betrayed a few of his inner feelings. To tell the truth, Edward Oswald was feeling a bit homesick on his own account. He hadn't noticed it while the Wanderer had been

in the lagoon—but one or two qualms were now beginning to make themselves apparent.

He stared down at the sea bed aggressively. Far below, through the transparent water, he watched the flight of fishes—fishes of glorious colour, that flashed by like shooting stars. And the coral on the lagoon bed was visible, too—coral of every exquisite hue and shape.

"Beautiful, eh?" grunted Handforth. "Who said so? Not long ago I thought it was ripping—but now it doesn't affect me a bit!"

"But—but—" began Church.

"Let's get into the canoe, and go directly over it!" said Handforth excitedly. "We can see better then. I tell you there's a sunken ship down there!"

"But it's impossible!" protested McClure. "It's all coral—anybody can see it's coral! It's just a queer formation—that's all!"

But they jumped into the canoe, and quickly paddled out until they were directly over the spot where they had seen this strange coral formation. The canoe was brought to a standstill, and all the ripples



The figure came stumbling on drunkenly, and at last drew near. Pitt and Grey ran forward to meet the man, who proved to be a member of Captain Hawke's crew from the ill-fated Samoa.

"What's that queer shape down there?" asked Church.

"Queer shape?"

"Yes, over there," said Church, pointing down into the water to a spot a fathom or two south of the wreck. "Can't you see? Coral, of course—but it's the queerest shape you ever saw—just like the bows of an old-time ship. Yes, by jingo, and there's the stump of a mast, too!"

"Rubbish!" said Handforth gruffly.

But he gazed with interest, and then started.

"By George!" he ejaculated suddenly. "You're right, though! Look there, Mac! It's just like a ship! Well I'm jiggered! It is a ship!"

were allowed to die away. They could see nothing unless the surface was still.

Directly overhead the view was much better.

So clear and transparent was the water that they could see straight down. The sunlight filtered through like something tangible, and the whole body of water was suffused with the rays. The shadow of the canoe was distinctly visible on a sand patch below.

But just near this rose the coral formation they had glimpsed from the Samoa. And now that they could look at it direct they stared in wonder. For, in all truth, a ship lay beneath them—a ship perfect in

every detail, except for the missing masts. She had a curiously high prow, and her general outline was vaguely familiar to the boys.

"I've seen pictures like this!" muttered McClure. "I know what she is. A giddy Spanish galleon! Look! Can't you see? She's an old pirate ship—one that must have sailed these waters three or four hundred years ago."

"But it's coral!" protested Church. "It's all coral!"

And that, indeed, was the most startling feature of the discovery. From stem to stern the sunken galleon was nothing but coral—coral of every imaginable colour. The galleon had been lying on the lagoon bed so long that every single inch of her had become encrusted with the all-conquering coral—she was practically a part of the reef itself. For centuries the coral polyps had carried on their slow, unceasing process. The result was a miracle of coral—a thing of wonder.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE PROFESSOR GETS BITTEN.



HANDFORTH & Co. were fascinated. In any temperate zone, the old galleon would have rotted away long since. But here her timbers had been covered and pro-

ected by the coral, and she was as complete and intact as when she had slipped down through the water to her last resting-place.

The galleon was resting on an even keel, and no portion of her seemed to be smashed in. She certainly hadn't been a wreck when she sank.

"I'll bet she was scuttled!" said Handforth grimly. "I've often read about Spanish galleons being scuttled by the crew. I'll bet they murdered the captain, pinched all the doubloons and pieces of eight, and sunk the giddy ship."

"Doubloons?" said Church excitedly.

"Pieces of eight?" breathed McClure.

"Old English coins," explained Handforth carelessly.

"Rats! Doubloons were Spanish!" said Church. "But never mind about that. How do we know that all the treasure was lifted before the galleon was sunk? There may be whole cabinfuls of booty down in that hulk!"

This possibility left the chums of Study D more breathless than ever. And the suggestion wasn't such a wild one, after all. Handforth & Co. were now thoroughly excited. They lost no time in dipping their paddles into the water and making for camp.

The news was soon broadcast throughout the juniors, and at first they refused to believe a word of the story. As a matter of fact, they were all feeling glum and depressed, for the anxiety concerning the Wanderer was still acute.

But Church and McClure supported Handforth's story so vehemently that the others were bound to take notice. If Handforth alone had told the yarn, the rest of the chaps would have laughed. As it was, practically all the camp set off in the boat and the canoes to have a look at this coral marvel.

The discovery could not have come at a better time.

It lifted the fellows out of themselves, and gave them something to do. And before long the excitement grew, for the story proved to be accurate.

Browne and Stevens, emerging from the palm grove, were astonished to see the camp deserted and everybody in the canoes. And they were all centring on one point. Browne raised his eyebrows.

"What is this, Brother Horace?" he asked. "Our nimble young friends appear to have lost their lassitude. A good sign—an excellent indication of reviving spirits. Once again the red corpuscles surge along at the usual speed. It is a glad sight, Brother Horace."

"I don't expect it's anything much," growled Stevens. "We might as well go out to see, though. It'll be something to do."

"It is possible that you are energetic enough to make the swim, but I fear I must decline," said Browne. "In a thoughtless moment, our brothers of the Fourth have collared all the available canoes. Alas! we are left stranded upon the beach."

The two Fifth-Formers could only stand there and watch—to be joined presently by Umlosi. The African chief had scarcely spoken a word since dawn. He, like the others, was worrying about the disappearance of the Wanderer. It filled him with a vague sense of dread.

But there were a few of the holiday party who carried on as though nothing had happened. Willy & Co. were as carefree as ever, and Professor Sylvester Tucker was altogether too absent-minded to realise the position. Indeed, he had quite forgotten that the Wanderer had gone.

At the moment he was being escorted round the western section of the island by Willy Handforth, Chubby Heath, and Juicy Lemon. The three fags thought it would be rather a lark to spoof the old professor. The idea was to land him in the middle of the densest section and then give him the slip.

But this original plan was abandoned—mainly owing to an unsuspected trait of the professor's. He began to elicit a great

interest in beetles, centipedes, and spiders, and other horrors of the insect world.

Willy seized every one he could lay hands on, to the infinite disgust of Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon. At first the professor displayed no enthusiasm, but Willy soon worked him up.

"Blessed if I can understand you, sir!" said Handforth minor. "You're great nuts on science, aren't you?"

"Science?" repeated Professor Tucker. "Exactly—exactly! But don't bother now, my lad—I'm concerned about my telescope—"

"Never mind about your telescope, sir," interrupted Willy. "Astronomy's your hobby—not your life-work. Just look at these beetles. To a scientist they ought to be marvellously interesting."

The professor adjusted his spectacles.

"Yes, yes, truly remarkable!" he declared. "Dear me! This is surely the rarest of all specimens? Good gracious! I believe you have secured a perfect example of the tropical coleoptera."

"Exactly, sir," nodded Willy.

"Wonderful—wonderful!" declared Professor Tucker, as he brought out a powerful lens and focussed it upon the unfortunate beetle. "And do you assure me, young man, that there are many others of this type to be found?"

Willy sniffed.

"Why, this one's a poor thing compared to most!" he replied scoffingly. "We've seen some marvellous things in these groves. Centipedes, scorpions, and goodness knows what else! Supposing we go on a hunt?"

"A hunt?" repeated the professor. "Certainly not! I don't believe in hunting. I once wrote a paper on the cruelty of—"

"I mean a hunt for specimens, sir," said Willy.

"Ah, yes, to be sure!" beamed the professor. "We will do so by all means, my boy. Then I will return to the yacht and see about my preparations for measuring the sunspots."

He went off with Willy contentedly enough, and the fag considered it unnecessary to remind him that the Wanderer was no longer present. Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon went back to camp—fed up with the whole affair. As they complained, if Willy was going back to his insect-hunting habits, it was time for them to leave him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.



WILLY HANDFORTH was certainly "going back."

At one time he had made a hobby of collecting every insect imaginable. But, to the relief of his chums, he had dropped this in favour of

animal pets. He had brought Marmaduke, the monkey, and Priscilla, the parrot, with him, and both of these pets had already created many diversions.

But when Willy showed signs of returning to his former love of insects, Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon gave him up as a bad job. They were in constant dread of being bitten, or stung, and they never knew how many crawly things would be wandering about their quarters. When Willy fairly started, he made things hum in general.

The professor's awakening interest only tended to increase Willy's. Consequently, in less than half an hour the elderly professor and the fag were grubbing about in every bush, searching diligently for fresh tropical insect wonders. They imbued one another with enthusiasm.

The hunt became so vigorous, in fact, that before long they lost one another. The professor went in one direction, and Willy in another. And when they wanted to join forces again, they found themselves alone. Willy searched everywhere, but could see no sign of his elderly companion.

He shouted several times, but received no answer. If the professor had been on the alert, things would have been different. But he had quite forgotten about Willy, and didn't even notice the fag's calls, although he must have heard them.

He went pottering along, oblivious of everything except the task in hand. He was discovering that the woods and the groves were full of fascination. This was the first time he had really examined the island, and he was astonished. The trees and the various tropical growths attracted his attention as much as the insects.

It was twilight here—a kind of green, transparent, subdued light. Gazing upwards, the professor was fascinated by the roof of foliage, far, far above. It was like a green ceiling, and here and there were points of light as the breeze parted the fronds.

"Wonderful!" declared the professor. "I'm astounded that I should have wasted so much time on that absurd yacht! This is nature—true nature! Come, my boy, let us go further."

He apparently thought that Willy was still with him, and he walked on and entered a wonderful chapparel grove. The twilight seemed to be deeper, and other trees grew in profusion. The tall bread-fruit trees, shadowy and grand, the eternal coconut palms, and the wild vines. The professor was particularly interested in the diamonded trunk of an artu tree. And he went fairly raving over the glorious orchids which grew in profusion.

"We must certainly come here again, young man," declared the professor. "I shall examine these flowers with greater interest. We need time—plenty of time."

These things cannot be done in a moment. Ah, what is this? A banana tree, by all appearances."

He paused and examined the enormous leaves of the banana tree. And he chuckled as he pulled a bunch of the ripe fruit. They hung there in great yellow clusters.

"Help yourself, my boy!" he invited genially.

He looked round and started.

"Dear me!" he murmured. "This is strange! The young man appears to have run off somewhere. No matter! He will probably return in due course. This is certainly an enlightening experience."

He walked on aimlessly, continuing his way round the island, lost to all sense of time and distance. By now he was practically due north, where the island narrowed down to a mere ridge. And he abruptly came out of the grove—which had been thinning away for some time—and found himself upon the outer beach. The surf was thundering upon the reef with unceasing splendour.

"Upon my word!" ejaculated the professor. "The sea is getting quite rough. An hour or so ago the beach was calm, with scarcely a ripple. A storm is blowing up, no doubt. One never knows in the tropics."

He failed to appreciate the fact that he was confusing the inner beach with the outer beach. The latter was always smothered with foam, as the Pacific rollers boomed in. On the other hand, the inner beach was generally calm and placid.

The professor turned away after a time and penetrated inland, with the vague intention of seeking for further specimens. But almost before he knew it he arrived at the inner beach, for the ridge was narrow here at the north. The professor walked down the sands and came to a sudden halt. The lagoon lay before him, calm and gentle.

"Well, good gracious me!" he exclaimed blankly. "This—this is remarkable, indeed! I left the beach only a few moments ago, and here I am, back again! And during that brief spell, the sea has become perfectly calm! There is no end to these tropical wonders!"

Professor Tucker became aware that some figures were near him. There were several men on the sands, and the professor walked towards them. They watched his approach without moving.

"Ah, some of the natives, of course!" declared the professor benevolently. "Doubtless this is one of their villages!"

He was still very vague in his ideas about the island. He didn't know that it had always been uninhabited, and that its present occupants were but temporary residents. The group he came upon were certainly natives—six of the Solomon Islanders, in fact, including Jat, the repulsive-looking black fellow who acted as a kind of leader.

"Good-morning, my friends—good-morning!" beamed the professor. "An unexpected meeting, eh? But what is wrong?" he added. "Good gracious, a wound of some kind, eh?"

He noticed that one of the men was lying on his back, his features screwed up in agony. Another man was attempting some rough kind of treatment. The others lounged about, heedless.

CHAPTER XXV.

SIGNS OF TROUBLE.



PROFESSOR TUCKER was a kindly man, and the sight of suffering always brought him up to the scratch, as it were. He forgot all his own concerns, and devoted himself entirely to the relief of the sufferer.

Rather to the astonishment of the islanders, he sat down on the beach near the injured man, and made an examination of the leg. The unfortunate Kanaka had received a bad gash—probably on a piece of sharp coral, during the diving operations. The calf of his leg was torn, with a deep, ugly wound, two inches long. It had been badly neglected.

"This won't do—this won't do!" said the professor briskly. "Good heavens, I am appalled! We need antiseptic—and the leg must be bound. You must have rest, my friend—rest for two or three days."

Jat came nearer, and laughed.

"Him strong," he said. "Get plenty well two days. No trouble."

"But I shall trouble!" declared the professor firmly. "Fetch me some water, and look sharp! Water, you understand?"

"Water," repeated Jat. "Heap savvy."

He lounged down to the lagoon and brought some water back in a big shell. And the professor proceeded to delicately wash the wound. Having done this to his satisfaction—and to the evident pain of the sufferer—he produced a pocket-case and extracted a small phial.

"This stuff will work wonders," he said kindly. "It will smart a little at first—but you must take no notice. It will take all the pain away in less than an hour."

Considering that Jat was the only one who could understand English, the professor's words were rather wasted. The patient lay there, allowing his benefactor to have his own way. The man was content that everything was being done for his own good.

That phial contained a special balsam which Professor Tucker always carried, as it was a wonderful antidote for mosquito bites, and such like. Soaking a portion of his handkerchief, the professor applied the stuff.

But the first touch was enough.

The man's wound had been allowed to get into bad condition, and it was throbbing severely. And that balsam provided the finishing touch. The smarting was so intense that the agony was well-nigh unbearable.

The patient leapt to his feet with one wild howl, and screamed madly.

"Good heavens!" shouted the professor. "What on earth—"

"Him say you kill him!" exclaimed Jat.

"Kill him!" repeated the professor. "Nonsense! This stuff—"

He couldn't make himself heard, for the patient was still shouting wildly, although the first pain was beginning to fade.

"Him plenty angry," said Jat. "Him say you play trick."

The professor was rather grieved. He had been doing his best to relieve the fellow's sufferings, and this was the result. He was accused of trying to murder the unfortunate!

And then the affair took a serious turn.

The wounded man suddenly leapt at Professor Tucker, his eyes rolling, his face contorted with mad rage. Under ordinary circumstances, he would not have made the attack, but at the moment he was half-demented. Jat shouted a warning, but it was no good.

As the professor was in the act of rising, the man made his attack. The unfortunate science master was lifted clean off his feet and hurled down the beach, head over heels. And at the same instant the attacker sprang after his victim.

It is probable that Professor Sylvester Tucker would have ended his earthly existence at that moment but for the timely arrival of two newcomers. They were Willy Handforth and Umlosi. Willy, in fact, had found Umlosi, and had persuaded him to join in the search for the absent-minded science master. And they had both been attracted by the strange screams from the beach.

They emerged from the neighbouring grove just in time to see the professor knocked down.

"Great Scott!" gasped Willy. "They're going to murder him!"

"Pigs!" rumbled Umlosi fiercely. "Wau! Have these foul dogs no more respect for the great white chief? Methinks 'twill be necessary to teach the dogs a lesson!"

He was just feeling ready for a scrap. It was just what Umlosi needed. He felt inclined to attack without an excuse—but here he had the finest excuse of all! A common savage had attacked a white man! It was just sufficient to earn the brute his death-blow.

Umlosi reached the spot in five great strides just in time to prevent the maddened Kanaka from making his second attack. What happened next filled Willy Handforth with startled amazement.

Umlosi seized the wretch, swung him round, and flung him up into the air as though he had been an atom of rubbish. The man rose high, all legs and arms, and turned half a dozen wild somersaults. Then he crashed down, and half-buried himself in the white coral sand—and lay deathly still.

Jat and the others hunched themselves together as though to make a combined attack. But Umlosi took one step towards them, and

they fled. Instinctively, they knew that this black giant was a man to be feared.

"Curs!" shouted Umlosi contemptuously. "Jackals and sons of jackals! Run swiftly, for thou art fit for naught else!"

He assisted Professor Tucker to his feet, and took no notice of the fellow who was half-buried in the sands.

"That—that was very splendid of you, Umlosi," panted the professor. "Thank you—thank you! Upon my word, that man was positively dangerous! And only a moment before I had been washing his wounded leg!"

"Thou wert mistaken to waste thy time upon such base material, N'Kose!" growled Umlosi. "Methinks the scum will work up trouble ere long. Already do I smell blood! Wau! Let them do as they will! We fear not!"

Willy Handforth was silent for once. He couldn't help thinking of the repulsive expression of hatred which had suffused Jat's face as the man had glanced round. These Solomon Islanders were savages of the worst type. What if they got out of hand?

It was a thought that caused Willy to go slightly pale. There were two hundred blacks on the island—and a mere handful of school-boys. Without the Wanderer in the lagoon, what would be the result of a sudden outbreak of warfare?

The prospect was so awful that Willy simply refused to dwell upon it.

CHAPTER XXVI.

PRESCOTT'S MASTER STROKE.



JONATHAN PRESCOTT laughed contentedly.

"Fine, Hawke—fine!" he declared. "I've got to hand it to you that the job's been done real smart! The camp sure looks pretty, don't it? I guess they've got nothing to grumble at!"

He was standing on the Wanderer's bridge, looking across the reef towards the tiny island which lay beyond. It was afternoon now, and the sun was getting towards the west. The heat was stifling, and the very air quivered. All the rails of the Wanderer were like fire.

The atoll was no longer deserted.

The lagoon was small, and almost entirely encircled by the low coral reef. In one or two places it widened out into sand patches, where clumps of palms grew. There was one patch which was several hundred yards across—quite a respectable size. And here the atoll's new inhabitants were placed.

A camp had sprung up—an extensive camp, consisting of many tents. There were piles of stores, too—enough food to last a full month. And there were big supplies of fresh water.

At last the prisoners had been all landed. It had been rather ticklish work, but the job had now been accomplished. Nelson Lee,

Lord Dorrimore, and all the other members of the party were ashore. The captain and officers of the yacht were there, too. Only a few men belonging to the engine-room staff had been kept on board—just sufficient to run the vessel. They would cause no trouble, for they were hopelessly outnumbered.

Lee, Dorrie, and the others had offered no resistance. To have done so would have meant a loss of dignity, and nothing else. It was impossible to defeat these rascals by an exhibition of obstinate resistance. It would have meant revolver-shooting, and probably a number of ugly wounds. And that wouldn't have improved the position in the slightest degree.

"When we are hopelessly beaten it is useless to make trouble," Nelson Lee had declared. "We cannot do better than display a calm indifference. Later on we shall be able to show Prescott our teeth."

"Splendid advice, old man," said Lord Dorrimore, "but it's infernally difficult to put into practice. I'd like to take that brute and ring his ugly neck!"

But they manfully resisted their natural feelings, and offered no hindrance to Prescott's activities. If there had been the slightest hope of making a coup, Nelson Lee would have taken the risk. But he had had untold experience in such affairs as this, and his calm inactivity was a sign of his masterly wisdom.

The Wanderer was now getting her anchor up again, and was preparing for departure. All the prisoners were left on the atoll—isolated from Paradise Island by thirty miles. It might just as well have been thirty thousand—for the marooned ones were without a boat of any kind.

"I've never felt so helpless before!" declared Mr. Russell fiercely. "It's terrible, Lord Dorrimore—worse than terrible! Somehow, I feel responsible for all this—"

"Rubbish, old man," said Dorrie calmly.

"But it's true!" insisted Mr. Russell. "You came out here at my suggestion—and Prescott is my enemy, not yours. I wish to Heaven I'd never seen the island, or the pearls, either! It wouldn't have mattered if I was the only one to suffer. But you are all—"

"Please say nothing more, Mr. Russell," interrupted Mrs. Stokes quietly. "Just look at the girls. Are they frightened and weak? I'm proud of them—more proud than I can say! They've got splendid spirit!"

Irene & Co., in fact, were accepting the position with a fine display of pluck. They knew well enough that their position on this atoll was dangerous; but they were managing to laugh and joke, and were treating the whole affair as a big adventure.

"They're splendid, Joyce!" said Mr. Stokes. "I'm not surprised, of course. I shouldn't expect them to be anything else. And I'll warrant those boys on the island are keeping their own end up, too."

"Oh, Barry, I wonder what's happening to them?" asked Mrs. Stokes.

"They'll probably be along here tomorrow," said Mr. Stokes drily. "That's Prescott's game, right enough. He means to clear everybody off the island, so that he can have a clear field. Then, when he's ready, he'll come along and release us all."

Lord Dorrimore laughed.

"There's nothin' to be really alarmed about," he declared. "Providin' a cyclone doesn't come along, or a tidal wave doesn't wash us off this speck of sand, we shall be safe. Not much scenery to explore, but that can't be helped. We'll get our own back in the end, I'll warrant!"

"Well, the position couldn't be much worse, that's one consolation," said Mr. Stokes. "If only we could think of some scheme! But what's the use? We're about as helpless as any other prisoners of war. One armed guard can look after a hundred! No, I'm hanged if I can see any ray of daylight."

They watched the Wanderer steam away—and many hearts were heavy. But all, without exception, kept smiling faces, and stiff upper lips. Everything had gone against them, and Jonathan Prescott had mounted from triumph to triumph.

It was just about time that the luck turned!

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE NIGHT ALARM.



LAGOON ISLAND lay bathed in soft moonlight.

It was late at night, and the entire atoll was apparently at peace.

The lagoon was simply a pool of limpid phosphorescence—its crystal surface reflecting the moon's rays in a fascinating manner.

Over the groves of coconut palms and other trees a faint, warm breeze was blowing. And overhead the sky was spangled with the wonderful stars of the tropics. They weren't quite so brilliant to-night, owing to the presence of the moon. But the whole scene was entrancing.

The Wanderer had not returned—a rather strange circumstance, since she had left the bay atoll some time before sundown, and the weather was calm.

Crusoe Camp was quiet.

The St. Frank's fellows had decided to go to bed in the usual way, with one exception to the general rule. A watch was kept. They had a vague fear that something might happen during the hours of darkness, and they had no wish to be taken by surprise.

There were two watchers, just for the sake of company. And the second watch consisted of Reggie Pitt and Jack Grey. They were squatting on the sand, in front of the camp, talking in low voices. The

beauty of the entire scenery held them. They only spoke occasionally. All the rest of the camp was asleep.

"It seems impossible that there can be any trouble here," muttered Jack Grey, after awhile. "I've never seen anything more peaceful or beautiful. What a contradiction of things, Reggie?"

"That's generally the way in this world, old son," said Pitt. "You can never judge by appearances. Our position is pretty bad, but who would think it? We're all safe, so far, and nobody's even received a scratch. But I can't help thinking of those beastly blacks on the other side of the island. It wouldn't be so bad if they were the better type of native. But they're not. They're the worst handpicked ruffians that Prescott could lay his paws on. If they ever get out of hand——"

"What's that?" interrupted Jack tensely.

"Eh? I didn't see——"

"No. Listen!"

They both sat there, listening intently. And a peculiar sound rose in the night, above the ceaseless music of the reef. It was like a distant howling, rising and falling on the breeze. The two juniors looked at one another rather queerly.

"It's rummy!" murmured Pitt, rising to his feet. "It can't be those natives——Hallo! Who's this coming along? Better be ready, old man!"

A figure was running along the sands, round the lagoon. It came stumbling on drunkenly, and at last drew near. Pitt and Grey ran forward to meet the man, who proved to be a member of Captain Hawke's crew from the ill-fated Samoa. He was a ghastly sight. With torn clothing, and with a deep gash in his left cheek, he presented a sorry spectacle. Blood had been flowing freely. But most of his unsteadiness was due to drink. He fairly reeked of strong rum.

"They're loose—they're running amok!" he gasped thickly.

"Eh?" said Pitt. "What do you mean?"

"The blacks! Them blamed Kanakas!"

panted the newcomer. "There was a fight; they got hold of the liquor. They're mad—clean loco! An' now they're runnin' wild. The whole blamed crowd's doin' a war-dance. And when that's over, heaven help us!"

Pitt and Grey needed to hear no more. They had received an explanation of that queer, melancholy howling which had come on the breeze. And the newcomer's appearance was enough to vouch for the truth of his story.

Within five minutes the entire camp was awake, and on the alert. Umlosi was about the only member of that startled band who viewed the prospect with joy. A fight—a battle. He was ready for it. The others, although facing the situation bravely, were absolutely appalled.

"We'll fight to the bitter end!" declared Handforth grimly. "We've got no guns, and there aren't any other weapons, either; but we can soon make some clubs."

"Yes, we shall have to prepare something," said Nipper. "These blacks are cannibals at heart, and as long as they're kept in check they're harmless enough. But once out of hand they're like a lot of wild animals."

"All in all, Brother Nipper, the prospect appears to be full of excitement and adventure," remarked William Napoleon Browne. "Pin your trust in me, and all will be well. Fighting cannibals is one of my favourite hobbies!"

But although Browne spoke lightly he was as concerned as any of the others. Things had indeed reached a climax.

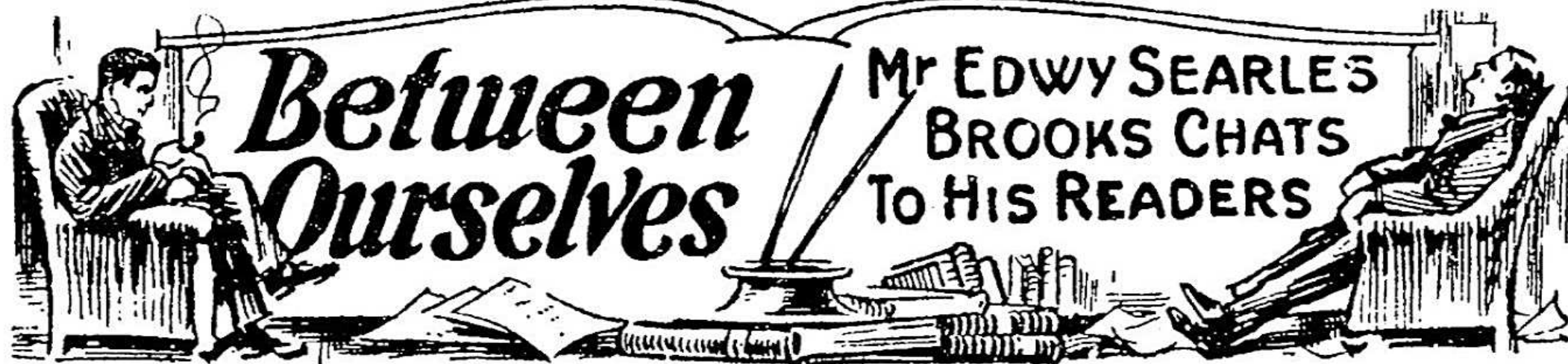
With the rest of their party spirited away into the unknown, and the Wanderer absent, there seemed little or no chance of help. This handful of British schoolboys was on the point of being attacked by a howling mob of savages, two hundred strong.

The events of the next twenty-four hours promised to be bristling with dangers, in all truth.

THE END.

How the mere handful of British Schoolboys held their own against a horde of Savages is told next week in:—

"BESET BY CANNIBALS!"



(NOTE.—If any readers write to me, I shall be pleased to comment upon such remarks as are likely to interest the majority. If you have any suggestions, send them along. If you have any grumbles, make them to me. All letters should be addressed to EDWY SEARLES BROOKS, c/o The Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY—THE ST. FRANK'S WEEKLY, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Every letter acknowledged below has been personally read by me, and I thank each writer most heartily. But though ALL letters afford me an equal amount of pleasure, I am reluctantly compelled to confine my individual replies to those of general interest.—E. S. B.)

Once again I've got to use my space for the subject which I at least hope is occupying the majority of your minds—The St. Frank's League. But I've got to tread warily, or I shall be fouling the corns of your Chief Officer. That's the last thing I want to do. Although the idea of the League was my own, it is fitting that your editor should develop the scheme. He can give it the systematic attention it requires, and which I, as your tale-spinner, could not. Nevertheless, my interest in The St. Frank's League will remain boundless, and I shall watch its progress with never-ceasing delight.

But your Chief Officer—who, by the way, is also none other than your old friend the Editor—will not, I know raise any objection if I occasionally supplement his chats to you by a few remarks of my own—particularly when these are called forth by observations made to me in one or another of your letters.

You'll notice I'm addressing you all as if you were already members. This is because I regard you all as such. Those of you have not yet actually joined I look upon as prospective members. So it's all the same.

"BETWEEN OURSELVES" has been pushed into the background a little of late, in order to provide more space for The St. Frank's League details, and other features which are likely to interest you more than my few weekly personal words. But I've no doubt they'll find a little more room for my scribblings under this heading in course of time. That is, unless there

are indications that it would please you better to see this page occupied with something of a more entertaining kind.

Well, before I make the few remarks about the League which I have in mind, I'm going to acknowledge every letter I've received up to the time of writing this.

George Burgess (Selsey), Albert Wilkinson (Gateshead), Alfred Leslie Blackwell (Hanley), John Franklin (Manchester), G. Croucher (Chilham), Donald Chisholm (West Norwood), Reuben Clifford (Willenhall), Doris Hill (Birmingham), Frank C. G. Clarke (Wimbledon), Leslie Bate (Plymouth), Frank R. Inge (Walthamstow), Roy Hearne (Bath), John Paton, junr. (Clapham Common), S. E. Bate (Warrington), Wm. J. Slade (Custom House, E.16), Richard Ferrell (Gateshead), James Duncan (Glass, N.B.), G. S. Hobbs (Bowes Park, N.22), An Old Maid (Nottingham), Gordon Horne (New York), Edward George (Wanstead), Frederick Bassfield (Wanstead), John H. Davidson (Rochdale), J. H. Body (Edmonton), George Burgess (Selsey), L. Moor (Bradford), Joe Beddows (Salford), Catherine Bailey (Leeds), J. Tym (Sheffield), Jack Osborne (Plaistowe), Mavis Alcorn (West Wimbledon), Once a Scout (Chester), Ben Yates (Birstall, Leeds), Ernie Fletcher (Southsea), Billie Murdoch (Nottingham), Albert Radford (Nottingham), F. Moore (Huddersfield), Joe Krietzman (Stepney), Felix Burke (Cheltenham).

Reginald Rushworth (Gateshead), Podge & Midge, Ltd. (Huddersfield), Bentley Robinson (Bradford), Sir Percy Blakeney (Finsbury Park, N.4), F. R. A. (Birmingham), T. R. Ward (Hornsey), Garfield Pollard (St. Ives), Jock Short 'Un (Beachley Camp, Chepstow), W. Swann (Ealing), Reginald Dormer (Blackfriars), J. Keith (Christchurch, N.Z.), H. Rumball (Taranaki, N.Z.), John Bailey (Fullerton, California, U.S.A.), Leslie Bowden (Ide, Exeter), Harry Mercereau (Montreal), Peter Chrysafis (Montreal), Peggy Kerrigan (Chesterfield), Edward Buckland (Broadstairs), Percy Young (Liverpool), Leslie T. Warren (Highbury), Stanley Nelson (Grimsby), Ross Buchanan (Sydney, N.S.W.), George F. Clara (Upper Dawson, Queensland), Edwin Francis Ebborn (Church Towers, Queensland), Reader For Ever (Balwyn, Melbourne), James A. Innes (Port Elizabeth, Cape Province, S. Africa), J. C. W. Weston (Port Elizabeth, South

Africa), Paul Williamson (Montreal), Eagle Eye (Brynmill, Swansea), D. Crawford (Wood Green).

* * *

Eric N. Brookes (Nottingham), Two Scout Readers—A. J. Wing and A. E. Wright—(Hull), Harry Chestney (Hindringham), A. Anderson (Aberdeen), Arthur A. Redgate (Nottingham), George Eldridge (Brighton), F. E. Simpson (Hammersmith), Leonard E. Nayton (Smethwick), Henry Thompson (Scotstoun, Glasgow), C. Buckingham (Twickenham), G. Boxall (Chatham), Michael O. Beirne (Dublin), Ronald H. Stacey (Barnstaple), D. F. (Custom House, E.16), Elsie Beay (Derby), A. G. Bain (Portsmouth), Arthur Taylor (Marple), A. Humphreys (Caerffynon, Carnarvonshire), Ada M. Woods (Nottingham), Edwin Couzens (South Tottenham), V. Fay (Penzance), C. F. Killington (Bethnal Green), E. J. Marton (Birmingham), M. Revelman (Melbourne), Edward J. Dexter (East Bendigo, Victoria, Australia), Jack Van Sickle (Brantford, Ontario), One Who Is Unknown (Selsey), Victor Berman (Bath), J. Wilson (Wandsworth Road, S.W.8), L. Miles (South Kensington).

* * *

If this goes on much longer, I shan't have room for those remarks this week, after all. But I'm on the last lap now, so I'll hope for the best.

* * *

George Andrews (Manchester), Ruth Whittingham (Etwall, Derby), D. K. Woodbury (Matawhero, New Zealand), A Pro-Nipperite (Victoria, Australia), John James Wright (Kalgoorlie, West Australia), Jack Day (Perth, West Australia), William P. Carr (Johannesburg), William Agnew (Los Angeles, California, U.S.A.), A. H. Goldenhar (Montreal), Roving Don (Selsey), Bobbie G. (Edinburgh), Mollie Heathcote (Garston, Liverpool), Winifred Wood (Birmingham), H. G. Rogers (Reading), Kenneth James (Solihull, Birmingham), B. Porclock (Aston, Birmingham), Stepney Secret Society—Girls (Stepney Green), Frank R. Inge (Walthamstow), Asu Likeit (Huddersfield), H. Hull (Skerton), M. Conan Doyle (Crowborough), Ronald Sprague (Newport, Mon.), Helen Price (Birmingham), Graham Watson (Basingstoke), Jack Ricketts (Hayle), D. J. Williams (East Acton), Jack & Jill (Portsmouth), Ernie Fletcher (Southsea), S. S. Elliott (East Ham), E. C. M. West (Mumbles, Glamorganshire).

* * *

At last! But your accumulated names and addresses have taken up such a lot of space that there's little enough left for any individual replies. So I've had to put the bulk of the letters I want to answer on my postponed pile. It's become a fearsome heap now. But I'll get back to it one of these fine days. Meanwhile, don't give up hope of finding another mention here any week. All your letters are treasured for future reference.

Thanks, Jack Ricketts, for your two Membership Application Forms. I've sent them along to the Chief Officer, and no doubt you will have received your Certificate of Membership weeks before this appears. Perhaps you'll also have gained your Bronze Badge long before then, and will have been busy waking 'em up in Hayle as one of our Organising Officers. You are such an enthusiast that I have always had great hopes of you. By the way, although I am always pleased to hear from you direct, it only causes delay to send application forms through me. Other qualifiers also please note. Kindly send your application forms direct to headquarters, as directed every week in the printed instructions over the Form. Any reasonable number may go in one unsealed envelope, which can be sent through the post for a halfpenny, provided no letter is enclosed with the forms.

* * *

You're worse than Jack Ricketts, Frank R. Inge. You've made two mistakes. You not only sent your application forms (for bronze medal, I suppose) through me instead of direct to headquarters, but you've omitted to send one signed by yourself under Section B for each one signed by an introducee under Section C. That's not the way to qualify for your bronze medal. While I admire your go-ahead spirit, you should make sure you're right before you hustle.

* * *

Now for you, D. J. W. You're worse still. You've made no less than three mistakes, and one of them has cost you an unnecessary penny in postage. 1. You sent one form only, signed by yourself under Section A (for your certificate), but did not accompany it by another form from same issue signed by your introducee under Section C. 2. This solitary form you enclosed in a sealed envelope, and used three ha'porth of stamps upon it, whereas if you had left the flap of the envelope unsealed it would have come through the post, containing the form alone, for a halfpenny. 3. Then you send it to me instead of the Chief Officer. Words fail me!

* * *

I've gone into these blunders at some length as a warning to you all to avoid similar pitfalls. In that sense they are matters of general interest. I hope all of you will study the League qualification instructions carefully before acting, and that in every instance you'll be careful to see that all writing on the forms is clear and legible.

* * *

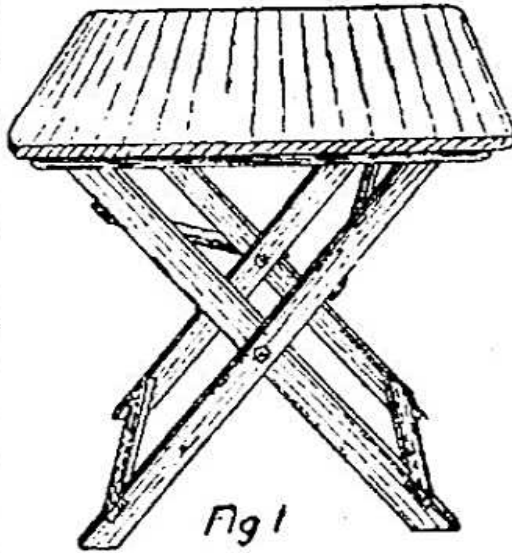
In my next chat with you I'll have a go at some of those general subjects which you've brought up amongst you. Till then fire away, all of you, and make the St. Frank's League a rousing success!

E. S. B.

HOW TO MAKE A FOLDING TABLE.

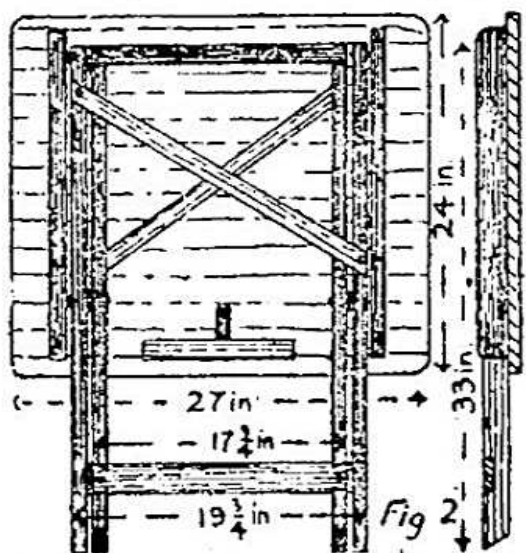
By DICK GOODWIN.

A LIGHT TABLE that will fold up quite flat is very useful in the garden and can be used for occasional purposes at any time. A useful type is shown at Fig. 1, and measures 27 in. by 24 in. The legs are attached to two thin battens which are screwed to the top and act as well to keep the thin top from warping. The two pairs of legs fit inside one another and fold back close to the top as shown in the two views at Fig. 2. The top can be of plywood about $\frac{3}{8}$ in. thick, but if ordinary wood is used it will be necessary to glue three or four strips together.



GLUEING THE TOP.

If possible the wood should be tongued and grooved, as indicated at T and G, Fig. 3. In using plain wood, the edges must be planed quite true and the boards placed between cramps to thoroughly tighten up the joints while the glue is setting. Useful cramps for this operation are shown at Fig. 3; they can

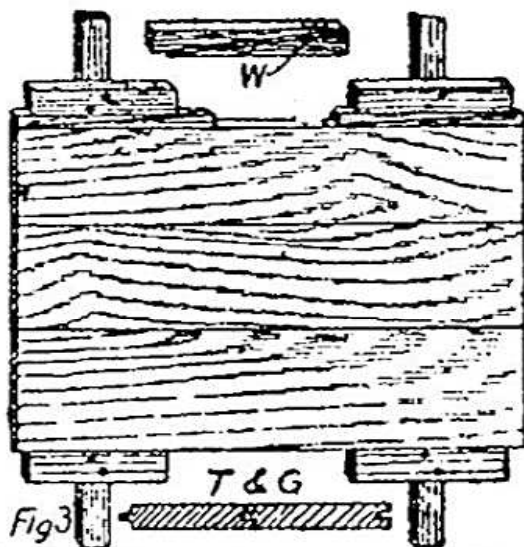


MAKING THE LEGS.

The legs are all the same length, but differ in width. The sides C and D are 2 ft. 9 in. by $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. by $\frac{7}{8}$ in., the connecting cross-pieces E and F are $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in. and 1 ft. $7\frac{1}{2}$ in. and 1 ft. $5\frac{1}{2}$ in. long respectively. The struts at G and H are both 1 in. by $\frac{1}{4}$ in. and are screwed on in opposite directions as indicated at Fig. 4. In both cases the cross-pieces are dove-tailed to the legs at a distance of 4 in. from the bottom, the joint being shown to an enlarged scale at Fig. 5.

FITTING THE DOVETAILS.

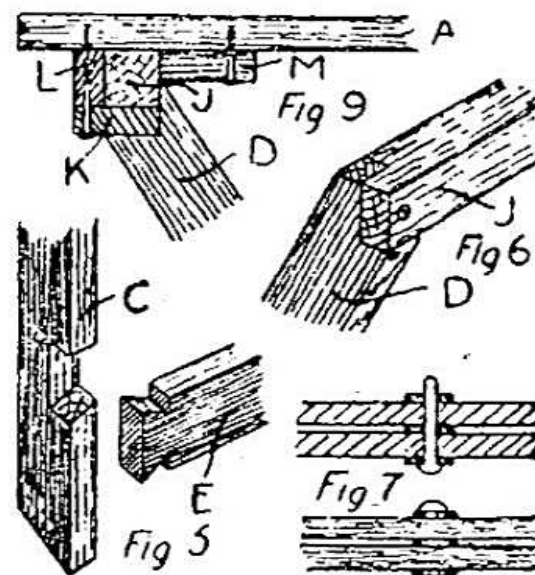
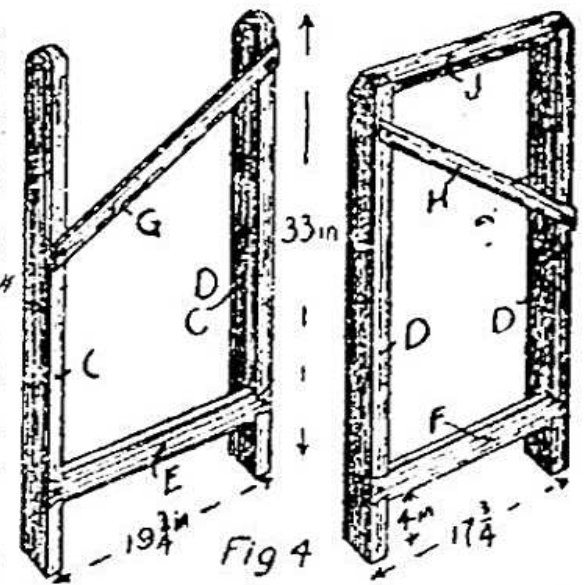
The best method of obtaining a good fit is to cut out the dovetails, place them across the edge of the wood and mark the shape with a pencil, care being taken to saw on the waste side of the line. In marking out the cross-piece of the inner pair of legs D, the measurement should be $\frac{1}{4}$ in. less than the inside of the outer pair C; this will allow of $\frac{1}{8}$ in. washers being



placed between them. The holes for the rivets, which should be $\frac{1}{4}$ in. diameter, must be accurately marked in the centre of the lengths and then the top of each of the outer legs rounded and bored with a hole to take a stout 2 in. screw. The inner pair of legs are joined at the top with a $\frac{1}{2}$ in. square length of wood J. The joint should be made as shown at Fig. 6 and screwed as well as glued.

RIVETING THE LEGS.

The two pairs can now be riveted together as at Fig. 7; three $\frac{1}{8}$ in. thick washers should be used with each rivet and the top of the rivet carefully hammered over to make a firm joint. The outer pair are now screwed to the rails B



and then the stop for holding the inner pair of legs made and fixed in position.

In order to make this portion of the construction quite clear, the underside of the table-top is shown at Fig. 8, the rails B and the stop K and button M only being shown.

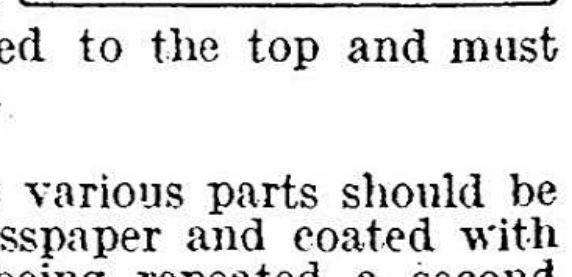
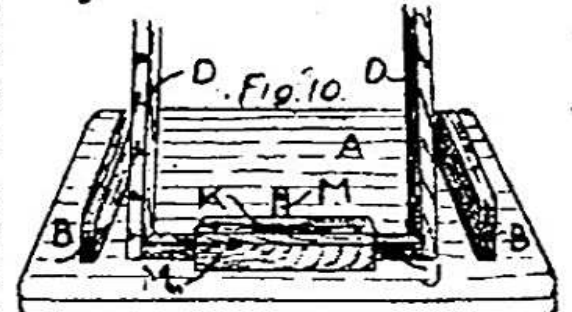
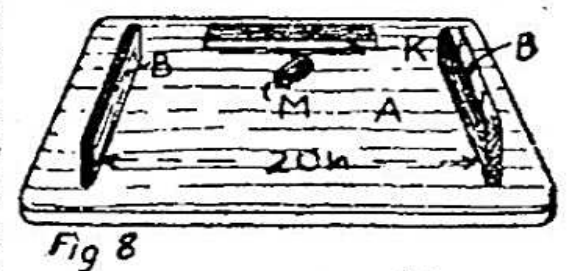
MAKING THE STOP.

In the enlarged section at Fig. 9, it will be seen that the stop is comprised of two pieces of wood screwed to the top A; both are 10 in. long. The top piece K is $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in. and the under piece L is 1 in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in. Screw them to the top on a line with the end of the rails and equally spaced between them, and then slip the square top of the inner legs underneath as shown at Fig. 10. In order to keep the top of the

legs in position, the button M, measuring 3 in. by 1 in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in., is screwed on so that when turned at right angles to the stop it presses against the top of the legs. As there is a considerable amount of strain on the stop and button, it will be as well to make them of hard wood. The parts should be well screwed to the top and must be made to a good fit.

FINISHING OFF.

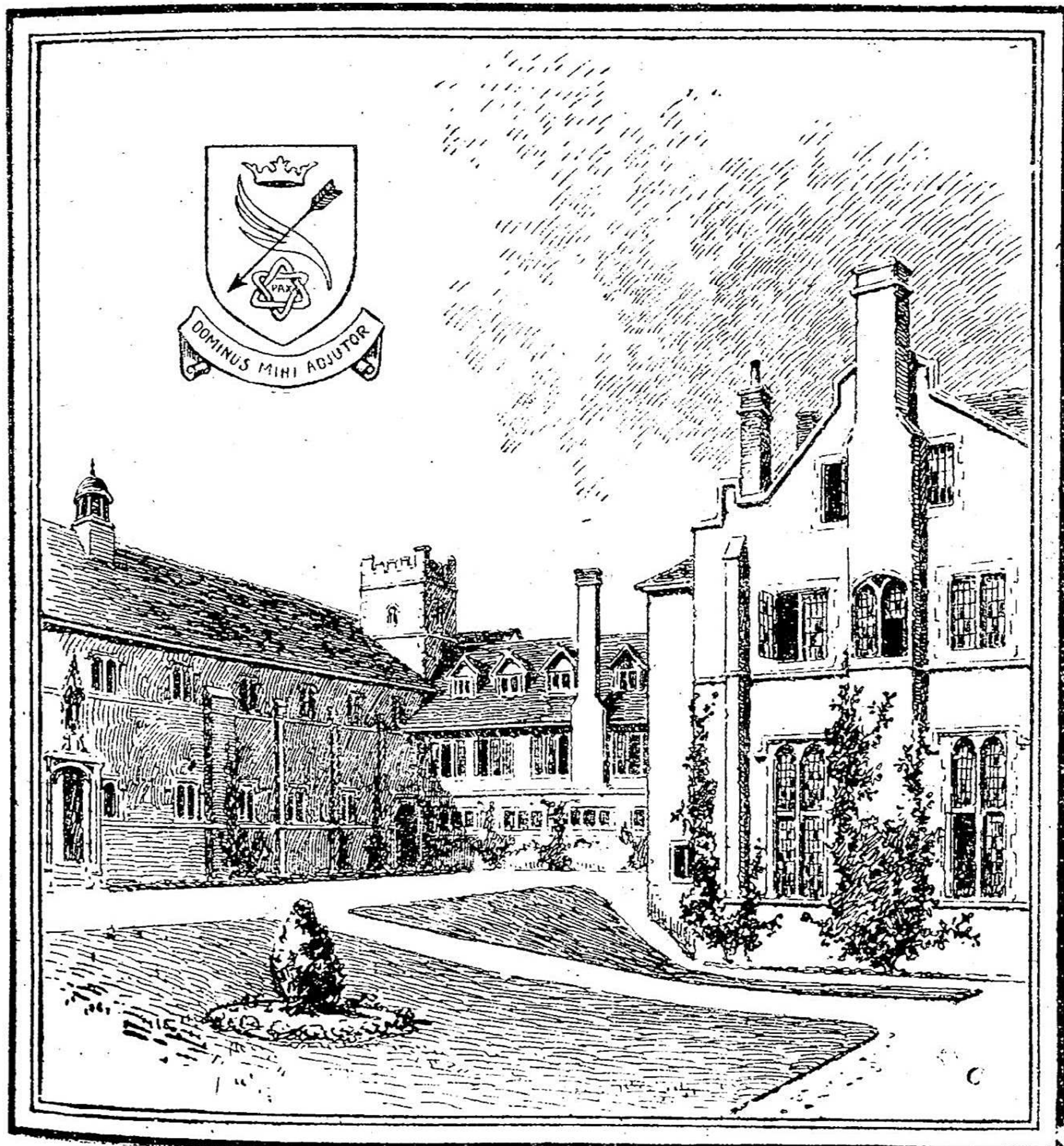
The surfaces of the various parts should be rubbed over with glasspaper and coated with size, this operation being repeated a second time when the first coat is dry. The wood can now be varnished, and the table should not as a rule be used for garden purposes unless it has been varnished. If the wood used is deal, and it is quite suitable, the appearance of the table will be improved if it is stained before sizing.



OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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

DOUAI SCHOOL



A well-known school in Paris before the French Revolution, Douai School was revived at Douai in 1818 by the English Benedictine Monks, and after expulsion from France in 1903, the school was transferred to Woolhampton, ten miles from Reading. The new buildings are very fine, and stand in thirty acres of playing-grounds.

THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE

(All communications for the League should be addressed to the Chief Officer, c/o The Editor, "The Nelson Lee Library," The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.)

My Dear League-ites,—There is still a large army of readers who have not joined the League, and I would very much like to know the cause if some of you can enlighten me.

Personally, I have an idea there are many readers who suspect there is a catch somewhere in the whole scheme, and that they may be letting themselves in for something that is going to cost them a lot of money. I would like to disabuse these doubting Thomases once and for all of any desire on my part or of Mr. Brooks' in running this League for any other purpose than for the benefit of readers.

As to the cost, I know of no club offering such splendid attractions at practically no cost whatever to its members as we are doing in the St. Frank's League. For if a prospective member goes the right way to work he can qualify for the trifling sum of $\frac{1}{2}$ d.

—that is, provided he gets the friend to whom he introduces the N. L. L. to pay for the extra copy. Now, as against that $\frac{1}{2}$ d. outlay expended on postage by the prospective member, consider what we expend in return. We supply a handsome, illuminated certificate, specially printed on cardboard for framing, a reproduction of which much reduced in size appears on this page. If you calculate the cost of this,

the postage, the labour and time in organising the League, you will find that it comes to a great deal more for each member to be enrolled than the member himself expends.

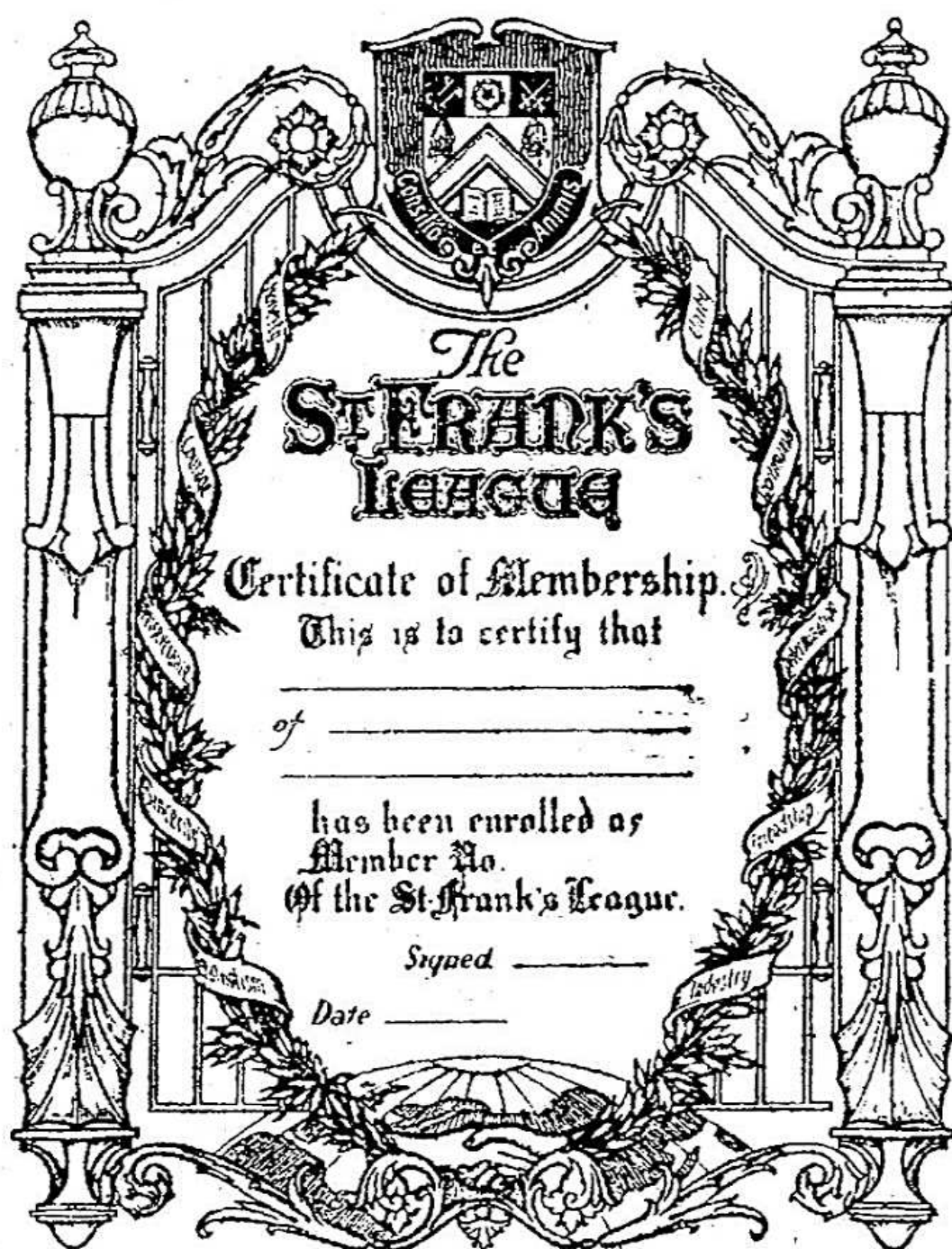
Several Leagueites have written asking if we are going to give away, or even sell, badges they can wear in their coats so that members can recognise each other in public. We did think of doing this at one time, but on consideration we thought it best to offer something worth displaying—not a cheap badge, but a solid bronze medal. As this would cost too much to give away, we decided to offer it as an award for introducing the Old Paper

and the League to your friends.

With very best wishes.

Your sincere friend,

THE CHIEF OFFICER.



SOME 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.
- (8) An employment bureau for members of the League.
- (9) Tours to interesting places in England and on the Continent, camping-out holidays, and sea-trips, specially arranged for members of the League.

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 1d., provided the envelope is not sealed and no letter is enclosed.

IMPORTANT.—Complete and post off this form before the next issue of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY is on sale. It then becomes out of date and useless.

ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE APPLICATION FORM No. 9. Aug. 22, 1925.

READER'S APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP.

SECTION

A

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.

I, Member No. (give Membership No.) hereby declare that I have introduced one more new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. This leaves me (state number, or, if none, signify with a dash) introductions to make to entitle me to a Bronze Medal.

SECTION

C

NEW READER'S DECLARATION.

I hereby declare that I have been introduced by (give name of introducer) to "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY" (No. dated), which I will read with a view to becoming a regular reader of this paper.

(FULL NAME).....

(ADDRESS).....

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