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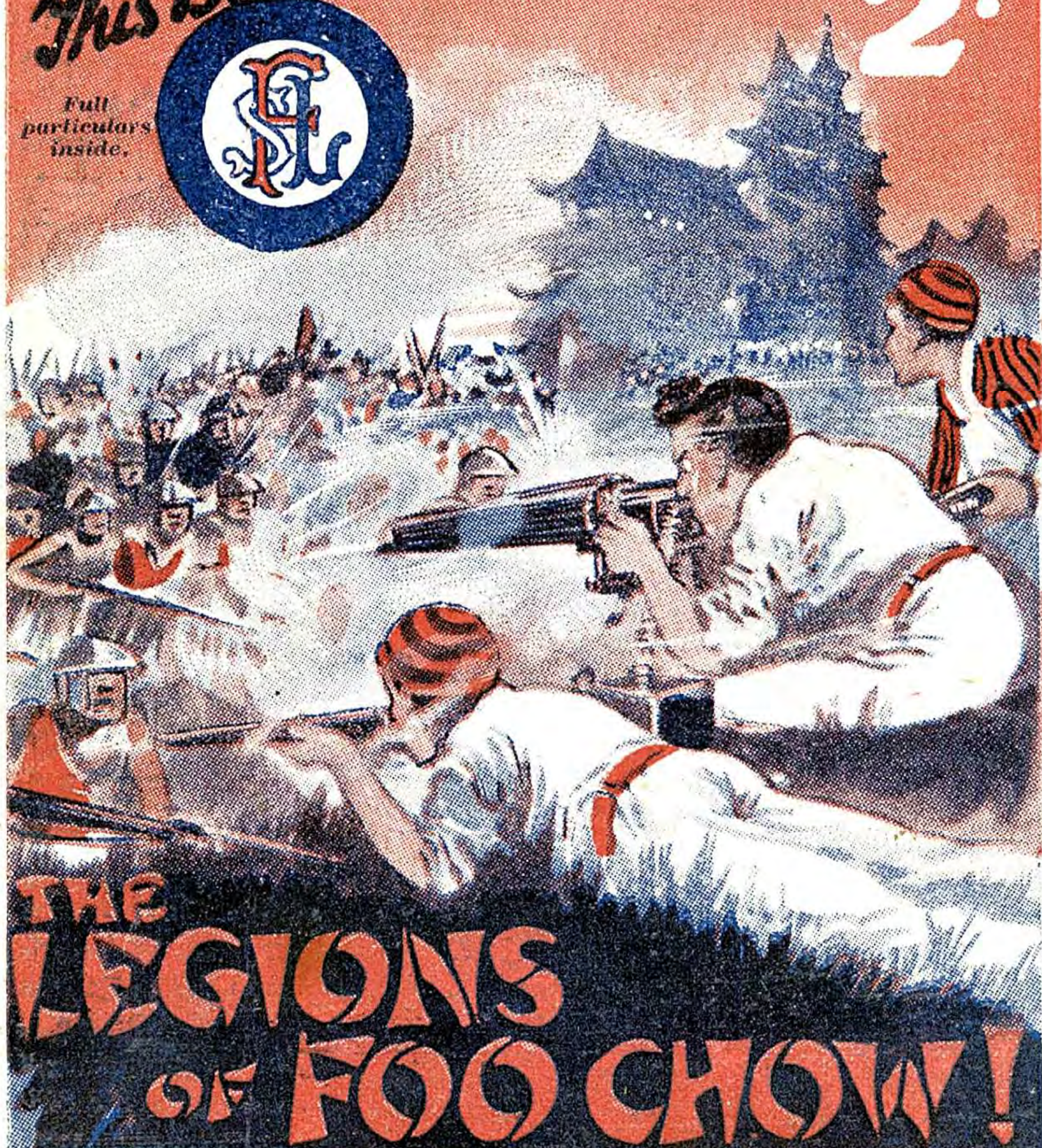
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New Series No. 17.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

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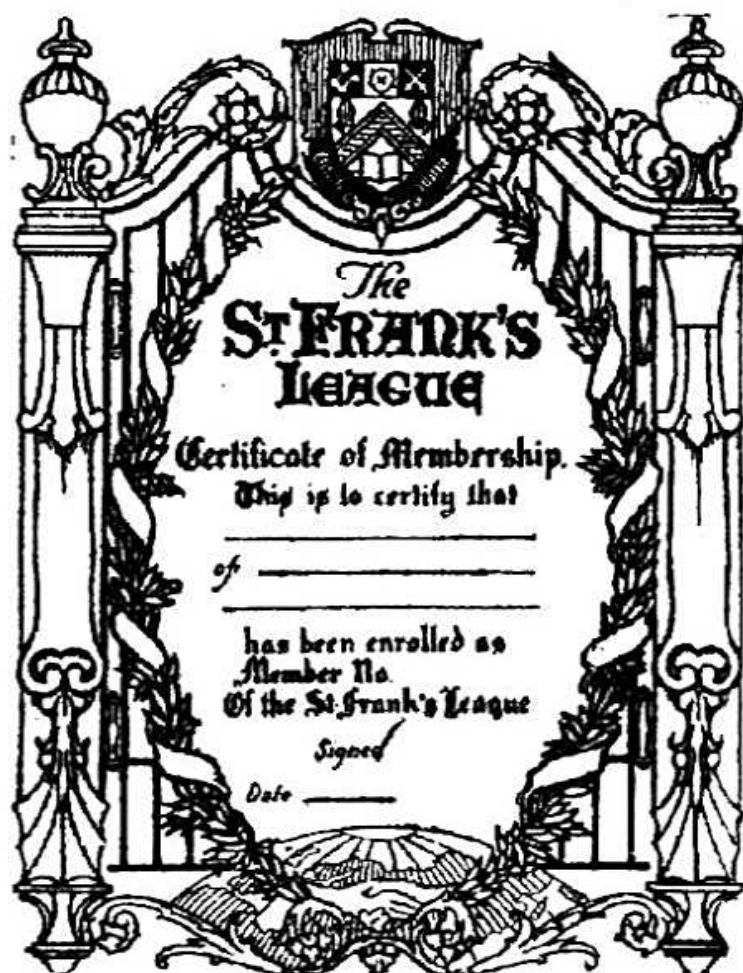
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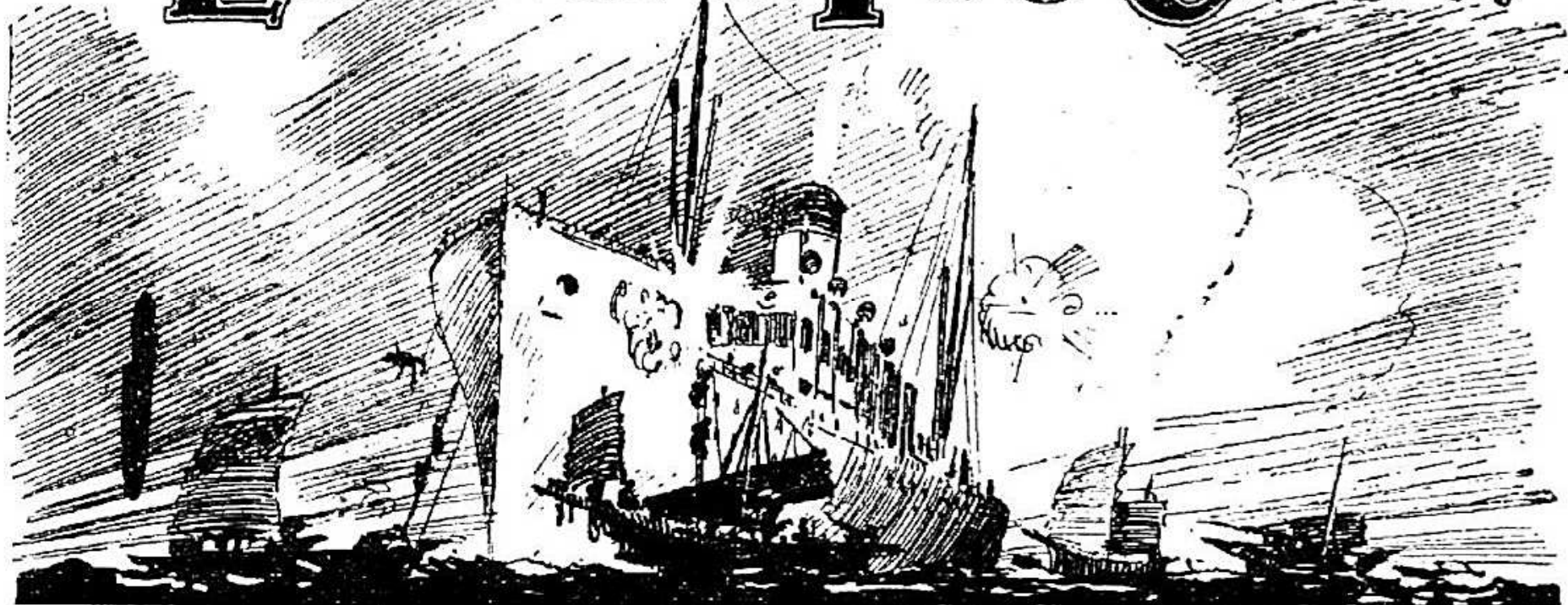
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THE LEGIONS OF FOO CHOW



By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

The Boys of St. Frank's are right in the thick of the fighting in China—this stirring long complete yarn of Schoolboy Adventure will keep you thrilled.

CHAPTER 1.

READY FOR THE DASH.

DICK HAMILTON, the popular captain of the *Remove* at St. Frank's, leaned over the *Wanderer's* rail, and looked up at the rocky sides of the gorge.

"Not a Chink in sight," he said, with satisfaction. "Foo Chow's men seem to have given us up as a bad job."

"They're too busily occupied elsewhere, if you ask me," declared Tommy Watson. "There's a war on, don't forget, and if all we hear is true, Yung Li Chang's armies are sweeping across the country in their thousands."

"Begad! It's a frightfully different position now, dear old boys," said Sir Montie Tregellis-West happily. "Here we are, all safely on the yacht, an' before long we shall be escapin' from this beastly country altogether. I've had enough of China to last me all my life—I have, really!"

"Same here," agreed Watson, nodding.

"We're not clear of China yet, though—not by long chalks," Dick Hamilton reminded them. "Dr. Foo Chow isn't the kind of man to let us slip away without giving us a parting kiss. Only his kiss will probably take the

form of a smashing attack. Thank goodness, we're well prepared."

He glanced round, and felt more confident. At various points of the decks there were machine-guns in readiness, with sailors in charge. Every man within sight was carrying a revolver at his belt, and there were stacks of rifles in handy positions.

"I hear they're preparing a meal down in the saloon," said Reggie Pitt cheerfully, as he came along. "By Jove, I'm ready for it, too! How long is it since we've eaten?"

"No good asking me," said Dick, smiling. "I've lost count of the hours during all this excitement. I know it's late afternoon, and I know that we shall soon be steaming up river into safe country. Why worry about anything else?"

"That's one way of looking at things," agreed the junior skipper of the *West House*. "Isn't it simply glorious to be back on these dear old decks? Foo Chow and his marble palace can go to the dickens! It's like home, being aboard the *Wanderer* again."

"Dick thinks we shall have some more fighting," said Tommy Watson. "He reckons that Foo Chow's teeth aren't drawn. What's your opinion, Reggie?"

Pitt looked thoughtful.

"I think that Dick's probably right," he replied slowly.

"But, hang it, Foo Chow's men are on the run, and Yung Li Chang's troops are swarming everywhere," protested Tommy. "Why, there's no need to go up river even. We're in the midst of friends!"

Dick chuckled.

"I'm afraid you take a few things for granted, old son," he said gently. "To begin with, these reports about Yung Li Chang's troops are rumours, more or less. And Chinese soldiers are Chinese soldiers, whichever general they're fighting under, and I've no great faith in 'em!"

Tommy Watson stared.

"Why, you think Yung Li Chang's army might mutiny, or something?" he asked.

"No, of course not; but these Orientals are queer beggars," replied Dick. "They don't conduct a war in the same way as we should. There's never any telling with them. And, as I said, these invading troops are exactly the same kind of men as Foo Chow's soldiers. They're primitive Celestials—Chinese from the interior province of Hu Kiang."

Tommy Watson was rather startled. He had certainly been taking things for granted. Yung Li Chang was the Governor of the neighbouring province of Hu Kiang, and, incidentally, he was the distinguished father of Yung Ching, the Chinese boy in the St. Frank's Remove. He was the friend of Lord Dorrimore's holiday party, and it was certain that he would be grateful to them for all they had done on behalf of his son.

"Again, how do we know that Chang's men will be friendly?" went on Dick. "How do we know that they won't chop our heads off, or something pleasant like that? These Chinese troops have rummy ways."

"But, hang it, Yung Li Chang is our friend."

"He may be, Tommy, but his soldiers are uneducated heathens," said Dick Hamilton. "And when they're mad with the battle-fever—as they probably will be, if they sweep over this particular neighbourhood—they won't make any nice points about friends. To them we're just 'foreign devils,' and they'll probably think it great fun to indulge in a little massacre."

"Begad! You're frightfully pessimistic, dear old fellow," said Sir Montie, adjusting his pince-nez, and gazing at Dick with severe disapproval. "There's surely no need to be so blessed morbid?"

Dick Hamilton laughed.

"Rats!" he grinned. "I'm just pointing out a few hard facts, that's all. There's nobody more cheerful than I am; but take my advice, and be ready for anything. We're still in China, and that's bad enough of itself."

As a matter of fact, Dick's words were not only shrewd, but indicative of sound knowledge. The *Wanderer* was moored in mid-stream, up this unknown Chinese river. She was far inland, away from all possible means

of white succour. True, her normal crew were in full possession, and she was well armed, in case of a fight.

But the only possible friends were yellow friends. The armies of Dr. Foo Chow were deadly enemies, and the war lord of this great territory would do everything in his power to revenge himself for the manner in which his white "guests" had tricked him.

Yung Li Chang, the opposing war lord—the general who was now leading these invading troops into Foo Chow's country—was a real friend. He liked the British, and his only son was a pupil of St. Frank's. Lord Dorrimore's party had got itself into all this trouble, too, on purpose to rescue the unhappy Yung Ching from torture, so his father's friendship was inevitable. But his swarming troops were, when all was said and done, no less heathen than Foo Chow's soldiers. The sooner the yacht was out of this war zone, the better.

Until this very afternoon, the St. Frank's party had been prisoners in Dr. Foo Chow's palace. But now they were free—they had seized the *Wanderer* from the hands of her Chinese guards, and had formed themselves into an independent force. This coup had only been possible by reason of Yung Li Chang's dramatic invasion. Mr. Nelson Lee had suggested a quick move, and everybody had responded valiantly.

Thus, the holiday party was itself again.

Even Edward Oswald Handforth, the volatile leader of Study D, was on board. He had been rescued from the city of Yang Fu, where he had been cruelly tortured in a crude wooden cage. The redoubtable Handy was now in his cabin below, sound asleep. For once he had no objections to make. Dead beat, rest was the only medicine he required.

But the unfortunate Yung Ching was not on board. He had been wrested from Foo Chow's clutches, and had been placed in the hands of a friendly Chinaman named Ah Fong. But Ah Fong's modest house was some miles away, and so Yung Ching was still absent. Many of the juniors were wondering if he was safe.

Lord Dorrimore came along the deck, looking cheerful and happy.

"Grub!" he said briefly.

"Is dinner ready, sir?" asked Dick.

"I'm not sure whether it's dinner, or tea, or what," replied his lordship. "Anyhow, it's a decent, Christian meal, and not one of these Chinese horrors. You'd better go down an' grab while the grabbin's good."

He passed on, and came across Mr. Pelton, the third engineer, just as the latter was emerging from the oily depths of the engine-room.

"Skipper about anywhere, sir?" asked Mr. Pelton.

"Look here, my lad, what's wrong?" said Dorrie, with a keen look. "Out with it! We ought to have been steamin' up river by this time, an' we're still anchored. What's the trouble?"

Pelton wiped his perspiring brow.

"Pretty bad, sir," he said. "The chief reckons we shan't be able to get a move on until early morning."

"Good gad!" said Dorrie. "In wonder's name, why not?"

"Those cursed Chinks, sir!" snapped the third engineer viciously. "We cleared them all off the yacht, but not before some of them had done a heap of damage in the engine-room. We didn't know anything about it until we made an examination. I've been told to come and report to the captain."

Dorrie led him along to the other side of the deck, where Nelson Lee was talking with Barry Stokes and Captain Burton. They were all looking rather tired, but eminently pleased.

"Ah, Pelton—good news?" asked the skipper, in his bluff way. "I've noticed the steam. We'll be getting a move on at once, eh? Plenty of pressure?"

The third engineer looked at Dorrie rather helplessly.

"Leave it to me, old man," said his lordship. "The fact is, skipper, we're up against a snag. These dirty Chinks have been makin' a mess of the engine-room. We can't shift for some hours—not until early mornin'."

"Is this an absolute fact, Mr. Pelton?" asked Nelson Lee sharply.

"Afraid so, sir."

Captain Burton growled deep down in his throat.

"This is ugly, gentlemen," he said, with deep concern. "Good heavens, that means we're helpless for six or seven hours!"

"The chief reckons eight hours, sir," said Pelton.

"You're quite right, captain, it's ugly," said Nelson Lee quietly. "A delay of any kind is bad enough, but—eight hours! Well, I hardly know what to say. Foo Chow's men will have a chance to blow us to bits. Hadn't we better go and see the chief at once, captain?"

"We're going now," replied Captain Burton grimly.

But Mr. Mackenzie, the chief engineer, was unable to give any cheering report. Smothered in grease, with the perspiration streaming down his oily cheeks, he faced the captain with a set jaw.

"They've caused more damage than I can explain," he declared. "I'd no idea of it until we were getting ready to start. I'm thinking it'll be dawn before we've got things shipshape, and it'll mean sweating work for all of us, without a minute's rest, too. But we'll do our best."

Later, Nelson Lee sat in Captain Burton's cabin, in company with Lord Dorrimore and Mr. Beverley Stokes.

"It only shows that we mustn't be too optimistic," said the schoolmaster-detective. "It's nearly nightfall, and, if I'm a judge of Foo Chow, he will make an attempt to revenge himself during the hours of darkness. We must be constantly on the alert."

"Well, there's surely no need to worry?" asked Barry Stokes. "We're all on board,

including my wife and all the Moor View girls. At least, we're one intact party. And we've plenty of machine-guns and men."

"Why, if ten thousand of these heathens tried to board the yacht, we could keep them at bay," declared Dorrie cheerfully. "What on earth's the matter, Lee? Personally, I'm not worryin' in the least. With these decks beneath my feet, I feel as safe as houses."

Nelson Lee was looking positively pale.

"I'm thinking of something else," he said quietly.



CHAPTER 2.

NELSON LEE'S FEAR.

ORD DORRIMORE stared.

"Somethin' else?" he repeated. "Now, as man to man, what is exactly behind that cryptic re-

mark? Out with it, old scout!"

But Lee shook his head.

"Not yet, Dorrie," he replied. "I want to think. Perhaps I am needlessly worried. Go and get something to eat—the gong went long ago. We'll have another chat later."

And Nelson Lee strolled out of the cabin, and went on the promenade deck.

"I don't like that," said Mr. Stokes, rubbing his chin.

"Neither do I," growled Dorrie. "Lee's a shrewd customer. He's got about four times my brains, and he can think of things. Now, I wonder what he's got in his head?"

"It's no good asking me," said Barry Stokes, with a smile. "Personally, I thought we were in a pretty comfortable position, and the delay of a few hours won't make much difference. In any case, what could we do to-night? I don't see Lee's point at all."

Nelson Lee remained alone on deck, staring up that sinister gorge. The country just here was wild and rugged, with steep rocks rearing their heads on high. Lower down the river the country was fair, with cultivated lands spreading as far as the eye could see, with picturesque Chinese towns and villages nestling among the rice fields and woods. The city of Yang Fu was comparatively near by, too.

But here the scenery was shut off by the menacing rocks. It was Dr. Foo Chow's stronghold. In full sight was the rocky island on which he had built his great palace, and which could be only reached from the mainland by means of a drawbridge. Higher up the river, moored against a concrete quay, was a graceful-looking steam yacht. She was the *Dragon*—Dr. Foo Chow's private yacht. And Nelson Lee's gaze was fixed upon her.

"I wonder?" he muttered. "It surprises me why no move has been made. We have only to thank the general confusion for our present safety."

He turned away, still with that pale expression, still with a light of acute anxiety in his eyes. He decided to go back to Lord Dorrimore and Barry Stokes. On the way he

came across Church and McClure, of the *Remove*.

"Well, boys, how is Handforth?" he asked, smiling.

"Sleeping like a log, sir," said Church. "There's a terrible graze on his neck, and his flesh is all swollen up, too; but that ointment you gave us soothed him marvellously. He says he'll be himself to-morrow."

"Handforth was always an optimist," said Nelson Lee. "I charge you two boys with looking after him. On no account let him get up. He must remain in bed the whole of to-morrow, whether he likes it or not. He's had a nasty experience, and he's not merely physically exhausted, but mentally tortured. A long rest is essential."

"Leave it to us, sir," said McClure. "Mrs. Stokes has been arranging things, too. Some of the girls are going to take it in turn, to-morrow, to nurse him."

"He ought to be well content to remain in bed, then," smiled Nelson Lee. "Have you boys been down to the saloon for your meal?"

"Not yet, sir."

"Then hurry up; there's no telling when you may get the next."

They went, forgetting the detective's words almost at once. But Lee himself pondered over them.

"There's more truth in that remark than they believe," he muttered. "Here they are, preparing gaily for to-morrow's activities, and there may be no to-morrow at all! Heavens, how wonderful it is to have the serene mentality of youth! Poor boys, they've no conception of the actual danger!"

He went back into the captain's cabin, and Lord Dorrimore and Mr. Stokes had now been joined by Captain Burton himself.

"I hear you're a bit worried, Mr. Lee?" asked the skipper.

"Not without reason," replied Lee quietly. "To tell you the truth, I am very reluctant to say what is in my mind. I have a horror of being classed as a pessimist. Perhaps my fears are groundless—perhaps this delay will not be so serious as I believe."

"Hang it, man, what *are* you getting at?" asked Dorrie.

"Simply this, Dorrie," replied Lee. "We are caught between two stools. We're either in the frying-pan or in the fire—one or the other."

"That's deucedly lucid," growled his lordship tartly.

"This is the position," continued Lee. "If we decide to take everybody ashore we shall probably fall into the hands of Foo Chow's soldiers, with such results that I dare not even think of them. And if we remain on board—safe, as you all appear to think—we may be killed at any minute."

Everybody in that cabin recognised the gravity in Nelson Lee's tone, and they all looked at him with sudden concentration.

"I must confess, I don't follow," said Mr. Stokes quietly. "Why should we even think of leaving the yacht, Mr. Lee?"

"Because it might be more dangerous to remain on board."

"But, in the name of eternity, why?" demanded Dorrie.

"Because the *Dragon* is lying within two dozen cable-lengths of us—because she is provided with heavy artillery!" replied Lee grimly. "That's why, Dorrie."

"Good glory!" gasped his lordship. "You—you don't mean—"

"Yes, I do."

"Mr. Lee, you're right," said Captain Burton, setting his teeth, and nodding. "By all the stars, you're right!"

"I cannot understand why we have escaped so far," went on Nelson Lee. "Perhaps Foo Chow is reluctant to destroy this yacht. He wants it for himself, possibly; but I do not accept that as a good suggestion. To such a millionaire as Foo Chow it would be nothing. No, we can thank this present confusion for our salvation."

He paused, and looked at them intently.

"But how long will this confusion last?" he went on. "My one hope of escape was to take immediate advantage of the situation. But anything might happen between now and dawn. I tell you, gentlemen, I am positively frightened."

"Not for yourself," growled Dorrie. "You're thinkin' of the young people, eh?"

"By a merciful Providence, we've come through these adventures without any loss of life," continued Lee. "That sort of thing can't go on for ever, Dorrie. Until this afternoon, Foo Chow made a pretence of being our host; but we have definitely ended that farce now. He was an enemy before—but a suave, polite enemy. It pleased him to play with us in order to amuse himself; but will he play any longer? I'm afraid not. It will give him greater pleasure to blow us to eternity."

"This is a frightfully disturbin' business," growled Dorrie.

"If it was only disturbing, it wouldn't matter," returned Lee, with a faint smile. "One shell from that big gun on the *Dragon's* foredeck would shatter our plates to fragments. Two shells would sink us in less than a minute. And can you imagine what havoc that gunfire would cause at such close quarters? At this very moment, while we're sitting here, the first shell may come! Do you wonder that I am worried, with all these young people aboard, calmly making light-hearted plans for to-morrow?"

Everybody was silent.

"Gad, now I understand why you were so deucedly upset when you heard about that delay," said Lord Dorrimore, after an appreciable spell. "You think of everythin', Lee! This infernal possibility never occurred to me."

"But it's more than a possibility, Dorrie—it's a probability," declared Nelson Lee. "I tell you, we're helpless! I don't know what to suggest, or what to do! We can't take these boys and girls ashore, for that might mean something worse than death. And here



With every ounce of his strength, Handy drove his fist at the jaw of the executioner. The brute staggered as he was swinging the sword down, and the cruel edge of the blade just missed Ah Fong's head.

we've got to wait, hour after hour, until those engines are repaired. Don't you see how different it would have been if we could have made an immediate move?"

"Yes, now you come to put it like that, there's no misunderstanding," said Mr. Stokes slowly. "Perhaps the damage in the engine-room was deliberately caused—I mean, with the deliberate purpose of keeping us here so that the *Dragon* could blow us to bits."

"In that case, why are we still whole?" asked Dorrie.

"Perhaps the gunners are not available," replied Lee. "Or—and this is far more probable—they have received no definite orders from Foo Chow. I think we can accept the latter theory as the reason for our present safety. Foo Chow is elsewhere—in Yang Fu, no doubt. But as soon as he learns of our predicament he will not delay a minute in giving precise orders."

Lord Dorrimore was rather aghast.

"The man's a devil, but, hang it, he surely wouldn't blow us to fragments in cold blood?" he asked. "I'll admit your theory is a likely one, Lee, but isn't it just a little too bloodthirsty?"

"Dorrie, you've been in China before—and you know the Chinese," he said. "Isn't that question of yours rather unnecessary? Man alive! A massacre of that sort would please Foo Chow's heart more than anything! The Chinese can be jovial, kindly, and charitable—

but they are also capable, when dealing with an enemy, of being utter fiends."

"I suppose you're right," admitted Dorrie grudgingly. "But why hasn't the brute acted? Why is he still holding his fire?"

"Because Yung Li Chang's invasion has taken him completely by surprise," said Lee. "He is spending all his time in getting his troops into order—in organising a defensive barrier against the enemy hordes. But when he learns of our position, he'll take swift action. He'll realise, at once, that it will be a mere sacrifice of life to storm this yacht. He knows that we have machine guns and rifles. So he won't attempt to seize the *Wanderer* again. No, he'll utilise those heavy guns—and we can only wait!"

Lord Dorrimore's eyes suddenly blazed.

"By glory!" he shouted. "Why should we wait? Why not take the bull by the horns, and seize this opportunity while it lasts?"



CHAPTER 3.

DORRIE'S DARING SUGGESTION.

DORRIE was the centre of all eyes.

"I don't quite follow," said Nelson Lee.

"Why, man, isn't it obvious?" went on his lordship quickly. "I'm

not usually good at ideas, but this one strikes me as bein' a corker! We daren't go ashore, an' by remainin' on board we're just waitin' for the *Dragon's* gunfire! In other words, there's no choice—we're between the devil an' the deep sea. Our only reason for bein' alive now is that Foo Chow's gunners haven't received any orders. Why not act ourselves—instead of waitin' for Foo Chow to act?"

"You mean, raid the *Dragon*?" asked Lee sharply.

"Absolutely!"

"By James, Dorrie, it is certainly a daring suggestion!" said Lee. "Indeed, it is a brilliant plan! We can't possibly remove those guns, but we can render them useless!"

"That's exactly my idea," grinned his lordship gleefully. "Let's call for volunteers, an' get up a raidin' party of about twenty men. In Heaven's name, why wait here to be blown to smithereens when we can spike the guns, an' make them about as useful as scrap-iron?"

"It's the best possible plan, gentlemen," declared Captain Burton. "Even if we lose three or four men—and we must be prepared for such a disaster—it will be better than waiting here idle. And while we're about it, couldn't we grab the *Dragon's* pilot?"

Lee nodded.

"A good suggestion, captain, but I doubt if the man would be of any use to us," he replied. "Indeed, it is more than likely that he would deliberately pile us on to the nearest rock. It will be quite sufficient if we disable the guns. And this plan must be kept quite secret. We don't want the boys or girls to even suspect what is in the wind. They are happy and comfortable now—deluded into the belief that we are secure. Let them go to sleep peacefully."

"That's my idea, too," said Lord Dorrimore approvingly. "Now, Lee, what about this raid? Don't leave me out of it, or you an' I will be enemies from now on. An' don't forget Umlosi. The old beggar's made a new spear for himself—a regular beauty, too. He's worth half a dozen ordinary men in a hand-to-hand scrap."

"He's worth a dozen," said Lee, with conviction. "These Chinamen are superstitious brutes, and Umlosi's fame has already been spread. The Chinamen are beginning to regard him as a sort of black demon, and they'll flee at the very sight of him."

Mr. Stokes suddenly uttered an ejaculation.

"Talking about demons, why not play on the superstitions of these heathens still more?" he asked keenly. "This raid, I take it, is to be undertaken in total darkness—say, in about a couple of hours from now?"

"Sooner, if possible, but we must wait until the young people are quiet for the night," replied Lee. "And it will take at least an hour to get ready. Well, Barry?"

"Well, couldn't we wear nothing but bathing costumes, and swim to the *Dragon*?" asked Mr. Stokes. "The current is strong,

but there are plenty of good swimmers among the crew. And in that way we could make a silent approach—without the *Dragon's* men guessing a thing until we were actually swarming aboard. A boat, on the other hand, would be a first-class target for rifle fire."

"Barry, old man, there must be somethin' about this cabin," said Lord Dorrimore, shaking his head. "We're all bristlin' with brainy notions!"

"But wait a minute—I haven't finished yet," said the young Housemaster. "If there's such a thing as luminous paint on board, we might decorate ourselves with grotesque, horrifying designs. Imagine the result! What will these Chinamen do when we swarm over the *Dragon's* rail? We shall look like a collection of river demons!"

"This suggestion may make all the difference between success and failure," said Nelson Lee, his eyes gleaming. "The Chinese believe that a river swarms with evil spirits—that the earth, too, has its own particular set of wicked demons. The effect upon their morale—when they see us emerging from the water—will be terrific. It is even possible that they will flee in utter terror without showing fight."

"That's bad," said his lordship. "We don't want to be dished out of a scrap!"

"If it's all the same to you, Dorrie, the less scrapping the better," retorted Lee grimly. "I shall be very sorry for Umlosi if his intended victims bolt, but I am not quite so bloodthirsty as he is. If we can make this a bloodless victory, all the better. Our object is to destroy the effectiveness of those guns—not to kill Chinamen! We shall only adopt the latter course if our lives are threatened. But can this scheme be put into effect?"

"It can!" said Dorrie. "You seem to forget that I've got a fully equipped chemical laboratory on this yacht, old man. I may mention that I had it installed especially for your benefit—knowin' your likin' for messin' about with 'stinks' an' similar abominations. Go an' prepare your demon-fire as soon as you like. We've only got to let you loose in that lab, for half an hour, an' Heaven knows what you'll produce!"

Nelson Lee smiled.

"At any rate, I think I shall produce something effective," he said. "Captain Burton, will you call for volunteers? I suggest that Mr. Stewart should accompany us, and that Lord Dorrimore should remain on board."

"Then you can suggest somethin' else!" said Dorrie indignantly.

"But you ought to stay, old man," urged Lee. "In case anything happens, you, at least, will be left with the young people——"

"Rats!" interrupted his lordship. "You can't swindle me out of a first-class joy-ride in that cool, off-hand way. We'll get back safely enough, don't you fear!"

"If you are fully determined——"

"I'm absolutely firm!" retorted Dorrie.

"In that case, I know it's perfectly useless

to argue," said Lee. "Well, I'll get below, and see about those 'demon' preparations. Have the men get ready, skipper!"

"They'll be ready!" promised Captain Burton.

Undoubtedly, the whole plan was daring and of promise. The danger was a positive one, for at any moment the *Dragon* might open fire. And at such close range as this, a miss was absolutely impossible. Dr. Foo Chow would have no mercy on his late "guests."

Within five minutes the *Wanderer* was quietly bustling with added life. Already the engineers were working against time to repair the damage to the engine-room. And now the other members of the crew were called upon to do their share. Not that they needed much urging.

Even the stewards were eager to volunteer their services for this night adventure. But there were enough men without them—trustworthy sailors, all of whom were powerful swimmers.

It wasn't dark, even yet, although the glow of daylight was fading in the distant sky. The whole surroundings seemed singularly peaceful—but the distant booming of gunfire told its own story. Somewhere across that rugged landscape the armies of Yung Li Chang were penetrating deeper and deeper into Foo Chow's territory.

"Hallo, sir! Anything in the wind?" asked Dick Hamilton, as he came across Mr. Stokes hurrying along the deck.

The young Housemaster paused.

"You're too cute, my son!" he said severely.

"I suppose that means there is?" said Dick.

"As a matter of fact, yes," growled Barry Stokes. "I wasn't going to tell any of you youngsters about it, but you've trapped me. Just a bit of a raid on the *Dragon* by some of our men. This is strictly in confidence, and I'm trusting you to keep it mum."

"Right you are, sir," replied Dick. "I understand. I'd love to go; but I'll be a martyr, and stay behind. The other fellows would only be jealous if I went without them. And I suppose they'd be justified, too. I thought we should be well under steam before now, though," he added.

"Yes—just a little trouble down in the engine-room," said Mr. Stokes carelessly. "Well, don't forget to keep it quiet, Dick."

"All right, sir. Where's the guv'nor?"

"You'll find him down in the laboratory—I oughtn't to have told you that, though," he added. "Still, I suppose you're in a different position to the others."

Mr. Stokes hurried off before he could be questioned further, and Dick grinned to himself. But before he went down to the laboratory, something else happened, and made his visit to Nelson Lee imperative.



CHAPTER 4.

HANDFORTH THE TIRELESS.

ALTER CHURCH leaned concernedly over the still evenly breathing form of his leader.

"Poor old Handy!" he murmured softly. "Sleeping like a top Mac. He's properly done up."

Handforth's chums were both by the bedside, and their comfortable cabin was quiet and peaceful. Only one small electric light was glowing, and this was shaded. Arnold McClure nodded sympathetically.

"He's had a terrible time!" he breathed. "We've got to let him sleep for about twenty-four solid hours. Even then he won't be fit for anything. Poor old chap, he's had the dickens of a time!"

They had just come to bed themselves, and were pleased to find that Edward Oswald Handforth was slumbering peacefully. Only Handforth's bulldog-like vitality had saved him from a real breakdown. He had had no real sleep for many long hours, and he had been imprisoned in a Chinese torture cage, and even now his neck was badly swollen and raw. Bandages were swathed round him.

"Yes, he's soundly off for the night," muttered Church. "Well, I suppose we'd better get undressed ourselves, Mac."

"Yes, rather," said McClure. "Good old Handy! I wouldn't wake him up for worlds—"

"No need to," said Handforth, opening his eyes. "What's the idea—gassing about me as though I were half dead?"

"We—we thought you were asleep. Handy," said Church tenderly. "You've got to keep quiet, and you mustn't disturb yourself on any account. Take it easy—"

"Rats!" interrupted Edward Oswald, as he sat up. "Whoa! My neck feels a bit stiff, but I'm all right otherwise. What's the time? I feel like getting dressed—"

"You can't!" said McClure in alarm.

"Why can't I?"

"Because you're not well enough—"

"Don't talk piffle!" interrupted Handforth tartly. "I've had a long sleep, and now I'm as fit as a fiddle. You chaps are up, so I'll get up. It's nearly breakfast-time, anyhow."

"You hopeless chump, it's only just got dark!" interrupted McClure. "You haven't been to sleep for more than four hours—"

"Plenty!" interrupted Handforth coolly. "Only sluggards and weaklings need more than four hours! Besides, I've got to get up. I've just thought of something. Are we still in the same position—in the river?"

"Yes, but—"

"Everything quiet?"

"Yes, of course, but—"

"No sign of Foo Chow's dirty Chinks?"

"No, but—"

"Not so many 'buts,' you ass!" said Handforth. "You can't say a word without

adding a 'but'! It's no good you looking at me like dead fish, either. I've made up my mind to get up, and——"

"Handy, you must be feverish!" interrupted Church gently. "Lie down, and go to sleep again. We've got strict orders to keep you in bed. You mustn't get up under any circumstances—either to-night or to-morrow. You've got to have thirty-six hours' sleep straight off."

Handforth glared.

"Any more funny jokes?" he asked tartly.

"But this is serious——"

"Rot!" said Edward Oswald, pushing the bedclothes back. "Where's my clobber? I don't suppose I shall be able to wear a proper collar, but that doesn't matter much. My hat! Do you think I'm going to stick in bed just because I've got a stiff neck?"

"He's not only feverish—he's delirious!" said McClure in alarm. "Handy, old man, be calm! You—you don't seem to understand how serious it is. It's bed-time—everybody's turned in. Go to sleep until the morning, at any rate——"

"And waste the whole night?" demanded Handforth. "I've made up my mind to lead an expedition across country——"

"He's—he's properly ill!" panted Church. "Quick, Mac—rush out and fetch somebody! He hasn't had enough trouble with these beastly Chinamen—he wants to go out on another expedition now!"

"If you go near that door, Mac, I'll smash you!" said Handforth, leaping out of bed. "You—you silly dummies! There's nothing wrong with me now. I've had a good sleep, and I'm perfectly fit."

"Irene's coming to nurse you in the morning," urged Church. "The girls are going to take it in turn to sit by your bedside, and give you medicine and things. Irene's going to nurse you for hours to-morrow!"

They waited anxiously for the effect of this information. To their minds, it would surely constitute a concrete reason for Handforth's remaining an invalid. But one could never tell with the leader of Study D. He looked positively scared.

"That's done it, then!" he said curtly. "I'm getting up—now!"

"But—but——"

"That's enough!" interrupted Handforth. "My only topper! If you wanted to thoroughly scare me, you've done it! So that's what the girls have planned, is it—to treat me as though I were at my last gasp, and sit by my bedside, handing me spoonfuls of medicine? Not likely!"

"But we thought you'd be keen on having Irene as a nurse," said McClure.

"Then you'd better get some oil, and lubricate your thinking gear!" snapped Handforth coldly. "Irene's a jolly ripping girl, and I want her to look upon me as a healthy chap, and not as a decrepit wreck. I've fully recovered, and I mean to get busy!"

"Busy?" echoed his chums.

"Yes!"

"Busy on what?" demanded Church.

"You poor, pitiful idiots!" said Handforth disparagingly. "You selfish rotters! Here we are, all comfortable and safe on the *Wanderer*, and nobody's even thought of poor old Chingy."

"Chingy?"

"I've been dreaming about him," said Handforth. "And after I'd dreamed about him I woke up and decided to act. You seem to forget that Chingy was left with Ah Fong, and that Foo Chow's soldiers might discover him at any hour. We've got to get up a party, steal to Ah Fong's place in the darkness, and bring Chingy back with us. Then we *shall* be all complete!"

"Well, it's a jolly ripping idea, I'll admit, but you can't help," said Church with absolute firmness. "You mustn't think of it, Handy. I'll tell Dick Hamilton and Reggie Pitt and some of the others, and we'll see what can be done. How's that?"

"Rotten!" said Handforth promptly. "You can do a fat lot without me, can't you? I'm the only fellow who knows the way to Ah Fong's house."

"Umlosi knows it."

"Perhaps he does," admitted Handforth, "but that's not the point. Umlosi isn't in the Remove, and this has got to be a Remove rescue. I'm fed-up with jawing, so dry up, and let me get dressed."

Handforth's chums looked on helplessly as their leader prepared to dress himself. They were amazed at his freshness. He had only had three or four hours' sleep, and he seemed to be practically himself again. It was his vitality and determination which made him so fresh.

And his plan regarding Yung Ching was undoubtedly sound. After all, the holiday party had come to China for the especial purpose of saving Yung Ching from his torturers. And now the party was all complete—with the exception of Yung Ching!

True, they had wrested him from his captors, and had placed him in the safe hands of a friendly Chinaman. But there was always a haunting fear that his hiding-place had been discovered, and that he had again been taken captive. As a matter of fact, there was something rather uncanny in Edward Oswald Handforth's obsession to fetch him—as later events were to prove.

But for Handforth to go on this mission himself was unthinkable. And while his back was turned for a moment, Church took the opportunity of slipping out of his cabin. This was essentially a case to be placed before Mr. Nelson Lee.

As luck would have it, Church ran into Dick Hamilton just as the latter was about to go down to the laboratory.

"Half a minute, Dick," said Church hurriedly.

"Anything important?" asked Dick. "Because, if not——"

"It is!" said Church. "That ass, Handforth, is getting up!"

"He's doing what?"

"Dressing!"

"Then go down and undress him again!" said Dick Hamilton indignantly. "What on earth is the matter with you chaps? Can't you look after him?"

"You might as well ask us to look after a cyclone!" snorted Church. "He's not only dressing, but he's keen on getting up a rescue party to go and fetch Yung Ching. He says that we're all together now, and that Chingy ought to be with us."

"Well, he's right there," admitted Dick thoughtfully. "But he's dotty if he thinks he can lead the expedition personally. Why, he's not fit to move from one side of the deck to the other. Go down and put him back to bed."

Church glared.

"Come and try to do it yourself!" he retorted. "I'd rather put a grizzly bear to bed! I tell you he's as vigorous as ever he was, and doesn't seem to show any effects of that awful torture at all! Mac and I are nearly off our rockers with worry. Where's Mr. Lee?"

"Go down and argue with Handy for a bit," advised Dick. "I'll tell the guv'nor, and we'll soon have him effectively dealt with. All you've got to do is to keep him quiet."

So Church went back, rather relieved. And Dick Hamilton made his way down to the laboratory, and found the door locked. This "lab." had indeed been fitted up mainly for Lee's benefit, for Lord Dorrimore was quite lavish where his yacht was concerned, and it was provided with practically every innovation conceivable.

"Who is there?" came Nelson Lee's voice curtly.

"Only me, sir."

"All right, young 'un—you can go away—"

"But this is urgent, sir," insisted Dick. "Handforth's getting up, and he insists upon starting off for Ah Fong's house, so that he can bring Yung Ching back. We want you to come and talk to him."

The door was unlocked, and Dick Hamilton went in.

is a minor point compared to their effectiveness. Now, what's this you told me about Handforth? I instructed Church and McClure to keep him in bed."

"He won't stay there, sir, and the poor chaps are worried stiff," said Dick. "I advised them to keep Handy arguing, while I told you. Hadn't you better go and have a word with him, sir?"

"Certainly not," replied Nelson Lee. "I haven't got time to bother with Handforth now; and, in any case, there is no fear of his putting this wild idea into effect."

"Handy's a determined sort of chap, sir."

"Nevertheless, he is physically incapable of any such strenuous mission," declared Lee. "He will soon drop the whole business. I would speak to him myself, but I really haven't time. There is something much more important to be done."

"Yes, sir; Mr. Stokes told me," grinned Dick.

"Oh, he did! That was very unwise—"

"But I guessed it first, guv'nor," interrupted Dick. "I promised him I'd keep it mum, so you needn't worry. But what's the exact reason for raiding the *Dragon*? Aren't we satisfied with the *Wanderer*?"

"Perfectly satisfied; and that is the main reason why we are going on this adventure," replied Lee. "We shall disable the enemy's guns, my lad. They are a deadly menace to us, particularly as we are compelled to remain at anchor until the engines are repaired. At any moment those brutes may open fire on us. We can't leave such a thing to chance."

Dick's eyes were gleaming.

"Good luck to you, sir!" he said. "I wish I could come; but I won't be unreasonable."

"Then go along and soothe that impulsive Handforth," advised Lee. "Tell him that Umlosi will be dispatched at the earliest possible moment to fetch Yung Ching. He need not imagine that I have forgotten the unfortunate boy. But we must deal with other things first."

Lee refused to waste any further time, and Dick Hamilton made his way to Handforth & Co.'s cabin. The leader of Study D was not only fully dressed, but Tom Burton, Doyle, Scott, Buster Boots and Bob Christine were with him, too. And they were all looking eager and excited.

"What's the idea?" asked Dick, staring.

"We're going ashore with Handy," said Doyle. "He's going to lead us to that place where Chingy is, and we're going to bring him back."

"And we don't want any arguments," said Handforth pointedly.

"Look here, you fellows," said Dick. "Handforth isn't fit for this job, and I'm surprised at you for encouraging him. He needs to stay in bed for another twenty-four hours—"

"That's what we told him, but he wouldn't listen," interrupted Boots. "And I must say he looks fit enough. After all, this business

CHAPTER 5.

READY FOR THE RAID.



FOR a moment Dick fell back, fanning his face.

"Phoo! I say, guv'nor, what an awful niff!" he protested. "What on earth have you been doing? These chemicals are enough to kill you! Fancy you making experiments at a time like this!"

"It is not quite so incongruous as you might think," retorted Nelson Lee. "As for the unpleasant odour of the chemicals, that

of rescuing Chingy is important, and Handy's the only chap who knows the way."

"I've just come from Mr. Lee," said Dick tartly. "Umlosi is going after Yung Ching later on, and there's no need to worry about him. In fact, I've got strict orders from the gov'nor to keep you chained up, Handy. Are you going to obey quietly, or shall we use force?"

"So Umlosi's going later on, is he?" said Handforth with heavy sarcasm. "Later on? And in the meantime poor old Chingy may be collared! We can't lose a minute, you ass! I've made up my mind to go ahead with this thing, and there's an end of it. So we don't want any more of your rot!"

"Handy's right," said Doyle. "This thing has got to be done."

"Hear, hear!"

"We're with him, you know, Hamilton."

Dick looked at them in amazement.

"You—you mean to say that you're supporting him in this mad suggestion?" he asked blankly. "I don't want to sneak on you—I don't want to tell the gov'nor—but you don't seem to realise the danger."

"What danger?" asked Boots. "Everything's quiet now. Foo Chow and all his troops have gone miles and miles away to meet the enemy. Not our enemy, of course, but his. Yung Li Chang's soldiers are our friends."

"Don't you make too certain of that," warned Dick. "Yung Li Chang himself is our pal, and when he knows of our position he may do everything in his power to help us. But until then his armies are just as liable to massacre us as Foo Chow's men. These Chinese are bloodthirsty beggars when they're worked up in a battle."

"Oh, but there's nothing for us to worry about," said Bob Christine. "I think Handforth's jolly sporty to get out of bed like this and suggest rescuing Chingy. Don't forget that he's the only fellow who knows the way to Ah Foo's place—barring Umlosi. And we thought it would be rather good to do this job on our own."

"Well, you can't do it," growled Dick curtly. "Mr. Lee's given his orders, and he simply won't allow you to go ashore. That's the long and the short of it. So the sooner you get back to bed, the better."

And Dick Hamilton went out of the cabin, feeling rather upset. He was full of sympathy for Handforth, but he had no patience for this reckless enterprise; and he blamed the other fellows for encouraging the impulsive Edward Oswald.

"Anyhow, they'll never get ashore, so why should I concern myself," murmured Dick. "I'll go and see what's doing."

He was more interested in this projected raid upon the *Dragon*. Not that he was allowed to watch the final preparations. These were made far below, in the very depths of the yacht. Nelson Lee had chosen a storage chamber for the purpose—one that had two wide portholes close to the water level. From

here it would be possible to slip noiselessly into the water and swim off. So even if there were secret watchers on the look-out, they would need to have very sharp eyes to detect the move.

Nelson Lee, Lord Dorrimore, Barry Stokes, Mr. Stewart—the yacht's first officer—and twenty picked men were in readiness. There were two dozen altogether, not counting Umlosi, who was practically as good as another half-dozen on his own. They were all attired in swimming costumes, and each wore a belt containing revolvers and cartridges. These latter would be none the worse for their immersion, since they were water-tight.

"We appear to be in luck," Nelson Lee was saying. "Everything remains quiet, and before very long we shall be in the midst of this affair. Are all the instruments ready, Mr. Stewart?"

"Everything, sir," said Mr. Stewart. "If we don't make a mess of those guns I shall be a Dutchman!"

The big storage chamber was reeking with a smell of chemicals, and a large pot stood upon an upturned barrel, with a brush in it. The pot contained a murky-looking paste.

"An' is this stuff goin' to do the trick, old man?" asked Dorrie, as he gazed dubiously into the pot. "It doesn't look particularly luminous to me. It's not like the stuff I've seen before."

"It's an invention of my own," replied Lee.

"Then it's bound to be pretty horrible," said his lordship. "By the way, does it taste as bad as it smells? If so, I'd rather not have any on my handsome visage. I hope it doesn't smart much."

"The stuff is perfectly harmless, and is only effective after it has been wetted. As it dries the effectiveness disappears, but is instantly renewed upon re-wetting."

"How long does it remain moist, then, Mr. Lee?" asked Barry Stokes.

"Quite long enough for our purpose, I fancy," replied Lee grimly. "Twenty minutes, at least—and even after that it will only begin to slightly fade in luminosity. Oh, you need have no fear that it will not be effective. The stuff has the added advantage that we can slip into the water unseen."

"Gad, that's a bright feature!" said Dorrimore, with a nod. "It would rather give the game away if we were all seen tumblin' into the river. Well, who's first? Are you goin' to be the artist, Lee? You can make me look as ghastly as you please. You won't need to do very much to me to secure that effect, anyhow!"

Nelson Lee was, indeed, the artist. One by one, the members of the raiding party were dealt with. The Housemaster-detective made no pretence of performing any elaborate painting. In most cases he daubed his subjects so that they would resemble skeletons; only a few deft touches were needed to gain this effect. But here, under the brilliant



The juniors dashed into the fray, hitting out with all their strength as they backed up Handforth, punching effectively and with deadly aim. This form of attack was new to the Chinese and they gave way.

electric light, the whole thing seemed absurd. A few smears of the brownish paste down the limbs of the men—a few ribs over the chest—one or two smears on the face. They looked comic, rather than horrifying.

"We're trusting to you, sir, that everything'll be all right," remarked one of the men, as he gazed down at himself. "Strike me! I don't look as if I should scare a five-year-old kid!"

"The effect will be very different in the dark," promised Lee. "In any case, it is only an experiment, and we must all be prepared to fight every inch of the way. Take no notice of the noxious odour, it will cause no ill-effect, although our skins may smart for some little time, particularly upon contact with the water."

Within five minutes everything was ready, and the raid upon the *Dragon* was imminent.

But, actually, things were very different.

Indeed, the wisdom of Lord Dorrimore's suggestion was far greater than anybody on the *Wanderer* realised. For even now—precisely as Nelson Lee had feared—grim, sinister activities were afoot.

Dark figures flitted about the deck on the Chinese yacht—silent, stealthy and shadowy. Although the vessel seemed so deserted, her main deck was actually peopled by scores of Dr. Foo Chow's trained men. They had received their orders—they were about to put these orders into execution!

Men were working silently at the for'ard gun, training it into direct line with the *Wanderer's* hull, close against the water-line. Officers were giving orders, and men were obeying. But everything was being done so stealthily that no sound could be heard, or no motion seen. The darkness enshrouded these operations.

So it was the intention of the Chinese to blow the *Wanderer* to fragments in one appalling burst of fire. They intended no warning to be given. They were making sure that their victims should not have any chance of escape. It was fortunate, indeed, that the holiday party was preparing to take the bull by the horns!

Failure to act would certainly have meant disaster for the whole party. Foo Chow's officers knew well enough that a raid would be costly, and even fruitless. They could throw hundreds of men into the attack upon the British yacht, and all would be beaten

CHAPTER 6.

THE DEMONS OF THE NIGHT.

THE *Dragon* lay dark and silent.



According to every outward appearance, she was utterly deserted by her crew, and by every living thing. Her decks were empty, and she lay moored against the quay like a ghost-ship.

back. And Foo Chow no longer desired to have these white people alive. His one wish now was to kill them—to destroy them utterly and completely, so that the world would know them no more.

In this way he would ensure silence as to his methods. The Chinese Republican Government would never learn the exact details of these events if the *Wanderer* and her occupants were sent to the bottom of the river.

One shot would be sufficient to cause a gaping wound, to create a death-dealing gash. And two or three following shells would complete the ghastly work. Within five minutes it would be all over. It was Nelson Lee's fear of this possibility that had given rise to the raid.

But even Lee did not guess how fine the margin was!

Nobody saw those black figures slip into the water from the *Wanderer's* porthole—nobody heard them. When it came to silence and stealthiness, the Britons were the equal of the Chinese.

A look-out man was stationed in the bows of the *Dragon*—others were placed at various points along the rail. Perhaps the Chinamen were half expecting some sort of attack. At all events, they were leaving nothing to chance.

And one of these look-out men suddenly drew in his breath. He stared down at the silently-running water of the river as it flowed relentlessly past the yacht's plates. It seemed to the Chinaman that there was a mysterious sort of reddish glow in the water—down beneath the surface. The man knew this river in all its moods, but he had never seen such an effect as this.

He stared harder, and then uttered a low cry.

There was something rising out of the river—a terrifying, skeleton-like creature which was not merely inhuman, but blazing with lurid flames, and surrounded by a haze of smoky radiance.

And this monster of the river, this flaming thing which came from the water itself, was swarming with deadly agility up the overhanging rope.

The Chinaman was struck dumb for a moment, and then he saw other demons—many of them—and all were climbing up the yacht's side.

The look-out man ran wildly. He charged full tilt into an officer. Other look-out men were running back, too, and several of the Chinese who had glanced overside caught the panic.

And well they might!

The *Dragon* was being attacked by these flaming devils from the river! Never for an instant did the Celestials believe that they were human creatures. Superstitious to a point of fanaticism, they were filled with the utmost horror. They had always known that the river was peopled by demons. Were not the occasional devastating floods caused by the wrath of the river gods? Were not the

tremors of an earthquake created by the earth demons, far below the surface?

And here were these fiends coming up from the river to exact some vengeance or other.

Even white people would have been startled at these grotesque figures which were now climbing over the rails. In the intense darkness they stood out luminously. Not greenish, in the way of commonplace luminous paint, but lurid and red. And each skeleton figure was surrounded by a halo of misty vapour. The effect was terrifying in the extreme.

And yet it was really a simple effect. For the water, acting upon that paint, caused it to send forth constant clouds of vapour—luminous vapour, which looked for all the world like flames.

Screaming now, and panic-stricken to the last degree, the Chinese ran helter-skelter over every part of the deck. And one of the demons—a greater one than the others—was already doing deadly havoc with a burning, glowing weapon which resembled a spear.

Man after man was struck down as he fled, screaming. Others hurled themselves headlong into the river. The demons were running over the decks madly, leaping high and making wild and horrifying sounds.

Within five minutes, not a single Chinaman was left, for even the officers had joined in the general panic. Some had fled below and were skulking in the cabins behind locked doors, trembling and faint with fright. But the decks were cleared.

"By gad, it's worked!" said Lord Dorri-more breathlessly. "Barry, old man, you're a genius! You deserve diamond-studded medals for this suggestion of yours."

"Yes, it's proved a success!" breathed Nelson Lee, with great thankfulness. "But now we must follow up our advantage. By heaven, we were not a minute too soon, either! These yellow devils were preparing for our destruction."

Mr. Stewart and his men were at work already.

There were sounds of metallic clangings, and there were experts on the work, too—for this raiding party contained three skilled engineers, men who were experienced gunners, too. They knew exactly what to do with these pieces of modern ordnance.

And while the working party disabled the heavy guns, all the others capered round the decks in the same mad way as they had started. They had no desire to fight against impossible odds, and it was better to scare the Chinamen off. Scores of celestials who had been on the quay had bolted long since.

"Wau! Is this not a pitiful pretence, Umtagati, my master?" growled Umlosi, in disgust, as he recognised the features of Nelson Lee through the glow of the luminous paint. "I am sick at heart. For did I not come hither to fight? And have I not been basely fooled? These yellow sons of dogs have fled like the cravens they are! I am sad, my master."

"I know it has been a disappointment for you, Umlosi, but we came here to wreck

these guns—not to kill men,” said Lee quietly. “Let us be satisfied that we have achieved our great object. Thou art thirsty for blood, but we desire naught but the end we seek.”

Umlosi grunted.

“If thou art satisfied, Umtagati, ’tis well,” he rumbled.

Mr. Stewart came up, breathless.

“All clear, sir!” he panted. “If they can use these guns now, they’ll be magicians! They’ll never be any use until they’ve been overhauled in an ordnance works. Will you give the order, sir?”

“Yes!” breathed Lee. “Splendid, Mr. Stewart! Our good fortune in this affair is almost too good to be true. Let us get back to the *Wanderer* without a minute’s delay.”

Lee uttered a piercing cry, thrice repeated. It was a signal that had been pre-arranged, and at the sound of it every member of the raiding party ran to the rail, and dived headlong into the river. And so the lurid demons vanished, as mysteriously and as dramatically as they had appeared.

Aboard the *Wanderer*, men were waiting—men who had been told off for this task. Ropes were being held overside, and as the swimmers went down with the flow of the river, they grasped at these friendly ropes.

There was not one man lost. All members of the party arrived safe and unscratched. From every point of view, the raid had been a brilliant success.



CHAPTER 7.

HANDFORTH MEANS IT!

MEANWHILE, other events had been happening.

On the *Wanderer*'s deck, Dick Hamilton had watched, breathlessly and anxiously, the raid on the enemy yacht. He had seen those luminous figures—he had heard the screaming Chinese. And he had waited, all his thoughts centred upon Nelson Lee and the fate of the mission.

For the time being, he had forgotten Handforth.

Dick had determined to tell Nelson Lee of Edward Oswald's obsession, but Lee had not been available. Indeed, the Remove skipper had not even seen or heard the figures of the raiders as they slid out of the porthole into the water. Dick's first intimation of the raid had been the screams of the frightened Chinamen. And after that he had watched, all his thoughts with his beloved gov'nor.

Below, Edward Oswald Handforth was nearly ready.

John Busterfield Boots, Doyle, Scott, Bob Christine, and Tom Burton were eager to support him. And Church and McClure were ready to support him from sheer loyalty—not because they were in agreement with this reckless plan.

The eight juniors had dressed, and were eager to start. At least, they were all eager with the exception of Church and McClure.

But this pair hoped fervently that something would happen to prevent the mission. They were by no means afraid, and they were ready to go into any necessary danger; but they were alarmed, in all truth, for their impulsive leader.

“Handy, old man, you’ve got to drop it!” said Church hoarsely. “You’re not fit to go out like this. Can’t you understand that we’ve been ordered to keep you in bed for six solid hours?”

“You mustn’t let us down!” urged McClure.

Handforth looked at them grimly.

“Are you funky?” he asked.

For a moment Church went red, and his eyes blazed, then he merely shrugged his shoulders.

“That’s not fair, Handy,” he said quietly.

“Sorry, old man,” said Handforth, contrite on the instant. “Of course you’re not funky, but, I will say, you’re jolly obstinate! You don’t seem to understand that it’s our job to bring Chingy here. Once he’s with us, our party will be absolutely complete.”

“Hear, hear!” said Doyle. “I’m game, anyhow.”

“So are we,” declared Boots. “And the sooner we’re off, the sooner we shall be back. You’re sure you know the way, Handy?”

“Am I sure that you’re an ass?” retorted Handforth. “Didn’t I take Chingy to Ah Fong’s house in the first place? I could find my way there blindfold, my son! As for being fit, if anybody’s doubtful, look at this!”

He doubled his fist and exhibited it.

“Who wants a taste?” he added grimly.

“We’re satisfied,” said Christine, with a grin. “You’re a marvellous sort of chap, Handy—nothing seems to hurt you at all! According to all the rules, you ought to be nearly dead, after what you’ve gone through. But you seem to be as eager to eat fire as ever.”

“I’m not made of jelly, anyhow,” growled Handforth. “It takes a lot to bowl a Handforth over.”

“Yes, your minor’s a tough customer, too,” said Scott. “You Handforths must be a leathery breed!”

“Don’t mention my minor!” said Handforth, with alarm. “If he hears anything about this affair, he’ll want to join us, and I hope the young boulder is fast asleep. What are we waiting for, anyhow? Let’s be going.”

They stole on deck, and found everything quiet. On the port side there were a number of men at the rail, it was true, but on the starboard side there wasn’t a soul to be seen, and it was here that the juniors desired to operate. Two or three boats were tied to the ladder—the boats that had been used when the holiday party had seized the yacht. They were not the *Wanderer*'s boats, but it had been thought better to keep them handy. And by retaining them, too, the Chinese were denied their use.

“Ripping!” murmured Handforth. “Boats are simply waiting for us!”

"We only need one," whispered Scott.

They prepared to swarm down.

"Look here, Handy," pleaded Church, in a final effort. "For the love of goodness, be sensible! You're not fit to go on this long tramp! It's miles to Ah Fong's place——"

"I'm determined!" interrupted Handforth firmly.

He climbed over the rail, and swiftly descended the ladder. It was only then that Dick Hamilton became aware of what was happening. By sheer chance he had glanced across the deck, and had seen a movement. But when he got to the ladder, the boat was already filled, and was preparing to depart.

"You—you mad idiots!" shouted Dick. "Handy, come back!"

"Sorry!" sang out Handforth. "We're in a hurry."

"You mustn't go off——"

"Go and eat coke!"

"Mr. Lee distinctly ordered——"

"Swallow the coal-scuttle!" advised Handforth calmly. "Ready, you chaps? Good! All together!"

The boat sheered off from the yacht's side and made for the rocky shore of the gorge. It vanished into the darkness, and only the sound of the splashing oars came to Dick Hamilton's ears. He turned round helplessly.

"Oh, the chumps!" he muttered. "I never dreamed they'd go off like that, without—— I say, Mr. Pelton, what the dickens are we to do? Handforth's just gone off with seven or eight of the fellows."

The third engineer, who was passing, was startled.

"But they must be crazy!" he said. "What have they gone for?"

"To fetch Yung Ching!"

"Well, it's a good object, but it seems very much like suicide to me," said Mr. Pelton. "Couldn't you prevent them?"

"I didn't know they'd gone until it was too late," said Dick. "I knew that Handforth was thinking of the dodge, but I never believed he'd actually do it."

At this moment there were sounds from the other rail, and the raiding party came on board, one after the other. The instant Lee appeared, Dick confronted him.

"Well, my boy, we've got to report a complete success," smiled Lee. "I cannot tell you of the relief we feel. Those guns are useless now, and the menace has disappeared. I rather fancy we can hold our own in any fight now."

"Ripping, sir," said Dick. "I was sure you'd be successful, though—and this luminous paint dodge was a brain-wave. But I've got some bad news."

"Bad news?"

"Yes, sir. That ass, Handforth, has gone off with a crowd of chaps——"

"But I distinctly told you, Dick, to keep them on board," broke in Lee sharply. "Good heavens! How long have they been gone? I cannot help admiring Handforth's pluck, but his recklessness is appalling! Just when we were comparatively safe, too!"

"I did my best, sir," growled Dick Hamilton. "Church and McClure were against it, too, but the others were fired by Handy's enthusiasm. They're all keen to fetch poor old Chingy. We can't blame them for that, you know."

Lee made a swift decision.

"They must be brought back," he said firmly. "As soon as I have got rid of this paint, I'll slip some clothes on, and I'll take a number of these men ashore. We can't move for several hours, anyhow, so we might as well occupy our time. And perhaps there will be a chance of fetching Yung Ching, after all."

"May I come, sir?"

"Well, under the circumstances, one more of you won't make much difference," replied Lee. "Yes, perhaps you'd better come."

Ten minutes later, Lee, Dorrie, and Barry Stokes were dressed again, and looking more like real human beings. They were all feeling eminently satisfied with their recent work.

"We shall need Umlosi as a guide," said Lee briskly. "I suppose you'll want to come, Dorrie?"

"You're a great chap at correct suppositions," agreed his lordship.

"But you'd better stay behind, Barry," went on Lee. "You must remember your wife—and there's no earthly reason why you should come, anyhow. We're taking a number of armed men, so I don't anticipate any trouble in getting back. But those boys must be fetched at all costs."

And soon afterwards the second party boarded a boat and pushed off.

Although Nelson Lee had spoken confidently, he was anxious, and he was very angry indeed with Edward Oswald Handforth. And yet it would be difficult to reprimand the junior when he was found. For his motive, at all events, was undoubtedly a noble and a self-sacrificing one. Caring nothing for his own condition, he had got out of bed, sore and aching, for the purpose of fetching the unhappy Yung Ching.

Lee marvelled at the daring of these boys, and prayed that he would find them safe.

"Hang it, Dorrie, we can't scold them for this affair!" he said uncomfortably. "But, in future, I'll see that a check is kept upon their high-spirited impulsiveness."

"It's all in a good cause, an' things have been goin' so smoothly to-night that we shall probably continue the run," said his lordship with his usual optimism. "Personally, I'm thoroughly enjoyin' the proceedin's. I'd no idea that we should get so much sport out of this adventure. But one thing's puzzlin' me. Where are all these 'teeming hordes' of Chinese?"

"There's not much of a puzzle there, Dorrie," replied Lee. "Foo Chow has taken the majority of his men into battle, fifteen or twenty miles from here, I imagine. And that is a very fortunate circumstance for us. He's attempting to beat the invaders back—to save Yang Fu from falling into

Yung Li Chang's hands. We owe our very safety to this feature of the campaign."

They had landed by this time, and Umlosi was picking his way unerringly over the rough ground towards the cultivated lands lower down in the valley, where Ah Fong's humble dwelling was situated.



CHAPTER 8.

A TIMELY INTERVENTION.

HOW much farther, Handy?"

Bob Christine asked this question somewhat wearily.

It seemed to him that they had been trudging for

hours. They had left the rocky country far behind, and had been penetrating bamboo woods, had floundered in boggy rice-fields, and had marched across many other cultivated tracts. And always they had steered clear of villages or anything that savoured of a dwelling.

In fact, nearly three hours had passed, and most of the juniors were beginning to regret their earlier enthusiasm.

Throughout their long tramp they had encountered no soldiers. The whole countryside had been deserted. But in the far distance there were one or two flickering glows hovering on the horizon. And at intervals came the dull, reverberating booming of cannonades.

"There's a battle going on over there right enough," declared Church. "Some fires, too, by the look of it. By Jove, I'll bet there's some awful slaughter taking place! Thank goodness the war zone is at a distance!"

"It may be along this way next," remarked McClure.

"We shall be back on the yacht long before then," said Handforth. "Not much farther to go now, you fellows. About another mile, I reckon."

"You said that half an hour ago," grunted Boots.

"I believe you've lost yourself," grumbled Doyle. "We were silly fatheads to believe your yarns in the first place, Handy."

Edward Oswald made no reply. At any other time he would have made vigorous protests, and he might have resorted to a fistic reply. But now he was too utterly worn out to care much. To his own pained astonishment, he was feeling bodily weary.

This adventure, upon which he had entered so enthusiastically, was proving far more strenuous and tiring than he had anticipated. The fact was, his spirit was a great deal stronger than his body. There was no holding down Handforth's dogged spirit.

After that sleep—brief though it had been—he had awakened with the idea that his tissues were fully restored. But they had played him false, for they soon wilted again, and now he was regretting the adventure

more than any of the others, although he would never have admitted it.

He wasn't lost, as Doyle had intimated. He had been over this ground two or three times before, and in the dark, too, and he recognised one or two woods, and a hill-top here and there. He knew that he was approaching the place where Ah Fong's lonely house was situated.

In China, the houses are not usually isolated in this way, and that was another reason why this particular dwelling was suitable for the particular purpose. Ah Fong was only a coolie—a man who worked on the land, and who watched over the rice-fields. It was not likely that Yung Ching would be detected in that household.

The Chinese boy had been masquerading as one of Ah Fong's own sons, and it was generally felt that he was safe there. But he would be a great deal safer on board the *Wanderer*.

Another reason for Handforth's concern was connected with Ah Fong himself. The man was grateful to Handforth, for the latter had saved Ah Fong's little son from a tiger. There was no denying the fact, however, that this humble Chinaman was in a dangerous position. For it would mean nothing short of death if he were discovered harbouring the son of Yung Li Chang.

"It's not fair to the chap," Handforth had declared. "Now that this war has suddenly started, it's up to us to take Chingy away, and save Ah Fong from any unpleasant complications. We've got two reasons for going on this expedition."

But now that the end of the journey was getting close at hand, Handforth was wondering how he would drag himself back to the security of the yacht. He didn't say anything to the others, but he knew, in his own heart, that he had acted rashly in setting forth.

Dawn wasn't so far off, either. There was a feeling in the air that the Eastern sky would soon be revealing the first glow of the coming day. And this would mean that the return journey would have to be made in full light. The absolute foolhardiness of the whole undertaking was being forced upon the eight juniors.

"Look here, Handy, you keep saying we're nearly there, and we still trudge on," grumbled Bob Christine at length. "How much farther now?"

"Just round this little wood, and we shall be within sight of the house," replied Handforth, waking up from a kind of walking doze. "You needn't think I've lost my bearings. I know where I am. Ah Fong's house is nearly hidden in trees, and there are fields all round it. We've got to go along a narrow path between some rice-fields, and then across an open stretch of grassland. Leave it to me, and we'll get there."

"By jingo, we shall be tired when we get back!" said Doyle.

"I'm thinking of Handy," muttered

Church. "He's nearly all in now, poor chap. I was afraid——"

"Rats!" interrupted Handforth curtly. "I'm all right! If you fellows wouldn't gas so much, we should get along better. Think how fine it'll be to take Chingy back with us. We shall feel that we've earned some real sleep then."

"Let's hope we get back safely," muttered Church.

They were all feeling more or less depressed. The hours of laborious trudging had had due effect, and every atom of enthusiasm for the affair had gone. All they wanted was to get back to the comfort of the *Wanderer*.

"Well, there's nothing here," said Boots, as they skirted the little wood. "It serves us right for trusting to your sense of direction. We all know what a chump you are, and——"

"Dry up!" muttered McClure. "Handy's doing his best, isn't he?"

"Yes, but——"

"But rats!" said McClure. "Leave the chap alone!"

"It's getting daylight already," put in Bob Christine. "There's the first tinge of dawn in the sky—— Hallo! Lights over there!" he added with a catch in his breath. "Look! I say, we'd better go easy!"

They all came to a halt, staring. Their weariness was forgotten in this sudden spectacle. It was the first indication they had had of human life. Normally, the countryside was swarming with Chinamen, but it seemed that all the inhabitants had fled now. But these lights were indicative of human presence.

"By George!" said Handforth keenly. "Ah Fong's place!"

"Where those lights are?"

"Yes," said Edward Oswald. "I can see some figures, too. Why, there must be twenty or thirty of them. My only hat! I'll bet we're too late! The soldiers have pinched Ah Fong, and they've got Chingy! Come on, you chaps—let's run for it!"

"Hadn't we better go easy?" gasped Church. "We don't want to be seen."

"H'm! Yes, I suppose we'd better be a bit cautious," admitted Handforth. "We shan't do ourselves much good if we walk into the enemy's arms, shall we? Follow me, my sons! I'll do the leading!"

With their hearts now beating rapidly they hastened on, and soon lost sight of the lights as they descended a dip. But when they mounted the opposite rise they had a much clearer view. The daylight, too, was now strengthening apace.

There were men all round the primitive little dwelling, which lay less than a quarter of a mile ahead, with bushes and trees close by. Many of the men were carrying flaming

torches, and in the flickering glare it could be seen they were wearing the showy uniform of Foo Chow's soldiery.

"Yes, by jingo, there's something doing here!" muttered Boots. "We'd better creep up like shadows. Look at that clump of bushes over to the left. Supposing we steal that way, and then peep through?"

"Good idea!" said Handforth. "Come on!"

His own tiredness had gone now, and he was thrilled with interest. But he realised the importance of caution. His recent experiences at the hands of the Chinese torturers had taught him a grim lesson, and he was not likely to err on the side of rashness now.

Fortunately, the bushes were very handy for the intended purpose. They formed a thick barrier, and just beyond them was a little cultivated patch of ground which represented Ah Fong's garden. By creeping up to these bushes and parting the foliage, it was possible to take a close look at the proceedings without any risk of immediate discovery. But when the daylight strengthened it would probably be a difficult matter to get away.

The juniors, however, thought only of the moment.

Handforth was the first to peer through, and he stared, fascinated. It was only by an effort that he held back an exclamation of consternation and horror.

A remarkable scene lay immediately in front.

There were twenty or thirty Chinese soldiers close at hand. In the background, Ah Fong's house was prominent, and lined up in front of it were the unfortunate members of Ah Fong's family—his wife, his two sons, his two young daughters, and the child which Handforth had saved from the tiger. All of them were rudely bound, and propped against the wall, while soldiers were standing on guard.

But this was not the horrifying feature.

Midway between the clump of bushes and the house were other soldiers, many of them carrying flaming, smoking torches. Three officers were standing in a group, and in Handforth's full view was Ah Fong himself.

But the unhappy Chinaman was in a dire plight.

With his feet bound, and his hands tethered behind him, he was kneeling on the ground. His head was thrust forward, and towering over him was an enormous Chinaman, bared to the waist. This uncouth-looking rascal held an enormous sword in his grasp.

"Great corks!" breathed Handforth, utterly aghast.

The story was as clear as daylight before him. Ah Fong had been discovered by the soldiers, and he was about to be executed!



A blackened, tattered figure emerged from the hole in front of the burning building—it was Handforth! "It's all right!" he called weakly to the rescue-party. "We're all here!"



CHAPTER 9.

IN DEADLY PERIL.

HANDFORTH was not the only one to utter a gasp of consternation. All those juniors, as they peered through the bushes, realised the ghastly nature of this situation. Ah Fong was about to be decapitated. There could be no other explanation of that scene, or of that yellow heathen with the great sword.

Even as the juniors watched, one of the officers raised his hand and spoke a few words of command. The sword was raised, swinging ominously. Wild cries came from Ah Fong's wife and children, as they watched, stunned and terrified by this exhibition of butchery. Perhaps they knew that it would be their turn next!

In the flickering light from those blazing torches the scene was made even more appalling. Ah Fong uttered no sound, and made no attempt to move his luckless head. He knew the futility of such a proceeding—and perhaps he viewed this swift death with truly Celestial fatalism. Anticipating torture, no doubt, he regarded decapitation with gratitude.

Edward Oswald Handforth acted.

It was impossible for him to do otherwise. While the other juniors were stunned by the horror of this sight, Handforth was galvanised into movement. To stand there and watch was impossible. As the sword

swung upwards, he gave a roaring shout of anger and burst from the bushes.

"You yellow beasts!" he bellowed.

In a dozen leaping strides he had reached the executioner, and none of the soldiers had had time to check him. The sword was hissing down upon its frightful mission. But at the crucial moment Handforth arrived.

Crash!

With every ounce of his strength he drove his right fist into the face of the executioner. The man staggered as he was swinging the sword, and the cruel edge of the blade swerved, missing Ah Fong's head.

"You hounds!" shouted Handforth furiously. "You—you inhuman devils!"

He glared round defiantly. He did not realise that this form of execution was one of the most commonplace sights of China. The executioner's sword is as much in use to-day as it was centuries ago, and the heads of wrongdoers are ruthlessly chopped off.

To Handforth it seemed a specially prepared act of barbarism. He did not even appreciate his own deadly peril. Having once saved the life of Ah Fong's youngest child, he had now saved Ah Fong himself.

"Come on!" yelled Church. "We can't leave Handy there alone! This is a fight, you chaps. We shall all go under, but we've got to back up old Handy! On, the Remove!"

The other seven juniors dashed into the

fray. Their overwhelming excitement prevented them from dwelling upon the odds against them, and the possible ending of this desperate fight. To win was impossible, for there were scores of these ruthless enemies.

"Come on, St. Frank's!" yelled Handforth fiercely.

"Hurrah!"

"Smash 'em!"

The daring of the thing was staggering. As the soldiers closed in upon the school-boys, they gave battle. And in less than ten seconds they were hitting out with all their strength, punching effectively and with deadly aim. This form of attack was new to the Chinese.

Smash! Slam! Crash!

For nearly half a minute the desperate knot of St. Frank's fellows held their own. But this was only because the Chinese soldiers were taken by surprise. Then came the change. The officers shouted angrily, and the rest was swift.

Utterly overwhelmed, the juniors were hemmed in so tightly that open fighting was impossible. They struggled in vain. Almost before they knew it they were held—each junior in the grip of three or four enemies.

"They've got us!" panted Handforth. "Cheer up, you chaps! No need to be downhearted! We'll dish the rotters yet!"

But the others were just beginning to realise, with full horror, the nature of their position. What chance was there of salvation? They had left the yacht in secret, and no help could reach them. The chances were that they would all be beheaded, one after the other.

"Where's Chingy, Ah Fong?" asked Handforth, as he saw the condemned Chinaman's eyes upon him. "Great Scott! Have they killed him?"

"No killee!" said Ah Fong, his voice cracked with emotion. "Takee away. Chingy plisoner. Allee same gone. Me velly solly."

"So they've got him, eh?" snorted Handforth. "You brutes!" he added, glaring round. "What have you done with Yung Ching? Where is he? Where have you taken him? Can't you answer, blow you?"

"It's no good, Handy!" panted Church. "They can't understand!"

"All this for nothing!" moaned Doyle, scared out of his wits. "Chingy's gone, and we've only got ourselves into this mess. They'll kill us all!"

Further conversation was difficult, for, at an order from the senior officer of the group, the eight prisoners were separated, and all of them were securely bound. It seemed only too certain that they were to share the fate which had been planned for Ah Fong. The Chinese officers consulted.

"These are some of the foreign devils that his Excellency has been harbouring in the palace," said one of them in his own tongue. "It is our duty to take them captive and hand them to our master."

"It will be better to execute them without delay," declared one of the others. "Have they not given enough trouble already? His Excellency has given orders that these white dogs shall be killed out of hand. Let us carry out the execution now—and by the sword!"

"It is well planned," agreed a third.

"But why should they meet death so painlessly?" added the second officer thoughtfully. "What is the sword but a merciful release? A swift blow, and all is over. Nay, I can think of a better method. These accursed white boys shall suffer before they die."

He talked at greater length, and his companions nodded, and added their own opinions. The sentence of death was unanimous, but there was some dissension as to the precise nature of the execution.

Dr. Foo Chow, perhaps, faced with this situation, might have been restrained in his treatment. But these soldiers were different. They were not under Foo Chow's influence now, and their minds ran to torture.

In preference to cold steel—swift and sure—they concocted a slower method of death. And even Ah Fong was included in this general execution. There were no half-measures about the Chinamen. They set about their grim work by methods that were absolutely direct.

At an order from the principal officer, the eight St. Frank's juniors were carried, one after the other into the primitive house. Ah Fong and his family were carried in, too. All were flung in a helpless, disordered heap in the central room. There was only one storey to this humble dwelling, for it was of the typical Chinese construction—with a curved roof, and a generally picturesque exterior. But, like other Chinese buildings, it was flimsy and ill-constructed.

The exact nature of the horror was soon apparent.

Every door and window was made fast. And the soldiers, carrying out fresh orders, proceeded to pile sticks and dry brushwood round every wall of the house. Within ten minutes the entire building was surrounded by a mass of this inflammable material.

Full daylight had come now, and the torches had been extinguished. But two of them were still smouldering. And at a word from the officer in charge they were fanned into living flame.

The simple directness of this wholesale execution was horrifying. All the prisoners, bound and helpless, were to be burned alive. That was the long and the short of it. The chopping-block had seemed terrible enough, but this was infinitely worse.

For the prisoners would suffer the agonies of mental torture at first. Then would come partial suffocation, followed swiftly and relentlessly by the first scorchings of the burning building. And then they would be in the midst of the inferno, to die the most appalling death of all. It seemed incredible

that such vile cruelty could be practised. And by men, too, who in normal life were probably like simple children. For these Chinese were queer fellows; ever ready to laugh at the smallest jest, but ready, also, to indulge in the most brutal form of torture.

The blazing torches were carried round.

Heap after heap of brushwood was set afire, and very soon the smoke was rolling up in dense, suffocating masses. It seemed that the brushwood was not so dry, after all, and much of the stuff was new wood. It caught slowly, but nevertheless certainly. The crackling of the burning wood filled the air with ominous sound, and here and there the flames were licking hungrily at the flimsy walls.



CHAPTER 10.

TOO LATE?

NELSON LEE looked round sharply as Umlosi uttered a low growl, deep down in his throat.

"What is it, old friend?"

he asked.

"Methinks, O Umtagati, that the battle is nigh," said the African chief, as he paused. "There are many of these yellow dogs approaching. I bid thee prepare for the fight!"

Lord Dorrimore glanced round him in surprise.

"You must have good eyes, Umlosi, for I'm hanged if I can see them," he remarked. "We've been hopin' to come across those boys all this time, but we've had no luck. Where are these mysterious Chinks?"

It was full daylight, and the rescue party from the *Wanderer* had been on the go for hours. Not once had Umlosi made a mistake. Over every description of country, he had followed the trail of Handforth and his seven companions. Umlosi was a tracker of uncanny ability.

The route had been devious, and it was obvious that Handforth had led his little party far astray on two or three occasions. And now the would-be rescuers were standing on the edge of a hill, with open country in front of them. The roofs of many villages could be seen in all directions; but in the early morning light there were no signs of human life.

"What makes you think that the Chinese are near?" asked Lee.

"Have I not seen the movements of the long grass over yonder?" replied Umlosi, pointing. "Have I not seen the signs in the bushes? I warn thee, Umtagati, that there are many of these dogs. And see! Smoke arises from beyond the belt of trees. 'Tis there that this friendly yellow man lives."

"Good glory!" ejaculated Dorrie. "He's right, Lee—smoke by the ton! What does it mean?"

"Heaven knows!" muttered Lee. "We can only press on."

Before they could do so, however, the truth of Umlosi's earlier words became evident. Men appeared as though from nowhere. Umlosi had detected them while the white men had seen nothing. And Lee was no mean hunter, either. The *Wanderer's* party halted, and revolvers were quickly swung from their holsters.

"By Jove, they're Yung Li Chang's men!" exclaimed Lee, as he watched. "Don't you notice the totally different uniforms? These are not Foo Chow's soldiers. We have walked into a band of the invaders!"

"Then we're all right," said Dorrie, with satisfaction.

"Perhaps—but we mustn't be too confident," returned Nelson Lee, looking anxious. "To these men we are just 'foreign devils,' and they may be as partial to our blood as the other brand of Chinese. Be ready to fight for your lives, men."

"Ay, ay, sir."

They were a grim little crowd as they saw the soldiers surrounding them. There were three or four hundred of Yung Li Chang's troops, and they seemed to materialise from every clump of tall grass, and from every bush.

The white men formed themselves into a compact circle, back to back, and facing the yellow hordes. Every man had his gun ready, and every man was prepared to fight to the last breath.

But the suspense was soon over.

There were evidently two or three officers in charge, and as they gave some orders, the men halted. They were all heavily laden with equipment, and looked tired and weary after long marching and many hours without sleep.

One of the officers came forward, halted, and saluted.

"You Blitish peoples flom yacht?" he asked, his English rather better than the usual "pidgin."

"Yes," answered Nelson Lee. "We are friends of his Excellency, Yung Li Chang. We are even now seeking his son, Yung Ching. You know of our mission in China?"

"We have had full news," replied the officer gravely. "I, Wong Loo. Our honourable Excellency know of what you do. He velly pleased—velly anxious for white friends to be safe. Excellency, he know why you come. We have orders to obey your commands."

"Well, that's very pleasant news," said Lord Dorrimore, with relief. "It's good to know, anyhow, that we've got some hefty friends in this heathen country. No offence, of course, old man," he added, smiling at Wong Loo. "But we can't be certain with these soldiers of yours."

"They velly good friends," said Wong Loo. "Death, if they harm white peoples. Excellency, Yung Li Chang, velly fond of Blitish. He seek news of his son."

"This meeting is opportune," declared Lee. "You'll help us? Good! We go find Yung

(Continued on page 24.)

HOW TO JOIN THE LEAGUE

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FORM No. 46.

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It's simple enough, isn't it? The Badge will be placed in the stamped and addressed envelope which you send, and will be posted to you immediately, *and there is absolutely no charge for the Badge! It's quite free!*

A Free Badge.

It was for that I was out from the start. The new Badge is the very neatest, smartest little emblem imaginable. Inside the deep blue setting we have the three letters "S.F.L." in white, red, and blue. You will be proud to have such a badge in your buttonhole, and just as glad to spot the friendly little sign of comradeship being sported by your pals, showing you in a twinkling who are Leagueites and supporters of the "Nelson Lee Library."

A Boom Rush.

There is bound to be a big run on these Badges, for no League member will be satisfied to remain without one an instant longer than he can help. And that reminds me of some of the suggestions that have poured in on me for months past about the Badge. Some correspondents went to the length of sending designs for one. Others were always urging me to get busy.

I was getting busy enough, but a scheme like this, with a huge roll of members, naturally takes time. You can't get an extensive job like this knocked off in five minutes. I know that some of my friends got anxious and fell to thinking that there was not going to be a Badge at all! They were quite wrong! The Badge did not hang fire, only I did not want the scheme to fall short of the best.

What I Think!

The arrival of the Badge will serve to stiffen the League. Not that the S.F.L. ever faltered from the outset. It has swung steadily on. Members have carried the movement onward unfailingly. New friendships have been formed. Clubs have been established. The root principles of the League stand for all that brings help and inspiration to life. Many and many a decent play-the-game bit of action has been fostered by the League.

The Outward Sign.

And now we have got the Badge, the outward sign of the splendid inner meaning of the St. Frank's League, I feel there should be congratulations all round. My sincere thanks go to thousands of chums who have assisted so materially to spur the movement on, and who have at all seasons impressed the brilliant significance of the S.F.L. on all their friends. That which our League stands for is not for one day or a myriad days, but for all time. It stands for honour, and the cheery word; for true comradeship in stormy times as well as when the weather is fair; for the stiff upper lip when times are bad—in short, for real sportsmanship. No Leagueite ever lets down a pal. No Leagueite will ever forget that the S.F.L. represents just those things for which the knights of old stood, and fought to the end.

Send in Your Applications.

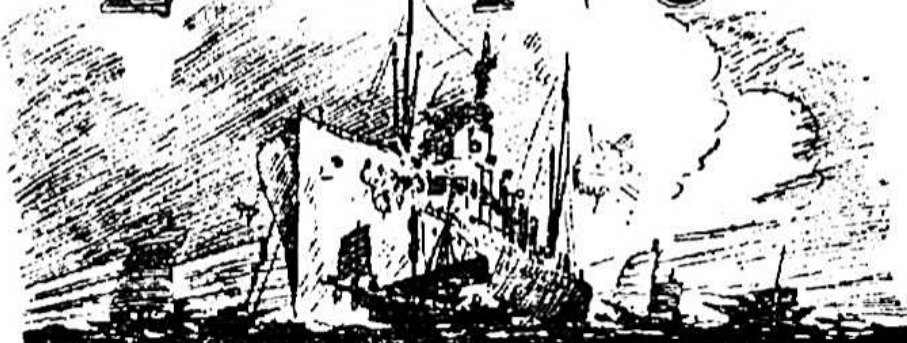
So let me have your requests for the Badge. The sooner the better. The more there are the greater will be my pleasure. And wear your Badge!

Just now I spoke of stiffening the League. What I am convinced of is that the S.F.L. Badge will serve us well as a tightening of the bond. It makes recognition an easy business. It forms just the fine rallying sign which has been so long needed for our cause.



**THE ST. FRANK'S
LEAGUE BADGE.**

THE LEGIONS OF FOO CHOW



(Continued from page 21.)

Ching. We help save our own boys from Foo Chow's soldiers. We fear badness. We go rescue. You help?"

"You command, Excellency—we obey," replied Wong Loo quietly.

There was a little further conversation of the same type, and it soon became clear that Yung Li Chang and his officers were in possession of every fact. They knew how the holiday party had come to China for the purpose of rescuing Yung Ching, and how they had fallen into Dr. Foo Chow's clutches. Their friendliness was patent.

"Excellency, my honourable master, make war," said Wong Loo. "He know of your position—he know of Yung Ching's captivity. And so—war. We come in many thousands. Foo Chow fight with his men, but no good."

"What is the exact position?" asked Lee quickly.

"We attack Yang Fu—city fight desperately," said the Chinese officer. "But we win. Maybe one day—two day—three day. But Yang Fu will fall. Soldiers of Hu Kiang never fail."

"Better an' better!" remarked Dorrie. "So the city of Yang Fu—Foo Chow's capital—is besieged, eh? That's where all the fighting is? You see, Lee? That accounts for the milk in the coconut. That explains why things are so quiet here."

"Perhaps they are not so quiet as you imagine, Dorrie," replied Lee, gazing over towards the rising column of smoke beyond the trees. "There is something ugly about this. That smoke is coming from Ah Fong's house. And Handforth and those other boys—Come! Let us wait no longer."

He again spoke to Wong Loo, and orders were given to the Chinese troops.

And without any delay an advance was made. So far as the little rescue party was concerned, the position was infinitely improved. Their own peril was now reduced to practically nothing. Even if Foo Chow's soldiers attacked them, they had the help of these men from the province of Hu Kiang—these invaders. They were certain of a safe escort back to the yacht.

But what of Handforth & Co.?

This was the worrying point now. The foolhardy juniors had set out to find Yung Ching on their own, and Lee had a haunting fear that they had fallen foul of the enemy. If only they could be conveyed safely back to the *Wanderer*, all would be well—for by the time they returned, the yacht's engines

would probably be in working order, and a start for Yung Li Chang's friendly territory could be made. The sooner they were all out of this war zone, the better.

And yet Lee could not chide the juniors for their zeal. They had risked their very lives in order to bring Yung Ching to the safe haven of the yacht, and Handforth in particular was worthy of the highest praise. And yet he deserved a sound thrashing for leading his companions into such reckless channels.

"I pray that we find them safe, Dorrie," said Lee, as they advanced at the double. "I shall be only too thankful if they are unharmed—and there will be no scoldings. But, by James, I'll keep these boys under my eye in future!"

"They're a lively bunch!" agreed Dorrie.

They topped a little rise, approaching Ah Fong's dwelling in the same way as the juniors had approached it earlier. They stood on exactly the same spot that Handforth and his chums had occupied.

"Great heavens!" muttered Nelson Lee, aghast.

They paused, staring with troubled eyes. Ah Fong's house was on fire! Great columns of smoke were rising from every wall, and there were livid tongues of flame licking up through the smoke volumes. And, at a distance, were scores of Foo Chow's soldiery.

"To the attack!" shouted Lee tensely.

Wong Loo and his men needed no bidding. Here were numbers of the enemy—small numbers in comparison to this invading force. With wild yells, the soldiers of Yung Li Chang swept down.

It was some few moments before the others realised their peril—for the smoke, and the crackling roar of the burning wood, prevented them from seeing and hearing.

By the time they knew of the approaching foe, it was almost too late.

The invaders rushed down upon them with deadly effect. There was no finesse about this grim little battle. As the one group of soldiers bolted, the others fell upon them. There was no quarter. Even as they ran for safety, Foo Chow's men were hacked down. There was something grim in this swift act of retribution. Not one of those fiends escaped. Every man and every officer was dispatched.

But was it too late?

Ah Fong's house was getting beyond all control now. The flames were licking up the walls to the roof, and it was impossible to approach. Umlosi, Lee, Dorrie, and the others ran round anxiously and despairingly.

"There's not a sign!" shouted Lee. "The boys aren't here, Dorrie!"

"It's a pity we didn't question some of those murderous blighters before they were killed!" said Lord Dorrimore. "They know where the youngsters are, I'll warrant. They know—Ye gods! Look at this, Lee!"

He indicated the ominous sword, which lay on the ground.

"An executioner's sword—they've been beheaded!" he gasped.

"No, Dorrie," muttered Lee. "The thing is clean—it hasn't been used. But they evidently intended—I wonder!" he added, his eyes glittering.

"You wonder what?"

"Perhaps the brutes were about to execute Ah Fong when Handforth and the other boys surprised them," said Lee, shrewdly guessing the actual truth. "Perhaps there was a fight, and a gory massacre. On the other hand, the youngsters were probably taken alive."

He turned, and stared at the burning house, the heat from which scorched his face.

"You—you mean——" said Dorrie, pale to the lips.

"What other inference is there?" asked Lee. "We're too late, old man! These devils have been killed for their foul crime, but we're too late to undo their villainous work!"



CHAPTER 11.

A DESPERATE CHANCE.

INSIDE the burning building, however, the victims of Foo Chow's soldiers were not yet past hope.

They knew exactly what had been done—they knew that Ah Fong's house had been prepared as a funeral pyre. The crackling of the brushwood filled their ears, and the smoke and fumes surged to every crack and crevice. But as yet they were all alive, and not even scorched. The heat had not penetrated to that central room where they were imprisoned.

The Chinese had arranged this deliberately, so that the period of torture should be longer. These helpless victims should suffer until the last moment—until the fire raged fiercer and fiercer in an enveloping blanket. Death would come slowly—after the awful horrors of burning.

Strangely enough, Handforth and his chums were calm. There was no sign of panic among them. Now they were face to face with an appalling death, there was no indication of fear.

"Well, we're booked all right now!" exclaimed Boots, trying to keep his voice steady. "A bit of a rotten finish, you chaps. After we came here to rescue Chingy, too."

"It wouldn't matter so much if we'd been successful," muttered Church. "But poor old Chingy has been taken prisoner again—and we're just food for this bonfire! Well, we shall all share the same end, that's one thing."

"It can't be long in coming!" said Doyle shakily.

They were huddled together in a confused heap, occupying the central floor space in the very middle of the curiously constructed building. Ah Fong and his family were hunched shoulder to shoulder with the St.

Frank's fellows, and they all seemed stunned into silence by the horror of their impending fate. But, with real Chinese stoicism, they merely waited.

All the prisoners were tightly bound—and bound in such a way, too, that they could not even crawl away from their huddled positions. To make any effort to smash through the barrier of fire was impossible. In any case, such an attempt would have meant death, since no living thing could burst through that flaming wall, and survive. The air was filled with the ever-increasing roar of the devouring flames.

Edward Oswald Handforth was affected in a peculiar way. Although he showed no sign of fear, his expression was one of hopeless misery and self-condemnation. He looked round at the other fellows, half afraid to face their glances.

"This is my fault!" he said at last, his voice harsh with anxiety. "I brought you chaps into this horror! Oh, I ought to be——"

"Dry up, old man," said McClure. "We're all in it together."

"Yes, but it was my idea," insisted Handforth wildly. "I ought to be the one to suffer—not you chaps! The demons—the fiends! Why couldn't they have chopped my head off, and have done with it? Why should they make you pay for my madness?"

The others were silent.

"Now it all rests with me," went on Handforth fiercely. "I've got to get you out of this—I've got to fool these devils, after all! They're trying to burn us alive, but they won't do it! Leave it to me, my lads—I'll find a way out of this furnace!"

"Handy, it's impossible!" said Church, nearly choking. "We can't do anything. We can't even get out of these ropes."

"Can't we?" panted Handforth. "Watch me!"

He gave way to a frenzy of violent effort, and writhed on the floor, struggling madly at his bonds. He didn't particularly care about his own safety—he didn't think of his own personal danger. The one thought which throbbed through his agonised brain was that these others had been led into this death chamber by his own rash foolhardiness. If only he could get them out of it—if only he could save their lives—he would feel that he had retrieved his character.

His frenzy was rather awful to witness, particularly as he appeared to achieve no success. When he ceased, panting hoarsely, those bonds were still intact.

"Don't, old man!" muttered McClure brokenly.

"I—I must!" gasped Handforth. "I've got to get you out of it!"

There were others who had been struggling at their bonds, too, but they had long since given up hope. The ropes were strong, and they were cruelly tied. To wrench at them was acute agony.

But Handforth felt no pain at all. He was already half numbed by his weariness. But

now he was endowed with a fresh burst of life. It was amazing, indeed, that his vitality should last so long; but he had always been a fellow of iron sinew and muscle.

"Got it!" he croaked suddenly. "Did you hear that? Something went just then—something snapped! I distinctly heard—"

He broke off, the force of his renewed efforts making speech impossible. This was no pretended madness, but a real frenzy. Handforth's chums were horrified, and feared that their unfortunate leader had gone completely out of his mind.

The crackling roar from the outer walls grew louder and louder, and the atmosphere was becoming stifling with the increasing heat and the accumulated fumes. Life could not continue in this inferno for longer than five minutes. For the fire would suddenly burst through with dramatic effect, and then death would come in a merciful rush.

Handforth abruptly ceased his contortions, and lay still.

"Poor old chap—he's done!" breathed Bob Christine. "He's fainted!"

"That's all you know!" retorted Handforth, coming to life again. "I've smashed these cords, and I'm taking a breather, that's all. We'll soon be out of this oven now!"

To the amazement of the others, he sat up, and his arms were free, although his wrists were bleeding. Taking no notice, he wrenched at his bound ankles, and his trem-

bling fingers unfastened the knots. He stood up—free!

"Now what about it?" he asked triumphantly. "I'm going to smash a way through, and lug you all out! You can always rely on Study D, my lads!"

"Quick!" panted Doyle. "Cut these awful ropes, Handy!"

"It's no good—it's hopeless!" shouted Boots, horrified by Handforth's assumption of victory. "It would have been better if you'd stayed as you were, old man! You'll only add to your torture! We can't get out of this—the flames are everywhere."

"Rats!" snapped Handforth. "I'll find a way!"

He burst into one of the other rooms, but came reeling back. The heat there was not only suffocating, but deadly. It was like a blast from a furnace. He had caught a glimpse—through the murk, too—of a few livid tongues of flame. The fire was already breaking through!

"My goodness!" he breathed desperately.

"Ah Fong help!" came a croak from the Chinaman. "Velly small hope, but we can tly. Hole in floor!"

Handforth swung round like lightning.

"Hole in the floor?" he roared. "Where?"

"Ah Fong keepee money in cellar," said the Chinaman. "Allee same, dangelous for Chinaman to let fiends know of nestee-egg. Evelybody wantee bollow! I keepee cash under floor."

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"But where—where?" yelled Handforth.

Ah Fong could only nod with his head, and Handforth ripped up a piece of flimsy matting. Beneath this he could see a rudely constructed trap. With desperate fingers he tore it up, and there was a gaping hole revealed.

"We can escape!" he exclaimed breathlessly.

"No way out," said Ah Fong, shaking his head. "Only biggee hole. No getee away."

"Is there room for us all?" demanded Handforth.

"We all getee down, but——"

"Ah Fong's right—there's no escape!" interrupted Boots harshly. "It would be the worst thing we can do to drop into that hole, Handy! Let's stay here, and get the horrible thing over quickly. If we go into that cellar we shall suffer worse tortures, that's all."

"I'm afraid that's right, Handy," muttered Church. "Oh, these brutes! Let's stay here and face the end as we are. It'll only prolong the agony if we get down the cellar. The house will cave in, and we shall be slowly roasted alive——"

"While there's life there's hope!" interrupted Handforth curtly. "Is it better to die at once, or wait until the last second? You never know what may turn up! Come on! Down with you!"

It was no time for gentle methods.

Handforth seized Church, swung him round, and sent him thumping down into the depths of the earth cellar. The heat was so overpowering that instantaneous action was necessary. And the atmosphere was becoming more and more unbreathable with every second that passed.

Handforth hardly knew what he was doing. One after the other he dragged his companions to that hole and dropped them down. What did it matter about bruises and grazes now? Stark death was at their elbows.

The heat was so terrible that Handforth felt as though his lungs would shrivel. And now the whole room was glowing with an unearthly light—the reflection of the flames as they licked through the cracking walls.

The wisdom of Edward Oswald's move was unquestionable. Had he waited to unfasten the bonds of his companions, they would all have perished. For even as Handforth himself dropped down the hole, there came a sudden roar of noise, accompanied by showers of sparks and burning heat.

the blistering heat above. It was pitch-dark, too—but only for a few moments.

And then the eyes of the unfortunates grew accustomed to the gloom. A kind of lurid reflection was coming down from the hole in the floor, allowing them to see one another.

"We've only made things worse!" sobbed Church. "We can't last more than five minutes, Handy. Oh, keep calm, old man."

"Poor old Churchy!" muttered Handforth. "Got the wind up, eh?"

"I haven't!" vowed Church.

"Well, I have!" said Edward Oswald candidly. "But I'm still full of hope, my sons! Come on, who's first? I'm going to cut you all free, and then perhaps we can dig our way out. If we all work hard enough, we might be able to scrape the earth away, and bore a tunnel." And he started on their ropes with his pocket-knife.

The other juniors were aghast at this exhibition of insanity. Handforth's plan—if he, indeed, intended it seriously—was the most outrageously mad scheme that the human brain could conceive.

But that remark of Handforth's bore rapid fruit.

"Allee same good!" came a voice from Ah Fong, as Handforth busied himself with slashing through the ropes. "My son tellee me. I lember. Maybe we getee out. Plentee——"

His-wife and his children were all talking excitedly.

"What is it?" demanded Handforth.

"Cellar, him long," said Ah Fong quickly. "One day he fell in. Nearly killee my two son. Loof falllee down. Now him loof plopee up. Velly thin. Glound allee same, too, thlee feet above."

"Great Scott!" shouted Boots, as he found himself free. "Did you hear that, you chaps? Did you hear what Ah Fong said?"

"I can't understand him," muttered Christine.

"He said this cellar is long, and the roof is only thin!" yelled Boots, frenzied with excitement. "It's propped up, too, and if we can only pull the props down, we might be able to get out into the open air."

"Then—then Handy was right in coming down here, after all?" asked Church.

"Of course I was right!" snorted Handforth. "If we hadn't come, we should all have been dead by this time. And we shall all be dead as it is unless we get a move on. My goodness! Did you hear that? The house is beginning to fall to pieces already."

"Look out!" shouted McClure in horror.

A shower of white-hot sparks came down from the opening above, accompanied by a sudden burst of burning air. And the atmosphere down here was becoming well-nigh unbreathable, too. Unless something was accomplished swiftly—within a single minute, indeed—suffocation would overtake them all.

"Who's got a light?" demanded Boots desperately. "We can't see up this far corner."

CHAPTER 12.

THE WAY OF ESCAPE.



RELIEF came to all the sufferers.

Although the cellar was small and appallingly stuffy, the atmosphere down there felt icily cool in comparison to

Where are those props? Oh, this is useless! I'm nearly blind already, and I can't breathe properly——"

"By George—my torch!" interrupted Handforth.

He took out an electric torch from one of his pockets, having brought it along especially in case of necessity. The bright beam of light cut through the gloom at the end of the long cellar, revealing a number of small boxes, all of them filled to the brim with neat stacks of Chinese "cash"—the coin which is commonly used there. Ah Fong had spoken the truth when he had said that this cellar was his secret bank. There seemed to be a fabulous sum there, judging by the bulk, but a cash is only worth an insignificant amount, for a hundred of them are only worth about threepence in English money. In Ah Fong's hoard there were thousands of one-cash and ten-cash pieces. To such a man it was wealth.

But neither Handforth nor the other juniors took the slightest notice of these dingy-looking coins, strung together by means of a cord through their central holes. The eyes of the boys were fixed upon the far end of the cellar, where the floor sloped upwards, and where a number of rude props were supporting the earthen roof.

"Come on!" croaked Handforth. "All together!"

He tugged grimly at one of the props.

"But—but we shall be buried!" gasped Scott.

"Better be buried than burned alive!" retorted Handforth fiercely. "And we can't afford to make any choice. It's either one or the other, and——"

The prop had given as he was speaking, and as Church and McClure applied their strength, the baulk of wood came away.

"Back!" yelled Handforth.

They staggered backwards, as the whole place seemed to cave in. There was a rush of earth, a cloud of dust, but they were still alive. Only the far end of the cellar had crashed, and the debris lay strewn on the floor. They were all blinded by the choking dust.

But there was something else.

A sudden rush of coldness came past them, and the appalling nature of the atmosphere was changed. In spite of the dust, they breathed more freely. Handforth blundered forward and let out a shout.

"Daylight!" he yelled. "Hurrah!"

The cool morning air was fanning his face as it came down the jagged hole in the ground. One blazing wall of the house was within a few feet, but the wind was beating against it, and blowing the flames inwards.

And at some distance stood a grim, despairing knot of people.

Nelson Lee was silently gripping the arm of Dick Hamilton, and Lord Dorrimore was standing slightly apart, his face tense with dumb misery.

After that first glimpse of the burning house they had jumped to the one inevitable conclusion—the victims of Dr. Foo Chow's soldiers were within those blazing walls. To rescue them was sheerly impossible. There was no water near at hand, and nothing whatever to carry water in, in any case.

A modern fire-engine could not have extinguished this fire, either. For the house was blazing like a gigantic torch, the flames roaring up to an immense height, and the whole providing an impressive, lurid spectacle.

The sparks were bursting into the sky like fireworks, and at any moment the outer walls of the house would crash. Already the roof had partially caved in, and was liable to be demolished at any second. To think of penetrating that inferno was madness.

"Let us hope that the poor boys were mercifully killed before they were imprisoned in that seething furnace," said Lee sombrely.

"No, Lee; they were put in there alive—there's nothing else to think," muttered Dorrie, his voice utterly tragic. "Oh, if we had only been half an hour sooner! We might have saved——"

"Don't Dorrie!" pleaded Dick brokenly.

They had already inspected every side of the house, seeking some spot where they might make a desperate attempt at rescue. But the Chinese had done their work too well. They had fired every side of the house at once, and there was not an inch that was not blazing.

At last, hopeless and dejected, the little party had halted, and stood watching the blazing building. Perhaps they had some faint hope of recovering the poor remains after the worst was over. At least, they could give these a decent, Christian burial. There was a slight consolation in this thought. But nobody spoke it.

From where they were standing the heat was blown away from them. The wind was high, and it took all the flames and sparks in the opposite direction. Farther afield, standing in watching groups, were the soldiers of Yung Li Chang. Perhaps they failed to understand the reason for this wait. What sense was there in watching a burning building? Had they not set fire to villages by the score since their invasion of this province?

"Perhaps we had better go, Dorrie," said Nelson Lee wearily at last. "It will be hours before this fire is out—before the ashes are cool enough——"

"Yes, I understand," interrupted Dorrie between his teeth. "Let's get away from—— Lee!" he gasped. "Did—did you see—— Good heavens! Am I mad, or—— Look! Look, Lee! Look, man!"

His lordship was so excited that he commenced to run forward.

"Steady, Dorrie!" said Nelson Lee.



As Foo Chow's revolver was sent spinning into the air by Nelson Lee's timely shot, Lord Dorrimore leapt like a tiger and drove his fist at the Chinaman's chin—all his weight behind the punch! He'd been waiting for a long time to knock Foo Chow down!

"You've seen nothing! You can't expect any life to exist now——"

"He's right, guv'nor!" shrieked Dick Hamilton with a wild leap. "Oh, look! It's Handy! They're not dead! Handy! Hurrah! Come on! We've got to pull them out of this!"

They stared as though they were gazing at a ghost. After they had given up every hope of seeing the boys alive, after they had taken it for granted that death had long since overtaken them, a figure had emerged from the ground itself—a staggering, blackened figure which could none the less be recognised as that of Edward Oswald Handforth.

"It's all right!" he called weakly to the rescue party. "We're all here!"

He did not emerge from the house, but from an unseen hole in the ground, from a place that had previously seemed solid.

"Thank God!" muttered Nelson Lee fervently.

With one rush he and the others came dashing forward. Wong Loo and his men were no less swift, for they came running up, too. Handforth was seized, and as he pointed downwards at the jagged hole, he fell, reeling, but was soon gripped and gently carried away.

Another figure was emerging from that hole, and still other faces could be seen below.

But the peril was by no means over.

The building was on the point of collapsing, and it was certain that this particular wall would fall outwards, burying everything in its path in white-hot fire. If the fall happened at once, that merciful exit would be blocked, and then, indeed, death would be swift.

Nelson Lee and the others worked madly.

One by one the victims were dragged away—dizzy, half-dazed, and already careless as to whether they lived or died. Two of Ah Fong's children were quite unconscious, and it was Lee who dived down into the black depths and flung the helpless little Chinese up into Lord Dorrimore's waiting arms. They were swiftly carried away by other willing hands.

"Any more?" shouted his lordship.

"No, I think not——"

"Then come, for your life!" shouted Dorrie. "This wall——" He paused and stared upwards at the blazing building in horror. Great cracks were appearing, and the sparks were flying. But for that strong wind it would have been impossible to stand so near. Even as it was, all the rescuers were painfully scorched, and their hair was singed.

"Back, Dorrie!" exclaimed Lee desperately. "I'm coming!"

But his lordship did not move an inch until Nelson Lee had scrambled through

the hole, and had joined him. As they ran there was a devastating crash in their rear, followed by a noise which sounded like an explosion. Ah Fong's house had vanished, and nothing remained but a towering mass of flames, and the sparks roared helplessly upwards into the wind. It almost seemed as though those flames were angrily protesting for being cheated.



CHAPTER 13.

DR. FOO CHOW ACTS.

WITH serene happiness Lord Dorrimore grinned at Nelson Lee.

"Well, old man, I've felt chirpy a few times in my life, but, by the Lord Harry, I've never felt so full of beans as I do now!" he declared blithely. "An' I must say you're lookin' pretty bright, too."

"I feel just the same as you do, Dorrie," said Nelson Lee.

They were both standing several hundred yards away from the smouldering remnants of the burning house. A little brook ran near their feet—a tiny, trickling spring—and on the grass close at hand were the intended victims of torture. They did not look particularly dead.

The St. Frank's fellows, indeed, had recovered with the wonderful alacrity of youth. Fresh air, water, and good health had worked marvels.

Less than half an hour had passed, but they were all sitting up and chatting with one another. Handforth was more exhausted than the others, for he had done more—and he had been unfit to undertake this expedition, in any case. But he was not willing to admit that he was "all in."

"The only rotten feature about the affair is that poor old Chingy has dropped into Foo Chow's hands again," he was saying. "I think we ought to make some sort of attempt to rescue him—"

"We've had enough for once, Handy," interrupted Boots. "Look at you! You're a fine sight to go rescuing people, aren't you?"

Handforth was certainly a picture. Both his wrists were swathed in bandages, his clothing was scorched and tattered, and his face was so red from the effects of the recent heat that he had a lobster-like appearance. But this effect was also noticeable on the others.

They did not pretend that they were normal. That terrible experience had left its mark, and all they wanted to do was to get back to the yacht—to rest, to sleep. It

was most probable that they would feel the effects far more later on. The present reaction was only natural. It was later that they would go through nightmares of horror again.

"It's one of the most extraordinary affairs I have ever seen," declared Nelson Lee. "I would not have deemed it possible that the boys could have escaped. And here they are, unharmed. For, after all, their hurts are only superficial. With their vitality they will be their normal selves within a week. We must get them back to the yacht at once, Dorrie."

"Yes, rather," agreed his lordship. "Thank goodness we've got a good escort! There must be two thousand of these soldiers with us. So Foo Chow can do his worst. I'd like to see his miserable warriors try to stop us! What about Ah Fong an' his happy family?"

"We must take them, too," chuckled Lee.

"The more the merrier!" chuckled Dick Hamilton. "I suppose it'll be the best way, guv'nor. They'll only be put to death if they fall into the enemy's hands."

"Yes, we can land them somewhere later on—when we reach a safety zone," replied Nelson Lee. "If the boys are fit, we will make a move at once. I suggest that they are carried—"

"They won't hear of it," said his lordship. "Too bally independent! But I think we ought to make an exception of Handforth. The poor chap's just about finished."

"Eh? Talking about me, sir?" said Handforth, walking up. "Oh, rot, sir! I'll admit I'm a bit tired, but I can stick it until we get back to the yacht. After all, we haven't done much. That fire was awful while it lasted, but I knew we should get out of it all right."

"Good gad! You knew, did you?"

"It's a rummy thing, sir, but he did!" put in Church. "Handy wouldn't admit for a minute that we were going to be killed. He was the only one to burst his ropes, and we all owe our lives to him."

"Dry up, you gassing ass!" growled Handforth.

"Well, it's true," said Church. "Ah Fong was saved from being beheaded by you, but you wouldn't say anything about it, would you? He's done some marvellous things, Mr. Lee!"

"What's this beheadin' business?" asked Dorrie. "Don't forget that we haven't heard any details yet. We're willin' to wait until we get back, but you've whetted my appetite."

"Why, when we arrived here, Ah Fong was just going to be executed," said McClure. "Handy dashed forward and shoved the sword aside, and the next second we were all in the middle of a terrific scrap."

"Handforth has always been renowned for his bulldog courage," smiled Nelson Lee. "I wish I could give equal praise to his discretion."

ANSWERS

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"Well, I like that, sir!" protested Handforth indignantly. "We're all safe, and we didn't come for nothing, did we? Ah Fong and his family are saved, and they've been able to tell us where Yung Ching is. Isn't that worth all the trouble?"

Lee was intent.

"Ah Fong knows where Yung Ching can be found?" he asked keenly.

"He heard those rotters talking, sir," explained Handforth. "Chingy was taken away, and rushed off to the Pao-Kang temple. I don't know where it is, but Ah Fong does; and, in my opinion, it's a piece of jolly useful information. Ah Fong is a handy chap, and I'm glad I saved his life."

"This is certainly an important item of news," declared Lee. "Yes, Handforth, there can be no doubt that your act of recklessness has been justified. But that doesn't mean to say that I should like you to indulge in any more of these escapades."

"You've got to remember that our hearts are only capable of standin' a certain amount," added Dorrie. "Mine has nearly stopped beatin' a dozen times already. That's one of the effects you have, old son."

They soon made active preparations for the return journey, and were indifferent to the possible attacks of Foo Chow's soldiers. They had an army with them in case of trouble.

But Dr. Foo Chow was not neglecting his former prisoners as completely as they supposed. Reports had already reached him that the *Dragon's* guns had been disabled, and he had promptly gone to the scene himself, determined to force a swift issue.

The battle for Yang Fu was progressing, and Foo Chow was desperate. He knew that nothing short of a miracle could save the city from falling into the hands of his enemies. And his thirst for revenge was unquenchable. At the moment, his main desire was to make these Britons pay. He blamed them entirely for the recent series of disasters.

Torture was the punishment he aimed at; but, as this seemed impossible, he intended to destroy them now, and thus rid himself of their presence for ever. To this end a horde of men were rushed to the river, hundreds and hundreds of them approaching by means of junks and sampans. In fact, an organised attack on the *Wanderer* was about to be launched.

Those on board could not fail to note the grim signs.

On both shores of the river men were gathering—swarms of them, like human ants. Farther up, near where the *Dragon* was moored, the junks and sampans were collecting, and all were being packed with men.

"You see what their game is?" said Mr. Stokes, as he stood on the bridge with Mr. Stewart, the first officer, by his side. "They're going to float those junks down on the current, and make an attempt to overwhelm us by sheer force of numbers."

"We're ready for the beggars!" said Mr. Stewart grimly.

He looked with satisfaction at the machine-guns on the deck, each one with its own crew in readiness. He looked at the grim men who were waiting with rifles ready. There were plenty of others below—in the engine-room and the stokeholds—who were working madly to repair the damage to the machinery. But Foo Chow was preparing his attack in good time, for there was no possibility of getting the propellers going for another two or three hours. Even now it was very early in the morning, with the sun low in the sky.

"I wish Mr. Lee and the others were back," said Captain Burton, as he joined the pair. "This confounded business was sure to crop up during their absence, of course! They'll probably find it impossible to approach now, and things will be generally confused."

"What a pity they ever went, sir," said Mr. Stewart.

"They had to fetch those boys back," protested Barry Stokes.

"Yes, I know that, sir—but I mean, what a pity the boys went in the first place," explained the first officer. "We were all together—the whole party of us. And now we're separated again. It seems such an infernal mess-up to me."

"Well, it's no good complaining," said the Housemaster. "We're up against some relentless enemies here, and this fight isn't going to be any too pretty, by the look of it. There'll be some slaughter."

"It's the only way," growled the skipper. "We can't afford to be squeamish with these inhuman devils! If we don't kill them, they'll kill us. It's just a question of self-defence."

"You're right, captain," nodded Mr. Stokes gravely.

He went down on deck, and approached Irene Manners and a few of the other girls, who had put in a much earlier appearance than Mr. Stokes had anticipated.

"Good-morning, young ladies!" he said cheerily.

"Good-morning, Mr. Stokes!" said Irene. "What does it all mean?" she added, indicating the preparations on all sides. "I thought we should be far up the river by this time."

"Have the engines gone wrong?" asked Marjorie.

"It's nothing much—you wouldn't understand, anyhow," said the Housemaster vaguely. "I want to know why you've turned out at this unearthly hour. It won't be breakfast-time for another two hours."

"Oh, we simply had to get up and see how things were going," said Mary Summers. "You're not angry with us, Uncle Barry?"

"Angry, no," said Mr. Stokes. "But you'll have to go below again, almost at once. That is the captain's order—not mine."

"But why?" they chorused.

"Why?" said Willy Handforth, as he came up. "Because there's going to be a terrific battle in about ten minutes."

"A battle!" cried Irene.

"Confound you, Willy——" began Mr. Stokes.

"Oh, what does it matter, sir?" interrupted Willy. "They're bound to know in another few minutes, anyhow. No news of my major yet, I suppose?"

"I am afraid not, my boy," said Mr. Stokes quietly. "But there is no reason to anticipate anything serious. They will probably come along before long. I am worrying about their approach. These Chinamen seem to be coming in greater swarms every minute."

As he was speaking, he saw that several of the junks were already floating out into the stream, and the attack was rapidly developing.

"Now, girls, you'll have to go below at once!" said Mr. Stokes anxiously. "There's going to be some terrible fighting here—and that's not the kind of thing that you ought to witness. There'll be an appalling amount of death, by the look of things, particularly when our machine-guns get going."

Mary Summers looked at her uncle, startled.

"But—but are you going to *kill* them?" she asked breathlessly.

"It'll be the only way."

"Wouldn't it do just as well to frighten them?" asked Doris.

Mr. Stokes laughed with a grim note.

"You girls don't realise what these Chinamen are, even now," he said gruffly. "If they once swarm on board this yacht, we shall be simply butchered—every one of us, irrespective of age or sex. They'll probably torture us in advance. Make no mistake about that—there'll be no half-and-half measures. And when it comes to a fight for life, we can't afford to be particular. We haven't precipitated this fight, anyhow. These Chinese will have to suffer the consequences. Britons don't give in tamely!"

deck but the men. The St. Frank's fellows and Moor View girls had been ordered below, and every door was closed and barred from the inside. In the event of a horde of men flooding on board, they would not easily get below.

Zurrrrh!

Two or three of the other machine-guns took up the song of battle, and the shrieks and yells from the junk were clear evidence of the damage that was being wrought. This was a real matter of life and death. The repelling of these legions of Foo Chow meant the difference between safety and extinction.

There were other junks coming down now, and from their high decks it was not much more than a jump to the *Wanderer's* rail. Men were being poured into the battle in greater numbers every minute.

Dr. Foo Chow had sworn to retake the *Wanderer*.

The air was filled with the confused yelling of the yellow men. One after another, the junks butted against the yacht's plates, and they came scraping along, the Chinamen attempting to leap upwards. Scores of them were shot down as they leaped, for the machine-gun fire was deadly and appalling. The battle was raging on both sides, and within five minutes it was at its height.

The defenders were not merely relying upon machine-guns and rifles, however. There were hand-grenades in plenty, for Lord Dorrmore had provided his yacht with every means of defence.

Boom! Boom! Crash!

The grenades exploded with terrible effect in the midst of the packed Chinamen. So far, not one member of the enemy force had succeeded in getting over the rail. In one or two places there were desperate hand-to-hand contests, but the defenders had all the advantage. And when it came to fighting, they were worth ten Chinamen each.

The attackers were flung off, and hurled headlong into the river. It seemed as though confusion reigned, but those on board the yacht were in full possession of the situation, and were dealing with this assault coolly and with businesslike effect.

Every man was called into the battle.

The work on the engines had been deserted, and even the boiler-rooms were left empty, every stoker taking his share in the fight. The majority of the men entered into the spirit of the battle with tremendous vim.

From afar, Dr. Foo Chow watched the whole business.

He saw junk after junk approach the *Wanderer*, and he saw junk after junk fail to make fast, only to be swept down by the current, with its full complement of men carried out of the battle.

But there were plenty more! And there was a wealth of activity on board the *Dragon*, too. Foo Chow's gunners were working madly, attempting to repair the damage which had been caused to the heavy guns. The Chinese millionaire knew that these white men would slip from his clutches unless he



CHAPTER 14.

THE ATTACK ON THE "WANDERER."

URRRRRH!

The first machine-gun opened fire with a wicked, devastating rattle, and a hail of bullets swept downwards upon a junk which was drifting towards the *Wanderer's* port side. The junk was packed with Foo Chow's soldiery, and the roar of the machine-gun was answered by a crackle of rifle-shots.

But the machine-gunners were protected.

Lord Dorrmore's yacht was resembling a battleship. Every machine-gun was surrounded by well-filled sacks, and only a loophole was left here and there for the gunners to direct their fire. There was nobody on

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held them now. And he had a few choice plans for Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore and Handforth—and a few more whom he had specially selected for treatment.

"We're holding 'em all right, sir," declared Mr. Stewart breathlessly, as he found Captain Burton by his side. "We've got the beggars taped!"

"They're still coming, though, Mr. Stewart," said the skipper.

It was true. There seemed to be no end to the string of native boats, each one full of armed men. And at one period it seemed as though the efforts of the defenders would be useless. Four of the biggest junks had succeeded in grappling, and scores of men were pouring over the side of the *Wanderer*. Revolvers spat, and the machine-guns continued their ceaseless roar. The yelling, screaming, maddened Chinamen fell in droves, only to be replaced by their comrades. It was like a horde of rats overrunning the yacht.

And it was at this crucial period that a change came in the whole situation. There

was a note of alarm ashore. Other bodies of troops, preparing to leave in more boats, were restless. And the reason was soon evident. Hundreds of men came sweeping down from every side, and these, although Chinese, were not of Foo Chow's army!

To be exact, Nelson Lee's party, including the rescued juniors, had arrived back with their escort, and the escort had flung itself into battle with sheer fanatical fervour. It need hardly be mentioned that Umlosi was one of the very first to leap into the fray.

"This was the chance he had been waiting for—this was the opportunity he had dreamed of! Enemies everywhere—these yellow sons of dogs should feel the steely bite of his trusty spear!"

"Good gad!" said Dorrie, as he stood on a high rock, gazing down at the moving scene. "They're tryin' to take the old tub, Lee! We've come just in time to see the fun. These soldiers of Yung Li Chang look like turnin' the tables, too."

"I don't quite care for the look of things," muttered Lee, frowning. "Boys, get into

cover, behind these rocks. There may be plenty of stray bullets about—and after your recent escape, you don't want to fall victims to such a fate. Handforth, where are you? Confound it, where—”

“Here I am, sir!” said Edward Oswald, appearing from behind a neighbouring rock.

“Well, you stay here!” said Nelson Lee grimly. “Upon my word, you gave me quite a turn! I never know when you are going to fly off on some fresh escapade! Give me your word, Handforth, that you won't leave the other boys.”

“All right, sir,” said Handforth readily. “Fact is, I don't feel much like scrapping this morning. I've had enough excitement to last me for a day or two.”

“You glutton!” said Lord Dorrimore severely. “You've had enough to last you about six ordinary lifetimes—but it'll only satisfy you for a day or two, it seems!”

They stood there, in comparative safety, watching the progress of the fight. From this elevated position they could see right down into the gorge—the yacht lying in mid-stream, the junks clustered round her, the figures of the fighters on deck. And on the shores there was another battle going on—at least, on this particular shore. The soldiers of the two armies were clashing, and no further boats were being put off.

It was the climax of the great attack.



CHAPTER 15.

SOMETHING FOR DR. FOO CHOW!

THE turning-point had been reached.

With no reinforcements to support those already engaged, the battle for the *Wanderer* was resolving itself into a certain victory—for the defenders. The swarms of men were being dealt with by the deadly machine-guns. And, so far, there had only been a few casualties on the defending side. Two or three men were slightly wounded, but none were knocked out of the fight.

Dr. Foo Chow, watching from his own point of vantage, was beside himself with rage. Everything was going wrong! His prisoners had escaped—his capital was in danger of falling into the hands of the enemy at any moment—and now this handful of white men were again defying him. Here, in his own stronghold, with thousands of his men to obey his orders, he was being defied!

At least fifty men of the *Dragon* had been ruthlessly put to death for their failure in defending the guns. There had been no excuses—there had been no trial. These men had failed, and they had been butchered. What did human lives matter to Dr. Foo Chow when he had thousands of others at his beck and call?

He gave fresh orders, and before long there was renewed activity on the *Dragon*. The

fight was nearly over in mid-stream. The junks and sampans were drifting away, and the water was teeming with dead and drowning Chinamen. The whole enterprise had the appearance of a colossal failure.

And then came the real climax.

The forward gun on the Chinese yacht had been repaired! In spite of the damage that had been caused, the gun was ready for action again—patched up temporarily. For one shell would be enough—one well-directed hit! The *Wanderer's* vitals would be torn open, and she would sink into the black depths of the gorge. Dr. Foo Chow waited, a figure of stone—watching for that fatal shot.

Boo-o-oom!

There came a roaring explosion, accompanied by great bursts of smoke from the *Dragon*.

“The guns!” shouted Nelson Lee.

“Good glory, they've got them—”

But Dorrie, horrified, could get no further. The same thought had leapt into the minds of them both. The guns were available, and the British yacht was about to be sunk before their eyes! Lord Dorrimore's feelings at that moment were indescribable. He was deeply attached to this private yacht of his, which had penetrated to almost every known corner of the globe.

But there was just that one devastating explosion—an explosion which shook the *Wanderer*, which shook the rocky sides of the gorge like the tremor of an earthquake. There came no second crash as the shell hit its mark. And the reason was obvious.

The gun, instead of sending forth its deadly charge of high explosive, had blown up! The repair had been ineffective, and the heavy gun had exploded! Every man on the *Dragon's* forward deck was blown to fragments, and the superstructure of the vessel was shattered.

The yacht was enveloped in a cloud of smoke and dust, and debris was falling in every direction. So much for Dr. Foo Chow's attempt to sink the *Wanderer*! But this was only the first disaster.

Practically upon the heels of that roar came a second one.

And this was infinitely worse than the first—a ghastly, devastating cataclysm of sound. A stack of shells, recklessly placed near the gun, had blown themselves to eternity, together with everything else on the whole of the *Dragon's* deck.

The gorge simply rocked.

And the Chinamen who remained in the battle lost heart when they saw what had happened to their war lord's vessel. The last junk was swept away from the *Wanderer's* side, and, ashore, the armies of Foo Chow were fleeing in panic before the enemy.

“Look!” said Handforth, pointing.

A haze of smoke was clearing from the Chinese yacht. A mass of wreckage lay revealed—a mere shattered hulk. The bridge had gone, the funnel was no more, and the entire surface of the yacht was changed.

She was now nothing but a smoking litter of debris.

"That's settled her for all time!" said Lord Dorrimore, with satisfaction. "I believe she's on fire, too—she'll be completely gone within an hour. Gad, I hope Foo Chow was aboard! I don't like to sound bloodthirsty, but there'll be thousands of lives saved if that one life is taken!"

"I don't think Foo Chow would take such a risk, Dorrie," said Lee, shaking his head. "He must have known the danger of attempting to fire that gun, and he could only have given the order in desperation. But come! This is our chance to get on board our own yacht."

"Hurrah!"

"We'll do it, sir!"

"Good old *Wanderer*!"

"Down with Foo Chow!"

The whole party, rather shocked by the terrible scene they had witnessed, but jubilant at the thought of victory, hurried down the rough, rocky gorge towards that causeway, which led up from the concrete quay. It was necessary to reach that quay in order to obtain a boat.

Since that explosion, a tremendous change had taken place.

The Chinese had fled, leaving the quay deserted, although there were many still forms lying there, as evidence of the gory battle. And there were boats, too. These had been deserted just as they lay, and Foo Chow's men were being chased across country in every direction.

Umlosi met the hurrying party as they reared the causeway. He was a spectacle. Gashes were bleeding on every limb—two or three of them ugly wounds which would need drastic attention. The black giant was limping, too, and he was half blinded by the flowing of blood from an ugly scalp wound.

"Good heavens, Umlosi, you're in a terrible state!" exclaimed Nelson Lee. "Man alive, we shall never patch you up!"

Umlosi showed all his teeth in a wide, happy laugh.

"Callest thou these scratches serious, Umtagati?" he rumbled. "Wau! What are they but the trifling hurts of battle? 'Twas a fight, N'Kose!" he added, turning to Dorrie. 'Twas a fight after mine own heart!"

"I hope you're satisfied, then," said his lordship. "You look perfectly awful! It'll take us a month to get you well!"

"Full three score of these pigs did I slay with my spear!" declared Umlosi. "Perchance thou wilt think I am boasting? But nay! I am modest in my estimate of numbers!"

"I believe you!" declared Lord Dorrimore. "We haven't got time to look at your wounds now, but we'll soon have you aboard, you gory old reprobate!"

They hurried down towards the quay, and were just passing a jutting portion of rock, when Dr. Foo Chow himself abruptly stood out. There was such an expression of fiendish hatred on his face that the leaders of the

party paused. Instinctively, Lee drew his revolver.

"Now, gentlemen, I will settle my account!" snarled Foo Chow.

His voice contained a world of peril. They had never seen him like this before, for he had always been suave and smooth. But this succession of defeats had converted him into a veritable fiend.

Crack!

Foo Chow's revolver, hidden in the folds of his uniform, was sent spinning out of his numbed fingers. For Nelson Lee, instantly sensing the meaning of that slight bulge, had fired. And only in the nick of time, for a bullet had been about to penetrate his heart. By sheer presence of mind, Nelson Lee had saved his own life and Lord Dorrimore's.

"You infernal cur!" roared Dorrie furiously.

He leapt forward like a tiger.

Crash!

His fist drove upon Dr. Foo Chow's chin with all the force of Dorrie's frame behind it. It was a blow such as the St. Frank's juniors had seldom seen. Even Handforth, famed for his terrific punching, stared with awe.

The Chinese millionaire uttered one gurgling grunt, his feet were lifted clean from the ground, and he thudded over sideways on to the concrete—a limp, quivering, unconscious heap.

"Lee gave you a taste of his fist the other day—now you've sampled mine!" panted Lord Dorrimore, rubbing his knuckles. "Gad, he's out!"

"That blow was enough to kill him, Dorrie," said Nelson Lee, falling on his knees.

He felt Foo Chow's pulse, but it was still beating. Lee had really suspected that the Chinaman's neck was broken, but he was only suffering from the effects of a plain knock-out.

"It'll be an hour before he comes to," said the detective as he rose to his feet. "I've half a mind to carry him with us on board the *Wanderer*. We'll hold him as a hostage; we'll take him prisoner."

"Gad, that's a good idea," said Dorrie. "But, hang it, I don't want this foul beast on my yacht! Let him lie, Lee!" he added gruffly. "He can't do us any more harm now. His armies are on the run, his capital is on the point of falling. Leave him there. He's shot his bolt, and we've done with him."

"Yes, perhaps you are right," said Lee slowly. "We'll leave him."

They went on, and reached the quay. There were so many boats that they could choose any one they pleased. And within five minutes they were going down with the current towards the beloved *Wanderer*. They tried not to see the floating things near the water's edge—things which they preferred to be blind to.

And Nelson Lee was thoughtful and grim. He was wondering. Had he done right in leaving Dr. Foo Chow unconscious upon that causeway?



CHAPTER 16.

AH FONG PROVES HIS WORTH.

CAPTAIN BURTON wrung Nelson Lee's hand with fervent pleasure.

"Glad to see you safely back, Mr. Lee," he said simply. "And you, sir," he added as he met Lord Dorrimore. "We were half-afraid that you might have met with some serious trouble."

Dorrie laughed.

"We met with serious trouble all right, captain," he replied. "And it seems that you've had your share, too. But tell me the news. Anybody killed?"

"Nobody."

"Fine!" said Dorrie happily. "Many hurt?"

"Three men in the sick-bay with bad shot wounds, but none of them fatal," replied Captain Burton. "Five others with slight wounds. I rather fancy the enemy has a bigger casualty list."

"You've done wonderfully, captain," said Nelson Lee with enthusiasm. "For our part, we have to report success. We have brought all the boys back, and we are all quite whole."

"Blistered a bit, but whole," said Dorrie. "I don't see any of the young people about," he added, glancing round. "All below, eh?"

"I packed 'em down as soon as the trouble started," nodded the captain. "And I don't think they'd better come up just yet, either. There's a good deal of litter to be cleared up. A good deal of mess to be washed off the decks, too."

He spoke significantly, for some parts of the decks were not pleasant to look upon.

Handforth & Co. and the other boys were taken straight below, where they were greeted joyously by their schoolfellows and by Irene & Co. The Ah Fong family was provided with accommodation aft.

Within two hours an apparent miracle had been wrought.

Not only were the *Wanderer's* decks clean again, but she was looking quite normal. All doors were open, so that any of the guests could go about as they pleased. So far as the enemy was concerned, none was in sight. The gorge was deserted. All the Chinamen had gone, and the

Dragon was now a smouldering mass of wreckage. Fire had not broken out, as Lord Dorrimore had anticipated, but there seemed every chance that it might still do so.

In any case, Foo Chow's wonderful yacht was disabled for all time.

And exactly the opposite was the case with the *Wanderer*. A triumphant report came up from Mr. Mackenzie, the chief engineer. His work was completed, the engines were ready for full service. The good old yacht was herself again.

"Hurrah!"

"The engines are going!"

"We're off!"

There was plenty of excitement among the boys. But Handforth & Co. and the other members of that shore party were conspicuous by their absence. They were all in bed; and this time Handforth was provided with a sailor outside his cabin door—a guard who was there to see that Handforth stayed in bed!

Not that there was much fear that he would attempt to get up. He was so utterly worn out that he fell asleep while his burns were being dressed. His chums were nearly as exhausted.

"We've had a pretty exciting time of it all round, an' I'm off for my cot as soon as we get on the move," declared Lord Dorrimore wearily. "Take my tip, Lee, old man, an' get some rest, too."

"You can be quite sure that I shall follow that very excellent advice," said Nelson Lee dryly. "There is one little point worrying me, however. We have beaten Foo Chow, and the yacht is ours. The engines are in full working order, too."

"Well, what's the fly in the ointment?"

"We have no pilot, Dorrie."

"H'm! That's pretty bad, I'll admit," said his lordship, scratching his ear. "It'll be a tough job, navigatin' this river without a pilot. Still, I don't see how on earth we can get one, Lee. We couldn't trust these accursed Chinks, even if we had a dozen to select from. I'm afraid we shall have to just steam off, an' chance it."

"That's what I've been thinking, but it's an awful risk," put in Mr. Stokes. "There may be hidden rocks, or mud-banks. At any moment, after we get started, we may strike a submerged snag."

Lord Dorrimore nodded.

"I've always held that there's nothin' like bein' cheerful," he observed.

"Well, hang it, we've got to be ready for these things!" protested Barry Stokes. "It seems madness to

(Continued on page 43.)

..... NEXT WEDNESDAY!

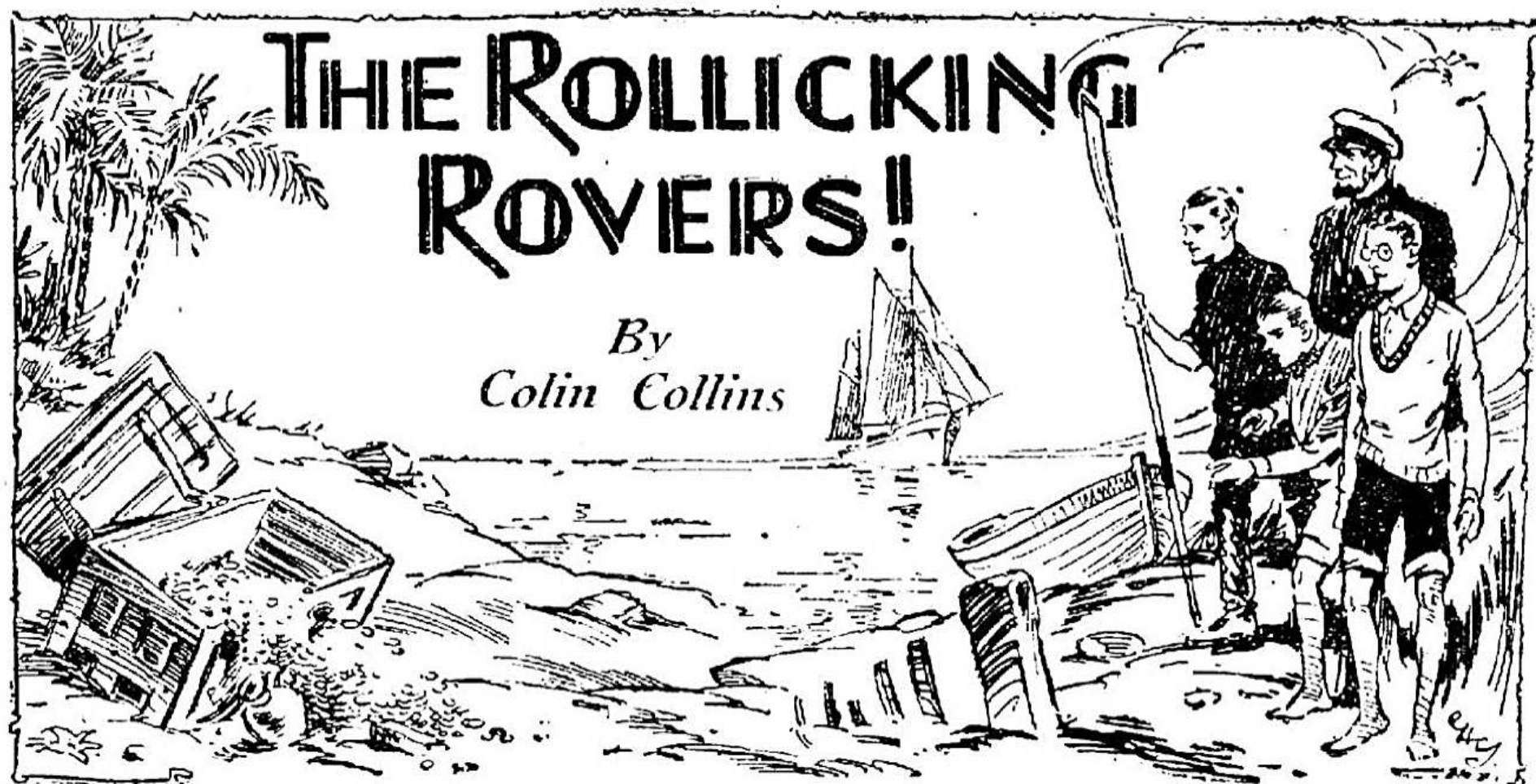
HANDFORTH THE RECKLESS!



.....

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WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE.

BOB DIGBY, HAROLD DWYER, and FATTY VOSS are left a large fortune, to be divided equally between them. The fortune is left them by their uncle, Silas Digby, and the wealth is hidden in a chest which he has buried somewhere during his travels round the world. They have no clue to the whereabouts of this fortune, but enlist the aid of BEN TOPPET, the skipper of the Saucy Ann, who tells them of a chest concealed beneath a tree in their uncle's garden. They dig up the chest and find that it contains documents, a mummified head and hands! The papers are examined, and it is decided to accompany Ben on the Saucy Ann in a world quest

for the lost treasure. But they are shadowed by FOXEY JOHNSON, a crafty rascal, who means to get hold of the treasure for himself. When our adventurers set sail in the Saucy Ann, Foxey conceals himself on board. The Saucy Ann proceeds to Teredos, where a box of valuables had been left by Old Digby. Foxey slips ashore, and, in league with a rascal named Barker, obtains the box and makes off with it in a dhow. They send a substitute box to the Saucy Ann. There is a scene when Ben Toppet refuses to open the box for the customs officials.

(Now read on.)

What the Box Contained.

"OPEN ze box!" commanded the English-speaking official, with a grand sweep of his arm.

"We won't," answered Ben.

"Verra well," said the officials, "we go for assistance."

They turned and marched off the ship.

Alas, they didn't go far enough, or allow any time for the Saucy Ann to slip her moorings and clear out of the harbour. They walked only a few yards to where some niggers were working on the quay, and took from one of them a very heavy pickaxe.

They were back again, and while one officer stood dumb with folded arms and looked on, the other attacked the box and hacked into its side. Ben would have leapt upon the man, but the swinging pick nearly got him in the face. He retreated and signed frantically to the boys to set upon the little officers and overpower them; but they were not able to grasp his meaning, and were more concerned about the damage to their precious chest.

"Here, stop him!" cried Fatty. "He's smashing up our property!"

"Here—you—" protested Bob.

Goggles stood and stared at the hole the pickaxe was making in the side of the box. One—two—three—and a heave! A loose, rotten board bulged, cracked, splintered, and was next moment bursting out.

"Look—look!"

Out of the hole rolled—not gold—but stones!

"Stones!" cried Goggles.

"Stones!" groaned Fatty.

"'Ere, 'ere, what's this?" shouted Ben.

The officer hacked away till the side of the box was no more, and a heap of road-fodder spilled out on the deck.

"Where are ze books?" demanded the angry officer. "You lie to me, you lie!"

"Stones! Stones!" was all Ben could gurggle in his dismay and utter stupefaction.

"You say books, and we find stones! You give wrong description. You deceive us. You break ze law. You are arrested. So! You come wiz us. Queek march!"

"We've been done! There's some jiggery-pokery 'ere!" shouted Ben, dancing about and almost treading on the little officers.

"This ain't the box—this ain't the chest your

uncle got out of the wreck! And them labels—look!—the Saucy Ann never touched any of them ports. Them nails is new, drove in this very day! We've been done! This ain't your uncle's box!"

"Well, where is it, then?" demanded Bob, "and who has done this?"

"Why, Foxey!" roared Ben. "He knew. He got it! This is a fake, a stumer!"

"Where is Foxey now? We've got to get on his track," said Bob.

As Ben stumped up and down in helpless rage his quick eye saw a boat slipping out of the harbour with white men aboard.

"Look—that's Foxey's cap!"

The customs officer looked, too, and gasped. A boat was escaping them without a permit. They ran ashore and waved their arms and shouted and spluttered and made frantic signs to the sentry on the fort.

Boom! went a gun.

But Foxey & Co. were going to take their chance, and sailed on.

"After them!" yelled Ben. "The engine—quick!"

In a few minutes the Saucy Ann was escaping, too—but giving chase!

In Pursuit of the Dhow.

BOOM! went the gun in the fort. A vessel slipping out of the harbour of Teredos, without permission of the authorities, wasn't a very serious matter—not serious enough to warrant a fortress gun being turned upon a British ship to sink it.

But the law must be obeyed; even the law of an outlandish old sandy mud-patch like Teredos. And the law must make its voice heard.

So the gun boomed out; and a shot splashed in the sea, behind Barker's native boat!

The gun boomed again. This time the shell splashed ahead of the Saucy Ann, but no damage was done. The port officials knew the names and ratings of the ships, and all about them, and could get even another time—in other ways.

It was not the gun Foxey had to fear; it was the vengeance of Ben Toppet, hot in pursuit.

"We've only got a sail, and Ben's got an auxiliary!" Foxey warned his comrade Barker. "They'll overhaul us—and what then?"

"We'll have to fight for it!" said Barker.

"They're armed, all of 'em, and them boys'll let fly at anybody and anything!"

"Well, let them!"

Just outside the harbour there was a freshening breeze and the sails of the dhow swelled to it. These boats, designed for light breezes and swift journeys, can make astonishing pace—but the Saucy Ann was overhauling them, taking advantage of the breeze, too.

"What's going to happen when we come level, Ben?" Bob asked a little anxiously.

"We'll call on 'em to surrender," replied Ben, who had taken the wheel.

"And if they won't?"

"Then we'll board her and fight 'em!"

"Hooray!"

The thrill of fight entered into the hearts of them all, even of the scientific Goggles. All worked with a will, flying to obey Ben's lightest word in the handling of the sails. Goggles was at the engine.

"Wouldn't it be easier to ram her and run her down, Ben?" Goggles asked.

"And what would become of your uncle's treasure, then? D'ye think it will be any good to anybody at the bottom of the sea? How many are there aboard? Look and see," commanded Ben, handing his glasses to Goggles, who began to count.

"I can see Foxey. There's another white man, and four brown fellows."

"Six to four!" muttered Ben.

"They're still a long way off—but we are gaining."

"What's that there splutterin' noise in the engine?" asked Ben presently.

There was no need to reply, for, after a few unexpected pops, the engine gave out.

"What's up? What have you been doin' to the blamed old engine?" roared Ben, ever suspicious of the young scientist.

"The petrol tank is empty," Goggles confessed a few minutes later, after a frantic attempt to get going again. "We were going to refill it in port—and forgot."

"You forgot, you mean," snarled Ben angrily. "You asked for this engine to be left entirely to you—and look what's come of it!"

It was sail against sail now, and the lighter vessel had the advantage. The yellow coast was receding and fading into a golden streak, half concealed in a hazy mist. The dhow began to increase her lead.

"Where's the whisky? Where's the brandy?" yelled Goggles, racing to the saloon.

"What's wrong with him?" asked Ben in alarm. "He ain't takin' to drink, is he, just 'cos the engine is run out o' petrol?"

"Where's the whisky?" shouted Goggles, seizing Fatty.

"In there—in a box under the seat in the saloon."

The excited one re-settled his spectacles and dived for the box. He returned, dragging it along with him to the well-hole where the engine was. Like a lunatic he was seen with his mouth at the cap of the petrol tank, blowing down it.

"'Ere, 'ave you gone off your head? Get away from there!" shouted Ben.

The engine began to go again, as if a fresh lease of life had been given it. As a matter of fact, the tank drainings had been blown to the carburettor. Then, to Ben's dismay—no knowing practically nothing of engines—he beheld the crazy lad knocking necks off bottles and feeding the engine with good whisky.

"He's mad—it's the sun! He's got it—and he's got it bad!" yelled Ben to the others. "'Ere, come and hold 'im down, or lock him up—look at him!"

The engine, after a splutter or two, showed that it liked whisky and thudded grandly. The boys came and stood round, and, for a few minutes, almost forgot the escaping dhow.

"Good old Goggles!" murmured Bob with a sigh of satisfaction and relief.

The young scientist began a short lecture on alcohol as motor fuel and its disadvantages in competition with oil in the world's markets. He would have told them about the specific gravity of each, and lots more, if they had not all been startled by something much more important, something that crashed through the side of the main deck saloon, and left a hole in it—a shot!

Strategy!

"**W**HERE did that come from?" Ben demanded, looking landward to the distant port, from which no puff of smoke was visible.

A second glance at the hole in the cabin side established the simple fact that a gun on shore cannot shoot a shot that will go out to sea and turn back and hit a cabin on the side facing the other way.

"They've got a gun!" roared Ben, staring ahead at the dhow.

It was only too true. The rum-runner had in its bow an innocent-looking skylight covered with tarpaulin, which, when necessary, would turn back and reveal a very serviceable brass cannon, three feet long, with touch hole, and swivel bearings and everything on the model of fifty years ago.

Such ancient implements of war are still cherished and hoarded in savage countries, and carried in outlandish coastal waters. Many a good sailing vessel has gone to Davy Jones in lonely places, driven ashore by a ball from an ancient field-piece carried by a pirate dhow.

Quite a long time elapsed between shots, but presently another one came.

Bang!

Ben steered the Saucy Ann's nose on to the direction of the shot, and the next one scraped a nasty scratch all along the bow on the port side.

All the same, the Saucy Ann was gaining, and would soon be near enough to come alongside, but dared not risk getting a shot below the water line.

"Well, and what now?" Ben cried to the boys in his dilemma. "What about it? Have you got any suggestions? Are we to go on?"

"What d'ye think, Goggles?" demanded Bob, who was no coward, but not too fertile of ideas. "Shall we rush it?"

"No—there's no need," replied the engineer, stopping his engine. "Let's drop behind."

"What—and lose a fortune?" cried Fatty. "They've got our treasure!"

"Well, let 'em keep it," replied the astonishing Goggles.

"Don't listen to him," growled Ben. "They're loading again!"

"Well, let them," urged Goggles. "Let them load and fire, and load and fire, and keep on at it."

"While we're doing nothing?" demanded Ben in scorn.

"Just so!"

"What for?"

"What for! It's obvious. Can't you see that the longer they go on firing, and falling short, and missing us, the sooner they'll exhaust their ammunition and their old iron."

"That's so, Ben," Bob agreed. "Let's follow, but not go too near."

Ben growled consent. The Saucy Ann, with all sail on, followed the treasure-laden dhow at a respectful distance, moving as if being left behind—and afraid to come on.

The Saucy Ann began to drop still further behind, out of every sort of range; the dhow wasted her ammunition and soon there was no scrap iron left with which to assault her.

Barker, huddled low out of sight, was told of this situation.

"Say, mate, will they try to board us?" asked Foxey nervously.

"Four to six—not likely. Look at my crew! Them boys is only kids."

"What's your idea, Sammy?" asked Foxey, still nervous. "It ain't no good runnin' in front of 'em, right out to sea, and us with no food aboard, and no water."

"My idea is to let 'em come alongside, then fall back, turn into the wind, and ram the Saucy Ann in the ribs."

"Pretty strong ribs," muttered Foxey. "Your bow is sharp—but it's slender!"

"It's cased in steel, and there's steel inside. We've used it afore to-day to go right through the side of a government boat. The Saucy Ann will sink nice and proper. She left port without giving any destination. She'll go to the bottom, and no one will ever know—'cept us."

Shots failing, the Saucy Ann crept closer and closer. Knives and cutlasses and long-barrelled guns were served out to the crew of the dhow, and Foxey was given a gun. They told him to go to the bow so that, the moment the Saucy Ann was rammed, he could leap aboard.

The boys were now all lying flat on deck, each near a convenient hole, with revolvers loaded.

Goggles, through his glasses, could see that the muzzle of the cannon was cocked high in the air, and anything out of its mouth would go over their heads.

"Ammunition exhausted," he announced. "Close in now, Ben."

"Better tire 'em out, and follow, and trail 'em, and let 'em get hungry and thirsty," Ben decided. "What d'ye see now, sir?" he asked with astonishing respectfulness. That "sir" was very unusual.

"I can see the crew passing a leather water-bottle from one to another and—

they're almost fighting over it. One of them has just had a cuff on the head from the man in the straw hat. He has grabbed it, and Foxey is grabbing now!"

"They're short of water!" yelled Ben. "They've run dry; and we've got gallons and gallons in our tanks!"

"What do you mean by that?" asked Fatty.

"It means that, in less than twenty-four hours, they'll be without water. Let 'em parch—let 'em do what they like and go where they like, and we'll go after, and just look on."

There was sense in old Ben's tactics; and, much as they longed to fight, all the boys realised that the longer and more patient way was best.

So the Saucy Ann followed close—daringly close—and the dhow kept ahead, wondering when the attack was coming, and longing for it almost as much as they longed for water.

"What fools we were to set off in such a hurry," Barker growled. "Never mind, these chaps of mine are accustomed to going without drink, but me and you, Foxey, if we are to keep any fight in us, must be refreshed. Here, have a swig at this bottle, but only a little one—we'll keep it up our end."

Foxy Funks It!

ONCE, in a sudden calm, the Saucy Ann came close enough for a shot from Fatty's revolver to whistle over the dhow. Glorious!

"Did I kill anybody?" he whispered to Bob, who lay near.

"I saw a seagull swoop to pick up the fish you assassinated," replied Bob with a chuckle.

"No, stop rotting—did you see anybody fall?"

"No—and don't waste good bullets!"

"There's Foxey's cap," whispered Fatty, all excitement, and finger again on trigger.

"Don't, you couldn't hit the ship if you tried at this distance!"

An hour or two later the boys were taking it in turns to crawl away out of the sun to get food and drink in the shade of the cabin. When Ben took his turn, Fatty was left at the wheel.

"She's turning," cried Fatty presently. "She's turning towards the land."

"Head her off and get in between," cried Bob, who was in command in the absence of the skipper.

This was done and, for a little while, the two vessels were abreast of each other, but a good gap between them. Now was the time, if the brass cannon had anything in it, to get one well in. But nothing happened, except a stray rifle shot or two.

In the dhow Barker was cursing and swearing. He realised the tactics of his enemy. No chance to get round and run in on the larger vessel. They were to windward.

"They mean to hang on to us till we're starved out, or a vessel comes along. We must make for shore and run in anywhere," he announced.

The Saucy Ann held on tight till night fell. But not the night we know; it was a hazy tropic night—never quite dark—with a phosphorescent light from the water which always showed where the solid hull of a ship moved.

Once the two boats were so near that Ben called out to the enemy: "Are yer givin' in, or are yer goin' to be sunk—which is it to be?"

No answer, save a cursing on board the dhow. Barker was gone below and was examining a chart. He was no navigator, but he had a rough and ready knowledge of his own coast. Foxey was called down to his aid.

"I reckon, Foxey Johnson, we are in dangerous water. Them shaded places on the map is shoals, shifting sands, and no boat with a bigger draught than ours ought to venture so near land. What if we was to lighten ship, fling everything overboard, and lead 'em aground?"

"Ah," gurgled Foxey, finding renewed hope. Then, after a pause, "It would only be sand, and they'd just stick and—we should still have to board 'em."

"If we could get 'em aground we could leave 'em till they starved and rotted. Easy then."

"With no food or water aboard us, and plenty aboard them," said Foxey. "I'm afraid it won't work—What's that?"

There was a bump.

"We're on the sand ourselves!" yelled Barker, leaping on deck and giving orders.

After a little rocking to and fro there was a lurch, and they were free of the sandy shallows.

But the Saucy Ann, what of her? In a minute she would be aground!

Ben was bending over the side of the ship, sniffing in an odd way.

"What is it, Ben?" they asked.

"There's a queer smell in the sea hereabouts," he replied, sniffing up some more air. "'Ere, look out, we're in shallow water!"

Ben rushed for the wheel, knocked Fatty clean over, and altered the Saucy Ann's course in an instant. And only just in time, for the keel seemed to hold a little, and foothold on deck was unsteady. Soon the lap of the waves on the bows was as before, a pleasant little prattle and tinkle.

The keel grounded again; the vessel held a moment, and then slipped free. The dhow glided safely over the shallows, lurching now and then, but going on; it was built for waters like these.

The Saucy Ann was soon lost to view. They had evaded her.

Suddenly out of the sea, in front of the dhow, there rose a queer tangle of masts and rigging—a half-submerged wreck! The most potent and terrible sailor's warning of

OUT TO-DAY!

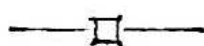
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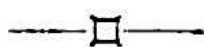


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dangerous waters—and the dhow went crashing through the rotten rigging!

All was confusion. The navigation of the boat was taken out of the hands of the white men forthwith. Barker was threatened with a knife, and Foxey was knocked flat. The native sailors knew what was before them if once marooned on these desolate sands—a slow and horrible death.

It was that or surrender.

They preferred surrender, and cared nothing for the cargo that Barker was smuggling out of Teredos. If they had known its value it would have been all the same; life was more precious than plunder, and capture better than torture.

The dhow, with confusion, and argument, and fighting on board, and free of the sands, was making for the open ocean in the wake of the Saucy Ann.

"They want to surrender," Barker explained to Foxey. "At least, two of 'em do. We'll have to settle those two—those on that rope hauling up the sail—the others we can attend to. Are you ready?"

"Y-yes," agreed Foxey with hands trembling on his knife.

"On to them quietly—slowly," whispered Barker, leading the way.

Foxey's heart wasn't in it.

He sheathed his knife, and came to a sudden resolution, the fruits of previous thinking and weighing up of his chances of life with a whole skin.

While Barker crept forward in the dark, Foxey slipped overboard; quietly dropped into the sea and swam.

Foxey was for the Saucy Ann—and safety.

In the Treasure Chest!

IT was not the first time, by a long time, that Foxey had boarded the Saucy Ann on his own. There was also a snug place aboard where he could lie hid, and await the issue of the coming struggle without being called upon for help by either side.

True, the crew of the Saucy Ann knew of his hiding place now; but they also knew it

to be untenanted, and would never give it another thought.

It was not a long swim—but there were sharks!

But Foxey missed the sharks. He got astern and rested on the now inactive screw, and from there crawled—like the rat he was—to a place where his eyes were on a level with the deck. The others were all on the other side, watching and listening. They could hear shouting in the far distance.

"Quarrelling," observed Bob. "I wish we could hear what they are saying."

"The only thing we have to fear is a head-on attack from their vessel—they might try to ram and sink us in the dark," observed Goggles.

"Not enough wind now," Ben declared with a satisfied grunt.

And, as they talked, Foxey slithered on deck. He saw the shadowy forms leaning over the rail.

He slid into his rat-hole and was mightily relieved to find that the others, after discovering his lair, had not troubled to clear it either of the empty or the full bottles and tins with which it was stored. It was as he had left it.

He seized upon a bottle of water and drank it with such greediness he almost choked.

Slaking his own thirst reminded him of the others he had left behind—twelve hours away from fresh water, and soon to be slowly maddened by thirst into an attempt, however futile, to board the Saucy Ann and murder her crew.

Meanwhile, there was trouble being done on board the dhow.

Barker, believing he was being backed up by a white man, had set out upon the task of laying out the two mutineers.

His knife descended. There was a yell—and the man leaped aside in the dark. Ere Barker could lunge again, a hand was at his throat, and he was on his back.

"Strike, Foxey, strike!" he gurgled.

But there was no Foxey.

Instead, a knife fell—and Barker paid swift penalty.

Warning cries in the native tongue brought the others to the scene with a lantern, the light of which was allowed to glint on the water, despite the need for caution.

"Where is the other white man?" they were asking.

But Foxey had vanished. They searched every hole and corner and came to the conclusion that Barker, having gone mad—as white men did in these parts, with the heat—had murdered his mate, as he would have murdered them.

A consultation was now held and the native sailors jabbered over the dead body of their master. What were they to do? It all resolved itself into one thing—they must have water or perish.

They had been rushed to sea by a madman, with only one water skin aboard, believing they were out for a little rum-running expedition of a few hours. Here they were,

out to sea with no hope save the mercy of the crew of the Saucy Ann.

A crew of white men! And here was a white man they had murdered in self-defence! But what white men would believe that story?

One, more cunning than the rest, suggested that they should pitch the yarn that the man Foxey Johnson had gone mad and done this thing before leaping to death in the sea. They, the innocent hired crew, were now ready to surrender in all humility—craving only water.

There was the heavy chest in the hold, what of that?

They resolved to have a look at it. With a lantern and an iron bar they descended and surveyed it. The simple padlocks were easily forced. The lid was thrown open and the silver cups, and brass and copper plates revealed. Not particularly thrilling things these to men of the east: such things as crazy white men often paid ridiculous sums to possess. White men's trash. Common native utensils, the things the whites called "souvenirs."

They looked under the gaudy Eastern cloth upon which these were laid and found—

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(Another fine instalment next Wednesday—look out for it!)

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(Continued from page 36.)

navigate this unknown river without a pilot at the helm. After gaining so much, we might easily throw everything away in one fatal moment."

"Barry is right, Dorrie," said Nelson Lee gruffly. "This point has been worrying me for some time, I don't mind admitting it. And the worst of it is, I can't see any possible way out of it."

Mr. Stewart came up and saluted Dorrie.

"The Chinaman you brought aboard, sir, would like to speak to you," he said.

"Who? Ah Fong?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right, he can come; I'm not proud," said Dorrie, smiling. "As a matter of fact, Ah Fong is a pal of mine, one of the right sort. I'm glad to know that some of these Chinks are human."

A minute later Ah Fong bowed low before Dorrie.

"That's all right," said his lordship. "I don't want any of that bowin' an' scrapin', you ass! What's the trouble? Somethin' wrong with your quarters? I'll send a steward—"

"Honourable Excellency, me your slave," said Ah Fong humbly. "You savee my family from death—"

"Rot! Handforth did that."

"Me glateful to young master," said Ah Fong. "But you are the gheat lord of this ship. Allee same tell me that you master."

"Well, she's my yacht, if it comes to that."

"You wantee go 'long?" asked Ah Fong. "You wantee sail?"

"Well, we want to, but there's a little trouble," said Lord Dorrimore. "You

wouldn't understand it, old son, so I shan't explain—"

"Me pilot," said the Chinaman impassively.

Lee glanced at him sharply.

"What was that?" he asked.

"Me pilot," said Ah Fong. "Me know liver. Know him channels. Know him locks and badee parts. Ah Fong know evelytthing about liver."

"By the Lord Harry!" said Lord Dorrimore, staring. "Is this providence, or not? We save this Chinaman, and he turns out to be a river pilot! Wake me up, Barry, old man!"

"Me spend many years on liver," said Ah Fong. "Me pilot *Diagon* hundled times—two hundled times. Me stlike sandbank once. No more good. Me pushee off. Me getee sackee. Allee same go into countly. But me know liver well. Me actee pilot. Savvy? Allee same yes?"

"Allee same yes—with four-wheel brakes!" declared Lord Dorrimore enthusiastically. "Mr. Stewart, take this gentleman below, attire him in royal raiment, and give him the best that we can supply. Remember that he is the most important person on board. Protect his life as though it were your own. He is our pilot, an' therefore worth his weight in gold!"

Ah Fong was grinning happily, and there was no fear that he would prove treacherous. He owed his life to the white people, and he would do anything in his power for them. And the one thing that he could do was just what they wanted him to do!

The *Wanderer* was safe, and she had a pilot. And every member of the holiday party was on board, intact. After all the stirring adventures it seemed wonderful that everything should be turning out so splendidly.

There was only one sad feature.

The unfortunate Yung Ching was in the hands of his enemies again.

But perhaps he would not remain in this predicament for long!

THE END.

(Another rousing yarn of the Boys of St. Frank's next Wednesday — "HANDFORTH THE RECKLESS!")

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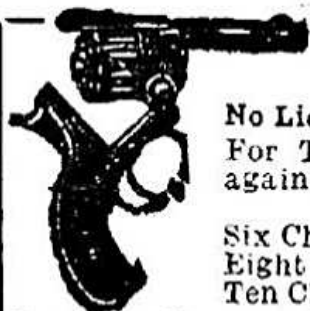
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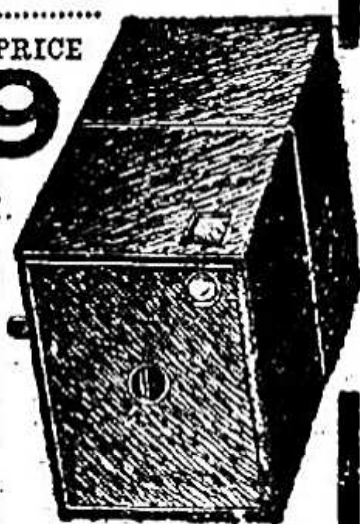
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