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The NELSON LEE

2^d



**HURRAH -
"BACK TO
ST. FRANK'S!"**

CHEER, BOYS, CHEER, AND WELCOME BACK YOUR OLD PALS!

Back to St. Frank's!

By
**EDWY
SEARLES BROOKS.**

K. K. PARKINGTON says:

"I'm red-hot and I'm going to wake up St. Frank's!"

E. O. HANDFORTH says:

"I'm Junior Skipper and I'm going to biff this cheeky newcomer into his place!"

YOU'LL SAY (when you've read this yarn):

"That's the stuff to give 'em!"

Ancient House at St. Frank's. A group of other juniors were standing in the Triangle, gazing about them with interest: Harry Gresham, Alec Duncan, Castleton, Burton, Russell, Dodd, Brent, and others.

It was a bright spring morning, and these Remove boys had only arrived back at St. Frank's that day. The famous old school had been re-opened. The ravages of the disastrous fire had been made good, so far as the Ancient House and the West House were concerned.

"Pretty smart work, you chaps," remarked Duncan, the New Zealand junior. "Everything's exactly the same—studies, dormitories, Common-rooms. Even the same kind of furniture. You might think there'd never been a fire. It's wonderful, how they've restored the old place."

"I'm glad that my people decided that I should come back," said Travers. "It's rather good fun at Mr. Lee's Detective Academy, but give me the peaceful life. I'm naturally lazy, and this just suits me."

CHAPTER 1.

The Carlton Gang!

VIVIAN TRAVERS, of the Remove, sighed contentedly.

"By Samson! It's good to be back, dear old fellows," he said. "Nothing quite like the dear old place, is there?"

"Can't beat it," agreed Jimmy Potts happily.

The two Removites were arm-in-arm, and they had just come down the steps of the



There were several other juniors present who had recently been members of Nelson Lee's famous Detective Academy. Upon the re-opening of the school, however, a number of the "cub" detectives had been weeded out, and it had been decided—either by Nelson Lee or the boys' parents—that they should return to St. Frank's.

Across the Triangle the scene was not peaceful at all. Scores of workmen were busy on the Modern House and the East House—which was one block. One half of the school was ready for occupation, but these two houses were only half finished. Bricklayers, plasterers, painters and plumbers were hard at it. Mortar-mixers were grinding, men were climbing ladders up the scaffolding, and the whole scene was one of bustling activity.

"It'll be a month before the Fourth-Formers and the rest of the chaps can get back," said Brent. "But who cares? The Ancient House is all serene, and the Fourth doesn't count, anyway."

Not all the boys of the Ancient House and the West House had arrived. Many of the seniors would come on Monday, including Edgar Fenton, the school captain, and Biggleswade. Both of them had retired from the Detective Academy, in order to take up their old duties.

"Yes, it's peaceful," repeated Vivian Travers dreamily. "Summer term coming on, and—cricket! Long days! What could be better?"

But the peace-loving Travers was a poor prophet!

IN Bellton Lane, midway between the village and St. Frank's, a small luxury motor-coach had come to a halt. It contained twelve schoolboys. They were all well-set-up youngsters, broad of shoulder and brawny of muscle. One in particular. His shoulders were excessive, and although he was no more than fifteen he was a young giant. His jaw was square, his nose slightly upturned, and he possessed a mop of red hair.

"Ready, gang?" he asked cheerily.

"Waiting for you, K.K.," went up a chorus.

K. K. Partington nodded. He eyed his companions keenly—and without a word, they all clasped hands in the Auld Lang Syne style, and gave a solemn shake.

"We come to St. Frank's—to conquer!" said K. K. Parkington.

He gave a sign to the driver of the coach, and the vehicle rolled on. It entered the gateway of St. Frank's, swung to a standstill opposite the Ancient House, and the twelve burly youngsters hopped out.

"Well, well," said Travers, with interest. "What have we here, dear old fellows?"

"Blessed if I know!" said Potts. "They're all strangers."

There was something peculiar about these new arrivals. They bunched themselves together, and it was noticed that they had their fists clenched, as though in readiness for a fight.

"What's the idea?" asked Potts, looking straight at K. K. Parkington.

Crash!

Parkington's fist shot out, and Sir James Potts, Bart., went flying.

"Yow!" gasped Jimmy. "What the dickens——"

"Sorry, but it's one of our rules that we knock everybody down who speaks to us unless he's been spoken to first," said the red-haired firebrand. "Better take this as a warning."

"By Samson!" murmured Travers.

"In case you don't know it, we're the Carlton Gang," continued the newcomer. "I'm Kirby Keeble Parkington, the leader. Let me introduce my pals. Harvey Deeks—Clement Goffin. We're better known as the Red Hot Trio. These others are Letts, Mayhew, Jepson, Kersey, Langley, Bonner, Fiske, Haddock, and Baines."

Jimmy Potts was on his feet now, hot with anger.

"I say, you chaps, we're not going to stand this, are we?" he yelled. "Who do these fatheads think they are? Let's smash 'em!"

There was an angry movement from the St. Frank's juniors.

"Better go easy," advised Claude Gore-Pearce, lounging up. "The Carlton Gang, eh? Phew! Haven't you heard of that crowd? They practically ran Carlton College! Nobody else had a look in."

"Glad to hear that there's somebody who knows us," nodded Kirby Keeble Parkington coolly. "Well, we've arrived. We've left Carlton, and we're now going to boss St. Frank's. To begin with, I'm junior captain—and the sooner that's understood, the better!"

And there was something about the attitude of those boys from Carlton College which made it clear that they were a force to be reckoned with!

CHAPTER 2.

Enter Edward Oswald!

"HERE we are!" said Edward Oswald Handforth eagerly. "By George! What a sight, my sons!"

"Makes a lump come in my throat," murmured Church.

McClure was silent; he could only stare.

The famous chums of Study D were gliding up Bellton Lane in Handforth's Austin Seven. The three cub detectives had taken a day off from the Academy to come down to St. Frank's. Handforth considered that the old school couldn't be properly re-opened without his presence.

The sight of the grey towers and the old familiar scenery affected even the burly Edward Oswald. He was so keen on looking at the school that he nearly drove into a ditch. A big car came swinging round the bend at the same moment, and only the

quick presence of mind of the chauffeur averted a collision. With a gasp, Handforth wrenched at the wheel and pulled over on to the grass.

"What do you think you're doing, young man?" demanded an angry gentleman, alighting from the big limousine. "Upon my soul! You might have killed us all!"

"Sorry, sir!" apologised Handforth, with a gulp. "My fault! I was looking at St. Frank's, you know—and the sight was so good that I forgot what I was doing."

The angry gentleman's expression softened.

"Fond of the old place, eh?" he said. "All right, I'll forgive you this time."

"We hear that the Ancient House and West House are all finished, sir," said Handforth eagerly.

"I wish the other Houses were finished, too," growled the stranger, with a worried look on his brow. "Heaven alone knows what will happen unless I get more men."

The three boys eyed him curiously.

"Why, are you interested, sir?" asked Handforth.

"Interested!" echoed the other. "I'm Stimson—of Stimson & Douglas, Limited. We're the contractors for this job. Such a lot of building going on in Bannington and all round that I can't get men. And I'm under contract to finish the school within a month. Looks as if I shan't do it in the specified time, which means I forfeit so much money that it'll wipe out all my profits. You can drive on, Rodgers," he added gruffly. "Good-day, boys!"

"Rummy old bird!" commented Handforth, as the limousine drove away. "What was his idea in telling us his troubles?"

They approached St. Frank's, and had to go slowly owing to the fleet of bicycles and lorries which came down the lane.

"Not enough workmen, eh?" said Handforth. "What about all these? I wonder where they're off to, anyway?"

"Home, of course, you ass," said McClure. "It's Saturday—and one o'clock. They've just knocked off."

When they drove into the Triangle the last of the workmen had gone, and the old school was at peace. The boys had gone in to dinner. So Handforth & Co. spent an ecstatic half-hour going over the completed part of the school, and marvelling at the perfection of the restoration. They finished up in the tuckshop, where Mrs. Hake beamed upon them as of old. Not being St. Frank's scholars, they couldn't very well barge in on the school dinner.

"Well, well! If it isn't the one and only!"

Travers came in with Jimmy Potts, and there was much hand-shaking and back-slapping.

"Thought we'd come down and see how you were getting on," explained Handforth. "By George! The old dump is better than I thought!"

"It's not so good!" replied Travers, shaking his head sadly. "There are sundry foul changes. Pycraft himself—the appalling Piecan—has been appointed master of the Remove!"

"Phew!" whistled Handforth with a grin. "Pycraft's one of the world's worst! But what about old Crow's-feet?"

"Our former respected Form-master, Mr. James Crowell, has been promoted," replied Travers. "He's the Housemaster of the Ancient House now. Mr. Lee won't come back, so they had to find somebody. And we've got Piecan!"

"And the Carlton Gang!" added Potts, tenderly rubbing his chin.

"The Carlton Gang?" echoed Handforth. "What's that?"

"Look outside, and you'll see," murmured Travers.

K. K. Parkington and his eleven supporters were in the Triangle. Handforth went to the tuckshop door, stared at them, and looked inquiringly at Travers. In a few words, he was told the worst.

"What rot!" he said wrathfully. "Captain of the Remove, eh? I've never heard such nerve! If anybody's going to be captain in place of Nipper, I am!"

"You don't belong to St. Frank's now," grinned Potts.

"Eh? Oh, well, these beastly outsiders aren't going to butt in like this!" roared Handforth, running out. "Hi, you!"

He raced up to the red-headed youth, and swung him round.

"What's this rot about you appointing yourself Junior Captain?" he demanded. "You'd better understand that—Here, what the — Le' go!"

The gang surrounded him relentlessly.

"Don't be too hard on him," said K. K. casually. "He doesn't know any better. Just bump him once or twice."

"Hi! Le' me go!" hooted Handforth wildly.

The methods of the gang were unique. Calmly, dispassionately, six of them whirled Handforth over, bumped him with tremendous force, while the others stood round as a kind of bodyguard to keep off any possible rescuers.

Handforth went through the mill swiftly. Then the gang walked away, with their hands carelessly in their pockets, leaving the unfortunate Edward Oswald a torn and tattered wreck on the ground. His nose was streaming, his jacket was torn in a dozen places, and he was smothered in grime from head to foot.

"What—what is this thing?" demanded an acid voice.

Mr. Horace Pycraft bolted out of the Ancient House like a rabbit, and he stood over Handforth before any of the other fellows could get near. They had more than a suspicion that Mr. Pycraft had been watching—and had deliberately delayed action until the gang had completed their work.

A stream of water shot out and struck Handforth in the face. His arm swung round—and the scorching flame of the blow-lamp played merrily upon Mr. Ebenezer Skeet's pants!



This was characteristic of the weedy, ill-natured Form-master.

"Grooooooh!" gurgled Handforth incoherently.

"Upon my word!" said Mr. Pycraft. "Handforth! How dare you display yourself publicly in this appalling condition?" He swung round and glared at the crowd through his glasses. "Every Remove boy here will take one hundred lines!" he shouted viciously.

"By George!" gurgled Handforth.

He leapt to his feet, just as Church and McClure joined him. Handforth was aroused by the injustice of Mr. Pycraft's action, and there was a sudden gleam in his eye.

"Come on—grab his feet!" he yelled. "He's got no authority over us, my sons! I've wanted to do something like this for terms!"

He hooked his foot round Mr. Pycraft's leg, and with a howl the Form-master went over. Handforth seized him by the shoulders, and Church and McClure—nothing loath—grabbed his legs. Handy was right! They belonged to the Detective Academy, and it was a sheer joy to rag old "Piccan." The St. Frank's fellows watched with gleeful enjoyment.

"Over here—there's a mortar-mixer just handy!" panted Handforth exultantly.

They rushed their victim over, Mr. Pycraft howling wildly. He rose in the air, his legs kicking, and plunged with a horrible plop into the mass of half-liquid mortar!

CHAPTER 3.

Lending the Builders a Hand!

"HA, ha, ha!"

Mr. Horace Pycraft was invisible when he emerged from that mortar bath. He was so smothered that not an atom of his person could be seen. He staggered to his feet, great blobs of mortar dripping from him.

"Glub-glub-glub!" came from somewhere near the top.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"He can't give us lines, anyhow," grinned Handforth. "He's got no more authority over us than—"

"One minute, young man!" interrupted a cold voice.

Handforth & Co. swung round. They found Mr. Crowell by their side; and Mr. Crowell's face was grim.

"I am amazed, Handforth, that you and your two companions should have deliberately assaulted Mr. Pycraft in this outrageous manner," said the Housemaster. "There can be no excuse. I witnessed the whole incident—"

"But—but you can't touch us, sir!" gasped Handforth.

"No?" rapped out Mr. Crowell. "Hold out your hand, sir!"

"Hold on, sir!" said Handy. "Churchy and Mac and I don't belong to St. Frank's any more. You can't swish us for giving Pycraft what he deserved."

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Crowell. "Allow me to tell you, Handforth, that you three boys are only quartered at Mr. Lee's academy as a temporary measure. You have never officially left this school, and therefore you are still scholars of the Ancient House. Hold out your hand!"

"Oh, my only sainted aunt!" groaned Handforth.

Swish—swish—swish!

A yell of laughter went up—unsympathetic, perhaps, but none the less hearty—at Handforth & Co.'s discomfiture. They were each given a red-hot six-handers and they groaned in anguish as Mr. Crowell strode off. Mr. Pycraft had long since staggered away to cleanse himself.

"I wish we'd never come!" moaned Church.

"Never mind, dear old fellows—you gave us a rare treat," said Travers sympathetically. "The sight of Pycraft emerging from that mortar was worth a term's pocket-money."

Handforth ignored him; he looked round angrily.

"Where's that red-headed rotter?" he demanded, in a thick voice. "Where's that blighter who ordered his fatheaded gang to bump me?"

"Better go easy," warned Singleton. "That chap Parkington and his gang mean business! They're unholy terrors! At Carlton, nobody could do anything with 'em—and it seems they're going to be the same here."

"I could do something with 'em!" roared Handforth. "But why should I try?" he went on tartly. "I'm going back to London to-morrow. In spite of what old Crowell says, I'm not a St. Frank's chap any more. If you worms are content to let these Carlton fatheads sit on you, it's your funeral."

He dismissed the subject with a wave of his hand, and Church and McClure hustled him indoors to get him cleaned up and repaired. He was strangely silent during this process; and when he came out into the Triangle again his eyes were gleaming.

"Never mind those new chaps for a bit," he said, as he joined the crowd of juniors. "Listen to me! I've got an idea. Do you chaps know Mr. Stimson?"

"We've seen him," replied Brent. "He's the contractor."

"The poor chap's worried," explained Handforth. He described what had happened in Bellton Lane. "Why not do Mr. Stimson a good turn?" he suggested eagerly. "The workmen have knocked off, but what about us? Everything's ready here—tools, bricks, mortar, and all the rest of the stuff. Let's carry on with the building!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If Winston Churchill can lay bricks, so can we!" grinned Travers.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The idea caught on. The Remove fellows were ripe for some fun, and it had only needed Handforth to suggest this brilliant wheeze. Helping to build the rest of the

school was rather a brainy thought. The juniors entered whole-heartedly into the game, and they had a free hand. Not many of the seniors were back, and the headmaster himself hadn't yet arrived. There wasn't much chance of Mr. Crowell or anybody else interfering.

The Remove, almost to a man, buckled to. The bricklayers had left off at the top of the building, and it was necessary for the boys to mount the ladders which were lashed to the scaffolding. They swarmed up with trowels, some carrying hods of bricks, others busy with mortar. Whatever their skill in this line, there was no doubt as to their enthusiasm.

"We'd better get busy on something else, Handy," suggested Church cautiously. "Painting, or whitewashing, or something."

"What do you mean?" demanded Handforth, hoisting a huge hod of mortar on to his shoulder. "I'm going to show the rest of the chaps how to lay bricks!"

"My hat!" groaned McClure. "There'll be trouble over this!"

He and Church knew, to their cost, what a blundering fellow Handforth was, and it was terrifying to see him mounting the ladder with that enormous hod of mortar on his shoulder.

"Boys—boys!" shouted Mr. Pycraft, running up. "What madness is this?"

He fairly danced at the foot of the scaffolding, excited and angry. He had only just got himself cleaned and changed, and he was startled to find the boys of his Form swarming over the uncompleted building.

"Handforth!" he stormed. "Come down at once!"

Handforth, who was nearly at the top of the ladder, swung round.

"Help!" gurgled Church, shutting his eyes.

That movement of Handforth's was fatal. Up tipped the hod, and its load of mortar shot downwards and blobbed into Mr. Pycraft's upturned face with devastating force.

CHAPTER 4.

Handy Helps!

THE unfortunate Form-master was literally bowled over.

The weight of the mortar carried him to the ground with a bump that almost shook the earth. The mortar fell from his face all over his changed suit; and a fiendish howl escaped Mr. Pycraft's lips.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Handforth, in astonishment.

"You—you—I'll—I'll—"

Mr. Pycraft, staggering to his feet, was speechless. This was too much. Once again he was smothered with mortar! He fled indoors to the accompaniment of gusts of laughter from the schoolboy bricklayers.

"Well, it was his own fault," said Handforth indignantly. "What was his idea

in startling me like that? The silly ass asked for it!"

He was at the top of the scaffold now, and a number of other juniors eyed him nervously. Handforth appeared to think that he was on solid ground, for he stood on the edge of the scaffolding with an airy disregard for the sheer drop at his feet.

He moved carelessly along, tripped on a wooden strut, and lost his balance.

"Look out!" howled Gresham.

He and one or two others dashed forward, but they were too late. Handforth, his arms waving like mill-sails, vanished over the edge. It was only his proverbial good luck which caused his jacket to catch on the projecting end of a pole. He hung there, in mid-air, held only by his coat.

"Who did that?" he asked faintly.

The others said nothing. Their hearts seemed to be in their mouths. Lying flat on the scaffolding, they reached over, seized Handforth by the arm-pits, and hauled him back to safety.

"Phew! That was pretty warm!" breathed Handforth, mopping his brow. "Who was the silly ass who shoved me?"

"Nobody shoved you—but somebody's going to shove you now, dear old fellow," retorted Travers. "Are you going down quietly, or shall we rope you up and lower you that way? As a bricklayer, you're a wash-out."

The rest of the fellows were so determined that Handforth, for once, was squashed. Protesting indignantly, he returned to the ground, much to the relief of Church and McClure. He was still protesting when two newcomers arrived on the scene.

They had just emerged from the mysterious interior of the half-completed building. One of them was a stumpy, middle-aged man in overalls. His face was weather-beaten, and he wore a vast, drooping moustache, which hung on his face like a patch of brown seaweed.

"My only hat!" ejaculated Handforth, staring. "Old Bill!"

"You ain't the first what's called me 'Old Bill,' neither, young gent," said the man heavily. "But my name's Ebenezer Skeets, if it's all the same to you, and I'm the plumber on this 'ere job. We're doing a bit of overtime. See?"

Handforth brightened up.

"By George!" he said. "Plumbing's just my line!"

Mr. Skeets grunted. His companion—a thin, wiry-looking youth, also in overalls—gave Handforth a pitying look.

"I'm sure!" he commented sarcastically.

"Don't you be so talkative, my lad!" said Mr. Skeets admonishingly. "This is my mate, young gents—Jim Parker's his name, but I allus call him 'Pipes.'"

They vanished into the building, and Handforth, after a moment's hesitation, followed. Everything here was in the raw state—bare walls, unplastered ceilings, and so forth. Handforth heard sounds from

the rear, and he finally ran the plumber and his mate to earth in the kitchen quarters.

"Hallo! One of those blow-lamps!" said Handforth eagerly.

Mr. Skeets sighed, and Pipes remained silent. Church and McClure, following their leader, hesitated to take action. Handforth was taking hold of a huge blow-lamp, which was roaring with businesslike efficiency.

He moved across to a festoon of pipes in triumph. He had often longed to handle a plumber's blow-lamp. There were so many possibilities. He tested one of them now. He had a vague idea that blow-lamps were used for heating pipes and mending joints, and things like that. He held the roaring flame to the first pipe he could see, curious to note the effect.

The effect was not long in making itself apparent. Unfortunately Mr. Skeets had his back turned. He was bent double, fishing about in his bag, his rear turned in Handforth's direction. Pipes, in the meantime, was watching Handforth with a mildly interested, contemplative eye. Without warning, the pipe suddenly melted under the concentrated heat, and a terrific stream of water shot out and hit Handforth in the face.

"That's done it!" yelled Church.

"I'm sure!" murmured Pipes, shaking his head.

"Yow! Whoooooh!" howled Handforth, backing away.

He swung round in startled surprise, and it was by pure chance that he held the blow-lamp so that the scorching flame played merrily upon Mr. Ebenezer Skeet's seat. The jump which Mr. Skeet's performed, one second later, would have done credit to a professional acrobat.

CHAPTER 5.

Hot and Strong!

"YAROOOOH!" bellowed Mr. Skeets, dashing round in circles. "Hi, help, Pipes! I'm afire, boy!"

"I'm sure!" said Pipes briefly.

There was no doubt about it. The plumber's trousers were smoking in billows, and sparks were now appearing from the smouldering cloth.

Pipes acted with great presence of mind. He swung his boss round, and lurched him sideways, so that the escaping stream of water played with brisk energy upon the seat of the fire. In a couple of seconds it was out.

"You young rascal!" shouted Mr. Skeets, glaring at Handforth, and shifting uncomfortably. "Burnt, I am! Soaked through, I am!"

"I'm awfully sorry," said Handforth, with concern. "How the dickens was I to know that this rotten pipe would melt like a bit of wax? I've never seen anything go so quickly in all my life!"

"Then you'll see yourself go now!" declared Mr. Skeets darkly.

And with Pipes confidently murmuring that he was sure, Handforth was seized by the scruff of the neck by the indignant plumber and hustled out.

Outside, Handy found a number of fellows emptying bags of sand and cement into a huge mortar-mixer. More mortar was required. Up aloft, a wall was rapidly taking shape. It wasn't much of a shape, but it was certainly a wall. It bulged here and there, and one part of it leaned perilously. However, the schoolboy bricklayers were satisfied with it, which was the main thing.

Over by West Arch, Kirby Keeble Parkington and his gang stood watching. There was a contemplative look in K.K.'s eyes. Until now his band of new boys had not deigned to take any part in the proceedings. They hadn't the interest in St. Frank's that the others had.

"I've got an idea," said K.K.

He explained, and after that things began to happen.

The other Removites had cleared off to fetch some more bags of cement. It only took the Gang a matter of seconds to dash over, grab two big metal drums, and empty the contents into the mortar-mixer. Parkington had spotted those drums earlier.

"The result ought to be interesting, if nifty," grinned K. K.

He and the gang retired to the shrubbery, watching. The other juniors returned; they emptied more cement into the mixture, and turned on the big hose-pipe which supplied the water. Instantly a violent bubbling and hissing arose. Clouds of vapour swept across the Triangle.

"Whoa!" gurgled Potts. "Oh, my hat! What's this giddy whiff?"

The stench was appalling. It spread in every direction, and the juniors fell back, spluttering and gasping. Travers was the first to jump to the truth.

"Look at these empty drums!" he yelled. "Carbide! They use it for the big flares. Who put the carbide in this mixture?"

"Those rotten new chaps!" gurgled Brent. "I saw them fooling about with those drums five minutes ago."

The mixture was seething fiercely, and the gas was being liberated in great quantities as the water soaked through the carbide.

"We'd better do something!" panted Singleton. "This niff is drifting over the Ancient House—we shall have Crowell out! How can we stop it?"

"Light it!" suggested Church. "It'll soon burn away."

Somebody pulled a piece of paper out of his pocket, screwed it up, and lit it. Then he flung it into the mortar-mixer. There was a dull kind of "swoosh," and masses of flames leaped up.

"Fire!" gasped Handforth, staring.

He had been unaware of the recent move, and thought that the fire was accidental. Instantly he remembered a patent fire-extinguisher he had seen inside the building. He dashed in at top speed. Yes, there it was—a heavy cylinder with a carrying handle and

a long length of pipe attached. There was a nozzle at the end of the pipe, and a tap.

"Nothing like presence of mind," muttered Handforth, turning the nozzle.

A fine yellow spray hissed out. Mr. Skeets and Pipes unfortunately appeared in the doorway at that moment, and they received the spray full in their faces.

"Blame me! He's at it ag'in!" gasped Mr. Skeets frantically.

"I'm sure!" came a gurgle from the mate.

They were transformed. They were yellow from head to foot. Handforth had failed to realise that what he had taken for a fire-extinguisher was a paint-sprayer!

He tore out with the sprayer going full blast, and there was some element of poetic justice in the fact that as he emerged into the open he swung the nozzle fully upon K. K. Parkington and the Gang, who had come up to watch the proceedings. Uttering frantic yells, they bolted—but not before their frontal views were well sprayed with yellow paint.

Handforth rushed up to the fire, still sublimely unconscious of the fact that he was in for more trouble. The paint spray played on the fire, and there was an instantaneous burst of yellow flame.

"Hi! Help!" hooted Handforth wildly.

The thing was like a flame-thrower. Liquid fire was bursting from the nozzle, and Handforth only just dropped it in the nick of time. At the same moment a limousine drove into the Triangle, and Mr. Stimson alighted—and accompanying him was Dr. Morrison Nicholls, the headmaster!

They rushed up, and Mr. Stimson, with bulging eyes, took in the whole scene, not excluding the drunken-looking wall up aloft.

"What is the meaning of this?" demanded Dr. Nicholls angrily.

"We're helping, sir!" explained Handforth. "This gentleman told me that he couldn't get enough men, so we've been lending a hand."

"If it's all the same to you, I can do without any further hands," said Mr. Stimson, with feeling.

"Go indoors—all of you!" ordered the Head. "And if there is any more of this nonsense I'll take very severe measures."

However, there was a twinkle in his eye as he uttered these words, and the rather abashed juniors retired. It seemed that their efforts were not appreciated.

Handforth's eyes were gleaming.

"That fire was Parkington's work!" he said darkly. "Nobody seems to have enough gumption to smash the bounder, so I'm going to stay! Blow the Detective Academy! I'm Remove skipper from now on—and it's war against the Gang!"

THE END.

(It's good to be reading about your old pals at St. Frank's once more, isn't it, chums? Look out for another rollicking complete school yarn next Wednesday, entitled, "K.K.—K.O.!" And don't forget to tell all your friends about this grand new series of school stories.)

The THREE TERRORS!



Conkey & Co. have already had one smack at Puzzo the Dude. This week the Chicago gunman comes up against them once more—and wishes he hadn't!

A Fiery Visitor!

THE Three Terrors—Conkey King, Whacky Clark and Bob Smith—and their friend, Chummy Chubb, had been practising their monkey act in an old gravel-pit by the roadside.

Cocko Lee, the old gipsy, and on whose caravan the four boys were travelling round the countryside, had been doing a bit of washing, and the laundry was hung out on some gorse-bushes to dry and get the sweetness of the sun.

Chummy Chubb, who had directed the rehearsal, was very pleased with his three pupils.

"Coo lummy!" said he. "You might ha' been born gorillas and orang-outangs, so well do you fit the parts. We're booked for a show to-morrow at Dumbledore Feast, and we ought to go down well, for they are an appreciative lot of old jossers at Dumbledore."

"Not so much o' our being like real live apes, Chubbo!" replied Whacky Clark, who wanted to wipe the perspiration from his face, but who was afraid to do so in case he disturbed his grease-paint. "You look a proper chimp—without the skin and the paint! Anyone meeting you sudden-like would climb up a tree!"

"Hi, you scoundrels!" yelled a voice above

them before Chummy could make a suitable retort. "Come out of that gravel-pit! It is the property of the Parish Council!"

The boys looked up, and saw a red-faced man standing up on top of the pit, shaking a riding-whip at them.

"Who are you?" asked Chubbo rather grumpily. He felt at a disadvantage in his monkey gear, and he did not like having a hunting-crop wagged at him.

"I am Major Pepper, sir!" roared the man at the top of the pit. "And I am Chairman of the Parish Council, sir, and I am Chairman of the Rural District Council, sir, and I am Chairman of the Board of Guardians, sir, and I am Chairman of the Magistrates, sir!"

"Then you must want a lot of chairs to sit on!" replied Chubbo.

"Chuck it, Chubbo!" whispered Conkey King. "It's a beak. Don't you try to pull the funny stuff on him, or you'll get a week in the cage! Let me talk to him!"

The orang-outang stepped forward politely.

"Beg pardon, general!" said he. "We did not know that this gravel pit was public property, or we wouldn't have camped here. We'll be obliged if you will let us stop and take a snack whilst our washing dries. Then we'll move on!"

Cocko, who was well away in the mouth of the pit, and who was a bit hard of hearing, had not heard Major Pepper shouting. Conk now dropped his voice to a whisper.

"Don't want to upset the ole gentleman we're travelling with, your worship!" he went on. "Got a bit of a pip squeak in 'is 'eart, 'e 'as, and 'e might drop 'is slice o' bread any minute if he was startled."

The orang-outang gave such an engaging grin that even the angry major was softened.

"What are you?" he demanded. "Tumblers?"

"Yes, sir," said Conk humbly. "Just four honest working boys, with an act. We are under the wheel jus' now, sir, but you never know! We might soon be on top like 'Arry Tate!"

"Why aren't you doing some honest work?" demanded the major, getting warm again.

"Look at the state of the labour market, sir," said Conkey reasonably. "We are workin' lads. We don't want to be on the greasy pole. We'd sooner be working round the country turning an honest crown than eatin' bread-and-dripping in your 'otel up at the ole workhouse. Come, boys! Give the major-general a free show, jus' to let him see we are artistes—and not tale-pitchers an' chicken-pinchers!"

The four apes threw a somersault like one. Conk squared his shoulders. Whacky leaped on his back. Bob climbed up on Whacky's back and Chummy the chimpanzee ran up the ladder of monkeys and stood on his head atop. Then the pile fell, and they rolled head over heels, coming to a sitting position, Chubbo with his mouth hidden by his hands, Whacky with his hand over his ears, and Bob with his hands over his eyes.

"The three wise monkeys o' Japan!" said Conk. "Speak no evil! Hear no evil! See no evil! Down comes the 'ammer and up goes th' donkey! That's the show, general!"

Perhaps the major liked being called general. He had always had the feeling that he ought to have been a general instead of being retired as major.

"When I was at Chutneypore," he rumbled reminiscently, "we had those three wise monkeys sculptured on a rock temple. And we had a lot of monkeys about as well. They are sacred in India. But mind I don't catch you in this gravel-pit after two o'clock, or you'll find that they are not sacred in England!"

He gave a flourish with his riding-crop and disappeared from the edge of the gravel-pit.

"Not such a bad ole sergeant-major," commented Conk. "I know the class. They get out in Injia, an' when they come home they're full o' their own importance. That Sir Percy's had niggers to wait on 'im, 'and an' foot, all his puff. Now I expec' he gets ticked off by the parlourmaid. That's what makes 'im a bit snorty!"

He broke the news to Cocko.

"I know him," nodded Cocko. "He's not

such a bad chap. Like his name—a bit o.t.—but that's mostly his liver talking. It's those hedge gipsies that make all the trouble for us regulars. They go mumping round for rags an' rubbish, sort 'em in the gravel-pits, and leave all their muck lying about. Never mind, boys; we'll pack up after we've had a bit of lunch and move on."

The boys gathered up the washing, which was now dry. They had their bit of food and the caravan moved on. And as they moved on they saw that their old friend the major had left his monicker well over the countryside. There were notices everywhere.

"Anyone trespassing or depositing rubbish here will be prosecuted with all the rigour of the Law. By order, PEREGRINE PEPPER, J.P."

"Gipsies and other vagabonds, including motorists, may not camp here. By order, PEREGRINE PEPPER, J.P."

"Coo lummy!" grumbled Chubbo, who was still a bit jaundiced by the gallant major. "Seems you can't blow your nose here without gettin' it wiped by Pepper, J.P."

An Old Enemy!

IT took them quite a long time to get out of the Pepper country, but at last they came to a gurgling stream which ran under a wide old stone bridge. Old Cocko pointed with his whip to a grove of trees not far from the roadside.

"We will stop here and have a dish of tea, boys," said he. "The landlord of this country is all right with the real Romany folk. His grandfather married a nut-brown maid out of the caravans, and he's more'n half a gipsy himself. So you can pick up some sticks and fill the kettle, and if you look among the stones under that bridge you'll find a nice lot of crayfish."

The boys got a fish-bag, and, having filled the kettle, returned to the river. They were engaged upon the enjoyable task of fishing for their tea under the bridge, when suddenly they heard the sound of a shrill female voice, and the crying of a baby.

"Yes!" said the voice. "And I'll pinch you again, you young 'ound, if you start making that noise. I 'ate you! You got a boko on you like your ole father! You stop 'ere for a minute till I dump 'is stuff in the river. Good job you ain't learned to talk yet. You can't squeal!"

It was a very old-fashioned bridge, and the boys, interested and intrigued, shrank back in the shadows of a groined arch.

Outside the old arch was being enacted a scene which might have been taken out of a sensational film. A handsome, smart-looking girl in a swell Parisian coat trimmed with real rabbit, stepped up to an old willow which grew by the bank.

She pulled the handle of a large pram



Four apes suddenly appeared from the hedge—and the worthy vicar gave a gasp of astonishment while Jane, the cook, uttered a shriek and dropped the tea-tray she was carrying with a crash!

after her, and, lifting the cover, brought out a large bundle tied up in cloth with a long string attached to it.

She dropped this into a deep hole under the willows, and the boys heard something chink. Then she stooped and tied the end of the string to a bunch of reed so that it was barely visible where the water lapped against bank. After that the woman sat down on the bank.

Conkey & Co., hiding under the bridge, could see the baby now, for the woman had pushed the pram forward a bit. He was a chubby child, and he had stopped crying. He was looking at his nursemaid as if he did not like her much.

"I'd like to shove you inter the river, you young 'ound!" said the young woman wrathfully. "I'd like to drownd ya!"

The baby made a noise with his mouth and bubbled contemptuously. He did not seem to be at all perturbed by these threats.

"Yus, and yer fine lady mother, too!" snarled the nursemaid. "Talkin' to me as if I wuz a dorg, alwuz telling me 'ow they 'ad things at Singapore, an' 'ow they 'ad things in 'Ong Kong, where they used to keep fourteen Chink servants and two to cut the grass for the ponies. Coo lummy! I'd like to see myself cutting grass for ponies at ten bob a week. I 'ate your mother, you beastly kid!"

And she thrust her face in the baby's face threateningly, but he only cooed at her.

"Coo lummy! She's a bit of a nutski!" whispered Whacky under his breath.

"Ssh!" breathed Conk.

The shape of the arch and the water, which

carries sound like a telephone, brought every word clearly to the listening boys.

"Yes—your lady mother!" said the nursemaid, with awful contempt. "Why, I could have twisted her neck with my little finger the way she spoke to me! Little thought that 'er slavey Jobson was the same ole Flash Kate that's filled the Sunday papers for years and years!"

The boys started.

They had been reading a bit in the Sunday paper only a few days before. Flash Kate was wanted by the police for a daring robbery. She was a young woman of prepossessing appearance who sometimes worked hotels as the Countess de Snidarini or the Honourable Mrs. Harkaway. But her special line was to get into a house with a forged set of characters and to stay a few days and disappear with all the jewels that she could lay her hands on.

She generally worked on the Society papers. If it was announced that Miss de Binge had been seen at the Ambassador's party in her new thousand guinea sable coat, Flash Kate would find some way of getting lodgings near that coat, and the coat would disappear as if the old sables were still walking about in it.

Mr. Justice Popham, who had last put her away for the space of six moons, had remarked that she was a dangerous and a spiteful woman, and that next time she came up she would get a stretch that would last till her hair grew grey.

And this was the woman who was outside the arch!

She had the reputation of walking armed with a pistol alongside her powder-puff. At the present moment she was evidently waiting

for someone to come along. Conk pressed the necks of his pals to keep them quiet. Probably the person she was waiting for would soon be coming, and this person would also be armed. There was no need for them to get shot in mistake for wild apes.

Flash Kate sat making faces at the baby, trying to frighten him. But the baby was a game kid. It was plain that he had been having a rough time with his nursemaid, and, not being able to talk, he had not been able to tell his mother about it.

Soon Flash Kate turned quickly. A figure was coming along the river-bank—the figure of a smart-looking young man who wore a slouch hat and a short Valentino jacket, with side-whiskers.

The four apes felt their feet turn cold in the water as a flash of sunlight fell upon the newcomer's sinister face through the trees. It was their old enemy, Puzzo the Dude!

"Good-afternoon!" said he to Flash Kate. "What have you done?"

"Mighty little in a big parcel!" replied Flash Kate. "That was a dud shop. The missus' stuff was all Indian with glass jools. All I got is the silver, an' I had to bring that away in the pram with this beastly baby."

"Silver!" spat Puzzo contemptuously.

"It's old," said Kate. "Irish and Queen Anne, and it's worth money. There's five hundred quid in the river there just under the willow!"

Puzzo's yellow face had darkened. He did not like silver. But he brightened up when he heard that this was the real stuff. He had been reading in the papers lately how two Queen Anne salt-cellars had brought three hundred quidlets in open sale.

"I'll come back by the eight-thirty train to Hobman's Halt," he said, looking at a timetable. "And I've got a couple of suit-cases, and I'll put the stuff in those. I can get away by the nine-forty-five from the Halt. There's only a boy porter there, and he's safe enough. He's half silly!"

"Right-ho!" said Flash Kate. "Then he won't notice me when I 'op out of the five-one. I'm for the ole village of London, and we'll do the share out at the usual ole coffee shop!"

"What about the kid?" asked Puzzo.

"You can keep the kid for all I care," said Flash Kate. "I've had about enough of that kid, I have!"

"I don't want to have anything to do with kids!" snarled Puzzo the Dude. "Last kid I had anything to do with nearly got me quodded!"

"Leave him where 'e is," said Flash Kate. "No, shove him along up this bit of path here. There's some gipsies campin' up on the grove. They'll find 'im, and I 'ope they'll pinch him!"

Puzzo shoved the kid and the pram up the path indicated, moving cautiously amongst the bushes. He looked round furtively, and the boys saw his hand move to his side-pocket

as he shoved off. Soon he was back again.

"There's only an old chap caning chairs," he reported. "He'll find him. You're sure he won't spot the stuff?"

"Sure I'm sure!" retorted Flash Kate.

"Shall I come along part of the way with you, Kate?" asked Puzzo.

"No, I don't want to be seen about with you," replied the woman. "You get away up that bridle path and it will bring you to Dumbledore Station. Then you go an' get your suitcase and come back here for the stuff at nine-forty-five, and if you take my advice you won't come to the Halt, but to Cherry Hill Station!"

"Right-ho!" said Puzzo meekly, and off he went one way, whilst Flash Kate, without looking back, made off down the river-bank.

Poor Old Puzzo!

THE boys watched the fashionable figure as she swung round bend after bend, and Conk would not let his chums move till she had passed out of sight beyond a belt of trees half a mile away. Then they dodged out the other side of the arch and crawled up the bank through a growth of ferns till they got within earshot of old Cocko.

"Cocko!" called Conk, lying flat on his face in the ferns. "Don't turn your 'ead or take no notice of us. We are playin' Redskins in the fern. There's dark work doing at the cross-roads. Get up casual like and walk across to the woods over the road, and you'll find a baby in a pram. His nurse has deserted him. Get him and his pram to the van, and look surprised when you find 'im, because there may be eyes watchin' you."

Cocko nodded his white head, and lifted his hand slightly to show that he had heard. He went on caning the chair he had in hand for a few minutes, then he rose and crossed the road into the woodland, pretending to be picking up a few sticks for his kettle.

He came upon the baby and the pram, and gave a start of well-assumed surprise. The baby did not seem a bit surprised to see him. Probably after a week of Flash Kate, he would not be surprised by anything.

"Hello, sonny!" said old Cocko Lee. "What are you doing here?"

The baby gurgled and bubbled, which was his way of saying that he was having no end of an afternoon out.

Old Cocko lifted his dead, and, putting his hands to his mouth, gave a gipsy call. And his keen eyes spotted a man well up the drive, walking away towards Dumbledore.

Slowly, and without hurry, Cocko wheeled the baby towards the caravan and brought him to a stand by the fire.

"A chap started walking away fast up the hill," he said to the invisible apes.

Cocko lifted the baby from the pram and examined his under-clothing.

"Thought so!" he muttered. "P.P. Peter Pepper! Why, it's the old general's kid!"

"It was dawning on my mind like that,"

said Conk from the fern. "If that's so we'd better get the kiddo back to his ma before she gets anxious. But wait a bit, Cocko. Gather up all the old bottles and kettles you've got, tie 'em up in a bundle and shove them into the fern 'ere!"

Cocko did as he was told, and pulling along the bundle of kettles and old bottles, descended the river-bank on the far side of the arch.

Here Conkey plunged into the water under the bank, and, moving along like a water rat, recovered the string to the bundle of stolen silver.

He hauled it up and tied in its place the bundle of kettles and old bottles, which sank with a bubbling and a fizzing.

Then, sitting in the cover of the fern once again, the boys untied the bundle. There were silver salt-cellars, pepper-pots, sugar-dredgers, and lots of other small stuff; also two heavy rose-bowls. Anyone could see that it was valuable booty.

"All clear, Cocko?" asked Conk from the cover of the fern.

"All clear!" answered Cocko.

And Master Peter Pepper gurgled and clapped his hands with delight as out of the fern rose four hideous apes. Some kids would have been frightened, and would have started howling, but not so Master Pepper. He waved his pudgy fists and chiyiked the boys in a manner that surprised them.

"I expect he's got some toy woolly monkeys at 'ome and takes us for them," said Whacky.

"What we going to do now?" asked Chubbo.

"Why, get this kid back to his ole pot an' pan, and the silver, too, afore the general rumbles they are missing," said Conk. "We don't want to get caught with a missing kiddo and the plate-basket, or we might get into Court over it!"

"There's a short cut through the woods to the general's place," said Cocko, and he indicated the direction.

"Right," said Conk. "That's our path."

The boys pushed through the wood merrily, the baby trying to talk to them, bubbling and singing and crooning.

"Coo lummy!" said the ape Conkey, snapping his fingers at the baby to make him crow. "Ain't 'e a proper little Tarzan?"

The baby and his nurse had not been missed. The major was about to entertain the vicar to tea on the lawn, and Mrs. Pepper was looking at her watch rather anxiously.

To keep the vicar's mind occupied whilst the muffins were getting ready, the major was relating a sporting anecdote.

"I was here, and my head Shikari was there, and the tigah was here, vicah!" he was saying in his loud voice. "The tigah leaped straight at me——"

Suddenly the vicar's eyes became fixed. On the borders of the shrubbery just behind the major, four hideous apes had appeared.

The worthy vicar sucked in his breath and

wiped his spectacles as if to remove this vision from them.

"Dear me!" he muttered to himself. "How very extraordinary!"

Then old Jane, the cook, appeared at the door of the house with the tea-tray. She gave a shriek; there was a crash as she let the tea-tray fall, and then bolted into the house and shut herself in the pantry.

The major turned and gave a roar.

"Hey!" he yelled. "What's this impudence? I'll have you all committed. I'll——"

"Here, not so fast with your committing, general!" said Conk. "Is this your kid?"

"My Peter!" cried Mrs. Pepper, running forward. "My cherub!"

"And here's your goods," went on Conk. "You got a nursemaid called Jobson?"

"Jobson! Certainly!" stammered Mrs. Pepper.

"Well, she's not Jobson at all. She's Flash Kate, one of the Bad Girls of London, and she's hopped it to London," said Conk. "If it hadn't been for the old firm here, you mighta lost the kid and all!"

"Who are you—infernal monkeys?" demanded the major.

"We are the Three Terrors, and young Chubbo makes four," said Conk. "And to-night, at nine-thirty, we are going to arrest Flash Kate's 'complice, Puzzo the Dude, when he calls with his two suitcases for his loot of bottles an' old pots and pans!"

Conk then proceeded to tell the whole story, and when he had finished the major was laughing like an antiquated hyena.

"But you are not going to arrest this Puzzo scoundrel," he said. "That man is too important for amateurs!"

He walked off to the telephone, whilst a fresh lot of tea and cakes were brought out for four monkeys and the vicar.

The boys had hardly finished tea, having demolished all the sugared cake, when a huge car came roaring up the drive, full of large fat men.

"This is the Big Six, our flying squad," explained the major to the lads. "You'll be pleased to hear that Flash Kate has already been arrested."

The Big Six sat down and ate a lot of tea. Much to Conk's sorrow they said that they did not want any help.

At nine-thirty, when Puzzo the Dude had pulled up the load of bottles and tin cans, a big fat man who looked like a retired publican touched him lightly on the shoulder.

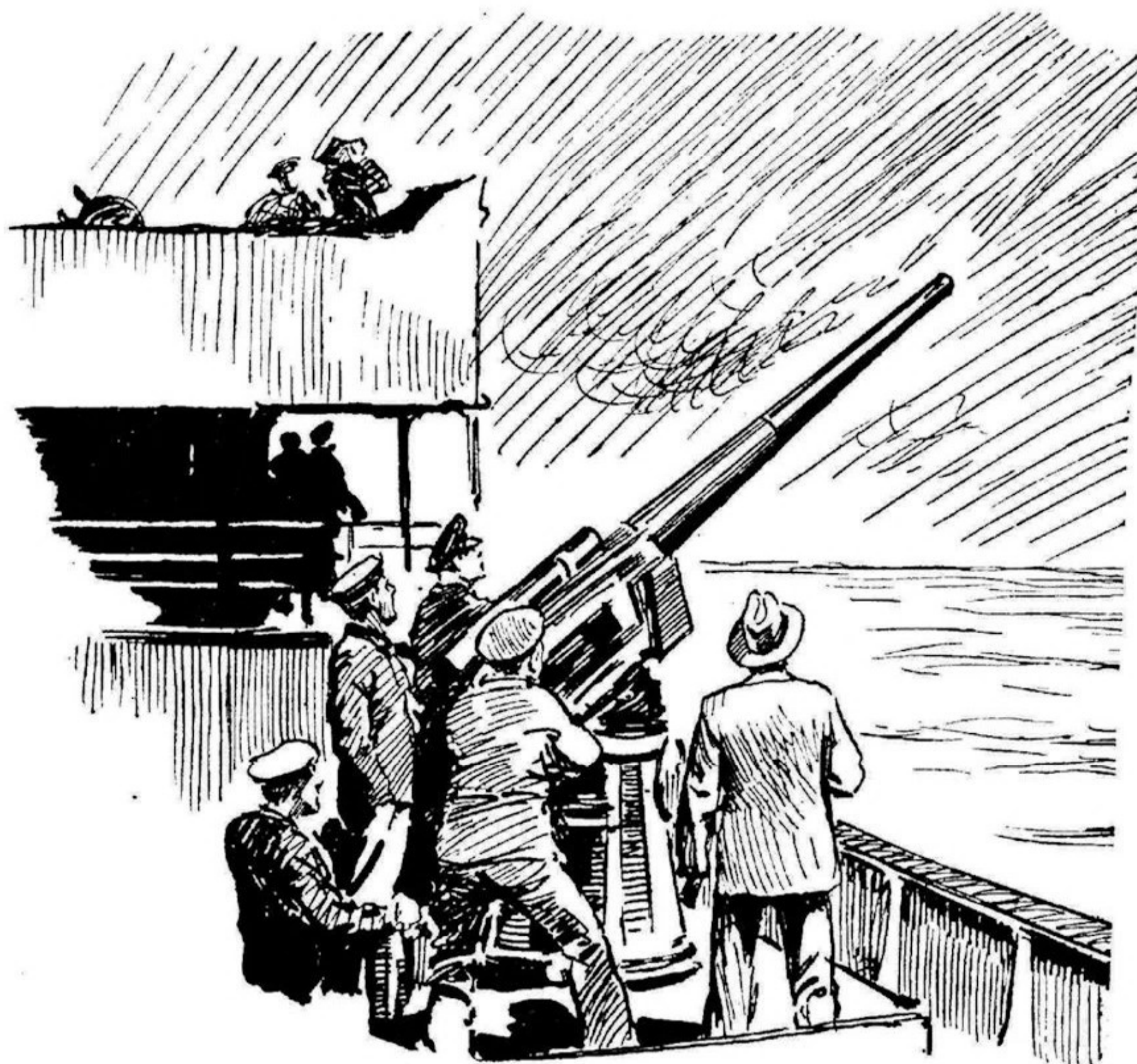
"Game's up, Puzzo!" said he. "Come along quiet!"

Two minutes later a big car roared off towards the local lock-up. In it was a very discomfited Puzzo. Once more he'd come up against the Three Terrors—and once more he'd come off second best.

(Another laughable yarn, featuring the Three Terrors next week. Don't miss it!)

SENSATIONAL MYSTERY! *Atlantic liners held up in mid-ocean by a big 'plane; passengers robbed; after that the Sky Pirate vanishes to—where? It is left to Nelson Lee and Nipper to solve a remarkable mystery which has baffled the world!*

The Atlantic Pirates!



CHAPTER 1.

The Sky Pirate!

"**A** TLANTIC flyers, probably," said Nelson Lee, shifting his binoculars a trifle.

"By jingo, gov'nor, it's a big 'plane!" exclaimed Nipper, with enthusiasm. "Look at her silver wings glinting in the sunshine!"

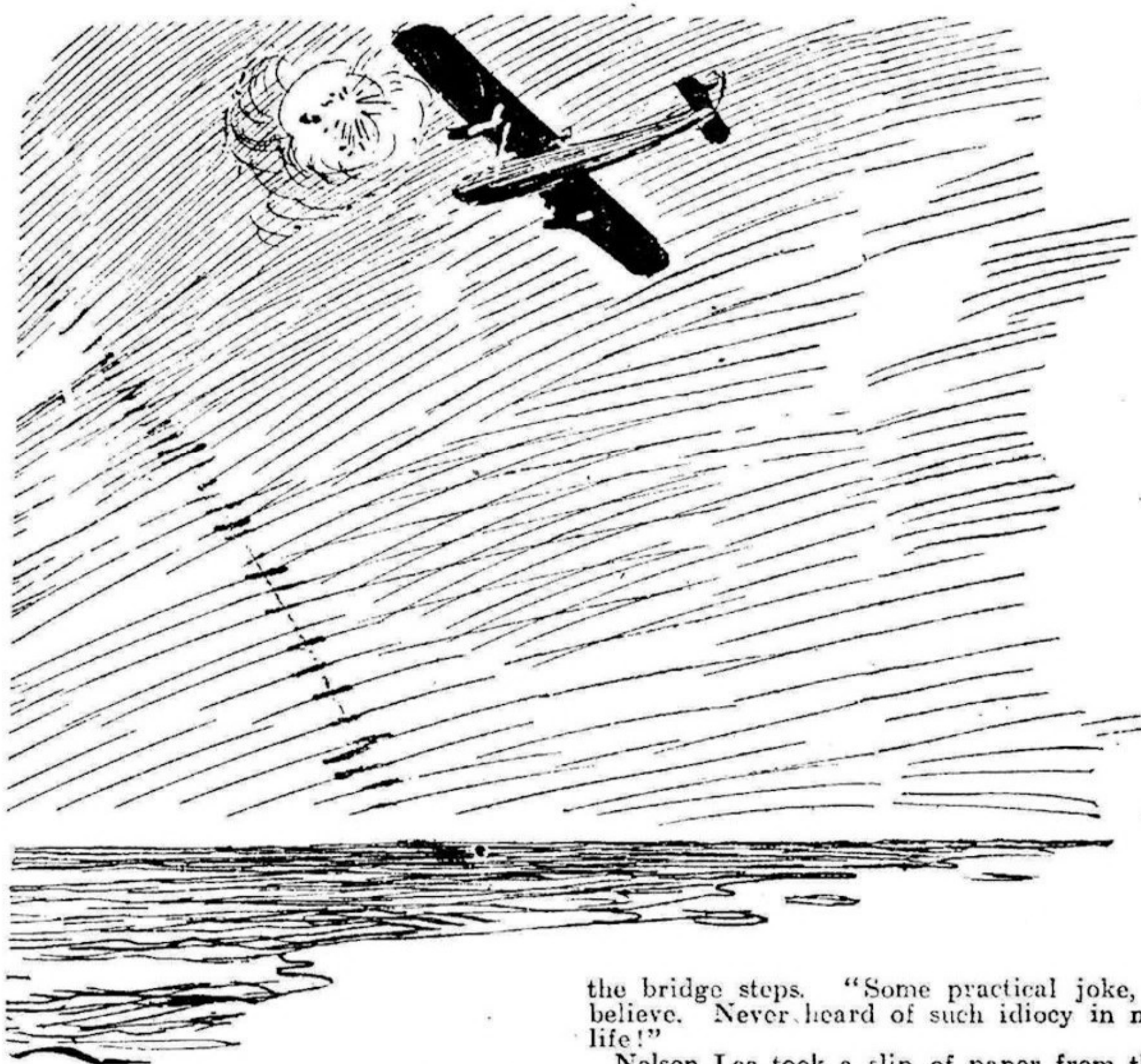
They were standing on the boat-deck of the s.s. *Aregon*, homeward bound from Rio de Janeiro to London. This was the last even-

ing aboard; by nightfall on the following day the liner was scheduled to dock at Tilbury. The sea was calm. The spring evening was cloudless and clear, with the deep blue of the sky reflected in the sea. Not another sail of any description was within sight. The s.s. *Aregon* ploughed placidly on her way.

A magnificent complete detective-thriller yarn by

**ROBERT
W. COMRADE.**

Some distance away to the east, high in the sky, was the big 'plane which was attracting the attention of all the passengers. The excitement became intense when the 'plane came directly overhead,



and commenced to fly round in majestic circles over the ship.

"Dornier type, by the look of her," said Nipper keenly. "My hat! I hope she comes lower, so that we can get a better view."

But the great detective was no longer looking at the 'plane. He was following the movements of a junior officer, who, in his shirt-sleeves, was dashing like mad for the bridge. The spectacle was so unusual that Lee was intrigued. The shirt-sleeved junior officer handed something to the captain, and the captain turned, after a moment, to his first officer. There was a consultation.

"Arrant nonsense!" came the captain's booming voice.

Another man ran frantically towards the bridge—and this one, too, had come from the wireless-room. Nelson Lee was interested still further. Leaving Nipper, he strolled nearer to the bridge.

"Mr. Lee!" came a sudden hail.

Lee looked up and saw that the captain was beckoning to him. The famous detective had made great friends with the captain during the voyage.

"What do you make of this, Mr. Lee?" asked Captain Farrow, as Lee nimbly ran up

the bridge steps. "Some practical joke, I believe. Never heard of such idiocy in my life!"

Nelson Lee took a slip of paper from the captain's hand. On it were the words:

"Heave to at once, and prepare for armed boarders." Certainly a surprising enough message.

"A wireless from the 'plane?" asked Lee, glancing at the still circling monster, far overhead.

"Yes; and here's another," said the skipper.

The detective read it:

"This 'plane is armed, and we mean business. Refuse to obey orders, and we will bomb you. We will give you ten minutes in which to heave to."

"Well?" asked the captain anxiously.

"On the face of it, it seems too ridiculous for serious consideration," answered Nelson Lee. "But we mustn't lose sight of the fact, captain, that this is an age of banditry. Motor bandits are common enough—so why not air bandits? I'm afraid you must take this seriously."

The captain looked incredulous.

"You can't mean it, Lee!" he protested. "It's some nonsensical joke! A nice fool I should look if I hove to and gave this airman the laugh over me. Gad, that's what he's expecting."

CAPTAIN FARROW gave orders to his first officer to keep straight on his course, and to ignore the 'plane altogether. The wireless operator was instructed to transmit no answer.

Lee waited grimly. When the time-limit was nearly expired, he noticed that the big flying-boat had eased its engines, and was gliding slowly downwards, coming to within a couple of thousand feet. Hitherto she had been flying at five thousand. She was now majestic in her graceful beauty. The passengers were excitedly taking snapshots, and not one of them had the faintest idea of the little drama which was taking place on the bridge.

"Captain Farrow, I want you to take my advice," said Lee suddenly. "Telegraph to have the engines stopped at once."

The captain stared.

"And get some gloating message down from that young fool to say that he's going to make me the joke of the world's newspapers?" he snorted. "Not me! The whole thing is preposterous!"

"I think I am in a better position to judge than you, Captain Farrow," said Lee quietly. "I believe this 'plane to be a genuine pirate. You have been warned. Your passengers' lives are in your keeping. Is it worth the risk?"

The captain breathed hard.

"But why can you be so sure?" he asked sceptically.

"That 'plane carries no official letters or numbers—as it certainly would do if it was piloted by a practical joker," replied Lee. "I tell you that the danger is——"

He broke off, catching in his breath.

Suddenly a far-off whining drone had sounded. It grew louder, becoming a shriek. Along the decks, all the passengers were staring upwards in surprise and wonderment.

Nelson Lee saw a flash of something in mid-air. It fell far for'ard, squarely in the middle of the deck.

Crash!

The explosion was not particularly violent, but it was startling. The smoke cleared away, and Lee saw a jagged rent in the deck. At the same time, the 'plane swung round, coming lower still.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated the captain, aghast.

Sounds of shouting came from the passengers—intermingled with a few frightened shrieks from the women, and the crying of children. Nelson Lee said nothing; he only watched the pirate 'plane closely.

"The infernal dogs!" panted Captain Farrow. "Do they think I'm to be intimidated by this sort of thing? Piracy on the high seas, by gad! Mr. Benson, keep her steady."

"Do you think it wise, sir?" asked the first officer.

"I'm captain of this ship, and I'm surrendering to no confounded pirates!" retorted the captain harshly. "Mr. Andrews—here! Quickly!"

He rapidly told another officer to dash down and see to it that all the passengers were taken below. The decks were to be cleared at once. Captain Farrow was an obstinate man—and a brave man. His temper was up.

"Do your worst!" he shouted, shaking his fist at the soaring 'plane.

Nelson Lee could not help admiring this dogged determination, but he was convinced that it would be of no avail. Rejoining Nipper, he briefly satisfied his young assistant's eager inquiries.

"We're passengers, and we're supposed to go below with the rest," added Lee. "But I'm not going. I'll see this thing out."

"Pirates!" panted Nipper. "Jove! Here they come again!"

There was something sinister in the big 'plane's movements now. Her engines were going all out, roaring with a low, droning aggressiveness. Her nose was down, and she was diving straight over the liner. At the last moment, when the 'plane was only fifty feet above the tops of the masts, she flattened out and swept over the *Aregon* from stern to stem at such close quarters that the whole sky was momentarily filled with the great all-metal monster.

Crackle-crackle-crackle!

"Duck!" yelled Nelson Lee.

He grabbed Nipper and flung the youngster flat on the deck behind a projecting hatchway. Lee had recognised that ominous sound. Machine-guns! As the 'plane roared over, the liner's decks were swept from end to end with a deadly machine-gun fire. One sailor fell, and another clutched at his arm, crying aloud. One of the officers on the bridge collapsed.

The great 'plane rose majestically, banked and turned. A messenger came rushing from the wireless-room, and Lee was on the bridge at the same time as he. The captain's face was ghastly as he read the message:

"Merely a taste of what will follow unless you surrender."

He passed it to Lee without a word.

"It's all right, sir—only a bullet in the shoulder," said the officer who had collapsed, pulling himself together. "The devils! Thank Heaven we had the passengers off the decks!"

Still the captain said nothing. He went to the engine-room telegraph, and swung it over to "Full Speed Astern." His knuckles were white as he gripped the handle. The telegraph clanged noisily. At the same moment the whole vessel quivered and shook as the engines were reversed.

"They win!" was all Captain Farrow said.

CHAPTER 2.

Robbery on the High Seas!

NIPPER gripped Lee's arm.

"You've saved my life, gov'nor," he murmured. "About four bullets hit the deck just where we were standing a second before you shoved me be-

hind that hatchway. What do you think these brutes will do now?"

"I'm more interested in what I'm going to do, young 'un," replied Lee briskly. "There's going to be some excitement. Come, I need your help."

They hurried below to their state-room. The pair had had a quiet time during this voyage, and were now eager for action.

Up on the bridge the captain had received a further wireless message, this time more detailed:

"Stand by for boarding party. If any resistance is offered, or if any of my men are molested, or held, you will be holed below the water-line, and left to sink. Be warned by what has already happened."

"THE SKY PIRATE."

Captain Farrow shook himself, and passed a hand over his eyes.

"Incredible—absolutely incredible!" he muttered. "This is nothing more nor less than a nightmare."

His face was haggard now. He felt his responsibility greatly. For the safety of his passengers, he had been forced to surrender; yet by so doing he was paving the way for his passengers to be robbed. In the ship's strong-room, too, there was not only a consignment of bullion, but a shipment of diamonds. The bullion, perhaps, would be safe, because of its weight. But the diamonds—

Captain Farrow watched the proceedings grimly. The 'plane, her metal wings shimmering in the evening sunlight, had alighted on the water. She was now taxiing gently towards the stationary liner.

S.O.S. messages had been sent out, but what was the use? It might be several hours before any other ships could approach. The *Aregon*, in spite of her majestic bulk, was completely at the mercy of this wasp of the sky.

Although a seaplane of great size, she looked absurdly insignificant compared with her prey. She taxied nearer, her propellers stopped, and suddenly a gun arose amidships.

"Ye gods! Look at that, sir!" muttered Mr. Benson.

The captain nodded. The gun was only a small one, but the *Aregon* was no battleship, and a shell would tear the liner's plates wide open at the water-line.

Another surprising thing was happening. From the nose of the 'plane—which was like a big floating motor-boat—several men were hoisting a collapsible boat and preparing it for the water. These men were dressed in overalls, with close-fitting head-gear of the same material, which came right over their faces like masks. The boat floated, and six men found room in her. A tiny engine at the rear started up, and within two or three minutes the frail craft had crossed the intervening stretch of placid water, and was at the liner's accommodation ladder. The

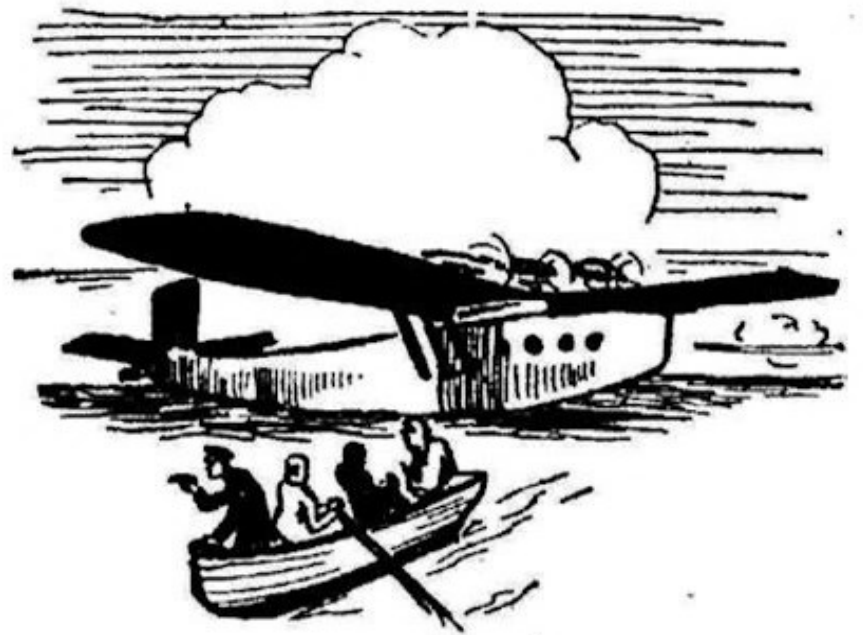
six men mounted. All held automatic pistols. On deck, Captain Farrow was waiting, his face hard.

"You murderous ruffians!" he ejaculated, as he eyed the masked men. "You shall suffer for this outrage——"

"Spare your breath, captain," interrupted a smooth, cultured voice. "You are not the first sea captain to utter these idle threats. The sooner you realise that we are your masters, the better for all concerned."

The captain and his officers were freshly startled. This was no foreigner—but an Englishman; or perhaps a well-educated American. The man's tone contained a note of confidence which almost amounted to aggressiveness.

"What do you want on my ship?" demanded Captain Farrow thickly.



"Everything, my dear sir, which is of value—and which is readily portable," replied the spokesman of the boarding party. "While regretting that I cannot reveal my name, you may know me as the Sky Pirate. These men are under my orders. You must place your vessel entirely at our disposal."

"I'll be hanged if I will!" roared the captain, in a sudden outburst of fury.

"You will be shot if you don't," retorted the Sky Pirate coolly. "Kindly give orders to your passengers to be lined up in readiness for our—er—inspection. If there is any attempt on the part of the passengers to conceal jewels or other valuables, it will be the worse for them. And always remember that if we are molested in any way whatsoever, my gunner will open fire."

"You infernal scoundrel!" said Captain Farrow thickly.

"Of course!" laughed the other. "I should be foolish to deny such a charge. But as I am an infernal scoundrel, it rests with you to beware of me. I would add that if we are seized below decks my gunner will wait no longer than ten minutes. He will then hole you at the water-line. Shall we proceed?"

THERE was, of course, nothing to be done except submit.

Not only was the *Aregon* without a gun of any description, but there was not a revolver or a rifle on board. The raiders had everything their own way.

It was a difficult time for the captain. He personally went and informed the passengers of what they were to expect. The men, for the most part, sympathised with him, but one or two accused him of incompetence and cowardice. Some of the ladies were even more hysterical.

"This isn't fair!" said one of the passengers—a tall, soldierly Scotsman. "Captain Farrow, is acting in our interests. If he refuses to obey, the pirates will sink us. Better lose our valuables than lose our lives."

The armed men went through their work systematically. Calmly and deliberately, they passed from passenger to passenger, taking note-cases, rings, diamond brooches, and so forth. Keys of jewel-boxes were demanded.

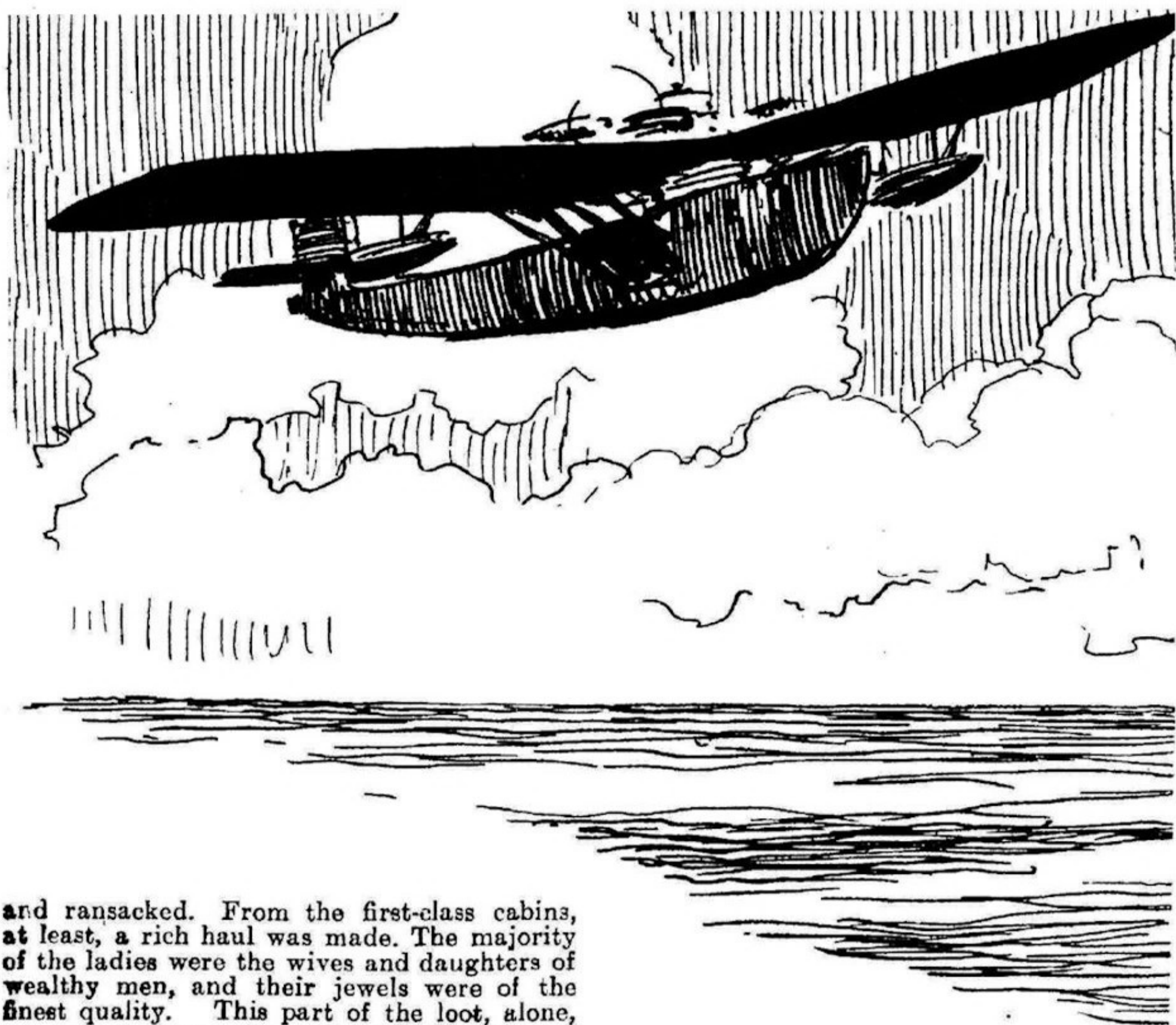
State-room after state-room was entered

Riffs in Morocco—and I've thrashed them, by gad! I'll surrender to no man—least of all to a dirty high-sea pirate!"

"This outburst is uncalled for, my dear sir," said the Sky Pirate gently. "I require your note-case and the keys of your trunks."

"You won't get them while there's a breath of life in my body!" vowed the old man. "I'm Colonel Garside, late of the Guards! I have never surrendered in the whole of my career! No, sir! Do what you will with me, but I defy you!"

"I admire your spirit, Colonel Garside, but I must nevertheless point out that you are in no position to defy me," replied the Pirate. "You will either submit like a gentleman, or my men will forcibly seize you, search your pockets, and take your keys. You have your choice."



and ransacked. From the first-class cabins, at least, a rich haul was made. The majority of the ladies were the wives and daughters of wealthy men, and their jewels were of the finest quality. This part of the loot, alone, was worth many thousands of pounds.

After the first shock, the passengers submitted quietly. There were only one or two exceptions. One choleric old gentleman, of the retired colonel type, caused a good deal of trouble. He breathed defiance at the Sky Pirate when his turn came. His ruddy face was ruddier than ever, his eyes blazed with fury.

"Never, sir!" he fumed. "I've faced hillmen in Afghanistan, and I've faced the

"Why, you—you——" The fiery old soldier spluttered and exploded. Words failed him for a moment. "Very well," he panted at last. "Since you threaten violence, I have no alternative. But, by gad, you shall pay for this later!"

The colonel had only made himself rather ridiculous in the eyes of the other passengers, and he was aware of this. The Sky

Pirate and his men regarded him with some contempt, too. Now that it came to the point, he turned his pockets out meekly enough—fuming and expostulating all the time, however. A well-filled note-case was seized, and his keys, too.

"Now you want to search my cabin, I suppose?" he said furiously. "You rogues! If you're going to ransack my trunks, I insist on being there, too."

"Take him to his cabin," said the pirate curtly, turning to one of his men.

"This way, sir," said the man, touching the colonel with the point of his revolver.

The old man exploded afresh, but he was compelled to submit. He led the way to his cabin, and there, breathing heavily, he watched while the pirate unlocked his trunks. Never for a moment did the pirate relax his vigilance; he kept one eye on the colonel continuously, his gun always handy.

Unfortunately, he did not possess eyes in the back of his head. Thus he was unable to see Nipper emerge suddenly from a big wardrobe trunk. He did not see Nipper leap—

CRASH!

Nipper's weapon, a small Indian club, struck the pirate on the head with such force that the man crumpled up without a sound.

"Well done, young 'un!" snapped Colonel Garside.

"Guv'nor!" gasped Nipper. "You're mad! You'll go to your death—"

"Trust me, old man," interrupted Leo briskly. "I'm not so easily killed!"

While speaking, he was ripping off the pirate's overalls. Nipper lent a hand. It was a quick job—and a quicker one for Lee to get into those overalls and to pull the cowed section completely over his head and face. Then the pirate was bundled unceremoniously into the trunk which Nipper had just vacated. Lee took various articles of jewellery and held them carelessly in his hand.

"Get into the other trunk, Nipper, and don't emerge until the raiders have gone," he ordered. "Then report to the captain, and have this man put in irons."

"And you, guv'nor?" asked Nipper. "When shall I expect you again?"

"When you see me," replied Lee promptly.

He strode out of the state-room and met one of the other pirates on deck.

"Any luck?" asked the man, without a suspicion.

"Plenty," said Lee, displaying his supposed spoils.

"Good. Better take the stuff to the Boss," said the other man.

Lee nodded, and went. He was playing a dangerous game, but he revelled in it. It had only taken a short time to prepare, and everything had gone exactly as he had hoped. As for the rest, Nelson Lee had sufficient

Nelson Lee and Nipper watched anxiously as the pirate plane circled menacingly over the liner.



faith in his own resourcefulness to see him through this risky business.

He found the Sky Pirate without difficulty, and handed over the jewellery. No questions were asked. He was accepted without a suspicion. Lee was one of the party which went down to the liner's strong-room. The ship's officers were helpless; under the threat of those revolvers, they were compelled to open up the strong-room. The bullion was left intact, but a large consignment of diamonds, from a famous Brazilian mine, was seized. Furthermore, there were many valuable jewels in the strong-room which had been placed there at the request of wealthy passengers. The haul was gigantic.

Then, as orderly as ever, the pirates took their departure. They got back into their boat, watched by hundreds of passengers all along the decks. The little boat reached the waiting plane, and the men were soon aboard. The boat was hauled in, folded, and stowed.

Nelson Lee found himself, with others, in the flying-boat's cabin; apparently the man he was impersonating was not one of the pilots or mechanics, for nothing seemed to be expected of him. The other men were removing their cowls now. They were laughing and congratulating themselves on the success of their raid. Lee was anxious. He did not want to be unmasked until the pirate was well in the air.

The flying boat was larger than it seemed. The cabin was quite spacious, and Lee's quick eyes noted every detail. Parachutes hung on handy hooks; rifles were stowed in racks; and Lee even noticed a smallish trap-door in the floor, which led, no doubt, into the bilge.

He was relieved when the engine commenced their purring roar. The sound increased, and the plane moved swiftly across the water, to take off gracefully after a comparatively short run. She circled the liner once or twice, and then, mounting higher, she set off in a southerly direction.

"A big success, boys," said the Boss, coming into the cabin through a communicating door from the pilot's quarters. "Didn't I tell you that the Aregon would be a rich prize?"

"You were right, Boss," said one of the men.

"Who's that with his headgear still on?" went on the Boss, who was a big, middle-aged, gentlemanly-looking man. "What's the idea, my lad? We're well away by now, aren't we? Take it off!"

Lee knew that the moment had come.

"All right, but go easy!" he said warningly.

There was something in his tone which caused the others to look at him with some curiosity. He took off his overall headgear, and a general shout went up. For instead of their own man, the pirates saw Colonel Gar-

side. "What's this?" demanded the Boss harshly. "What's happened? How the thunder did

"Take it gently," said Lee, grinning. "That fiery colonel stuff was just a stunt. You can't kid me! I want some good copy for my newspaper, and when you boys started in on that pirate dope I reckoned there was some good copy."

He spoke coolly, with a pronounced New York accent. For some moments the pirates gazed at him in dumbfounded silence. His presence aboard their craft had come as a complete shock.

"A confounded newspaper man!" snapped the Boss. "Hold him! Search him!"

"What's the big idea?" protested Lee. "You don't think I carry a gun, do you?"

Nobody heeded him. He was roughly held, and his pockets were searched. No weapon was found. Nelson Lee was cleverer than that. A card-case, containing some cards, bearing the words "Elmer T. Walton, 'New York Examiner,'"—came to light, also some American money, an American watch and chain, and a few other similar ordinary articles. It had only taken Nelson Lee two minutes to obtain these from the friendly New York journalist who was a passenger aboard the Aregon—promising Mr. Walton a good story if he got through.

"There's no telling what these infernal newspapermen will do!" snapped the Boss angrily. "Let's have a look at him! Take that wig off!"

Lee was roughly handled. His make-up was forcibly removed. And here he played another trump card. His features, exposed, were not the features of Nelson Lee. It was easy for a man of his training to give his face a twist—which he could hold indefinitely, if necessary. His whole facial expression was changed.

"You've run your head into trouble, my friend," said the Boss grimly. "I suppose you thought this was a game?" You thought we were joking, eh? You'll be lucky if you get out of this mess alive!"

A sudden fear leapt into Lee's eyes.

"Aw, say!" he ejaculated, breathing hard. "You guys wouldn't croak me, would you? I figured on getting the real dope for my newspaper. 'Aboard the Pirate Plane!'—that stuff. Get me? Can't you set me down on the next boat you hold up? That's how I worked it out."

"Oh, that's how you worked it out, is it?" repeated the Boss. He hardly knew what to say—or how to deal with this intruder.

"Yacht just ahead, Boss," said one of the other men suddenly.

Lee's heart beat more rapidly. He turned and looked out of the nearest window. The journey had not been long—in minutes—but fifty or sixty miles of ocean had been covered since the plane had left the Aregon. Far down on the sea, Lee saw a comfortable-looking steam yacht. His eyes opened wider as he noticed an extraordinary feature of that yacht. A huge section of its starboard side was swinging down like a drawbridge!

"Geel!" he ejaculated.

The Boss looked down and cursed.

"I was going to alter the course, and drop

this fellow near some other ship," he snapped. "But it's too late now—he's seen too much. Tie his hands."

"Say, cut it out!" gasped Lee, his voice quivering with pretended fright. "You'd best remember that I'm an American citizen, and there'll be trouble if you bozos get too fresh."

Nobody took any notice of his words. His wrists were bound, and he was held. The 'plane, in the meantime, was gliding swiftly down towards the sea.

Nelson Lee's stunt had succeeded. He had hoped that something of this sort would happen before he could be got rid of. That yacht was the Sky Pirate's supply ship!

CHAPTER 3.

Nelson Lee Scores!

WHIMPERING and uttering feeble threats, Nelson Lee was forced out of the flying boat and helped up the yacht's ladder. His hands were bound, so it was impossible for him to help himself. By maintaining this "scared to death" attitude, he had already made his captors contemptuous of him. But as he mounted that ladder, his eyes took in every detail.

The yacht's side, swinging down, formed a great platform. Already men were stowing the 'plane on to a kind of slipway. Chains had been attached, and machinery was at work. The 'plane was being drawn into the yacht's capacious hold—through this great opening in her side. Lee was startled at the completeness of the pirates' arrangements. Within ten minutes the 'plane would be hidden, and the yacht's side would be in place again. The pirate craft would vanish utterly. Lee did not fail, either, to note the name on the lifeboats: "S.Y. Jersey Lily." He also noted that the sailors were smartly dressed, and the whole yacht was delightfully spick and span.

"Who's this fellow?" asked a tall, elderly man in immaculate yachting attire, when Lee and his captors reached the deck. "What's happened?"

"A confounded New York journalist!" snapped the Boss. "Got on the 'plane by a trick. Don't know what to do with him now."

"He can't stay here!" said the other sharply. "Man alive, are you mad? You oughtn't to have brought him—"

"Couldn't help it," said the Boss. "He spotted the yacht before we could decide what to do with him."

"You're not going to get rough, are you?" asked Lee, looking from one to the other, with terror in his eyes. "Aw, gee! Have

a heart! I was only after copy! You guys will be sorry if you start any funny business."

He looked as though panic had seized him. With a sudden terrified cry he ran madly across the deck, not stopping until he reached the rail on the port side. He put his back to this, and noted, with inward satisfaction, that it was very low.

"Fetch him!" snapped the Boss to two of the sailors. "Take him below, and lock him up. We'll deal with him later."

The sailors advanced, and Lee uttered a squeal. The squeal changed to a yell of terror as he backed against the rail and lost his balance. He hovered for a moment, and then fell headlong into the sea, still screaming. There was a rush. The Boss and the others were just in time to see Lee come to the surface, spluttering and gasping with panic-stricken fear.

"Save me!" he pleaded. "My hands! I can't move them—and I can't swim, either! Help—help!"

He sank under the surface again—and now he acted with the speed and agility of a fish. Diving deeply, he swiftly rid himself of the ropes. It was a simple

enough trick for Lee to wriggle out of those bonds. He had been bound carelessly in the first place, and every moment since he had been working them loose. Now they almost fell off. He dived, and came up on the other side of the yacht. Exactly as he had foreseen, every available man had rushed to the port rail.

The starboard side of the yacht was deserted. Ropes that had been used in the manipulation of the 'plane were still hanging in festoons. Lee grabbed at one, swarmed up, and wormed his way through an open porthole.

"**H**E'S gone, poor devil!" said the Boss, with a grunt.

"Best thing, too," declared the man in the immaculate yachting garb. "It's saved us the trouble of dealing with him, anyhow."

They had no suspicion of the truth. Nelson Lee's brilliance had fooled them completely. Orders were immediately given for the yacht to be got under way.

Meanwhile, Nelson Lee, having squirmed through that porthole, found himself in a place which he took to be a store-room. The door stood ajar, and when he looked out he found himself gazing into a huge hold, where the seaplane was resting after its adventurous trip.

(Continued on page 24.)





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The Atlantic Pirates!

(Continued from page 21.)

"H'm! Not too nice," muttered Lee.

The store-room, he saw, was half-filled with oil-drums. Supplies for the 'plane's engines! There was no cover in here—no place where Lee could hide in a sudden emergency. The great detective was under no illusion regarding his fate if he should be caught now. To remain in that store-room was unthinkable.

He crept out, bent upon finding a more secure retreat. Voices sounded when he had reached the flying boat's wing. There were footsteps. It was a moment for swift action. With two strides he was at the doorway leading into the flying boat's cabin. He slid through. It was a moment's work for him to jerk up that trap-door in the cabin floor. Dropping into inky darkness, he found there

discovered Lee. Heaven only knows what they've done to him."

"We must be careful, sir," said Mr. Benson. "According to young Nipper, Mr. Lee was planning to pretend that he was a New York journalist named Walton. We'd better not give that away, had we? But we shall have to stop, I suppose."

"Nothing else for it," replied the captain gruffly.

Nipper was pale and haggard when he heard. This news told him clearly enough that Nelson Lee had been discovered. His anguish was agonising.

As before, the pirate 'plane landed close to the liner. The boat put off, and approached the Aregon's ladder. Nobody saw—the pirates least of all—a figure which slipped from the cabin in the deep twilight.

Lee's hope had materialised. Gently opening the door, he had found the cabin door wide open. Not that the door was left unprotected. There were other men forward with him, but he was like a mere shadow as he slipped into the sea. He did not make any attempt of swimming to the liner's side, but contented himself with swimming the flying boat's tail; and here, with his mouth and nose above water, he waited.

A long wait. The man, Daniels, came over without fuss. And with him, passing over the sea, the pirate ship. All aboard of her believed in the "New York journalist" story—and they were doubly reassured when they learned that Daniels had not questioned.

Boss was so considerate.

"Don't fool yourself—he's not!" came the other voice. "He's afraid of Daniels spilling too much after he's handed over to the Yard men. Get him back now, and he'll have no opportunity of talking."

Nelson Lee smiled quietly to himself. Things were going better than he had even hoped for!

AFTER that came much jolting and jarring. The 'plane was being launched once more. Lee began to hope in a new direction now. He had resigned himself to an ugly ordeal—to being cooped up in that bilge in soaking clothes for perhaps twenty-four hours or more—but if luck kept with him he would be out within thirty minutes!

It wasn't long before the flying-boat was in the air again, speeding swiftly over the ocean. The wireless was at work. Once again the Aregon was instructed to heave to, and to prepare for boarders.

"You have one of our men aboard," ran the wireless message. "If he is not produced by the time we come alongside, we'll sink you."

Captain Farrow, receiving this message, almost groaned.

"I was afraid of it, Benson," he said to his first officer. "This means that they've

They would have had a shock could they have seen the agile figure which was clinging to the Aregon's accommodation ladder before the latter had been hoisted up. After the 'plane had vanished into the gloom, this figure coolly mounted and dropped on to the deck. A young officer strode forward, full of suspicion.

"What the deuce——" he began.

"Not a word!" snapped Lee. "Come with me!"

Almost roughly he seized the officer's arm, and they ran up to the bridge before any of the passengers had time to notice anything unusual.

"Mr. Lee!" ejaculated Captain Farrow, as the dripping figure came into the chart-room with the young officer. "Good heavens! How did you get here?"

"Do the passengers know any details of what has happened?" asked Lee quickly.

"Nothing, except that one of the pirates was captured," replied the startled captain.

"You've told them nothing about the supposed journalist?"

"Nothing at all," said Captain Farrow. "I've had enough to do without satisfying the curiosity of passengers!"

"Splendid!" said Lee, his eyes gleaming with satisfaction. "Then, if this young gentleman will be kind enough to smuggle some

Nelson Lee lost his balance and plunged over the taffrail into the sea.



clothes out of my cabin, and bring them here, the passengers will assume that I have been on the bridge ever since the raid. It's most important that there should be no talk."

"I'll go, sir," said the young officer eagerly.

"Good man—and bring Nipper," said Lee. "But don't tell him anything except that he's wanted in the chart-room."

Nipper arrived before the officer with the clothes.

"Guv'nor!" he gasped, nearly choking with relief. "I—I thought——"

"Of course," nodded Nelson Lee dryly. "You thought that I had fallen into the hands of the pirates, and that I had been brutally murdered, eh? I rather think it's about time, young 'un, that you learned to trust me."

"I do, guv'nor!" said Nipper, his eyes gleaming. "But—but this is all so extraordinary!"

"I could find a better word than that!" grunted Captain Farrow. "I'm just as much in the dark as ever."

"I'll tell you this much," said Lee coolly. "Luck had favoured me to an almost unbelievable extent. Not only do I know the headquarters of this pirate gang, but they haven't the faintest suspicion that their secret has been probed. Captain Farrow, we're going to lay these impudent pirates by the heels!"

Nipper breathed hard.

"And the guv'nor calls it luck!" he said feelingly.

CHAPTER 4.

The Sensation of the Year!

"**W**HAT exactly happened, Daniels, after you went into the cabin with that supposed colonel?"

It was the man in the immaculate yachting suit speaking; with him was

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It was the man in the immaculate yachting suit speaking; with him was

the other man known as the "Boss." They were in the captain's cabin of the steam yacht Jersey Lily, and Daniels was being questioned.

"I don't remember anything, sir," said the man. "I was suddenly hit on the head."

"By that infernal journalist—the fellow who posed as the fiery colonel?"

"I not sure, sir," replied Daniels. "It happened so suddenly. I don't think I gave the colonel a chance to round on me. There must have been somebody else there."

"Probably a friend, Bulmer," said the Boss, smiling. "I imagine that two of them must have planned that affair."

Mr. George Bulmer—he of the spotless yachting suit—nodded.

"I expect so," he said. "And when you awoke, Daniels, what then?"

"I found myself locked in a cabin, sir, alone," replied Daniels. "My head was aching, and I was a bit dazed. I didn't have time to think much because I was soon lugged out, and then you took me back on the 'plane.'"

"Nobody saw you in the meantime?"

"Nobody, sir."

"All right, Daniels, you can go," said Bulmer.

The man went, looking rather relieved. When the door had closed behind him, Bulmer lit a cigar and glanced across at his companion.

"Well, we're lucky, Nixon," he said. "This thing might have been a lot worse. That fool of a Walton is dead, and we were saved the trouble of throwing him overboard. As it happens, there's no harm done."

"We shall have to be more careful in future, though," said the other. "Our men must always be in pairs."

"Yes, and we must allow a week or so to pass before we do another job," said Bulmer thoughtfully. "Let things simmer down a bit. There's bound to be a red-hot sensation over what we've done, and the chances are that the authorities will look for our 'plane somewhere on land.'"

"They'll be unlucky."

"That's just the cleverness of having our 'plane stowed aboard my harmless-looking yacht," smiled Bulmer. "Nobody can have a suspicion; we've made our plans too carefully. Now I've got to get to London, not only to find out exactly how things are going at that end, but I must arrange for fresh supplies. The Lily mustn't come to a British port for at least a month."

"We've got everything we need for a full month's cruise," said Nixon. "And a lot can happen in that time. You're absolutely wrong, Bulmer, about allowing a week or two to pass. I'm going to raid every promising ship that comes within reasonable distance of us. Then if we have to chuck the game up suddenly we shall have something to show for our pains."



Jokes from readers wanted for this feature! If you know of a good rib tickler send it along now—and win a prize! A handsome watch will be awarded each week to the sender of the best joke; all other readers whose efforts are published will receive a pocket wallet or a penknife. Address your jokes to: "Smilers," Nelson Lee Library, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4.

Giving the Game Away!

The burglar was about to depart with the swag, when he heard a voice.

"Hands up!"

Turning, he came face to face with the owner of the house, who was holding in his hand what appeared to be a revolver. Suddenly a small voice piped from up the stairs:

"Daddy, what are you doing with my water-pistol?"

(A handsome watch has been awarded to C. Marwing, 119, Bamber Street, Liverpool.)



Too True!

Gentleman: "Why are you crying, my boy?"

Small Boy: "My dog has just been killed."

Gentleman: "My uncle died the other day, but I never cried."

Small Boy: "Ah! But you never brought him up since he was a pup!"

(W. Berry, 50, Upper Perry Hill, Bristol, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

His "Good" Turn!

Little Frank, who had been smiling gleefully over his breakfast, suddenly turned to his father and said:

"I've done my good turn for to-day."

"What! Already?" inquired his father.

"Yes," answered the youngster. "I was at the gate, and I heard the man next door say that he wouldn't be able to catch his train, so I sent the bull dog after him and he arrived just in time!"

(J. Boorman, Mill Farm, Colchester, has been awarded a penknife.)

Scathing!

They were having an argument on the relative merits of their respective cars, and became very heated.

"I tell you," said Bill, "I haven't paid a shilling for



"It's madness to rush things like that," said Bulmer.

"I'm boss here, and I'll do as I choose!" snapped Nixon. "This yacht is registered in your name, and it's supposed to be your property. We're partners. But don't forget that I'm in control."

Bulmer shrugged his shoulders.

"You always get your own way, Nixon, and I suppose you'll get it now," he replied.

"I shall," retorted Nixon. "We're steaming for Lisbon at full speed, and we shall arrive to-morrow. You'll go ashore, kick up a fuss with the British Consul, and then proceed overland to London. The Lily will go to sea again, and keep at sea. I'm not taking any more chances. In London you'll find out everything you can that'll be useful to us. Many of the big liners are carrying handy stuff that we can grab. Your job will be to wireless to me—using our code, of course, giving me all necessary details."

THE next day the steam yacht Jersey Lily, entered Lisbon Harbour, and Mr. George Bulmer, the well-known Anglo-American yachtsman, rushed furiously to the British Consul. He complained bitterly that his yacht had been held up in mid-ocean by a pirate aeroplane.

"And what's more, that aeroplane was British!" said Bulmer hotly. "You've got to do something at your end. It's a pity if a private yacht can't go on a pleasure cruise

without being raided by an infernal gang of pirates."

The British Consul was grave.

"I appreciate your feelings, Mr. Bulmer, but perhaps you don't understand that your yacht is not the only ship which has been held up," he said quietly. "Several big liners have been similarly victimised by this pirate. Naturally, everything possible is being done to safeguard the high seas."

LONDON was enjoying a rare sensation.

The newspapers were full of the exploits of the daring pirate 'plane.

All manner of theories were advanced by the newspapers, the favourite being that the pirate was a flying-boat of great range, and that it had its lair on some isolated island near the Azores, or perhaps off Spain or Portugal. Such a flying-boat with a two thousand mile range could sweep a considerable section of the Atlantic. Nobody even thought of the possibility of the pirate having his headquarters on a sea-going vessel.

At the Detective Academy there was naturally a good deal of excited comment. Nelson Lee's famous "cubs" were aware that their chief and Nipper were on board the Aregon, which was one of the raided liners.

"If the Chief hasn't done something brilliant, you can call me a poached egg!" said Tommy Watson. "The Aregon will be

repairs on my car during the whole eighteen months I've had it."

"So the man that does your repairs tells me," replied Jake dryly.

(H. Perkins, 2, Clare Villa, Clare Street, St. Helier, Jersey, C.I., has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

Wasted Energy !

Two small boys walked nervously into a doctor's surgery.

"Ah," said the doctor, "vaccination for you, isn't it? Left arm, sonnie, please."

"I knew it, Alf," remarked one, turning to his pal. "Just our luck, an' we've both been and washed the right 'uns!"

(A. Oram, 36, Tewson Road, Plumstead, S.E.18, has been awarded a penknife.)

Nasty !

Caller: "I'm the piano tuner, mum."

Lady: "But I didn't send for you."

Caller: "I know, but your neighbours did."

(W. Lawler, 12, Arundel Square, Barnsbury, N.7, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

A Labourer's Lament !

A gang of navvies were at work on a deep trench. The foreman was far from popular on account of his hustle.

"Jump out of that trench!" he suddenly yelled to one navvy, and the man did so. "Now jump back again!" was the next order. Back

went the labourer. "Out again—quick!"

This out-and-in performance went on for some time, until at last the navy lost patience, and wanted to know what the giddy idea was, or words to that effect.

"I'll tell you," replied the foreman grimly. "You're bringing more stuff out on your boots than you brought out on your spade during the last hour!"

(E. Browne, 115, High Bank Road, Burton-on-Trent, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

S-s-sorry !

Theatre Attendant: "I shall have to ask you to leave if you persist in hissing the performers, sir."

Smithers: "Hissing! I w-w-was s-s-simply s-s-saying to S-S-Sandy that the s-s-singing w-w-was s-s-simply s-s-superb!"

(H. Hall, 18, Acres Street, Keighley, Yorks., has been awarded a penknife.)

Did It Work ?

Jack: "Please, teacher, can a boy be punished for something he hasn't done?"

Teacher: "Of course not, Jack. Why do you ask?"

Jack: "Well, I'll tell you, teacher, because I haven't done my homework."

(J. Tounes, 31, Compton Avenue, East Ham, E.6, has been awarded a penknife.)



in Southampton to-day, anyhow, and we shall see the Chief by this afternoon. I'll bet he's hot on this pirate affair."

"You're probably right, dear old boy," said Tregellis-West, looking up from a newspaper.

There were glaring headlines across the front page. America, it seemed, was greatly interested in the pirate because so many American citizens had been robbed. Furthermore, a prominent New York journalist, Mr. Elmer T. Walton, of the "New York Examiner," had disappeared.

Nelson Lee had caused that report to be published. Its object was to fool the pirates, who had every reason to believe that the unfortunate Mr. Walton had sunk to the bottom of the Atlantic. This report would fit in with their own beliefs.

Mr. Walton was only too glad to lie low. A sensation of this kind appealed to him, particularly as Lee had promised him the full story as soon as his plans for the pirate's capture had materialised.

Bulmer reached London before the *Aregon* docked, and he was exceedingly interested in all the sensational news. One of the first things he did was to seek an interview with the First Lord of the Admiralty; but he got no further than one of that gentleman's private secretaries.

"I tell you, sir, I'm going to make a lot of noise over this!" shouted Bulmer angrily. "I'm an American citizen, and my yacht has been robbed. I've come to London overland on purpose to lay this complaint, and my boat has gone on to America without me. I want to know that something is being done!"

"I can only assure you, Mr. Bulmer, that Lord Winterset is doing everything within his power," replied the secretary. "But I would like to point out that there is no evidence that these pirates are British citizens. Very little is known of them, except that they speak English."

"Are you hinting that they're Americans?" demanded Bulmer.

"It is quite possible that they are Americans," replied the secretary coolly. "Lord Winterset is satisfied that this matter is one for international action. This pirate aeroplane is menacing shipping of all nationalities. If you would care to make an appointment with my chief—"

The secretary made the usual official excuses, and Bulmer went away apparently fuming, but inwardly pleased. These fool officials would dilly-dally about for weeks.

Mr. Gilbert Bulmer would have been somewhat surprised if he had been at the Admiralty an hour later. Nelson Lee arrived, and he was immediately admitted into the presence of Lord Winterset, the First Lord.

"I understand that you have something of importance to tell me regarding this pirate aeroplane, Mr. Lee," said the Admiralty chief. "The Chief Commissioner of Scotland

Yard has been in communication with me, and he told me that you were coming."

"I feel it is my duty to pass on my information to you in person," said Nelson Lee. "I was aboard the *Aregon*, although that fact has been carefully suppressed in all the newspapers. Now, Lord Winterset, I'll tell you a little story."

He did so, and the First Lord listened in amazement.

"Good heavens! You took an appalling risk, Mr. Lee!" he ejaculated at length. "This piece of news is vital. The pirate 'plane, then, is aboard this steam yacht?"

"Exactly!" replied Lee. "And that steam yacht is presumably owned by Mr. Gilbert Bulmer, an American yachtsman. The vessel is called the *Jersey Lily*."

The First Lord's eyes opened wider.

"This is incredible!" he said. "Mr. Bulmer was here at the Admiralty, only about an hour ago. Are you sure, Mr. Lee, that your facts are correct? Don't you think it possible that these criminals have deliberately named their vessel after a well-known yacht such as the *Jersey Lily*?"

"Such a thing is possible, but not probable," replied Lee. "And the fact that Bulmer was here is merely a proof of these pirates' impudence. However, the question can be very easily settled. Bulmer is in London, and I will make it my business to run across him. If he is one of these pirates, I shall immediately recognise him. I saw most of them while I was aboard the aeroplane and the yacht."

"You stagger me, Mr. Lee," said the First Lord. "The whole thing is incredible. And if this man Bulmer is what you think, you had far better avoid him. For he will recognise you, too."

"I think not," smiled Lee. "I took precautions to conceal my normal features—and in the guise I then adopted I am presumed dead. If I can bring you proof that Bulmer is actually one of these pirates—in fact, probably the leader—will you take steps to have the *Jersey Lily* seized and searched?"

Lord Winterset rubbed his chin.

"That's a difficult question to answer, Mr. Lee," he replied. "In the first place, the *Jersey Lily* is not a British vessel—she is registered in America. Her owner is American. There might be a big fuss if we took any such action. Moreover, where is this yacht? Bulmer himself told my secretary that the yacht is on its way back to America."

"Bluff, of course," said Lee. "That yacht is cruising in the Atlantic, waiting for victims. Being a private yacht, its movements are leisurely; it keeps no schedule. No comment will be raised if it fails to touch any port for another month or so."

"And in the meantime, this piracy will continue?"

"It will, unless drastic steps are taken to put a stop to it," replied Lee. "As far as I can see, the only safe plan will be to lure these pirates into a trap."

Like a flash, Bulmer pulled a revolver out of his coat pocket. "Look out!" yelled Watson, in alarm.



NELSON LEE was not entirely satisfied with his interview with the First Lord. There was too much hesitation—too much officialdom. Lee was a man of action, and government officials always irritated him.

When he got to the Detective Academy he found Nipper ready with some very interesting information. Nipper had been assisted in his researches by practically the entire personnel of the Detective Academy.

"The Jersey Lily is registered at New York," said Nipper. "Her owner is Mr. Gilbert Bulmer—and that's rummy, guv'nor," he added. "According to the papers, Mr. Bulmer has been kicking up a big

noise because he's been victimised by the pirates."

"Merely a ruse, Nipper, to safeguard himself," replied Lee. "There is less chance of Bulmer being suspected if he pretends to be one of the victims."

"He's got a flat in Clarges Street, sir, and three months ago he became a member of the Wayfarers' Club," continued Nipper, looking at his notes. "Very little known about him, except that he's a wealthy American with a passion for yachting."

Lee had hardly heard the latter words.

"The Wayfarers' Club!" he repeated, with satisfaction. "Splendid! I was wondering how I could run across Bulmer by chance. Here is my opportunity. Bulmer is bound to go to the Wayfarers' Club at once—if only to keep up his policy of pretence. As I am a member of that club, too, I can meet him quite naturally without arousing any suspicions in his mind."

"And there's something else, sir," put in Morrow, the senior cub of the Academy, now

that Edgar Fenton and some of the other boys had returned to St. Frank's. "Lord Dorrimore rang up yesterday and asked for you."

"Dorrie back in England, eh?" said Lee. "I shall have to look him up."

"He asked me to tell you, sir, that he would spend most of his time at the Wayfarers' Club," said Morrow. "Talking of the club reminded me."

Nelson Lee gave little thought to the millionaire peer; but the genial Lord Dorrimore was to figure very largely in the events of the immediate future.

CHAPTER 5.

Baiting the Trap!

NELSON LEE smiled quietly to himself.

He was lounging in one of the big easy-chairs of the smoking-room at the Wayfarers' Club, apparently buried in a newspaper. Actually, he was listening to Mr. Gilbert Bulmer's sensational account of the holding up of his private yacht. A circle of interested clubmen were gathered round. Lee could not help admiring the audacity of this cool American super-crook. He had instantly recognised Bulmer as the immaculate man in the yachting suit he had met aboard the *Jersey Lily*.

"Why, Lee, old horse! By the Lord Harry! This is pretty good!" ejaculated a hearty voice abruptly.

A heavy hand clapped Nelson Lee on the shoulder, and a moment later he was shaking hands with the bronzed, athletic Lord Dorrimore.

"I've been waiting for you, Dorrie," said Lee, smiling.

"Had dinner?"

"No."

"Then come along with me," said Dorrie promptly.

Then went into the dining-room, and selected a quiet nook. And very soon Nelson Lee was telling his friend all about his recent adventure.

"Hanged if you don't get all the luck!" growled his lordship. "I've just got back from the Amazon—rummy we should both have been in South America—and I haven't had an adventure worth twopence. The *Wanderer* is lying at Tilbury, and I'm at a bit of a loose end."

"You can't settle down for long, can you, Dorrie?"

"I'm a restless blighter," admitted his lordship. "Couldn't we do something about this infernal pirate," he went on eagerly. "I'm game for anything, Lee. The *Wanderer's* yours for the asking."

Nelson Lee did not appear to be listening. A sudden light had leapt into his eyes, and now he was deep in thought. Dorrie said nothing. He knew the signs—and he waited patiently.

Dinner was half-over before Lee became normal. Then he grinned across at Dorrie, and lifted his glass.

"Here's to the success of our pirate hunt!" he said dryly.

"Glory! You mean——"

"I'm accepting your offer of the *Wanderer*, old man," replied Nelson Lee. "As soon as you mentioned that the yacht was available, an idea occurred to me. There might be an adventure for us, after all—and if we're wily, we'll trap these modern buccaneers!"

AN hour later, in the smoking-room, the talk drifted back to the pirates. Mr. Gilbert Bulmer was still there, and he had made himself very agreeable to everybody in general. Nelson Lee had not re-appeared, but the genial Lord Dorrimore was much in evidence.

"Pirates?" he said with contempt. "If you ask me, the whole thing has been much exaggerated. I'm not denying that these cheeky beggars have been playing a pretty game, but there's no need for all the alarmist views that the newspapers are taking. 'High Seas Unsafe'—'Perils of the Atlantic'—and all that sort of stuff is so much tripe."

"You don't think these pirates are really dangerous, then?" asked another clubman.

"They're dangerous if they happen to pick on a certain vessel," said Lord Dorrimore argumentatively. "Several people get killed every day on the roads in Great Britain—but that's not saying it's dangerous for me to walk through London. I might be unlucky—but the chances are that I shall get through safely. The same with these pirates. The danger of any particular vessel being attacked is remote."

"That's true, I dare say," said one of the others. "At the same time, this piracy business will keep a good many people from using the big liners. They won't want to have their valuables stolen."

Lord Dorrimore laughed.

"It won't keep me off the sea," he said cheerfully. "My yacht is sailing on Wednesday—the day after to-morrow—and I don't think many of my guests will back out on account of these pirates. And they'll have plenty of valuables, if it comes to that!"

"Quite a rich prize for the pirates, Dorrie!" chuckled somebody. "I'll bet you won't go out of your way to advertise your cruise."

"I shan't advertise it, or I shan't make any attempts to hide the fact that the *Wanderer* is sailing," replied Lord Dorrimore. "I'm going ahead just as though these pirates never existed. Hang it, we can't alter the order of our daily lives because of a parcel of freebooters."

"You'll be taking a risk," said Bulmer, strolling up.

"You've had a taste of these pirates, haven't you, Bulmer?" asked Dorrie.

"The hounds robbed me of thousands of pounds' worth of jewellery," retorted Bulmer angrily. "My guests were plundered, too—and it's that which makes me so furious. You'd far better delay your sailing, Dorrimore."

Dorrie had not failed to detect the interested gleam in Bulmer's eyes.

"Oh, no, I shall sail on Wednesday," said his lordship. "Quite a crowd of people will be with me, too. Sir Edward and Lady Handforth, Colonel and Mrs. Glenthorne, Sir Rufus Browne, the judge, and a few others."

Dorrie casually mentioned a few famous names. None of those prominent gentlemen in the Wayfarers' Club noted—even if they knew—that the majority of Dorrie's guests on this forthcoming cruise were the parents of Nelson Lee's cub detectives. They were all well-known Society people—and, what was more to the point, immensely rich people.

"We can't be hindered by these pirates," said Dorrie carelessly. "If we do happen to come across them, it'll be bad. The Wanderer will be a treasure-house of diamonds, rubies and emeralds. It's a funny thing, but you can't keep the ladies from trotting out their jewels. But, as I have said, there's not one chance in ten thousand that we shall encounter the raider."

He spoke in the same casual way—in a characteristic way. Lord Dorrimore was well known at the Wayfarers' Club, and he was exceedingly popular there. Many of the clubmen had an idea that Dorrie would be secretly pleased if the voyage provided some excitement.

"Well, Dorrimore, I admire your pluck," said Bulmer, smiling. "Of course, it's the only thing to do—ignore these pirates altogether. I feel that I ought to have done the same thing, instead of flying into an excited temper. Almost wish I was coming with you!"

"My dear man, you're welcome!" said Dorrie promptly. "There's still plenty of room aboard the Wanderer. I can promise you a good cruise."

"That's extraordinarily nice of you, Dorrimore," said Bulmer.

"We shall make for the Mediterranean, I expect," continued Dorrie. "Azores first, I think, then Madeira, and after that the Mediterranean. If you'd like to come, Bulmer, I'll send word to the yacht to have a state-room prepared for you."

"Thanks—I'll gladly accept!" said Bulmer.

Dorrie smiled inwardly. Everything was going just as Nelson Lee had planned.

CHAPTER 6.

Nibbling the Bait!

MAGNIFICENT as the Jersey Lily was, Bulmer was compelled to admit that his yacht was a mere tub compared with the Wanderer. Lord Dorrimore's famous yacht was probably the most luxurious privately-owned vessel afloat. Not only was she a millionaire's palace, but she was capable of a speed which would make any self-respecting destroyer jealous. Not that the Wanderer revealed any of this speed during her cruise down the Channel and into

the open Atlantic. She was a pleasure boat, and everybody was bent upon enjoyment. All mention of the pirates was distinctly "taboo." It was tacitly agreed by the guests that the subject should not be raised. Nelson Lee was aboard, but it would have been difficult to recognise him. His name, for the time being, was Sheppard, and he was the chief wireless operator.

After the first evening at sea, Bulmer was jubilant. He had hoped that this yacht would contain a prize worth the picking; and his expectations were being more than realised. The magnificence of the jewels displayed by the guests that evening had left him almost breathless. In the privacy of his own state-room that night he made a mental calculation of the spoils.

"Worth every farthing of a quarter of a million," he muttered, as he paced up and down. "Dorrimore's a fool—and his guests are fools. When the moment comes, we can grab every scrap of this loot! It'll mean fifty or sixty thousand net for us, even allowing for the loss in transfer."

Bulmer knew only too well how the "fences" or receivers would wolf the bulk of the prize; but this prize was so enormous that the leavings would be a fortune in themselves.

Never had Bulmer seen a more care-free, easy-going holiday crowd. Everybody seemed determined to get the last ounce of pleasure out of this cruise. There was a number of young people on board, some of them mere boys. They were the sons of the wealthy and titled guests. Astute as Bulmer was, he did not connect these boys with Nelson Lee's academy.

It was significant that nothing further had been heard of the pirate 'plane. Its activities had ceased. Either it was lying low, or the crooks had decided that their game had gone far enough. This seemed to be the general impression. But Nelson Lee, constantly on duty in the wireless-room, kept in close touch with the Admiralty authorities. If there was any further raid, he would hear of it without delay.

Dorrie amused himself with his guests. He did not expect anything to happen until after the Wanderer had called at the Azores, anyhow. As it turned out, his calculations were at fault. For on the second night out, while the Wanderer was steaming out into the Atlantic with the Bay of Biscay well on her quarter, Bulmer acted.

It was well after midnight, and the guests were all sleeping in their cabins, when Bulmer ventured out. The decks were deserted, and the night was black. He reached the wireless-room, and it only took him ten seconds to slip a key into the lock and turn it. He had prepared this key during the day.

He was taking a risk now—but not a serious one. Even if the worst came to the worst, and he was caught red-handed, it wouldn't matter. Once his message was sent, the pirate 'plane would arrive soon after dawn,

and then he would be rescued. He held the trump card all the time.

His knowledge of wireless was considerable. In a moment he was seated at the instruments, and he got into communication with the Jersey Lily within two minutes. His message was brief. He gave the Wanderer's approximate position, and ordered the raid for the hour following dawn. He closed down the instruments, crept out of the wireless-room, went back to his cabin, and turned in.

"I'm sorry for these poor fools!" he muttered exultantly.

ONE of the "fools" emerged from a little cupboard in the wireless-room five minutes after Bulmer had gone.

Making certain that the coast was clear, he slipped out and went to Lord Dorrimore's state-room.

"Hallo! Anything doing, Lee?" asked his lordship, fully awake in a second.

"Not just yet—but very soon we shall have some excitement. Bulmer has been in the wireless-room, and has sent a message."

"Glory! It was a good idea of yours to keep on the watch!" ejaculated Dorrie. "You and the boys have been taking it in turns, haven't you?"

"Yes; Bulmer happened to come while I was on duty."

"What was the message?"

"I don't know—it was in code," said Lee. "But it is fairly certain that Bulmer would not have taken this risk unless he was giving orders for his 'plane to get busy. We must look out for squalls, Dorrie."

"Not on your life," said his lordship. "It's the pirate who must look out for squalls—not us!"

BULMER could not sleep. There was too much at stake. Suddenly, as he heard soft footsteps out on the deck, he became alert. They weren't like the ordinary footsteps of an officer or a sailor. They struck him as being stealthy. He sat up in bed, alarmed. Had he been seen? Was he suspected?

Quickly, he got out, half-dressed himself, and stole out on deck. Everything was as quiet as before, and he began to think that his imagination had played him false. The yacht was gliding along as serenely as ever, only the faintest throb audible. Bulmer strolled along to the end of the promenade deck. Then, with a little catch in his throat, he came to a halt, staring. Something was happening for'ard. Dim figures were moving about.

Bulmer watched, fascinated—with a cold grip at his heart. There was a deck-house for'ard, and to Bulmer's amazement the entire roof of this was now sliding back, as though on a hinge. It was being operated by the two dim figures he had previously seen. Something came into view out of that roofless cavity. It rose menacingly—an anti-aircraft

gun of formidable size! The whole thing shook Bulmer to the marrow.

"Yes, she's a beauty!" he heard somebody murmur—and recognised Lord Dorrimore's voice. "We're ready for them when they come, Lee. By the Lord Harry, we'll give them the shock of their lives!"

"Put her away, old man," came another voice.

Bulmer was hardly capable of thinking clearly. He felt stunned. But one thing dinned into his consciousness. The cruise was a trap. The Wanderer was no innocent pleasure yacht, but an armed hornet, her guns camouflaged, in the same manner as the "hush-hush" ships which struck such terror into the German submarines during the Great War.

Then the name—Lee. It was familiar; it was—Nelson Lee! Bulmer experienced a fresh staggerer. His brain ridding itself of its confusion, he was able to think more clearly.

What a fool he had been! Lord Dorrimore's invitation, the extraordinary number of jewels that the ladies had been wearing, the setting of the yacht's course so that it would be out of the track of ordinary shipping. All this was part of the trap. It was he, Bulmer, who had been so blind.

Yet he wondered if there really was any significance in Dorrie's invitation. Somehow, he did not think that he was suspected. These people were merely trying to lure the pirates to their destruction.

Mercifully, there was still time to warn his chief, Nixon. He would tell Nixon to avoid the Wanderer as he would avoid the plague. It was easy. This trap, so elaborately baited, would fail. With soft footsteps he slipped back to the wireless-room. As before, it was dark and deserted. He entered. But when he sat down at the controls and switched on nothing happened.

"Not this time, Brother Bulmer!" said a cheery voice.

The man swung round gasping. A lean, lanky youth had just emerged from the cupboard, accompanied by a smaller youth. They were, in fact, William Napoleon Browne and Willy Handforth.

"I—I thought I heard the wireless!" stammered Bulmer. "I came in and—"

"Rather too thin, Mr. Bulmer," said another voice, this time from the doorway. "I was just behind you while you watched Lord Dorrimore and Mr. Lee uncovering that gun."

Nipper came in with two other cub detectives.

"I—I don't know what you're talking about!" panted Bulmer.

"You thought you'd warn your pirate pals, didn't you?" asked Nipper sweetly. "Sorry, Mr. Bulmer, but we shall have to lock you up—"

"Look out!" yelled Watson suddenly.

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Like a flash Bulmer had pulled a revolver out of his coat pocket. But before he could even hope to operate it there came a sharp "twang" and the revolver was knocked clean out of his hand. Nipper and Watson and Tregellis-West hurled themselves forward and grappled with the man. They bore him to the floor in one swift rush.

"Smart work!" panted Nipper. "Who knocked that gun out of the blighter's hand?"

"That was nothing," said Willy. "Only my catapult."

"My only aunt!" ejaculated Watson. "He's quicker with that catapult than anybody could be with a gun."

Bulmer was fighting like a madman, but his struggles were useless from the start. Within a couple of minutes he was securely roped up, and Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore, coming to the wireless-room, were in time to see him dragged to his feet.

"It pains me more than I can say to treat a guest in this cavalier fashion," said Dorrie sweetly, "but you must admit, Mr. Bulmer, that you've been asking for trouble. Is it quite nice to break into your host's wireless-room and send code messages to your shady pals?"

"You're wrong!" panted Bulmer desperately. "The whole thing's a mistake!"

Even as he uttered the words he knew how useless they were. His first suspicions had been right. Lord Dorrimore had known him for what he was all along. And he had sent that message, and now there was no means of countermanding it.

"You tricky hound!" he snarled, suddenly losing control. "How did you know? How did you get on to me?"

"My dear chap, don't look at me in that accusing way," said Dorrie. "And don't give me any credit, either. My old pal, Lee, is the big noise in this business."

Nelson Lee was not prone to anything theatrical, but for the life of him he could not avoid a little amusement at Bulmer's expense now. He had already removed his slight disguise, and he suddenly screwed his face up and assumed an air of whimpering terror. Bulmer stared at him as though he was looking at a ghost.

"You!" he gasped.

"The next time you have occasion to rope a man up, Mr. Bulmer, I recommend you to be more careful, particularly if that man appears to be so terrified that he is beneath contempt," replied Lee, becoming himself.

Bulmer suddenly laughed.

"Gosh!" he said bitterly. "And I thought that Nixon and I were clever!"

CHAPTER 7.

Into the Trap!

THE Jersey Lily floated placidly on the calm ocean while a big section of her side was lowered. The seaplane slowly emerged, running down the slipway and into the water.

It was just after dawn, and not another vessel was in sight. The Boss—Nixon—was superintending the operations. He stood on the drawbridge-like platform, talking to another man. This second man, wearing overalls, was the aeroplane's pilot.

"An easy run this time, Hawkes," said the Boss. "According to the skipper's reckoning, this yacht, the Wanderer, isn't more than a hundred miles away."

"We'll do it within the hour," said the pilot, nodding. "Easy picking, isn't she? Lots of swell dames aboard?"

"Packed with 'em," grinned the Boss. "I had a long code message from Bulmer before the yacht left England. This ought to be the richest haul we've had yet. Everything ready along there?" he added briskly.

"Waiting for Hawkes," said one of the other men.

Within a few minutes the flying-boat had taxied clear of the yacht and was in the air. Nixon was on board, as before. In the cabin he and his companions donned their overalls with the cowls which came over their heads and faces.

"This ought to be a quick job," said the Boss. "It's only a private yacht, and it's full of rich Society people, with no more pluck than a crowd of rabbits. I don't think we shall have to do much threatening; she'll heave-to at the first signal."

The flying-boat was remarkably speedy. Climbing steadily, she was hurtling through the air at something between one hundred and twenty and one hundred and thirty miles an hour.

"THERE she is!" said Nipper, pointing. "By jingo, you're right!" breathed Watson tensely.

They had binoculars to their eyes, and they were searching the clear morning sky. It was early, and none of the older guests was yet up, or even awake, if it came to that. Neither Lee nor Dorrie saw any reason why their sleep should be disturbed until the last moment. Lee himself was on the bridge, and as soon as the speck was seen in the sky Dorrie hurried round to give the warning.

"It's all right," he called cheerfully. "No need to be alarmed in any way. Just sit tight below. Might be a bit risky to come on deck. The circus will soon be over—once it starts."

He said the same to the boys, but they scoffed at him.

"We're going to see the whole thing, Dorrie, and don't you forget it," said Nipper. "Just you try to keep us below."

Dorrie grinned.

"I dare say you're right," he chuckled.

The Wanderer was steaming along as carefree as ever, as though no such desperate people as pirates existed. Everything looked normal. Yet there were two powerful anti-aircraft guns ready to be brought into instant action—one for'ard and one aft.

"I don't think there'll be much of a fight," said Lee, as he watched the approaching 'plane. "We can expect the wireless message at any minute now, and we must immediately obey orders and heave-to."

"Seems a bit tame," said Dorrie with a sigh.

"Perhaps so, but we want to avoid any disaster," replied Lee. "This 'plane will alight near us. Then will be the time for us to expose our guns and show our hand. If they don't surrender, which they almost certainly will do, we can blow them to pieces. Far better capture them intact, Dorrie."

"And no fight," said Dorrie with a grunt. "It's a pity you're not as bloodthirsty as I am, Lee!"

The order to heave-to came within a minute. By now the great flying-boat was droning overhead, just as she had circled over the Aregon. For the sake of appearances, officers were running to and fro as though in a panic. The boys joined in this game, too.

Below, in one of the unused cabins, Gilbert Bulmer was frantic. He had been locked in there since his capture, and a sailor was placed outside on guard. Bulmer was not roped; there seemed to be no necessity for such extreme measures.

When Bulmer heard the droning of the aeroplane's engines, following the stoppage of the yacht's throbbing, he knew that his associates were coming straight to their Waterloo. The thought drove him frantic.

Like a madman he tore at the cabin table. He was a powerful man, and he wrenched one of the legs off at the third pull. It was a heavy club, and with all his strength he smashed it against the beautifully moulded cabin-door. Again and again he attacked, and the upper panel splintered and crashed into pieces.

It was all done so quickly that the man on guard was nonplussed. Bulmer, his face red with maddening anxiety, forced his way through the opening. The sailor, brought to his senses by the abrupt appearance of the prisoner, gave a yell and rushed to the attack.

Crash!

The table leg did its work. The sailor, with a groan, sank to the floor, and Bulmer ran up to the deck like a maniac. Emerging, he stared upwards, and saw the big 'plane circling overhead.

He stood there, waving wildly.

"IT'S Bulmer!" ejaculated the Boss hoarsely.

The 'plane was gliding down, preparatory to alighting on the water. Nixon, gazing out of the window upon the

yacht's deck, had seen that dishevelled figure waving its arms. Now he saw Bulmer seized by an officer and three or four sailors, and dragged out of sight. But it was enough.

"Quick! Out of my way!" shouted the Boss harshly.

He pushed past his men, rushed to the pilot's cockpit, and seized Hawkes by the shoulder.

"Let her go!" he shouted. "Open up, man, and get as much height as you can! Something's gone wrong!"

On board the Wanderer, Nelson Lee leaped down from the bridge and he shouted orders as he ran. The for'ard gun was swiftly uncovered. Like magic, the innocent-looking deckhouse was converted into a gleaming, glittering weapon of war. Dorrie, aft, took charge of the second gun.

Boom!

A shell went screaming skywards, and there followed a second concussion as the missile exploded—only three or four hundred feet away from the rapidly-mounting 'plane. The pirate staggered, swerved, and side-slipped. Then she swung round again, mounting higher.

"**T**HEY'VE asked for it—they'll get it!" snarled Nixon. "We're not quitting, Hawkes! Get out of range as quickly as you can—and then get height."

"Bombs?" asked the pilot.

"You've said it!" retorted the Boss. Boom! Boom!

Two reports sounded in the distance, followed immediately by the explosion of the shells in the air. But by now the pirate craft was out of range. However, Nelson Lee was wily. The 'plane's very movements told him at once that no attempt was being made to fly off. Lee guessed what the game was. The enemy was merely gaining height—with the intention of dropping bombs. So, deliberately, Lee waited.

As he had anticipated, the flying boat, circling high, suddenly commenced diving, going all out and travelling at fully one hundred and fifty miles an hour. The intention was to sweep over, and to drop a bomb—or three or four bombs—at the crucial moment.

"Now we'll let her have it!" said Lee.

Both for'ard and aft guns spoke at the same moment. There came a blinding flash in mid-air, a puff of smoke, and the pirate's tail, shattered into fragments, fell like a shower of matchwood.

"Hurrah!" yelled Willy Handforth. "She's hit!"

"Great Scott! She's diving straight down on to us!" panted Nipper.

The 'plane, completely out of control, was nose-diving like a rocket. Her bombs had never been released. It was a tense, dramatic moment. It seemed that nothing could avert an appalling catastrophe—for if the 'plane crashed on the Wanderer's deck, her bombs would explode with dreadful results.

Hurtling down, the crippled pirate missed the for'ard mast by a mere foot. She fell like a stone, grazed the starboard rail, and plunged with an awful crash of metal and woodwork into the sea.

A STONISHINGLY enough, scarcely any of the pirates were badly injured. The flying boat's enormous size saved them—added to the fact that she struck the water with one wing tip first. This crumpled up, and saved the main body from the greater part of the shock. It also prevented the bombs from exploding. The rescue work was soon in hand, and one by one the dazed and injured men were brought aboard, after being disarmed. Nixon had suffered more than anybody. He was unconscious when found, suffering from a fractured skull and three fractured ribs; but his injuries were by no means fatal.

"Well, I'm glad that none of them was killed," said Lee. "This unconscious man and Bulmer are undoubtedly the ringleaders, and I should imagine they'll be put out of harm's way for at least fourteen years."

"What about the Jersey Lily?" asked Dorrie. "Aren't we going to make a thorough job of it and capture her, too?"

"We're going after her now," replied Lee. "I've got an idea, Dorrie, that the Admiralty people will be a trifle surprised. And my old friend, Mr. Walton, of New York, will dance with joy when he gets hold of this red-hot story!"

It was impossible to salve the pirate 'plane. Indeed, the last of the men were only got off before she sank. And then the Wanderer showed what she could do in the matter of speed. Instead of the placid, leisurely pace she had been previously satisfied with, she now leapt forward with the speed of a destroyer.

It was a thrilling trip, especially as nobody knew what the pirate's parent craft would do when they sighted her. Lord Dorrimore was rather hoping for another fight—this time a real sea battle. It did not develop.

The Jersey Lily was a remarkable vessel in many ways, but she carried no guns. Bulmer and Nixon had not prepared for any such emergency as this. So her capture was a simple matter. Under the Wanderer's guns, she was compelled to heave to and surrender. An armed skeleton crew went aboard, and took charge. Both vessels then made for port.

The short career of the Atlantic Pirates was over—thanks mainly to the courage and resource of Nelson Lee. Incidentally, every scrap of loot was found aboard the Jersey Lily. The idea, no doubt, had been to make a number of these raids and then dispose of the booty later on.

THE END

("The Mummy Mystery!" is the title of next week's long complete detective yarn featuring Nelson Lee and Nipper—and it's a real thriller, chums!)

THE NIGHT HAWK!



..... No. 5: FLOATING DEATH!

Tied to an electrically-controlled mine; floating in the path of an oncoming ship! A horrible fate awaits Snub Hawkins, the Night Hawk's cheery young assistant.

.....

The Raid!

FROM a height of three thousand feet above London, Thurston Kyle, the Night Hawk, on stiffly outspread wings, commenced a long clean dive for home.

With the wind whistling through his steel feathers, he glided across the dark city, straight for the veranda of his rambling old house, hovered there for a second, then landed as light as a piece of thistledown. And as he glanced through the French window of his laboratory, his hand flashed to his hip.

Gun first, he strode into the room. The sight that greeted his eyes filled him with fury and dismay.

He had been absent only an hour; but during that short time desperate events had taken place. Of Snub Hawkins, his cheery little assistant, there was no sign. And instead of the magnificently-fitted workshop and laboratory, he saw—chaos!

The place was an utter wreck. Furniture, retorts, instruments, everything had been smashed to atoms. A pile of charred ashes showed that all his books and papers had been burnt; and one grim look was sufficient to tell him that his radio, that delicate invention by which he listened to the plots of Silas Benton and his sinister gang, had been ground to fragments in this swift surprise raid.

In a prominent position on a shelf stood a letter, addressed to himself in sprawling, arrogant handwriting. Wrenching it open, the Night Hawk read it—in silence. Slowly his long, sinewy fingers crumpled it into a ball. His lips twitched into a thin, bloodless line. Still without a word, he walked on to the veranda once more, spread his wings and swooped away into the night.

Fifteen minutes later he was swinging in circles above Silas Benton's headquarters, among the dunes on a lonely stretch of the East Coast. Beneath him, everything was dark; but his keen eyes, peering balefully through the slits in his vizor, caught a glimpse of something moving across the grounds of the house.

Straight and true as a striking hawk, he pounced; his hands, shooting out, closed round the man's throat and lifted him off his feet with only a faint, strangled cry to mark his passing.

Bearing the man aloft, the Night Hawk wrenched back his captive's head and glared at him. A terrible laugh of triumph rang out. The man was Otto van Loon, Silas Benton's chief lieutenant.

The gangster's face was grey and sunken as he met Thurston Kyle's gleaming eyes, and his terror-stricken lips muttered one word:

"Mercy!"

"Mercy, you dog!" hissed the Night

Hawk. "What have you done with young Hawkins?"

Powerless in that merciless clutch, Van Loon shook his head.

"I—I don't know—oh, mercy, mercy!"

For, with a cry of fury, the Night Hawk raised the man aloft and hurled him high into the air. Kicking and screaming, Van Loon turned and began to fall. His winged foe allowed him to drop a full fifty feet before he ranged alongside and caught him again roughly.

"Now, you scum, the truth!"

The rogue clung to his tormentor frantically now, too shaken to speak until a menacing movement of the Night Hawk's arms stung him into frenzied activity.

"I'll tell—I'll tell! Don't drop me—promise not to drop me!"

"I promise!" snapped Kyle. "Where is Hawkins?"

"He's aboard our yacht, the Sea Wolf—out there!" Van Loon nodded towards the open North Sea. "We—it's lying in wait to capture Wesley Cleveland's yacht, the American millionaire—"

"Who defied your attempt at blackmail recently?" finished the Night Hawk sternly; at which the other gasped in superstitious horror.

"You're not—not human!" he moaned at last. "How did you know that?"

Thurston Kyle laughed in his face.

"Fool! So Snub is a prisoner aboard the Sea Wolf! And doubtless he will not return to England, eh?"

The Night Hawk thrust his sombre face close to Van Loon's and read the answer in the man's bulging eyes. Smiling terribly, he grasped his prisoner firmly and set his wings moving. Otto van Loon kicked desperately.

"You promised—you promised!" he squealed.

"Silence!"

For some miles Kyle flew along the coast at top speed, and then, a few feet above the beach, he threw the villain down.

"Listen, Otto van Loon!" he cried, in a voice that made the whimpering wretch cower closer to the sand. "This time your life is spared. Yet the end is near—for you and all your gang. The destruction of my laboratory was bad. But"—and the words were like daggers—"tell Silas Benton that when he harmed my assistant he signed his own death-warrant. That is all. Go, you snivelling cur!"

The voice ceased. When the man on the beach raised his head at last, he was alone. Staggering to his feet, he went blundering and sobbing over the dunes. And at every step, he raised a ghastly face of fear to the sky.

But now the Night Hawk was out over the wide North Sea, flying against the north-east wind on strongly-beating wings.

Face to Face with Death!

HE knew the terrified Van Loon had spoken the truth. Some days previously he had heard, through his radio, the details of the gang's encounter with Wesley Cleveland, the famous American millionaire, whom Silas Benton had endeavoured to blackmail for a colossal sum.

Unlike most of the master-criminals' victims, the strong-willed financier had contemptuously defied him. Whereupon, Silas Benton had sworn to get even.

For the last week the millionaire had been cruising in his sumptuous steam yacht among the Norwegian fiords, and now he was returning south to London or France.

Thurston Kyle smiled bitterly. Now that he knew the gang's own yacht had put to sea, he could easily guess at Benton's vengeance. Somewhere in the North sea, the Sea Wolf was lurking athwart the pleasure yacht's course. Under cover of the night it would be a simple matter for the heavily-manned pirate craft to board and cripple the other vessel—after which Wesley Cleveland would "disappear" until whatever price Silas Benton fixed was paid to ransom him!

But it was the thought of little Snub Hawkins in the midst of his foes that sent the Night Hawk flying at terrific speed across the tumbling sea!

He was flying high on a straight course, and suddenly, as the clouds above parted and the stars glimmered through, he saw something below which made him check on quivering wings.

Away to the right, grim and black against the faintly-shining sea, lay a yacht. Not a light showed in all her evil length. Her decks were deserted. Only the faint throb of her engines floated to his ears. She was the Sea Wolf awaiting her prey.

Climbing higher, the Night Hawk stared round the wide horizon. Yes, the time was drawing near. Far away, but heading straight for the grim pirate, came the bright lights of another ship!

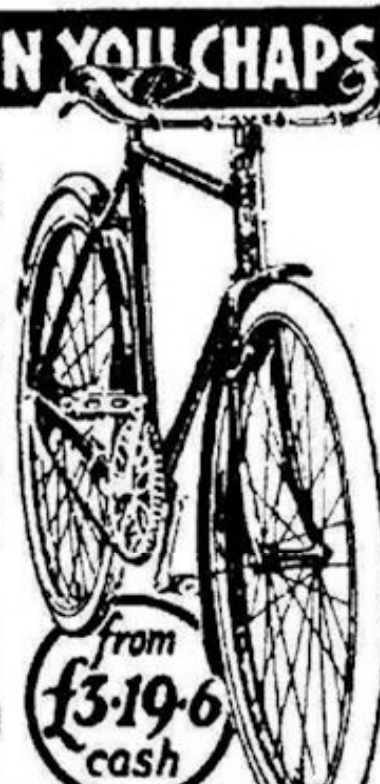
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Mead

(DEPT. B. 151) BIRMINGHAM



407, FARRIS SQUARE, BIRMINGHAM

Hovering above the Sea Wolf, he watched, an invisible, menacing avenger. For the first time he saw a little group of men on the deck below, staring into the darkness through binoculars.

The Night Hawk sank lower. Something was moving away from the ship—a queer, ungainly blob that rolled and tossed awkwardly yet steadily increased its distance.

The lights of Cleveland's yacht were plain now. Under the even rhythm of her engines the beautiful boat was heading straight for her unseen enemy, and the heaving, clumsy object in the sea wallowed squarely in her track.

For a long moment, during which his blood ran cold and the muscles of his lean jaw stood out in cords, the Night Hawk studied the uncouth monster. Then, without a sound, he dived—swifter than he had ever done before, his rigid wings cutting the air like scythes. Headlong, reckless of the waves leaping to drag him down, he skimmed along the surface.

The gang's fiendish scheme was plain now. That unwieldy eyesore, slopping soggly in the trough of the waves, with its hideous horns poking into the air, was a high-charged mine, drifting lumpishly but steadily towards the oncoming yacht. And on its back, securely bound between the grisly points, lay Snub Hawkins, lifting his wet face to the sky and gasping for breath.

It was a revenge typical of the scoundrels Thurston Kyle had sworn to exterminate.

Wheeling, he fluttered a few feet above the helpless boy.

"Snub!"

Snub looked up eagerly.

"Guv'nor!" he gasped. "Knew you'd be somewhere near. Keep away from me!"

The Night Hawk sank nearer.

"Are you hurt, lad?"

"No—not yet!" smiled Snub grimly. "But I shall be when the balloon goes up! Keep off, sir; this is a mine. Our dear little playmates are controlling its course by electricity, and they're driving it——"

"I know, Snub! Listen, now; if I cut you loose, how long can you swim for?"

"Long as you like, guv'nor!" spluttered Snub. "Half an hour, anyway!"

"Good!"

Stretching his wings flat and wide, the Night Hawk leant down, supported by the straps. A knife gleamed in his hand and began to saw through the ropes that held the lad.

Out there in the dark, heaving sea, it was ticklish work. The mine rolled and bumped as every wave hit it, and the stiff, repellent horns rocked dangerously. One touch of those sensitive, charged ends—and Thurston Kyle's campaign would be over. Neither he nor Snub had ever been nearer death in their lives. Yet both remained calm.

Seconds passed, each seeming like a year. But at length the last rope parted, and Snub slid stiffly and carefully into the sea. Put-

ting a safe distance between himself and the mine, he trod water. The Night Hawk came lower still.

"I must go now, Snub—there is work ahead! In a few minutes Cleveland's yacht will be here. Will you be all right?"

"You bet, guv'nor!" grinned the irrepressible Snub.

"Then take this—and swim away from here for your life!"

Kyle thrust an electric torch into the lad's hands and Snub slipped it inside his shirt.

"When I have finished my work I will return to pick you up!" continued the Night Hawk quietly. "After I have dealt with the Sea Wolf, shine your torch from the sea so that I can find you!"

"All right. But how shall I know?" cried Snub, as the great black wings commenced to move.

An awful gleam appeared in Thurston Kyle's eyes. His face shone as white as marble.

"You will know all right!" he replied softly, and was gone.

Revenge!

THERE was no further time to waste. Climbing, the Night Hawk hurled himself down on the pirate yacht.

The little group of men still stood in the bows, staring through the glasses. But they were watching the oncoming pleasure yacht now, her brilliantly-lit cabins and deck full of gaily-dressed men and women. The sounds of laughter and of dance music drifted across the silent sea.

Apparently, the darkness had hidden the mine from sight of the Sea Wolf, for no alarm appeared to have been given at Snub's rescue. The first intimation the gang received that their dreadful flying foe was upon them once more, was a piercing scream from a deck-hand.

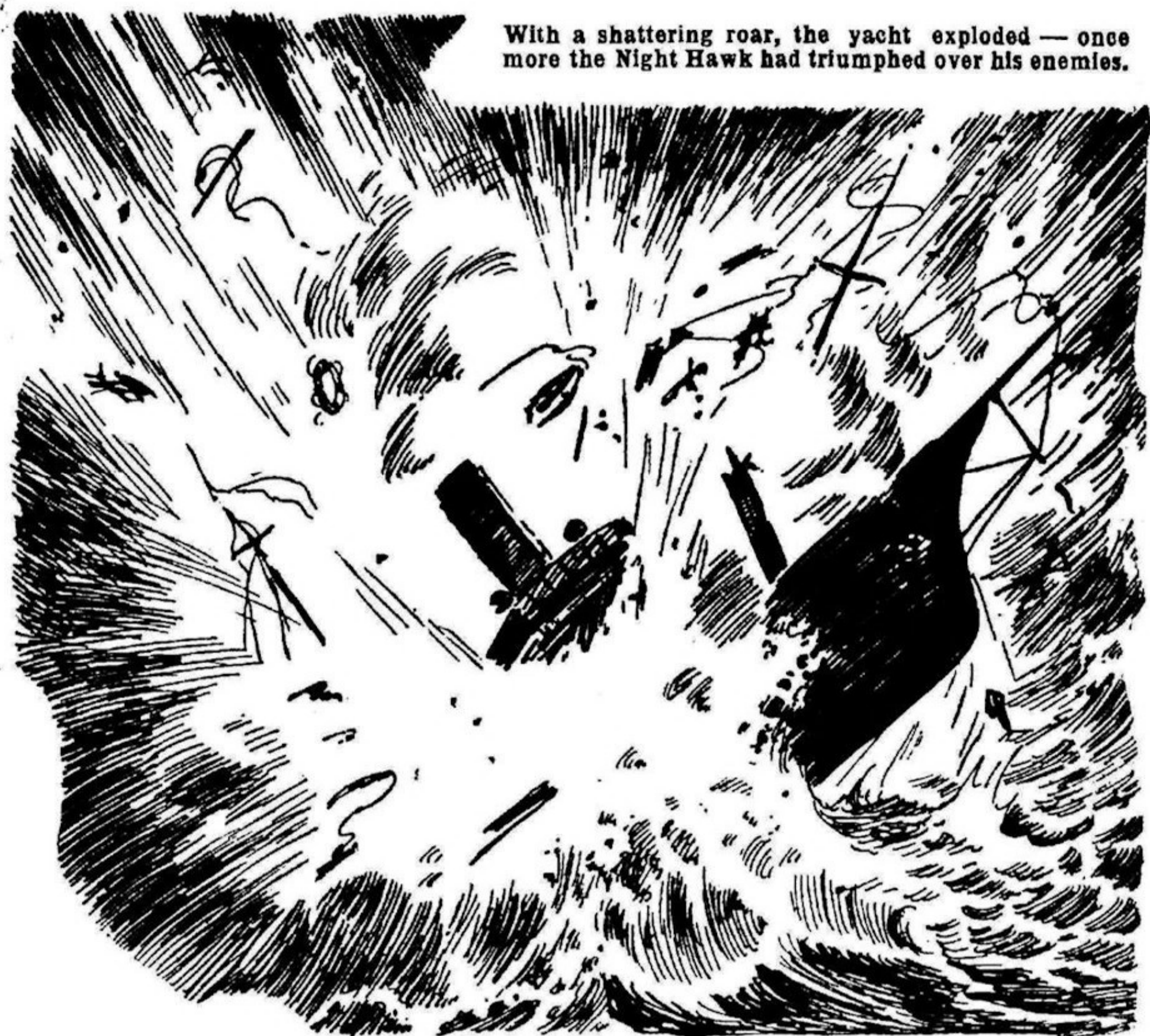
Happening to glance up, he saw a monstrous bird hurtling towards the ship like a thunderbolt. He had time for only one shriek of warning before something hurled him across the deck with terrible force. Helpless as a wind-driven leaf, he crashed against a bollard, writhed and then lay still and silent.

In a panic-stricken bunch, the men in the bows dived for cover, drawing their guns and firing madly, heedless of spreading alarm aboard Wesley Cleveland's yacht.

Fiery streaks split the night, followed by a continuous rattle, like a stick being drawn across railings. With both guns spouting, the Night Hawk swooped upon his foes, diving, twisting, wheeling. The waiting gangsters were caught like rats. Man after man bolted, a shot rang out, a shriek—then a soft thud.

On the bridge, the man at the wheel tried to desert. The captain's gun, thrust in his ear, forced him to stick to his post, but in the next second an appalling glimpse of two great wings sent both men stampeding for the rail. Diving after them, the Night Hawk

With a shattering roar, the yacht exploded — once more the Night Hawk had triumphed over his enemies.



threw them into the hungry sea like straws, and banking, turned to land beside the wheel.

A party of men charged furiously up the bridge-ladder. Left and right, Kyle caught them with his automatics, and they fell into huddled heaps.

He had the wheel now in strong hands, wrenching it over until the Sea Wolf turned in a sluggish smother of foam. Seizing the engine-room telegraph, he rang it to "full speed ahead," and immediately the ship leapt forward. Either the alarm had not spread to the depths of the ship yet, or else the chief engineer thought his captain was making a bolt for it!

Calmly the night Hawk brought the ship round until her sharp ram pointed straight for that dark blot still drifting in the waves. The end was in sight—a matter of seconds now.

Leaning over the side, Kyle saw the horned mine within a few yards of the sharp, plunging prow. He gave the wheel a last turn, lashed it and jumped for the rail like lightning. For a moment he stood there; then his long laugh, high and triumphant, rang through the night.

A leap, a dive, a tremendous beat of his

wings, and he was up and away. Swaying against the stars, he watched the dark, silent yacht cleaving the waves, dead men littering the decks, while her engines hurled her to the doom she had prepared for others. Nearer—nearer—

There came a flash from the sea, a vivid flame that annihilated the darkness, followed by a shattering explosion.

Peace descended on the waters once more. Like a dying monster, the pirate yacht lay on her torn side for a moment. Then, slowly, painfully, she went under and the waves closed over her grave in a foaming billow.

Wesley Cleveland's yacht had heaved to. Startled orders were ringing out, and lifeboats came shooting from her davits on a fruitless errand of mercy.

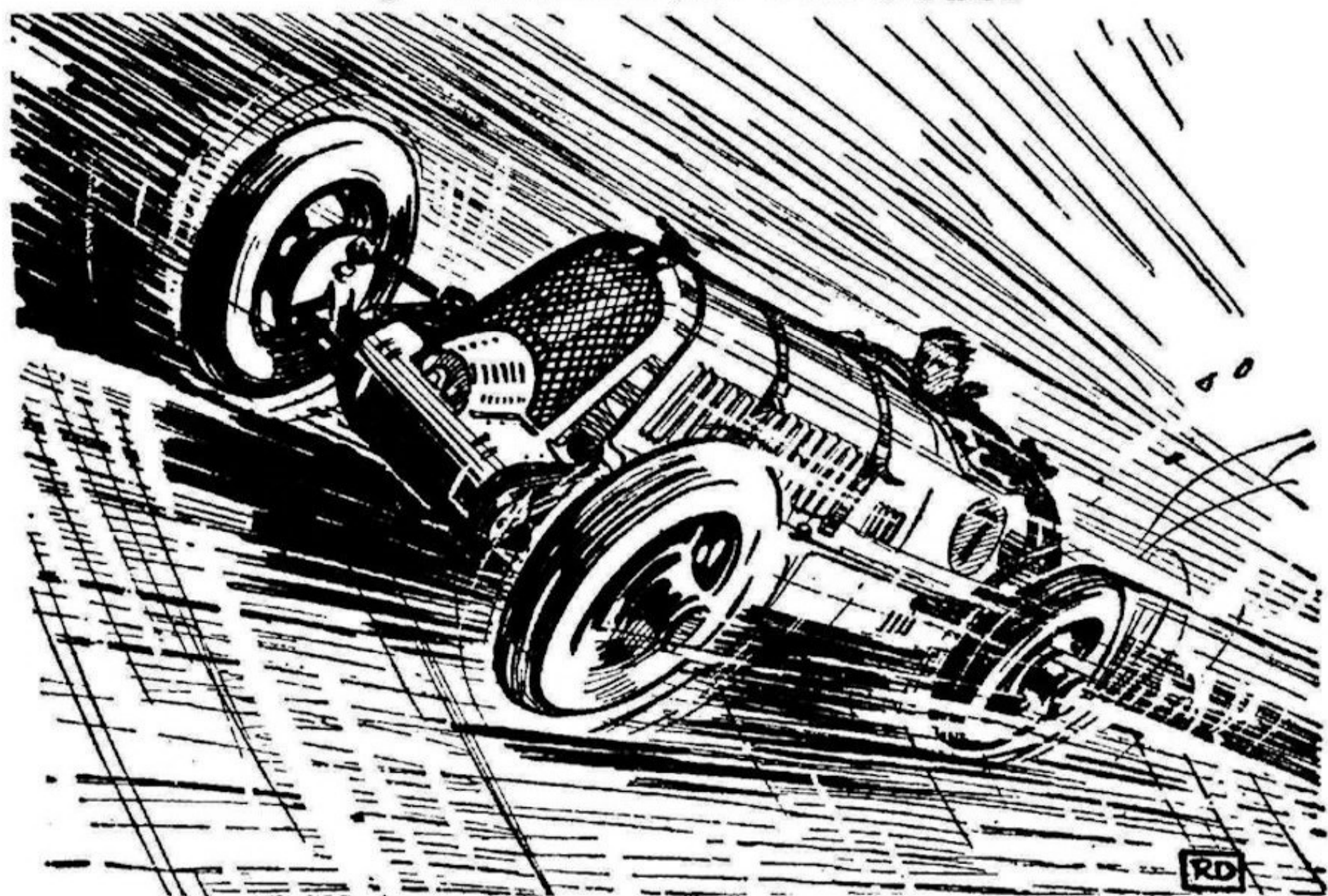
But the Night Hawk did not stay. He had seen a quick gleam of light from the dark sea, and flew towards it in a clean, fast plunge. A moment later he had hauled the exhausted but jubilant Snub on to his back and was flying back to land—and home!

THE END.

(Another enthralling episode in the grim fight between the Night Hawk and the Benton Gang next Wednesday.)

THE IRON SPEEDMAN!

By ALFRED EDGAR



The Plotters!

THAT brief encounter with the Ace cars showed Jim that the rival firm was taking the big Irish race very seriously. In all probability the three machines had not been at the top of their form that morning, or, if they had, Stargie didn't want to strain the engines by letting the cars all out.

In any case, it had proved to the lad that his practice car had a very real turn of speed, and the news of the episode went around the village like wild-fire after Joe had mentioned it to some of the crowd still hanging about the garage.

One trouble with the machine was that it made a lot of noise. All day people around and about Woodburn were asking one another what it was that had disturbed the morning's quiet, something which had sounded like a flying traction engine.

They soon learned that it was young Jim Ross out with a car and practising for a big race, and later in the day the local policeman looked into the garage. At first Jim

thought he had come to summons him for speeding, but it was nothing like that.

The policeman merely wanted to know what roads and lanes Jim would be using when he went out for practice the following morning, because the farmers and other people would then see that the way was kept clear. Apparently, Jim had given the fellow with the empty hay-cart the shock of his life, and no one else wanted another like it!

Lon Stargie fears only one person. That's young Jim Ross—and the unscrupulous speedman reckons he won't be fearing him much longer . . . !

All day long people were wandering around to the garage yard, eyeing the grey car with awe—and all day long men were busy in the Ryan engineering shops, starting to fashion parts for the new Ross-Ryan Eight racer.

And into the village inn that evening there drifted a stranger. He was a keen, crafty-eyed man who listened to the gossip of the others there. He heard all about the grey juggernaut, all about the wrecked machine in the Ross garage, and all about how Mr. Ryan was going to build a still faster car for young Jim to drive in the Irish Grand Prix.

When he had learned all he wanted to know, the man went away. A car was wait-

ing for him outside the village, hidden in the mouth of a lane. It took him to the Ace works, and he alighted at the door of the big shed which formed the racing department of the firm.

Here, Lon Stargie and Sniff Dix were waiting. Only one electric lamp was alight, flinging rays which caught the grim shapes of three racing cars, shone on the tools and benches, the instruments and test beds and equipment all around.

This shed contained the finest kit that could be obtained for the building and testing of super-powered racing machines. The Ace firm spent a thousand pounds with less thought than Steve Ross would have spent a ten-shilling note. Behind him, Lon Stargie had all the resources of a big and powerful firm. It seemed ridiculous that a man like him should fear a boy driver like Jim—yet he did fear him.

He stood with his face dour and his eyes narrowed as he listened to the story that the man had to tell.

"The kid's idea," the spy finished, "is to practise road-work with this old car. The villagers say he's a marvel with it—they're making a kind of hero out of him. But, of course, the boy's not much good, and—"

"Talk about something you know!" Stargie snarled. "That boy's a born driver!" He glared at the man, then added: "Well, that's all I want to know. You can go. I'll talk it over with Sniff!"

The man went, and Stargie dragged the door shut behind him, then glanced around the shed to make certain that he and Sniff were alone.

"You heard that?" the speedman asked. "It sounds as though they mean business!"

"We don't have to be afraid of them!" Sniff grinned. "We'll be faster than ever when we get on the road this time!"

"If that kid hadn't crashed at Brooklands, he'd have won!" Stargie growled. "He's as reckless a driver as his father."

"Big Ross, you mean?" Sniff asked.

"Yes!" Stargie seemed to flinch at the mention of the name. "I'm not anxious to ride against that youngster over in Ireland, Sniff—understand? I'd—well, I'd see you right if he didn't come to the starting-line."

Sniff looked at him for a long moment, then grinned faintly and nodded. Stargie went on:

"He'll be out with that grey car every morning, practising, see? He's tearing up and down narrow lanes, chancing his luck not to meet anything on the corners—and travelling at about ninety miles an hour!"

"He wouldn't stand much chance if there was something waiting for him around one of the bends," Sniff said slowly.

"He wouldn't!" Stargie did not smile, but his eyes narrowed to the merest slits. "He'd hit it—and he'd smash himself up, if what he hit were big enough."

"If I can find out which way he goes," Sniff murmured, "I could take a five-ton lorry down there early one morning and—"

"And leave it on the road around a bend!" Stargie said.

They looked at one another, and now Stargie's thin lips spread in a slow grin which showed his gritted teeth.

"If he hit a five-ton lorry at ninety miles an hour," he rasped, "he'd never drive a car again!"

"I'll go out now and get a lorry ready!" said Sniff, and he moved towards the door.

The Spy!

A LITTLE group of country people stood where two narrow roads crossed one another. It was very early in the morning, not much after sun-up, but the group was extremely wide awake and was listening to the rising roar which was swiftly approaching.

It became apparent as the shattering blare of a wide-open exhaust and the mighty booming of a super-powered engine. A man shouted a warning, and the group leaped for the safety of a hedge as a grey car came into sight, skidding a bend which led to the little crossing.

It hurtled down like a thunderbolt, dust rising solidly behind, with the very hedges quivering and bending beneath the gale which the speeding car roused. There was a difference in the note of the exhaust as Jim Ross made a racing gear-change, the brake-shoes screeched fiendishly in the drums on the kicking axles—then he was at the cross-roads.

Round he went in a fierce right-angle turn, with dust and stones spurting from the stamping tyres—but with never the sign of a skid. Skids meant seconds lost in racing

HOW THE STORY STARTED.

JIM ROSS, iron-nerved, daring, is a born racing driver. His brother, STEVE ROSS, has just completed building a special racing car known as the Ross Eight, and they take it down to Brooklands for a big race. They are accompanied by JOE COOPER, Jim's chum, who acts as mechanic. Jim realises that his most dangerous rival is LON STARGIE, the crack speedman of Ace Motors. Stargie is unscrupulous, too—as Jim discovers to his cost during the race. Jim is winning, and then the Ace speedman deliberately makes him crash. After the race Jim vows he will get his own back against Stargie in the Irish Grand Prix. The Ross Eight having been wrecked, Mr. Ryan, owner of the Ryan Engineering Company, agrees to build another car for Jim. During a practice run, Jim has a tussle with Stargie, who is driving one of the Ace's new racers. The lad nearly puts it across his rival, despite the fact that he is mounted on a "home-made" car. Afterwards Joe warns his chum that they can expect trouble from Stargie as a result of this.

(Now read on.)

work, and Jim was now driving as the cracks drove.

The cross-roads and its awed little group of enthusiastic early-risers faded out behind, and Joe Cooper reached up to yell into Jim's ear:

"Nice bit o' work that—fastest you've ever come round there. 'Nother inch an' you'd have been in the ditch!"

"I know—I reckoned on the inch!" Jim grinned through the dust on his face, while his clear eyes peered through the lenses of his goggles and his gaze never eased off the twisting, tortuous, dangerously narrow road which formed his practice circuit.

He was out to do something good this morning. In fact, he had already done it, and this was his last time round. The new racing machine would be ready to-day, and on the morrow Jim was to try it out before they all departed for Ireland and the great Irish Grand Prix.

He took a curve, wheel-hubs brushing the hedge, then went, with gears screaming, round a hairpin bend—taking it in a fashion which almost slung Joe out of the car. Tail wagging, exhaust spouting a long streak of flame, the car kicked the bend away behind it, and Jim grinned as he trod the throttle wide.

"Tryin' to chuck me overboard?" Joe bawled. "You haven't half come on, Jim! You'll make 'em all sit up when we get to —" He broke off as he sighted a figure leaping to a gap in the hedge on the road ahead. "There's Sniff Dix again!"

Jim saw him, too, but at the fierce speed he was travelling he was past the gate through which the man from the rival Ace team had gone—beyond it before Joe had stopped yelling.

The road was narrow, but it broadened a hundred yards ahead, where the hedges had been set back to provide a space in which vehicles could pass one another. On went Jim's hand and foot brake, as though he was making an emergency stop in a race.

The broad part of the road whipped to meet them. Joe yelped as he saw Jim swing the steering over and use the brakes to lock all four wheels. Round went the tail of the car, tyres shrieking as it turned completely about, to go sliding tail first down the road until the brakes took effect. The instant it stopped, Jim sent it forward again, to pull up at the gate.

Joe sat gasping. He knew that Jim was a good driver, but he had never seen him do anything like this stunt—to turn a machine about in almost mid-career!

"Want me to get heart disease, or something?" he panted, as they checked, but Jim did not answer. He nodded towards Sniff Dix.

The fellow was now running as fast as he knew how in the direction of the wooded slopes of Shawpit Hill. Sniff was travelling doubled up, as though he was not anxious to be observed.

"This is the fifth time we've seen the blighter since we've been practising," Jim murmured. "He's after something. Let's have a word with him!"

He was out of the car and over the gate in what seemed a single leap, Joe coming at his heels. Both of them were in training for the ordeal of the Irish race, and they were as fit as they could possibly be. They tore across the dew-wet grass of the meadow, and were up to Sniff Dix before he reached the shelter of bushes at the foot of the hill. Jim caught him by the shoulder and swung him round.

"What are you hanging about here for, Sniff?" he asked.

The Ace tester was breathing hard, and his gaze shot from Jim to Joe in a glance that was startled.

"I'm not! I just—just happened to be round here," he said.

"We saw you at Coombe Corner yesterday, and you were hiding behind the pump at Moorcombe the day before," Jim told him. "And we've seen you near this hill two other times! What—"

"Well, ain't I entitled to be here?" Sniff suddenly snarled.

"You're not!" Joe cut in. "You're not entitled to stay out late at night, either—that's how our car nearly got burnt at Brooklands! We aren't taking any chances, and you—" Joe checked then.

Figures were coming across the field behind, and some were appearing from the narrow, rough road which ran up the hill; more men were running from other directions. All these were spectators from Woodburn and places around, keenly interested in Jim and his car—and all of them knew that Sniff Dix was a member of the Ace works, Jim's rivals.

"Chuck 'im in the pond—'e be spyin'!" A farm-hand lumbered up, glaring at Sniff and indicating a duck-pond screened by the bushes.

"You're up to some mischief, Sniff!" Jim said grimly. "Come on, out with it! What's the game?"

The little group was increased at every moment. Threatening faces surrounded the tester, and another man growled:

"Duck th' varmint, Jimmy boy! He ain't up to no good—seen 'im before, I have!"

Sniff glanced towards the pond. It was full of stagnant water, and its surface was covered with a vivid green which concealed a coating of unpleasant slime.

"He isn't doing anything," Jim said quietly. "Give him a fair chance. But d'you see that pond, Sniff? Well, if we catch you watching me at practice again, you'll go in it—head first!"

"Yes, and I'll use my fists to alter your dial a bit, too!" Joe told him.

"You'd do a lot!" Sniff snarled, and his hands bunched as he glowered at Joe. "You can—"

"Want to have a go now?" Joe pushed

back the cuffs of his racing overalls as he spoke.

The young mechanic was always ready for a fight, and when his opponent was a man of the calibre of Sniff Dix—well, Joe was just champing at the bit, so to speak, to get into action!

He bunched his fists, brought up his arms to a fighting position, and advanced threateningly. Sniff back away hurriedly. He wasn't exactly afraid, but he knew that, with all these people surrounding him, he wouldn't be able to fight as he'd like to fight. Then Jim butted in.

"Shut up!" he exclaimed. "Clear off, Sniff! And don't forget: it's the pond for you next time!"

Voices rose in protest as Sniff hastily went on his way up the hill to the road which scored its side. The villagers wanted to duck him and make sure of him, but Jim wouldn't have it. Sniff tramped steadily until he was on the road and had a clear run ahead of him; then, when he was safe, he turned and yelled:

"There's a little surprise coming to you—an' it won't be a pleasant one!"

He jeered his threat, then turned, and, running, vanished along the road.

(There's trouble ahead for Jim and Joe! Will they be caught napping? Look out for some more stirring chapters of this grand serial next week, chums!)

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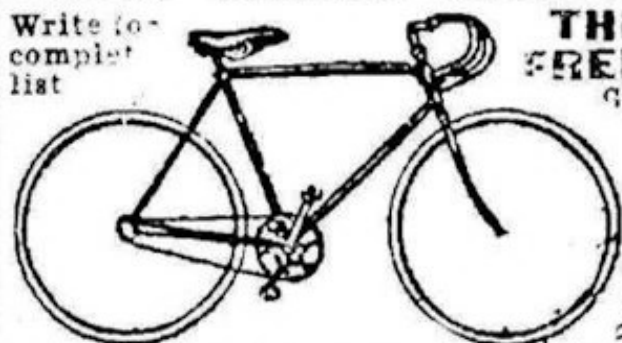
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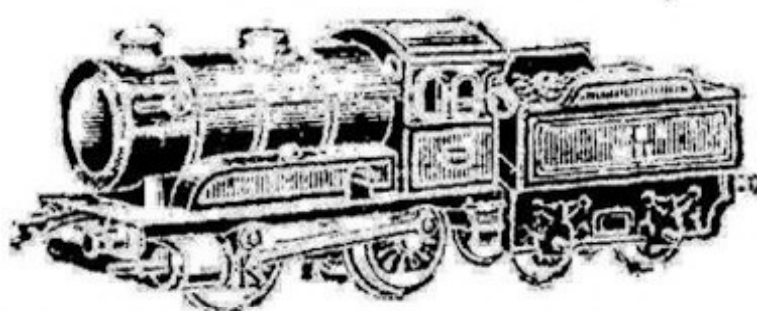
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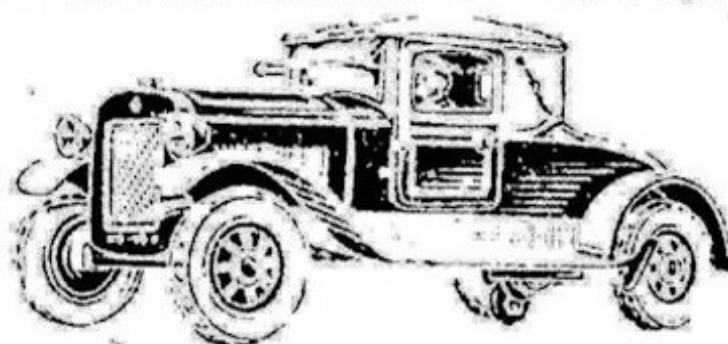
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