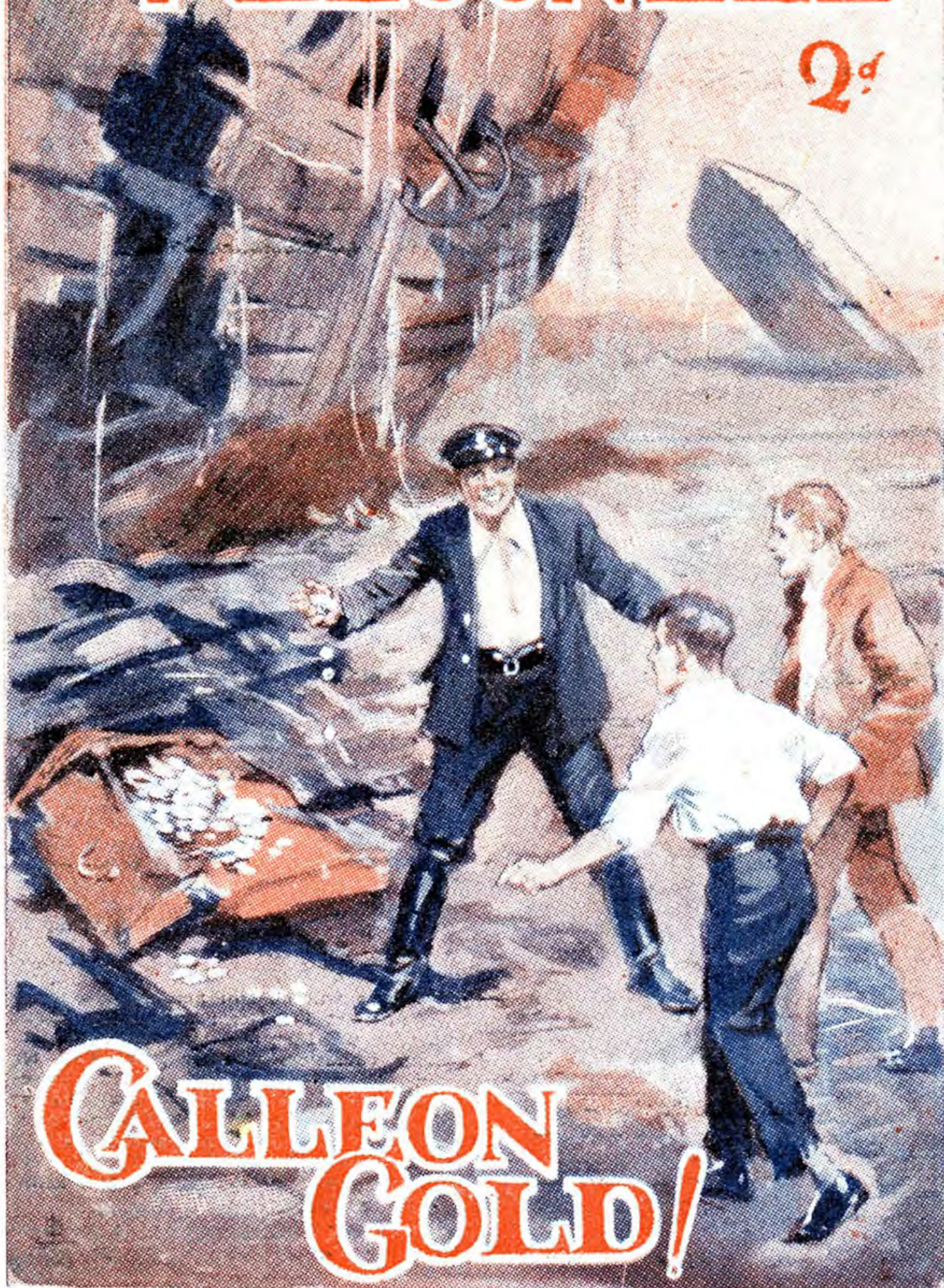


The NELSON LEE

2d



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OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

July 26th, 1930.

Lively Times at St. Frank's This Week; with Handforth & Co.—

HOAXING THE HEAD!



**Smashing Complete
School Yarn**

**By EDWY
SEARLES BROOKS**

Forbidden to go to
the Test-match by
their headmaster—
but Handforth &
Co. go all the same!

CHAPTER 1.

The Head's Decree!

DR. MORRISON NICHOLLS, the headmaster of St. Frank's, looked round Big Hall with a kindly, agreeable eye. And the school waited with dread. Whenever the Head looked particularly agreeable, it generally meant that something particularly disagreeable was about to happen.

"To-day, as you all know, is Friday," he said pleasantly. "But to all sports lovers—and particularly cricket lovers—it is an especially important Friday. For to-day, at Manchester, the fourth of the great Test-matches between England and Australia commences."

The school held its breath. Was it wrong for once? Was the Head, in a spirit of noble generosity, going to proclaim a whole holiday for the morrow? Unhappily, it is no longer the age of miracles.

"I want to tell you, quite definitely, that nobody from this school can make the trip to Manchester," continued Dr. Nicholls, a hard note creeping into his voice. "We have our own cricket, and that should be sufficient to hold your interest. Manchester is a long way off, and I cannot see my way to grant any permits."

"There are plenty of excursion trains, sir!" sang out one bold spirit.

The Head frowned, and the rest of the school felt singularly depressed. What idiots

they had been even to hope! They might have known that the Head wouldn't tell them any good news.

"On the occasions of the three previous Test-matches," continued the Head, "certain boys—and mainly junior boys—succeeded in getting away. I am not going into this in detail, but I have every reason to believe that there was a certain amount of—er—trickery involved. Well, that is not going to happen again. Quite definitely, no boy of this school will be allowed to go to the fourth Test-match at Manchester. That is my final word."

The school remained silent—outwardly.

"There will be still another Test-match—the fifth—at the Oval; and as the summer vacation will then be on it will be for you to please yourselves whether you go or not," said the Head smoothly. "Now, there is one other little matter which I wish to speak of. A very distinguished gentleman is coming to tea with me to-day, and afterwards he will make a tour of the school. This gentleman is Sir Gregory Gillingwater, a new member of our Governing Body."

The school was not interested in the Governing Body, or in Sir Gregory Gillingwater, either.

"I have not yet had the pleasure of meeting Sir Gregory, and, in fact, he has never yet visited St. Frank's," proceeded the Head. "I am particularly anxious, therefore, that

all the boys of this school should comport themselves with dignity and reserve. You may dismiss."

The school dismissed, fed-up to the teeth.

"WELL, that's done it!" said Edward Oswald Handforth gloomily.

The burly captain of the Remove was lounging against the Ancient House steps, staring abstractedly across at the scaffolding of the East House, where the workmen were busy bricklaying and plastering and hammering. Church and McClure and Reggie Pitt and Travers and Waldo and a few others were also collected round.

Even Kirby Keeble Parkington was there; and normally the great Parkington was Handforth's deadly rival. The Old-Timers and the Red-Hots were for ever at loggerheads. But in this common disaster they were allowing the hatchet to be buried.

"There's no hope for us this time, dear old fellows," remarked Vivian Travers sadly. "When the Head makes an announcement like that, it's as cast-iron as the laws of the Medes and the Persians."

"Bother the Medes and the Persians!" growled Handforth. "We wangled it last time, didn't we? A whole crowd of us went to the Test-match at Leeds."

"Ah, sweetheart, that was different," said Parkington, shaking his head of red hair. "The Head, bless his soul, was away. We only had to deal with Crowell, our own House-master—and, by the same token, Crowell is still away, recovering from the effects."

"Well, he needed a rest, anyhow," said Harry Gresham. "The point is, what are we going to do about to-morrow? There's a ripping excursion from Bannington, early in the morning."

"There's one this evening," put in Church despondently. "It would be a lot better to get off to-night; then we shouldn't have any trouble in getting into the ground."

"We'd far better take this thing philosophically," said Harvey Deeks. "It's nearly always raining in Manchester, anyhow—and even if we went we should probably have the journey for nothing."

"Rats!" said Dick Goodwin indignantly. "Summer-time in Manchester is nearly as fine as summer-time anywhere else."

The others chuckled. Dick Goodwin was a Lancashire lad, and he was always ready to defend his own county.

"Let us not be so downhearted, darlings," said Parkington kindly. "Something is stirring; and, unless I am mistaken, it will soon develop into a first-class, gilt-edged brainwave."

"Something stirring?" asked Handforth, staring. "Where?"

Parkington placed a finger to his forehead. "Here!" he said impressively. "I can feel a distinct movement."

"Anything addled feels like that," retorted Handforth tartly.

Kirby Keeble Parkington was in no way upset.

"Let us remember what the Head an-

nounced," he said. "Sir Gregory Gillingwater, a new governor, is coming down to tea—to-day. Surely, sweethearts, there is something in that to give us cheer?"

"Is there?" snorted Handforth. "What do we care about Sir Gregory Drinking-water, or whatever his name is?"

"Personally, we don't care two tinker's raps for him," replied the leader of the Red-Hots. "But don't you think it would be rather a brainy wheeze to get hold of Sir Gregory's ear?"

"By Samson!" said Travers. "It's not a bad wheeze, either."

"There'll be plenty of time after lessons," continued Parkington. "Sir Gregory is bound to come by car, and he won't get here until about four o'clock. I suggest that we form a committee, wait somewhere along the road between here and Bannington, and intercept him."

"And what then?" asked Handforth, his eyes beginning to gleam.

"Well, I'm afraid we can't plan much," admitted Parkington. "It'll all depend upon what kind of man Sir Gregory turns out to be. If he's a genial old buffer, we might be able to convince him that cricket at St. Frank's is so important that we simply *must* go to see the Test-match. And if we get him on our side, he'll probably put in a good word with the Head during the eats. Anyhow, it seems to me the only possibility."

"Well, it's something," admitted Handforth grudgingly. "And, by George, we'll give it a trial!"

CHAPTER 2.

The Unexpected Happens!

IMMEDIATELY lessons were over, bicycles were fetched out, and a big party of Old-Timers and Red-Hots cycled out along the Bannington Road. So far there had been no sign of Sir Gregory Gillingwater, and everything seemed serene. This idea of intercepting Sir Gregory was a desperate move, but, after all, there was nothing else to be done.

"My only hat! We're lucky!" ejaculated Parkington, as they dismounted on a lonely stretch of road. "Here's a whacking great limousine coming now. I'll bet it's the old boy himself! Only just in time!"

"I say!" yelled somebody else. "Look at that thundering great cart-horse! The driver of that car can't see him because of the high hedge—"

He broke off, for at that moment the thing happened. An enormous farm-horse dashed through an open gateway into the road. It came out like a frisky elephant, and swerved round into the middle of the road. And at the same second the big limousine was almost upon it.

There was a grinding of brakes, a shout from the chauffeur, and the car swerved across the greensward, jolted violently up and down, and then dived headlong into the ditch.

There was an immediate rush. A number of boys from the River House School, who

had witnessed the incident from a neighbouring hill, came up, too.

The chauffeur, looking dazed and bewildered, was still sitting in his seat. The car was not damaged much, but it was listing heavily to port.

"Is this Sir Gregory Gillingwater?" asked Parkington quickly.

"Why, yes," said the chauffeur, passing a hand over his brow. "Where's that horse? I tried to——"

"Never mind the horse!" interrupted Handforth. "Sir Gregory doesn't seem any too well. Lend a hand, you chaps!"

All the boys were startled. It was strange that this mishap should take place just when they had planned to intercept Sir Gregory's car. Indeed, it looked as though their little scheme would collapse, for Sir Gregory was in no fit condition to listen to them.

He was sprawling back in the seat, quite still, having either fainted or lost consciousness from some other cause. He was a small, dapper man, with white hair and a big white moustache. The boys quickly lifted him out of the car and laid him on the grass beside the road.

"One of you dash back and find Dr. Brett," said Handforth quickly. "The doctor will be at home now, and his house isn't very far away. Buzz off, somebody!"

"I'll go," said Church, rushing for his bicycle.

"Here's the cause," said Parkington, as he passed a hand over the back of Sir Gregory's head. "There's a lump here as big as an egg. He must have caught his head a terrific crack when the car jolted into the ditch. It knocked him completely unconscious."

"Hadn't we better carry him into this cottage?" suggested Hal Brewster, of the River House. "Old Sam Brampton lives in it, but he works on this farm, and he's never home till half-past six or seven. He won't mind a bit, and I'll tell him later on."

"Good egg!" said Handforth. "Come on—altogether!"

Sir Gregory was gently lifted and carried into a small cottage a few yards farther down the road. In the meantime, the big cart-horse, having escaped injury, continued on its journey. Nobody else other than the juniors seemed to have witnessed the incident. Nobody else seemed to be about.

By the time Sir Gregory was made comfortable on old Sam Brampton's parlour sofa, Dr. Brett arrived. Church had found him just starting off for Bannington in his car.

"By jingo, sir, you've been quick!" said Handforth, staring.

"What's happened here?" asked the doctor. "An accident, I understand?"

"This is Sir Gregory Gillingwater, one of the governors, sir," explained Parkington. "His car had to swerve because of a big cart-horse, and it's a wonder there wasn't a serious accident."

The doctor's examination was brief but thorough.

"He's all right," he said presently. "A

slight touch of concussion, but when he wakes up he'll have nothing worse than a headache. Some of you boys had better remain here for a bit—until he comes round."

"Right you are, sir."

"It might be ten minutes, or it might be an hour," continued the doctor. "Oh, and one of you had better hurry to the school and tell Dr. Nicholls. He's expecting Sir Gregory, isn't he? I'd go myself, only I've had an important summons to Bannington—an urgent case. I may not return until later on in the evening."

"That's all right, doctor—you can leave everything to us," said Parkington. "As long as we know it isn't serious, there's nothing to worry about. We'll take charge of Sir Gregory until he comes round."

"Good fellows!" said the doctor, nodding.

"**R**ATHER messed things up, hasn't it?" said Handforth glumly, after the doctor had gone.

"How do you mean?" asked Brewster.

The River House fellows were informed of the wheeze that was to have been tried, and which now apparently was all off.

"That's too bad," said Brewster. "Your Head's a bounder, isn't he? Lots of us are going to the Test-match by that excursion train."

"Don't make it worse!" grunted Handforth.

"I say!" burst out Hal Brewster, his eyes twinkling. "We might be able to help you—if you didn't object to an outsider butting in."

"We don't care who butts in as long as we go to the Test-match," replied Handforth.

"Graham, old man, what about it?" asked Brewster, looking across at one of the other River House fellows. "Sir Gregory is just about your size, and you're a masterpiece for making up."

The St. Frank's fellows stared at Cyril Graham with interest. He was a smallish boy, and he looked extraordinarily innocent. Actually, Graham was as full of "beans" as anybody. He was the son of the celebrated Cyril Graham, the West End actor; and Cyril Graham junior promised to be even cleverer than his famous father.

"It oughtn't to be difficult," he said, as he examined the subject. "White hair—big white moustache—glasses—and everything. It wouldn't take me long."

"And Dr. Nicholls has never met Sir Gregory," pointed out Brewster. "Buzz off, old son, and get your things. You can be back within ten minutes if you hustle."

Cyril Graham, with another grin, dashed off.

"But—but what the dickens are you suggesting?" asked Handforth blankly.

"You say you want some help, and we'll supply you with some," grinned Hal Brewster. "Graham's always ready for a jape, and a jape on your headmaster is just his mark."

"My only sainted aunt!"

"We can try Graham on the chauffeur first, and if he passes it'll be a cert," went on Brewster, with a grin. "As for you chaps going to the Test-match, you can leave that to Graham. Once he gets to your Head, he'll wangle the thing all right. And if Sir Gregory recovers before Graham gets back, you chaps can easily keep him here."

Even Parkington and Handforth were looking dazed at the audacity of this plan.

"But—but what about when Sir Gregory goes to St. Frank's later?" asked Handforth. "He'll let the cat out of the bag."

"Not necessarily," replied Brewster. "Graham will see to that. Or probably the Head will think that Sir Gregory has for-

"It'll be taking a big risk," said Parkington dubiously.

"Well, it's the right thing to do, and I don't think there's much of a risk," said Edward Oswald. "Sir Gregory is bound to be grateful to us for looking after him, and it'll be a pity if he can't do us a good turn by way of reward."

CHAPTER 3.

Changing the Head's Mind!

"MARVELLOUS!" said Handforth in an awed voice.

"Never seen anything so brainy in all my life!" declared Parkington.



The juniors shouted, but it was too late. The big horse lumbered into the narrow lane—right in front of the approaching motor-car.

gotten—he's bound to be a bit dazed, in any case, after this bang on the head. Anyhow, it's worth trying."

"The doctor's helped us, too, by rushing off to Bannington like this," put in Harry Gresham eagerly. "The Head doesn't know anything about it—and there's no means of his finding out. We're the only chaps who saw the accident."

Handforth had fixed ideas on what was right and what was wrong.

"Well, anyway, I'll only agree to it on one condition," he said stubbornly. "After Graham gets back, we'll take Sir Gregory into our confidence and tell him what we've done, and we'll leave it to him to decide. If he's a sportsman, he'll forgive us and let the thing stand."

Only twenty minutes had elapsed, and during that time Cyril Graham had returned with his make-up box, and with a suit of clothes, too, which compared very favourably with Sir Gregory's. Now the schoolboy actor was made up so cleverly that it was difficult to distinguish between him and the real Sir Gregory Gillingwater.

"Well, let's go," he said briskly. "All you want me to do is to make the Head change his mind about the Test-match? Good! I'll wangle it—or bust!"

He made a move towards the door of the cottage.

"Supposing the chauffeur spots you?" asked Handforth anxiously.

"We shall have to risk that," put in Parkington, before Graham could answer. "If

the chauffeur notices anything we shall have to square him, that's all. But I don't think he will."

"Good luck, old man," said Hal Brewster. "And for goodness' sake be careful! If you're bowled out, it'll probably mean the sack."

The real Sir Gregory was still unconscious, but he was breathing easily, and it was evident that he was now in a sound sleep. The longer he slept, the better.

The chauffeur, whose name was Mills, was still feeling a bit shaky. A number of the boys had helped him to get the car out of the ditch. By much heaving and shoving and pulling, aided by the engine, they had done the trick. The big car was now standing on the side of the road, none the worse for its mishap. The only damage was a buckled wing and a twisted running-board.

Mills hadn't much opportunity of giving the false Sir Gregory a close scrutiny as he came out, for he was surrounded by boys. They assisted him along, and helped him into the car.

"It's all right—you sit where you are!" sang out Handforth, as the chauffeur prepared to get down. "We'll see Sir Gregory into the car all right. He wants you to take him straight to St. Frank's."

"Yes, young gentleman," said the chauffeur. "I hope Sir Gregory is better now?"

"A good deal better," replied Handforth truthfully.

They breathed a sigh of relief after the car had started. Mills, at all events, had noticed nothing particularly wrong with his employer.

"Well, he's gone," said Handforth, taking a deep breath. "Good luck to him! Rather a pity we can't be there to see how things go, though."

"We've got our duty here—looking after Sir Gregory," replied Parkington. "By all I've heard of that River House chap, he's going to wangle this thing for us."

DR. NICHOLLS, with a rather troubled little frown on his brow, was standing at the door of his house, looking out across Inner Court. His brow cleared, however, as he beheld a limousine gliding across from the Triangle. It was just after five now, and Sir Gregory was nearly three-quarters of an hour late. When the car stopped, the Head did not give the chauffeur a chance to get down and open the door. The Head opened it himself.

"Thank you, sir—thank you, indeed!" said Graham, in a low, weak voice. "I must apologise for being so late, but we've had a mishap on the road. Nothing serious—nothing to worry about. But disturbing and annoying. You are Dr. Morrison Nicholls, sir?"

"Yes, Sir Gregory," replied the Head, without a suspicion.

They went indoors, and Graham breathed more freely. He badly wanted to get out of

the chauffeur's way. Once inside the Head's house he felt considerably better; his natural confidence came to the fore.

"A horse!" he said, his voice stronger. "A confounded farm horse, sir! Dashed into the road and caused my chauffeur to run the car into the ditch. A painful business!" he added, rubbing the back of his head.

"If you are hurt, Sir Gregory——"

"No, no—I am quite all right!" interrupted the other firmly. "Please don't mention the matter again. What I need more than anything else just now is a good, strong cup of tea."

Graham was glad, when he got into the Head's drawing-room, that the light was somewhat subdued. He chose a seat in the darkest corner, with the window behind him. In this way he was in shadow, while Dr. Nicholls was in the full light. It was just as well to take these precautions.

"Ah! This is indeed comforting," said the visitor, as he stretched himself out. "I must say, Dr. Nicholls, that I am very, very favourably impressed with my first glimpse of St. Frank's. After tea you will have to take me round."

"I shall be very pleased to show you over the school," said Dr. Nicholls. "I understand, Sir Gregory, that you have come with the primary object of discussing that little matter which Sir John brought up at the last meeting of the Governors?"

Graham hadn't an earthly idea what was the "little matter," but he did know that Sir John Brent was the Chairman of the Governors. He waved an impatient hand.

"That will do later—after tea!" he said imperiously. "I cannot be bothered with business now, Dr. Nicholls. Good gracious! I'm not feeling at all myself; my voice is peculiarly affected—as you will no doubt notice after I have fully recovered. To tell you the honest truth, I am not quite myself."

"If there is anything I can do——"

"Tea!" said the visitor firmly. "What I want mostly is tea. I really feel that I can do justice to this meal, Dr. Nicholls. And, while we are partaking of the meal, let us discuss matters of no importance—matters of sport and so forth. I am very keen on sport, Dr. Nicholls. You take cricket seriously at St. Frank's, eh? Splendid! Before I go you will have to introduce me to your prominent cricketers. I have not the slightest doubt that I shall be introduced to some future England players, eh?"

"Yes, we have some very promising material here," agreed the Head. "And cricket, this summer, is particularly to the fore. The Test-matches are attracting a good deal of interest—in fact, rather too much interest so far as the boys are concerned."

"Too much?" interrupted Graham sharply. "How can that be, sir? How can there be too much interest in cricket?"

"Quite easily," smiled the Head. "Many of my boys are anxious to go off to the Test-match at Manchester."



The door opened and in walked Cyril Graham—disguised so that he was a replica of the injured St. Frank's Governor. "Marvellous!" declared Handforth in an awed voice.

"And, naturally, you are allowing them to go?" asked Sir Gregory. "I think it is splendid of the boys to show so much interest——" He paused, and looked at the Head strangely. "You are letting them go, aren't you?" he asked quickly.

Before the Head could answer, the door opened, and tea was brought in. The visitor looked uneasy and impatient until Phipps, the butler, had gone. Then he adjusted his glasses, and gazed across at Dr. Nicholls with a fixed stare.

"You are letting the boys go to the Test-match?" he repeated ominously.

"Well, to tell you the truth, I have strictly forbidden them to go," replied the Head, with a touch of diffidence. "You see, Sir Gregory——"

"I do not see, sir!" broke in Graham, springing to his feet. "I am amazed! I am startled! How can you sit there, sir, and tell me that you have refused to allow these boys to go to the Test-match? It is appalling! It is ridiculous!"

"My dear Sir Gregory——"

"Forgive my vehemence, sir!" went on the other. "But, really, you have amazed me. I am disappointed, too. You cannot possibly be serious!"

He sat down again, and accepted a cup of tea with such agitation that he spilled nearly a quarter of it into the saucer.

And by the look on Dr. Nicholls's face, Graham had an idea that everything was going well!

CHAPTER 4.

Working the Oracle!

THE Head stirred his tea thoughtfully. He was beginning to understand that this visitor was touchy. And nothing could alter the fact that Sir Gregory was a member of the Governing Body. As such he needed to be carefully handled.

"Why, in Heaven's name, have you forbidden these boys to see the Test-match?" asked Sir Gregory, biting viciously into a slice of bread-and-butter. "What is your object, sir?"

"You must allow me, Sir Gregory, to conduct this school in my own way," replied the Head, somewhat coldly.

"Yes, yes, to be sure!" said Graham, realising that he was on thin ice. "Good gracious! I hope you don't think, Dr. Nicholls, that I am presuming to dictate? You, as the headmaster, have complete and absolute control. I would not dream of interfering in any way."

The Head was mollified.

"We have ample cricket at St. Frank's," he said. "There is an important First Eleven match to-morrow, and if the Junior boys are really keenly interested in the game they will find plenty to attract them——"

"No, no! I cannot possibly agree with that!" interrupted Graham. "A school match, no matter how important, cannot compare with a Test-match between England and Australia. You, yourself, must surely know that, Dr. Nicholls. And if these boys are so

keen, why disappoint them? In my opinion, they show an admirable spirit. You must surely realise that there are many tips to be picked up at a big Test-match. Watching first-class cricket is an education in itself."

"That, of course, is perfectly true," admitted the Head.

"I admire these boys tremendously for showing such eagerness," continued Graham. "They are willing to spend their money on railway fares—on such a long journey as this one to Manchester. Really, it shows a splendid spirit. That is why I am bewildered at your own attitude. I am more than bewildered—I am keenly disappointed. However, you are the headmaster, and it is for you to decide. I will not presume to interfere."

He continued his tea in a somewhat huffy manner, changing the subject completely. He talked of football, of squash rackets, of flying. He dropped cricket altogether, but it was perfectly obvious that cricket was still foremost in his mind.

The meal gradually drew to a close.

"You must take me out and show me your playing-fields," said Graham, as he set down his empty cup.

"No, thank you, doctor. No more tea. I have had a splendid meal, and I am feeling much better. Will there be any cricket now?" he added, glancing at the window.

"Yes, there will probably be a match in progress," replied the Head. "A House match, I dare say."

"Excellent! Then let us go out at once," said Graham. "Oh, and by the way! About this Manchester Test-match. I dislike bringing up the subject again, Dr. Nicholls, but do you assure me that you have definitely prohibited the boys from going?"

"Very definitely."

"And you will not change your mind?"

"I see no reason why I should," replied the Head. "I am sorry, Sir Gregory, that we do not see eye to eye in this matter."

"We certainly do not," put in Graham. "We are completely at variance. It would please me enormously, sir, if you did the Big Thing. Indeed, I should regard it as a personal favour to myself if you rescinded your edict. It would be nice for me to leave St. Frank's knowing that you have been influenced to such an extent that you have generously seen this matter in another light. You will suffer no loss of dignity if you announce to the school that you have changed your mind."

The Head was in a quandary. He had no wish to offend this important member of the Governing Body—yet, at the same time, he was a man of firm convictions.

"There is far too much fuss made over these Test-matches," he said bluntly. "Cricket, as a game, is a first-class sport. Indeed, cricket is the King of Games. But we have plenty of it at St. Frank's, Sir Gregory, and it is my opinion that the boys should be satisfied with our own school games. Manchester is a very long way off, and it means considerable disruption of the routine. Boys must neglect work—"

"Surely they can make up that work later—next week?"

"Yes, that is possible, but—"

"Then why not let them go?" asked Graham earnestly. "Come, come, sir! As a

personal favour to me! Some of these boys have been good to me to-day—they assisted me after my accident—and it would please me enormously to know that you have shown this great generosity. I should not like the boys to know that I have been in any way responsible—"

"My dear sir, if I announce to the school that I have changed my mind, I shall certainly tell the school that I have done so at your request," interrupted Dr. Nicholls.

"I have no desire to shine as a bene-

factor," protested Graham. "I am only too pleased to hear you say this—for it indicates that you are softening. Come, Dr. Nicholls! You will do this for me, won't you? You will allow these boys to go to the Test-match? After all, not many of them can go—for it is only a comparative few who will be able to afford the trip. Let them have their pleasure, sir!"

Dr. Nicholls, rather amused by his visitor's earnestness, broke into a smile.

"Very well, Sir Gregory," he said. "You shall have your way. I will post up a notice immediately, saying that all boys who desire to see the Manchester Test-match can do so."

"Splendid! Thank you, Dr. Nicholls—thank you a thousand times!" said Sir Gregory gratefully. "You have indeed proved yourself to be a man of greatness. For it is only great men who change their minds. Lesser men pigheadedly stick to their first decisions, for they are unable to listen to reason or to argument. I may say, sir, that you have gone up very considerably in my estimation."

CONCERNING ST. FRANK'S!

Building operations at St. Frank's are now nearly completed; the East and Modern Houses will shortly be opened, and the famous school will once more become its old self, ringing to the laughter and shouts of ALL your favourite schoolboy chums.

Look out next week for full details of a series of LONG complete yarns, specially written by Edwy Searles Brooks, which are due to start in the NELSON LEE in a FORTNIGHT'S TIME!

"If I have pleased you, Sir Gregory, I am rewarded," said the Head graciously.

"Then I can take this as an absolute, definite promise?"

"Yes, of course."

"Then let us go out and see some of this cricket on your wonderful playing-fields," said the visitor, making a move towards the door. "Dear me! I do not feel quite so well now." He swayed slightly, but waved the Head back. "If you will allow me, sir, I would like to venture out alone for a bit," he went on. "Just a little walk will perhaps do me good. Or, better still, a drive in the car. Just a short drive round. I will return very shortly, and then we can discuss those other matters which are of such importance."

Two minutes later he was in the car and being driven back to the cottage.

CHAPTER 5.

Sir Gregory is Obliging!

HANDFORTH and Parkington, and a number of others were waiting in the road as the car came into sight. They fairly swarmed round it when it stopped, and Graham was hustled off towards the cottage.

"Well?" asked a dozen eager voices.

"It's all serene!" said Graham, with a grin. "I've fixed it a treat! The Head's changed his mind, and he's promised to put up a notice saying that you can go to the Test-match!"

"Graham, you're a genius!" said Handforth, wringing the River House boy's hand.

"Sweetheart, let me kiss you!" murmured Parkington.

"Why punish me for doing you a good turn?" retorted Graham.

They went in at the back, and within a few minutes Graham had removed his make-up. In the front room Sir Gregory was just recovering. He had half awakened some little time before, but his "nurses" had urged him to lie quiet. Now, however, he insisted upon getting up.

"What has happened?" he asked dazedly. "Where am I? What is this place?"

"You had an accident, sir," said Handforth gently. "Don't you remember? There was a horse in the road——"

"To be sure!" said Sir Gregory, in a voice which was totally unlike the one that Graham had used. "I remember the car dashing into the ditch, but after that——"

"You hit your head, sir, and lost consciousness," said Parkington. "We've been looking after you ever since. The doctor's been, but he said that it's nothing serious, and that you'll soon be all right."

"My head is throbbing abominably," said Sir Gregory. "Good gracious! What is the time? I was due at St. Frank's at half-past four. Dr. Nicholls will be worrying!"

"That's all right, sir," put in Handforth. "You've been to St. Frank's, and had tea with the Head. At least, the Head thinks you have. We've got to explain that. One of our fellows went there dressed up as you,

and we want you to be a good sport, sir, and forgive us——"

"Dressed up as me!" echoed Sir Gregory incredulously. "Rubbish, young man! Non-sense!"

"If you'll let us explain, sir——"

"I am not in a fit condition to listen to your chattering now," said Sir Gregory impatiently. "If it comes to that, I am not in a fit condition to go to St. Frank's, either. All I want to do is to go home."

"Your car's outside, sir," said Parkington, with a wink at Handforth.

"But my car is damaged——"

"Nothing to speak of, sir," answered Parkington. "Mills is ready, and if you like we'll go to the school and tell the Head that you can't get back. We'll say that you're not feeling well."

"Will you, really?" said Sir Gregory eagerly. "Splendid! That is very good of you, boys. I am grateful to you for all that you have done for me. Tell your headmaster that I have had this mishap, and make my excuses to him. Say that I will come down on some future occasion."

"But look here, sir——" began Handforth. "I don't see—— Ow! What the—— Here, keep your feet to yourself, Parkington, you clumsy ass!"

"Sorry!" said Parkington. "You silly ass!" he added, in a hissing whisper. "Dry up!"

FIVE minutes later, Sir Gregory Gillingwater had gone—and Handforth was still bewildered.

"He didn't want to go back to St. Frank's—and that's made all the difference!" said Parkington. "Why take the risk of telling him what we've done? He's gone back home now—and the Head will never know! Or, at least, he won't know until long after the Test-match, and then it won't matter."

"By George!" said Handforth, scratching his head.

"Nobody's come to any harm, and, as far as I can see, the spoof will stand," grinned Travers. "We can easily tell the Head that we came across Sir Gregory, and that he asked us to say that he wouldn't be returning because he was feeling a bit wonky. I daresay the Head will think it rummy—but what does that matter?"

In due course, the juniors went back to St. Frank's—after thanking Brewster & Co. very heartily for their help—and Parkington himself went to see Dr. Nicholls. The interview was brief. The Head, knowing his recent visitor had been feeling shaken up, wasn't a bit surprised to find that Sir Gregory had gone straight home.

That evening the notice appeared on the board, and there was much rejoicing. Once again the boys had won—and this time they had spoofed the headmaster himself!

Not that the Head ever knew it!

THE END.

(Another rollicking yarn featuring the cheery Chums of St. Frank's next week. Look out for the title: "The River Rivals!")

PINE WALK BATTLE

is the funniest and most original battle ever fought in history!

Night Before the Battle!

IT was the night before the grim battle between the Three "K" Brethren and the Hooded Horrors, which was due to take place on the common outside the town. Ern, Earl of Backstreet, leader of the Brethren, spent the evening in solemn preparation for the event of the morrow. Having sharpened the blade of his sword on his mother's doorstep, he descended the coal-chute, where the Three "K" Brethren awaited their chief.

Much had happened since Dicky Dyke, cap'n of the Hooded Horrors, had issued the great challenge. The news had spread and the Knighthood was now thirty strong. They were gathered in Mrs. Drawback's coal-cellar, helmeted, with shields, and some even had breastplates, gaudily painted. Sam, Squire of Gashouse Property, was now a full-blown knight, and very proud, too. Behold him standing by the side of Lou, Lord of Alleyway, armed with a wooden sword. He wore a white robe—it was one of his mother's sheets—upon which was gaily painted his coat of arms—a dragon on its hind legs with its tongue poked out at what looked like a gnat, but which Sam declared to be an enemy in flight.

There came the clang of swords being whipped from their sheaths as the valiant earl shot down the chute. Thirty voices shouted many discords: "St. George! St. George!"

"Shut up!" rasped the earl, his brow thunderous. "Me mother ain't gone out!"

Many a home that night was short of dust-bin lids and copper tops; broomsticks had been secretly severed from the broom, painted, and a hilt nailed on. The earl had levied a tax of six curtain-rings per squire, nine per knight and twelve per lord, the combined result being a shirt of mail, which he now wore. Lord Lou's mother had a gilt fern pot, shaped like an egg, which hung from the porch by three chains. Lord Lou had got away with it, and this he now presented, upon bent knee, to the gallant earl.

The battle was to commence with the dawn. The knights were sure of victory. Gassy, Hooded Horror No. 6, had been bribed to betray Dicky Dyke's secret plans, which Dicky Dyke had confided to three-quarters of the neighbourhood.



The THREE "K"

The town clocks were striking the hour of nine, pip emma, and Mrs. Drawback was listening to the wireless news, while Mrs. Dyke was nagging Mr. Dyke—as usual—when a hooded figure might have been seen creeping among the shadows up Orange-Pip Avenue, which leads into Beategg Road from which one might pass into Back Street along which the back garden of Mr. Drawback's residence runs for as much as fifteen feet.

As silently as an elephant in flight, the Hooded Horror climbed the fence and crushed Mr. Drawback's solitary marrow. From the marrow-bed the mystic figure made a bee-line for the coal-chute, a journey which necessitated the sacrifice of two rows of beans, a small flower-bed of sweet-peas and Mrs. Drawback's washing.

A call went forth into the night which Mrs. Drawback mistook for oscillation on the wireless, yet which in reality was the traitor's signal to the waiting knights.

A moment later Gassy appeared at the bottom of the coal-chute. In his hand he brought a bean, the dreaded symbol of the Hooded Horrors, and midst a silence it was solemnly burnt in a candle flame, as a sign that he supported the Three "K" Brethren.

"Speak!" commanded the bold earl, his mail jingling at every step he took.

flag upon a bush, spread out their soothing oils and lints, and then awaited the first casualties.

Suddenly, from nearby, they heard a voice. It came from little Eric Chuckhalfpenny, getting in some practice and reciting the burial service. He had on his father's frock coat and topper. His mournful accents sent cold shivers down the spines of the three little maidens who, with tears in their eyes, watched the knightly band pass up Pine-walk.

The east was a pearly-grey, changing to warmer hues rapidly. Dawn was at hand; a solemn stillness brooded over the common, and the pines swayed and whispered as if they understood that many a brave soldier was to fall before the sun had fully risen.

The knightly band was passing between the sand-banks when suddenly the air was filled with flying beans, small potatoes, and even marbles. Three dozen Hooded Horrors rushed from among the trees, using their catapults with such enthusiasm that the front members of the Three "K" Brethren received the first six rounds in the back of their necks.

Eggs, sand, and even water, deluged down upon the startled knights. The earl, his head eggy but unbowed, saw defeat facing him. He had been betrayed by Gassy.

Wrenching his sword from its sheath, he whirled it above his head, shouting: "St. George! St. George!" The blade came away from the hilt, and Lord Lou caught it where he hoped to put his breakfast later.

With a gasp he fell, rolled thrice in the sands and lay still. Two stretcher-bearers arrived on the scene, and so did little Eric Chuckhalfpenny, eager for his first burial.

A heated argument arose as to whether the weighty Lord of Alleyway was alive or dead. He was rushed to the three little maidens, who poured a mixture of paraffin, water, dripping and flour over him, to ease him of his sufferings.

"E's dead!" cried the doctor, and the corpse was solemnly carried to the grave.

One little maiden—the others could not be spared—followed, weeping. Lord Lou liked being carried; but he certainly didn't like being thrown into a six-foot grave. He struggled out, and his fist sent Eric Chuckhalfpenny staggering.

"You don't play fair!" wailed little Eric. "You're dead!"

Lord Lou was anything but dead. The taste of the soothing oils with which he was saturated, angered him. It also made him smell.

Meanwhile, the battle was going along quite nicely, thank you for inquiring.

Dicky Dyke's shorts still flew on high. Many, however, were in retreat, protesting the game wasn't being played fair. Bad eggs and flour, catapulted beans and small potatoes are all very well, but—

Defeat hovered, and the hard-pressed earl realised the fact. Seizing a catapult that a

wounded Hooded Horror had dropped, he hastily placed a bean in the sling, but in his excitement he fired at himself. His eye received it, and soon commenced to swell.

The sun was up by this time. Cries and yells filled the air. The ambulance brigade was very busy now. Not content with attending to the wounded, they were also carrying off the sound in wind and limbs.

Lord Lou returned from the grave. He carved a path to his leader's side by using fists and boots.

"The day is again' us, brave earl!" he shrieked.

"We can but fighting die!" hissed the earl through his teeth.

After the Battle!

ERIC CHUCKHALFPENNY became very annoyed as the battle proceeded. He commenced to bury the dead in batches, but no sooner were they dumped in their graves than they rose to renew the fighting.

Dicky Dyke rolled in the dust. It was his own fault. He did not realise he was so near the edge of the sandbank. Taking careful aim, with the intent to slay the Earl of Backstreet, he fell and rolled at the very foot of his dreaded foeman.

A cry of joy burst from the thinning ranks of the hard-pressed knights. From above the amazed, horrified Hooded Horrors saw their leader in the hands of the enemy.

Like a torrent of water they swept down the bank, and a real hearty hand-to-hand struggle followed.

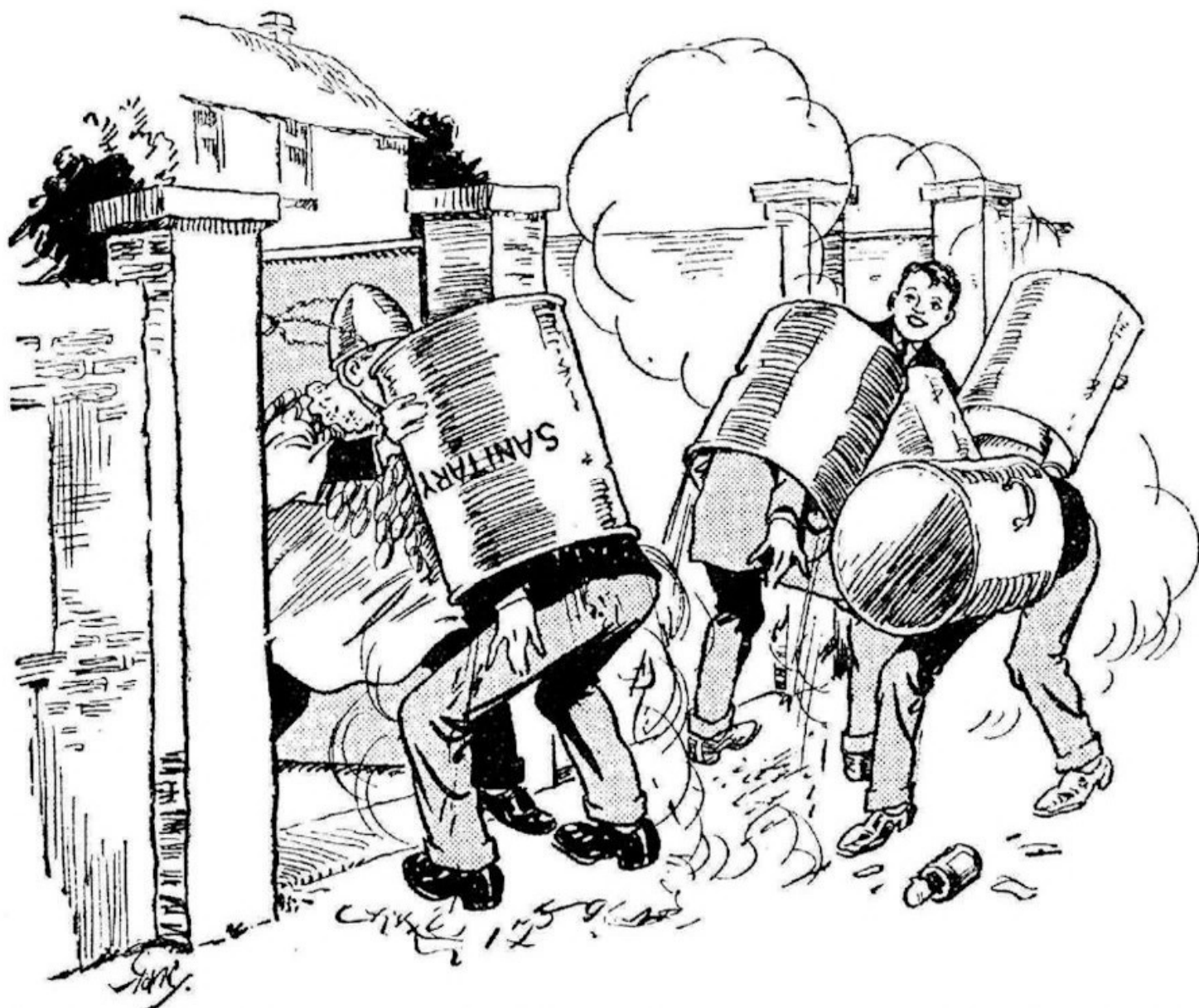
Outnumbered, his pennant in the hands of the sweating and tattered Dicky Dyke, Ern, Earl of Backstreet, gathered what was left of his band and commenced a retreat.

Inch by inch they grudgingly surrendered the common which was not theirs to lose. Lord Lou, Sam and half a dozen others remained by the side of their leader.

The outskirts of the town was reached. Suddenly the knights turned and bolted. With cries and yells, the triumphant Hooded Horrors pursued. The knights took shelter in the back gardens of the houses—one in each—and the H. H. followed.

Ern, Earl of Backstreet, was magnificent in defeat, as a good knight should be. In his hand he held a dust-bin, which he had spotted in the garden. Dicky Dyke came prancing through the tradesman's entrance, and suddenly felt the dust-bin rammed over his head and shoulders. The other knights had acted likewise to their respective pursuers. Dicky Dyke's standard bearer found his flag snatched away, and the earl's lost pennant was retrieved.

Gathering the knights together, Ern captured the Hooded Horrors. He cut off their trousers-buttons. They had to keep their hands in their pockets, and so they could neither run nor fight.



The pursuing Hooded Horrors suddenly found themselves pounced upon by the Three "K" Brethren, who rammed dustbins over the heads of their rivals.

Dicky Dyke threatened to tell his mother. Eric Chuckhalipenny was in a flood of tears and declared himself to be non-combatant. But no mercy was shown.

Down the coal-chute of Eric's residence the lot were sent. They were forced to empty their pockets. The spoils of war were heavy that morning.

But, even in the hour of triumph, disaster brooded over the head of the valiant Earl of Backstreet. A figure climbed the fence at the bottom of the garden and dropped upon Mr. Drawback's marrow-bed.

As noiselessly as a rhino having a swimming lesson, he fastened Mr. Drawback's water-hose to the garden tap, and then, crawling to the coal-chute, hissed:

"'Ands up, you wollers!"

Friend and foe alike turned. They were trapped. The cellar door was locked at the top, and the traitor held the hose and commanded the coal-chute.

"Traitor!" cried Dicky Dyke.

"Vile miscreant!" hurled the earl. "Avaunt!"

"Cut it art!" chortled Gassy. "'And up the spoils of war. An' quick!"

There was a moment's hesitation. A deluge of water altered opinions. Sweets, knives,

tops, string and a hundred other things of a schoolboy's pocket were tied in a bundle and handed up to Gassy.

"You wait!" threatened the earl.

"S'long, mates!" laughed Gassy. "We moves away to-day!"

That was the last seen or heard of the traitor. Before departing he placed the garden roller over the coal-chute.

Three hours later Mrs. Drawback heard sounds from the cellar below. She unlocked the door. One by one, crestfallen, tattered and torn, covered in sand, drenched to the skin, collars missing, coats torn, eyes swollen, the remnants of two armies trooped out.

Too amazed, she let them go. But the sight of Ern, Earl of Backstreet, revived her. Over his coat of mail he had placed his father's lost night-shirt, on which he had painted the cross of St. George.

The valiant earl felt himself seized by his neck. He was hoisted across his mother's lap.

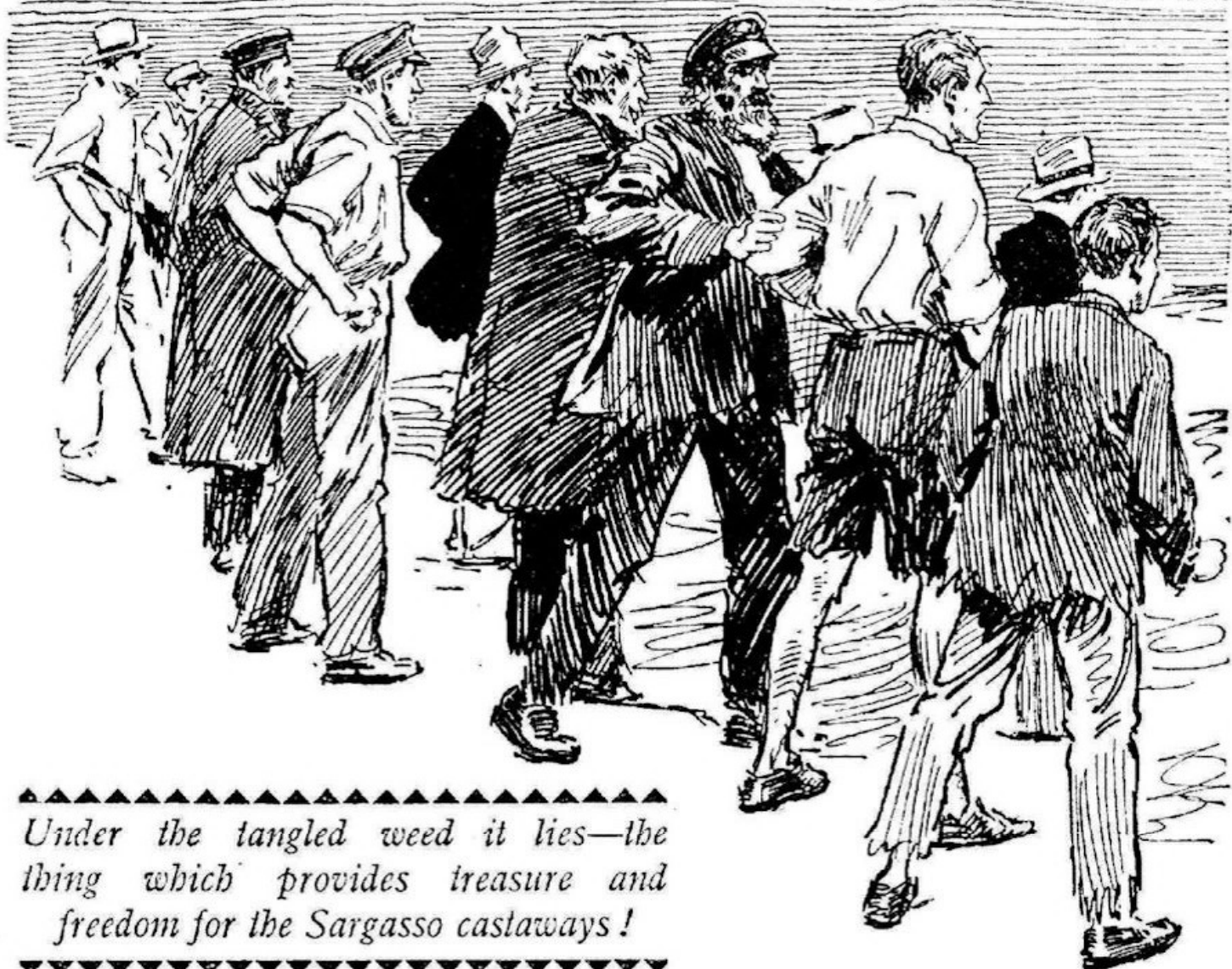
"Bin lookin' fer that, me boy!" she informed him, and then got in a bit of strenuous arm exercise.

Ern consoled himself in the fact that the Hooded Horrors were routed, and with the departure of Dicky Dyke from the town peace reigned once more.

THE END.

Corking Complete Yarn of Amazing Adventure in the Sargasso Sea!

Galleon



Under the tangled weed it lies—the thing which provides treasure and freedom for the Sargasso castaways!

CHAPTER 1.

Lost in the Weed!

THROUGH the swirling eddies of damp, clinging mist, the little party made slow progress over the spongy weed growth.

There were four in the party—Nelson Lee, Fenton, Browne and Stevens. They were all looking weary and haggard. Two of them carried great flaring torches, which sent a lurid glow over the dark weedscape. Billowing volumes of smoke left the torches to mingle with the swirling mist.

"It's no good, sir," said Fenton, after a while. "We've been searching for hours. There's not a sign of them. By this time they must have been dragged away by those horrible creatures!"

"I am afraid you are right, Fenton, but we must carry on," said Nelson Lee deter-

minedly. "There is always the chance that we have missed them. This weed is very deceiving. There are no landmarks by which we can identify any particular spot. We may have passed within twenty yards of the boys without knowing it. They may be comparatively near to us now."

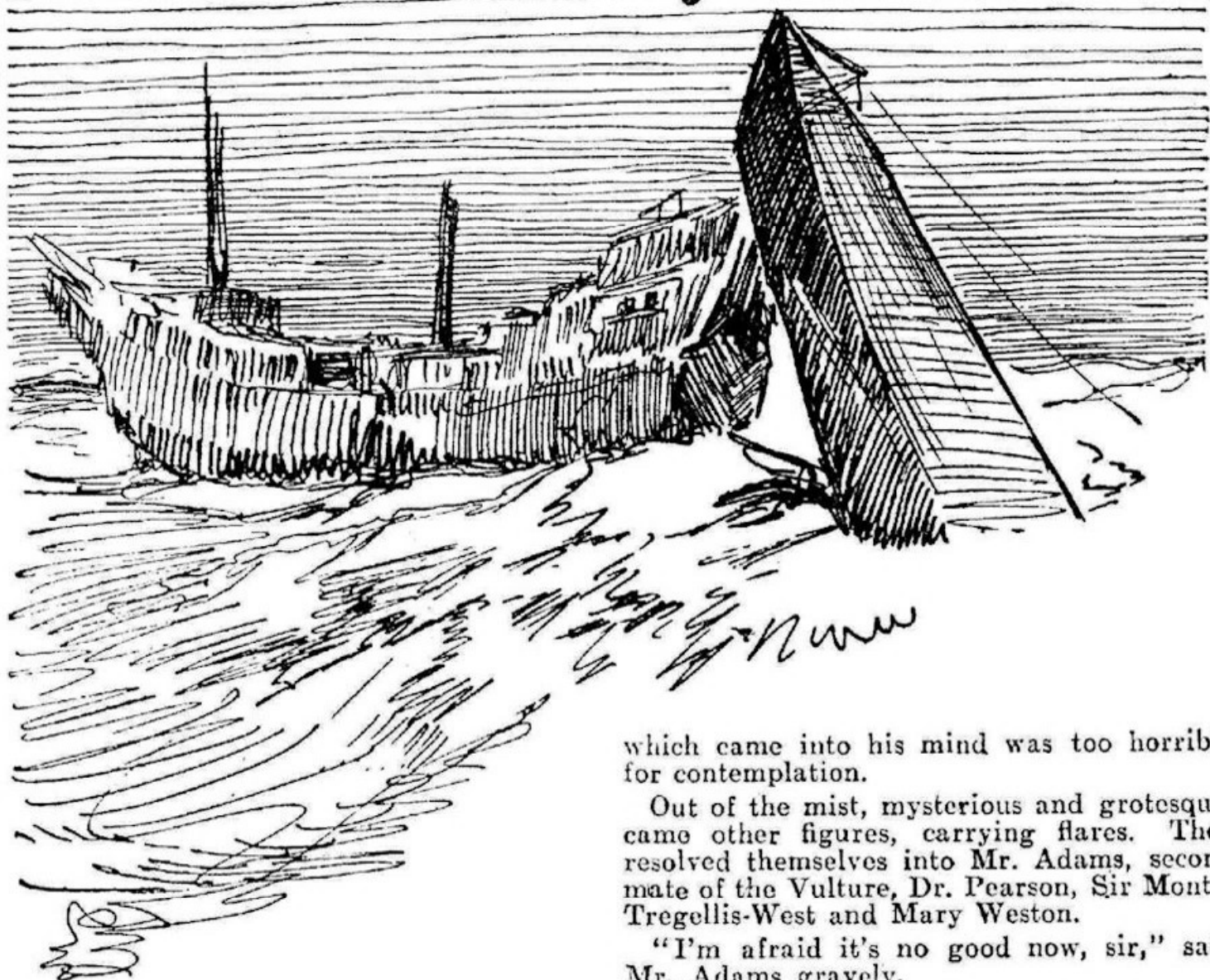
The others said nothing. They each felt in their own hearts that they were on a hopeless quest. Nipper and Tommy Watson were lost—lost for ever. The Weed Monsters had taken them—had carried them off many miles across the weed to their own bestial colony.

Every now and again a group of these Weed Monsters would be seen faintly in the distance. Queer, hairy, animal-like creatures, the descendants of a long-lost group of human beings who had been trapped within the recesses of the Sargasso Sea hundreds of

Featuring Nelson Lee, Famous Detective, and his Boy Assistants!

Gold!

BY S. B.
HALSTEAD



years ago—perhaps thousands of years ago. They were hardly human beings now; they seemed to be half-fish, half-human.

As long as the searchers carried torches they were safe. The Weed Monsters were baffled by the light, and they kept their distance. If the party had found itself in the total darkness, however, the creatures would have swarmed round in hundreds, and there would have been a quick finish.

"Nipper and Watson couldn't have stood any chance," said Stevens, after a while. "They were left out on the weed in the gathering darkness. Before we could get to them they were grabbed by these filthy brutes. That was hours ago. They're dead by now—or carried off somewhere. What possible chance is there that we can ever find them?"

"Very little chance indeed—but we must continue," said Lee fiercely. "Good heavens! To think of those poor boys being seized—"

He broke off, shuddering. The picture

which came into his mind was too horrible for contemplation.

Out of the mist, mysterious and grotesque, came other figures, carrying flares. They resolved themselves into Mr. Adams, second mate of the *Vulture*, Dr. Pearson, Sir Montie Tregellis-West and Mary Weston.

"I'm afraid it's no good now, sir," said Mr. Adams gravely.

"You have seen nothing—no sign?" asked Lee.

"Nothing, sir."

"Even I have failed—and I know the weed as nobody else knows it," said Mary quietly. "Oh, Mr. Lee! It's terrible, but Nipper and Watson must have been caught by the Weed Monsters."

Lee looked at the girl closely. She was only about fifteen, a slim, pretty, fragile-looking creature—but strong and lithe and brimming with health.

"What do you know of these weed men, Mary?" he asked. "Are they really dangerous? Do they kill their victims?"

"Worse than that!" whispered the girl, turning pale. "Oh, I can't speak of it—it's too, too horrible!"

She covered her face with her hands, and sobbed. Nelson Lee and the others understood, and their own faces became more haggard.

THE voyage of the four-masted brig, *Vulture*, had been exciting enough, but the events which had happened since she had become entangled in the eternal weed of the Sargasso Sea were a hundred times more dramatic.

Nelson Lee, the world-famous detective, and his six "cubs" had been shanghaied, and when they awoke they found themselves on that disreputable sailing-ship far out at sea. They had, in fact, been shipped "before the mast," and for many days they had suffered the bullying of Captain Blackford Angel and his rascally mate, Reuben Cragg.

Then the great storm had come, during which the brig had become almost a total wreck. Her rudder gone, her masts snapped off, she had drifted at the mercy of the currents. The captain, the mate and several members of the crew had stolen away in the longboat, taking all the available drinking water, and leaving Mr. Adams, the second mate, a few other members of the crew, and Nelson Lee and his boys to die of thirst.

By some curious trick of chance, however, they had all been drawn into the vortex of the Sargasso Sea. And here, in this place of everlasting weed, they had discovered a remarkable community of Lost People.

There were between thirty and forty—women, men and children. Old captain Weston was the "king," and these people had done marvels in converting the ugly collection of old hulks into an island of their own. They had built stagings, connecting ship to ship, they had decorated the hulks with beds of flowers, they had roofed many of them in, and they had provided themselves with comfortable homes. They were lost to the world—believing that never again would they see the civilisation they had left behind many years earlier. For no man had ever been known to penetrate to the very centre of the Sargasso and get away. The currents were too strong, the weed was too thick, too entangled, too vast.

The difficulties had been increased for these castaways by the fact that Captain Angel had made up his mind to "rule the roost." Not content with accepting the hospitality of these peaceful folk, he had sworn to grind them under his heel. He wanted to be the lord of life and death in this community—the king of them all.

In order to gain his evil end, Captain Angel had seized Nipper and Watson, and had held them as hostages. Then, at the moment when the captain had been parleying with Nelson Lee, a misunderstanding had arisen. The two boys had been carried out by Angel's confederates, and had been left far out on the weed, bound hand and foot, left there at the mercy of the weed creatures who, according to the island colonists, lived many, many miles away on the outer edge of the weed growth. These loathsome creatures were never seen during the daylight hours, and only once or twice during the years had they attacked; and then always by night—always stealthy, creeping, crawl-

ing, horrible. Open fighting was not their way; their method was to seize a victim in secret and to carry him off.

This, no doubt, was what had happened to Tommy Watson and Nipper. The Weed Monsters had seized the boys and carried them away to their own part of this weed continent.

TRAILING back in the misty darkness, the flares gleaming luridly, the various parties returned to the "island." It was not, of course, a real island, being merely a large collection of wrecks and hulks—ships which had collected throughout the centuries, and which now formed an extraordinarily miscellaneous gathering. They all floated, firmly entangled in the weed. This weed was so thick, and it descended so far beneath the surface of the sea, that it was like something solid.

Not a ripple ever disturbed the tranquility of this growth, which extended for some hundreds of miles. Towards the centre it was thicker and more compact, and this island was in the very centre—in the vortex. No matter how heavy the seas beyond, no disturbance of the surface was ever seen here. It was, indeed, difficult to realise that there was any sea anywhere near. Yet the ocean bed was probably a mile or two down. There were other perils at night, in addition to the Weed Monsters. There were giant crab-like creatures, enormous, hideous things which crawled over the slimy growth. Fortunately they were not rapid moving, and it was generally easy to avoid them.

Once or twice, as some of the parties passed an isolated old hulk—for dotted about here and there were lonely wrecks sticking out of the weed—a great outcry would arise: a screeching and squawking, and sometimes a bewildering chorus of chatterings.

Many of these lonely wrecks were inhabited by great colonies of monkeys. Others were the homes of parrots. The effect, in the intense darkness, with the mists swirling all around, was weird in the extreme.

These mists were not always present; they were peculiar to this particular season of the year. At other seasons there would be drenching, continuous rains.

Upon returning to the "island," Nelson Lee stood for some time in a lofty crow's-nest far above the deck of one of the old ships. He stared out over the weed, watching the other parties coming in. Occasionally he would call out, but the answer was always the same.

No success!

At last all the searchers had returned. Every yard of weed for a radius of several miles had been scoured, and it was evident that the two boys had met with disaster.

When Nelson Lee came down from the crow's-nest he found Captain Weston and Dr. Pearson and Mr. Adams and several others collected in a little group under one of the thatched roofs which covered most of the old wrecks. It was a quaint scene, illuminated by two yellow-burning oil lamps.

"This is a terrible affair, Mr. Lee," said Captain Weston gravely.

Nelson Lee's face was pale and drawn.

"I want to see Captain Angel," he said steadily. "You imprisoned him somewhere, I believe?"

"I'll take you to him, Mr. Lee," put in Mr. Adams. "I locked him up in one of the old store-rooms—in this very ship, too."

Nelson Lee turned without a word, and Mr. Adams, seizing a lantern, led the way. They went down through a comfortable saloon, which more closely resembled the sitting-room of an old country house. Passing through this, they went down another passage, descended some stairs, and Adams unlocked a door.

"So you've thought of me at last, 'ave you?" came a growling voice. "By hokey! What sort of a game do you call this? 'Ere am I, gaspin' with thirst——"

"Your thirst, Captain Angel, must wait!" interrupted Lee curtly. "Perhaps it will give you some satisfaction to know that those two unfortunate boys, whom you seized, are lost."

The burly ruffian backed away under Nelson Lee's fierce gaze.

"It wasn't my fault!" he growled. "You know as well as I do that Adams, here, loosed off his gun. That was the signal I had arranged."

"Why did you not tell us that you had arranged such a signal?" demanded Lee harshly. "Man alive! Do you realise that those poor boys have been seized by the Weed Monsters? There is not one chance in a thousand that they are alive now. Indeed, I am hoping that they are *not* alive."

"Mr. Lee!" protested Adams.

"I mean it," said the detective curtly. "Better to be dead than alive in the hands of such vile things! And this man is responsible."

"It's a blamed lie!" protested Captain Angel. "It wasn't my fault——"

"Not your fault!" thundered Lee, turning upon him ferociously. "You infernal scoundrel! You shall pay to the utmost limit for this, Angel! What you have done is little short of murder. The fact that the signal was given by mistake is neither here nor there. You arranged this dastardly business, and you shall suffer!"

"'Ere, wait a minute!" snarled the rascally skipper, reaching forward and seizing Nelson Lee by the arm. "You can't pull that stuff on me, you slabsided son of a cockroach! I'm as good as you are, an' we'll all in the same boat on this blamed island!"

"Take your filthy hand off me!" interrupted Lee hotly.

"Not until you think ag'in about keepin' me prisoner!" shouted Angel. "I'm a ship-master, an'——"

Crash!

Nelson Lee was at the end of his patience. His right came round, and caught Captain Blackford Angel on the point of the chin. The man went over like a ninepin, thudding heavily to the floor.

"Lock the door on him, Adams," muttered Lee. "Take him food and water later."

Mr. Adams, rather startled, locked the door.

"I'm sorry about that," said Lee, once more his usual cool self, as they went up to the deck. "I'm afraid I lost my temper, Adams."

"I don't wonder at it, sir," said the second officer of the Vulture. "That dirty rogue has caused us enough trouble already."

He knew why Nelson Lee had "let-fly." There was a limit even to his endurance; and the fate of Nipper and Watson had left Lee's nerves on edge.

CHAPTER 2.

The Man From the Unknown!

IT had been practically dark when Nipper and Tommy Watson had been left lying helpless on the weed. The evening mists were thick. The two boys were lying side by side, bound hand and foot, and they had mufflers tied round their heads so that they could make no outcry. They had been dragged far away from the main "island" by Captain Angel's men—Cragg and Schwartz.

It took Nipper just about two and three quarter minutes to work the "gag" away from his mouth. He was an expert at such things. Wriggling round, he seized Tommy's muffler with his teeth, and pulled it clear.

"Thanks, old man," panted Watson. "That's a whole heap better."

"Now we'll have a shot at these ropes," said Nipper, trying to speak cheerily. "Pretty nasty fix, eh, old son? Well, we've only got ourselves to blame. We were a couple of chumps to fall into Captain Angel's trap."

"Where are we?" asked Watson, looking round. "I can't see anything; this mist is too thick."

"I think we must be at least a mile from the island," replied Nipper. "I don't know exactly what the game is, but it's bound to be ugly."

He wriggled, testing his bonds; and it did not give him much satisfaction when he realised that the ropes were tightly knotted, and that they were strong. Given an hour—or perhaps two hours—he might work his way free, but to gain his liberty within a few minutes was out of the question.

"It won't take us long, old man," he said cheerily. "You have a go at your ropes, and I'll see what I can do with mine."

"It's no good talking like that, Nipper," said Tommy. "You know jolly well that we can't get free. And—and there are those—those——"

He broke off, looking round with fearful eyes. Tommy Watson was no coward, but he knew the perils of this weed growth. He could dimly see for perhaps five or six yards through the swirling mist.

"Oh, there's no danger," said Nipper. "You're thinking of those Weed monsters, eh?"

Tommy shuddered.

"They'll get us, Nipper!" he whispered. "I tell you, they'll get us!"

"Rats! They don't leave their retreats until after dark," said Nipper. "Mary Weston told us distinctly that they're never seen during the daytime."

"But it's not daytime," insisted Watson. "Darkness is nearly here—and it will be completely on us within a few minutes. And what can we do? Why not shout? The air's still, and our voices might carry."

"It's a good idea," said Nipper. "There's no telling. We might be nearer to the island than we think—"

"Look!" gasped Watson abruptly. "I knew it! Oh, my hat! They're coming, Nipper—they're on us!"

Nipper caught his breath in sharply. He was horrified. Dimly, vaguely through the mist, figures were approaching—crouching, hump-backed monstrosities, with long animal-like arms.

The two boys watched, fascinated.

The Weed Monsters were approaching cautiously, and they made no sound. They were covered with a thick furry hair, and it fell in shaggy masses over their ears and foreheads.

"Keep your pecker up, old son," muttered Nipper. "This is going to be nasty."

"Help—help!" shouted Tommy, his voice cracking. "Oh, I'm not funky, but this—this—"

"I know," said Nipper. "Come on—we'll both shout together. It might scare them off."

They yelled, but their voices seemed to come back to them, beaten back by the mist. Neither were their attackers scared away. They came nearer more quickly, sensing, perhaps, that their victims were helpless. As they came they brought with them a horrible, musky-fishy odour. At the last moment they fairly pounced, leaping over the weed, and swarming round the two helpless boys in dozens.

"It's all up, Tommy," said Nipper huskily. "Well, cheerio, old man. Keep a stiff upper lip."

"Rather!" said Tommy Watson bravely. "I'm game!"

Further conversation was impossible. The weed creatures were lifting them up, carrying them off. The two boys could hear the breathing of their loathsome captors—quick, steady breathing, not unlike a continuous sort of gurgle; and now and again they made guttural sounds, one to another.

After the first shock, Nipper grew calm—and so, for that matter, did Tommy Watson. They overcame their initial horror, and they were fascinated by the appearance of their captors.

Undoubtedly, they had originated from human beings. In some distant, far-off age, the ancestors of these men had probably been shipwrecked mortals. Perhaps far back in the Ice Age, or even earlier. It was impossible to tell.

The two boys were being dragged over the weed. They had half-expected to be torn

limb from limb on the spot; but their captors had some sort of concerted plan in mind. No doubt they were taking their victims to their own hideous colony.

"Well, they don't seem to be after our blood," said Nipper, as he found himself close to Tommy. "Things may not be so bad, after all."

"If only we could get free from these ropes we'd have a smack at them," panted Watson. "Anything's better than being helpless like this!"

"Yes," agreed Nipper. "Going under fighting is one thing—and being dragged along in this way, never knowing what's going to happen to us in the end, is another! Still, what's the good of grouching? While there's life there's hope."

"Perhaps Mr. Lee will come after us soon," said Tommy.

But he had very little hope that such would be the case. Already they were a long way from the island; and they were being taken farther and farther away every minute. The mist was deepening, and night was falling rapidly.

IT seemed an endless, everlasting journey. The boys lost all count of time and distance. The darkness had descended like something solid, and they could not see a foot in any direction.

They wondered how their captors could possibly know their direction; but in some uncanny way these creatures appeared to have the faculty of actually seeing in the dark, although it was far more probable that their hearing was so acute that they found their direction by this sense. As usual, in this strange land of weed, the coming of total darkness signalled the lifting of the mist.

"Well, we're having a pretty long trip," said Nipper suddenly.

His voice sounded extraordinarily loud amid that utter silence; for the weed men, paddling over the spongy surface, made little or no noise. Tommy Watson was startled.

"Yes," he said, with an effort. "I wish it would finish. Anything is better than this suspense."

"Well, I don't see how it can last much longer," said Nipper. "Surely we are coming to—"

He broke off abruptly, for suddenly the weed men had halted. A fluttering whisper passed from one to another through their ranks. It was like a note of alarm.

"What's happened?" asked Watson, with a catch in his voice. "Are—are we there?"

"I don't know," replied Nipper. "But I thought I heard something a minute ago—and these things must have heard it, too."

"Help! Help!" yelled Watson. "Perhaps its some of the—"

Then he broke off with a despairing groan. What was the good of shouting in that panic-stricken fashion? There wasn't one chance in a million that any member of the island party was near here.

A curious guttural muttering passed between the Weed Monsters. After a pause of

some minutes—during which the creatures remained deathly still—they picked up their burdens once more. The journey continued.

"Something must have disturbed them," said Nipper presently. "One of those giant crabs, perhaps."

After a while there was another pause, during which the weed men listened again. It was fairly clear that they were uneasy. Nipper could even hear them sniffing, like so many hounds. Perhaps they could smell something on the air—the scent of some enemy.

"I don't know what to make of this," said Nipper. "But it's no good hoping, Tommy. There can't be any of our people about. They would use flares——"

Zzzrrrrh!

Suddenly, dramatically, a zizzling roar

sounded, and a spear of fire shot up into the blackness of the night. It was so unexpected, so surprising, that both Nipper and Tommy uttered gasps. The weed men dropped their burdens and started back, making strange, frightened little sounds.

"A rocket!" panted Watson. "We must be mad! It can't be——"

Puff-puff-puff!

It wasn't a rocket, but a star shell, and it had been sent up from quite close at hand. Now, just overhead, the sky was spangled with a number of dazzling white points of fire. The weed, for many hundreds of yards, was illuminated as though by daylight. The boys could see their queer enemies scuttling off in panic-stricken terror, running in every direction.

"What does it mean?" asked Nipper amazedly. "Look! There's something else now—a kind of torch! Can't you see it over there? Not a burning brand, but an electric torch!"

The beam was distinct and clear-cut in the night air, and it now wavered round, hesitated, and finally settled upon the two boys. It came nearer.

"Who is it?" shouted Nipper. "Quick! I don't



Watching in amazement, Nipper and Watson saw the man disappear down the big gaping hole in the weed.

know who you are, but we're bound and helpless. Those weed men——"

He broke off as a figure came up at a run. Dimly behind the torch light the boys could see a grotesque travesty of a human being. He was a tall man, and he was dressed in rags and tatters. His hair was long and unkempt; his beard was in a similar condition.

"Gott in Himmel!" came a voice from behind the torch. "Poys! White Englander poys! And from the seaweed men I save you!"

CHAPTER 3.

Into the Depths!

NIPPER and Tommy Watson were so startled at first that they could hardly think of any reply.

"It's a man!" babbled Tommy, at length. "Oh, thank goodness! We're safe—safe!"

"Who are you?" asked Nipper, trying to make his voice steady. "I believe you are German, but——"

"Ach, hein. I from Chermany came," said the man, going down on his knees, and feeling at Nipper's bonds. "And you? You come here—how? You are Pritish, hein? Ach, but you are of the enemy."

"Enemy?" said Nipper, puzzled. "What do you mean? I think you are the best friend we have ever had!"

"You are Englander poys—not soldiers, not sailors, und so, perhaps, you do no fight?" asked the German.

"Fight?" ejaculated Nipper. "But why should we fight? And whom?"

"Mein Gott! Haf you of the war not heard?"

"The war?" shouted Nipper, a light of understanding dawning upon him. "But the war has been over for years and years!"

"Ofer?" said the old man, clutching at Nipper, and staring into his face. "Himmel be praised! Deutchland uber alles! Deutchland is victorious, hein?"

"Does it matter?" asked Nipper. "Germany and England are friends now. We have been friends again for years!"

"Great Scott!" murmured Tommy Watson. "He must have been here so long that he doesn't even know that the Great War is over!"

"Chermany und England—friends!" said the man, in a dull kind of voice. "Ach, but that, it is goot. Much you shall tell me, mein young friendts. Come! Your ropes, we will cut."

He produced a sharp knife, and within a minute both the boys were released. They were glad enough to struggle to their feet, and to stretch their aching limbs. Fortunately, their bonds had not been tied cruelly tight, so they did not suffer much from impeded circulation.

The Weed Monsters seemed to have gone; they were kept at bay by the light. Yet, no doubt, they hovered about in the dis-

tance, waiting to pounce at the first opportunity. Both the boys were still bewildered; amazed at their escape, and puzzled as to how this man had so dramatically appeared upon the scene.

"We don't understand," said Nipper. "Who are you, sir? Where did you come from? Is there a ship near here?"

"But you," said the German. "I? I am Captain Lieutenant Otto von Zimmern. Mine ship, it is the U426."

"A submarine?" asked Nipper quickly.

"Hein," nodded the other. "But yes. Where you from come?"

"Don't you know?" asked Nipper, staring. "Don't you know of the island?"

"You speak of islands?" said Von Zimmern. "There are no islands here?"

"Don't you know anything about Captain Weston and Dr. Pearson and all those other people?" asked Nipper. "Back there, across the weed? All those ships, grouped together, forming a floating island? Haven't you ever been there? Don't you know anything about ——"

"Mein Gott! You say other people, they are here?" interrupted the German. "For years I think I am alone. The one man in all this waste! Und now you tell me of others!"

"Well I'm hanged!" said Nipper, glancing at Tommy Watson. "He doesn't know anything about that island colony! Where is your ship, sir?" he went on, turning to Von Zimmern. "For goodness sake, take us there! We are parched with thirst; and it is none too safe out here, either."

The German waved an eloquent hand.

"You speak of the seaweed men?" he asked, almost contemptuously. "Ach, they are but things of the night! They see the light, they run. Und while we haf the light, it is goot. But come! Into mine ship shall you enter. So the war, it is ofer. I am pleased."

Muttering to himself, obviously as excited as the boys—perhaps more so—he led the way across the weed, flashing his torchlight here and there. Lurking in the distance could be seen the dim, shaggy figures of the weed men, but none of them came near.

Presently the German halted. At his feet there was a great gaping hole in the weed. It was like the end of a shaft, not more than two or three feet across; and to the astonishment of the boys they saw, when the German flashed his light on it, that there was a crudely constructed rope ladder hanging downwards.

"What's this?" asked Nipper in amazement. "Where does this lead to?"

"I go—you follow," said Von Zimmern. "Then, mine young friendts, you shall see."

Freshly intrigued, the boys unhesitatingly followed their leader. This adventure was taking an extraordinary turn. They had expected to see a battered, rusty hulk; the remains of an ancient German submarine. Yet there was nothing—nothing except this hole in the weed.

Very soon there came the sound of a metallic clang. Nipper found his feet resting on something solid. He was beginning to guess at the truth now. This German submarine was not on the surface, but deeply entangled in the weed, some distance down. The weed here, in fact, was moist. This funnel-like opening apparently led straight upwards from the submarine's conning-tower. Her actual decks, no doubt, were completely in the water.

They descended an iron ladder now, and fresh amazement was theirs when they found themselves in a little control-chamber, where electric lights were gleaming, and where everything was spick and span and glittering. This was no wreck such as Nipper had expected.

"I can't believe I'm awake," said Watson, as he looked round with dazed eyes.

Von Zimmern waited until they were down, then he climbed the iron ladder again, and a clang announced that he had closed the metal lid. The boys waited, and their strange rescuer soon reappeared. Now, under the electric light, they could see that he was much younger than they had first believed; his tangled hair and his beard gave him a false appearance of age. Actually he could not have been a year more than fifty. His eyes were kindly, and they were now filled with an eager light.

"Wait!" he said, his voice quivering.

He left them again, diving through a narrow metal doorway. Soon he returned with a big jug of water and a dish of cold fish.

"Drink—und eat," he said. "Mine friendts! Mine young friendts! That you are poys of the enemy no difference does it make."

"But we are not!" protested Nipper. "Haven't I told you that England and Germany are no longer enemies?"

"Already haf I forgotten," said Von Zimmern. "Mine head, she sings. I am what you call muddled. Now tell me. Of yourselves—of these others you haf spoken. Tell me all—all! Mine ears, they are eager."

He was like a child, bubbling with impatience. He listened intently, fascinated, while Nipper, occasionally helped by Watson, told him everything.

CAPTAIN-LIEUTENANT OTTO VON ZIMMERN sighed when he had heard all.

"Und I lif here without knowing!" he said, hammering his head with his knuckles. "For years I think I am the only man."

"Didn't you ever go across tho weed?" asked Nipper.

"I haf work here—work which keeps me always," replied the German. "In the distance I sometimes see wrecks, but I nefer go. Ach, yes! But I go to one. A big ship, she come, and from her I get food. Plenty tea—sugar—meat in tins—drink. Much drink

in pottles. All by mineself I drink champagne und make merry, hein?"

"It's the rummiest thing I've ever heard of," said Nipper, scratching his head. "Captain Weston and his people, of course, never even saw you, because you didn't leave your own locality. I dare say this ship you speak of lies in the other direction, anyhow. And even if some of Captain Weston's men did come this way, they might have passed within a hundred yards of this submarine without knowing of its presence. They wouldn't think anything of a hole in the weed."

"They're not so close, either," put in Watson. "I reckon those horrid weed creatures must have carried us the better part of seven or eight miles."

"Perhaps even farther," said Nipper. "And now we're safe—safe after we had given ourselves up for lost. By jingo! Won't the guv'nor be pleased! You'll let us go back when daylight comes, won't you, sir?"

"We are friendts, are we not?" asked Von Zimmern, with a twinkle. "Why shoul I try to keep you? You go—und I go with you. To me this is a joy. You haf men there—many men?" he added eagerly. "Gott in Himmel! Then my work, it has not been for nothing."

He paced up and down the confined space, like a cat on hot bricks. His face had become flushed with excitement.

"What exactly do you mean?" asked Nipper. "What is this work you refer to?"

"You understand it not?" almost shouted Von Zimmern. "But haf you no eyes?"

"You mean, keeping everything spick and span like this?" asked Nipper.

"Come!" said the other. "You—I will show you!"

"Wait a minute!" said Nipper. "You haven't told us how you got here. And what about all the other members of your crew?"

The German was suddenly sobered.

"We were crossing the Atlantic," he explained quietly. "The U426—it is a big submarine. One of the biggest. We get into a storm, our engines go wrong. We drift. Ach! And then we get caught in the weed. We talk, we plan. My companions are afraid that nefer will they get free, und so they signal to passing sailing-ship. She also drift in weed, but she can sail out. Und so my companions go."

"Why didn't you go, too, sir?" asked Watson curiously.

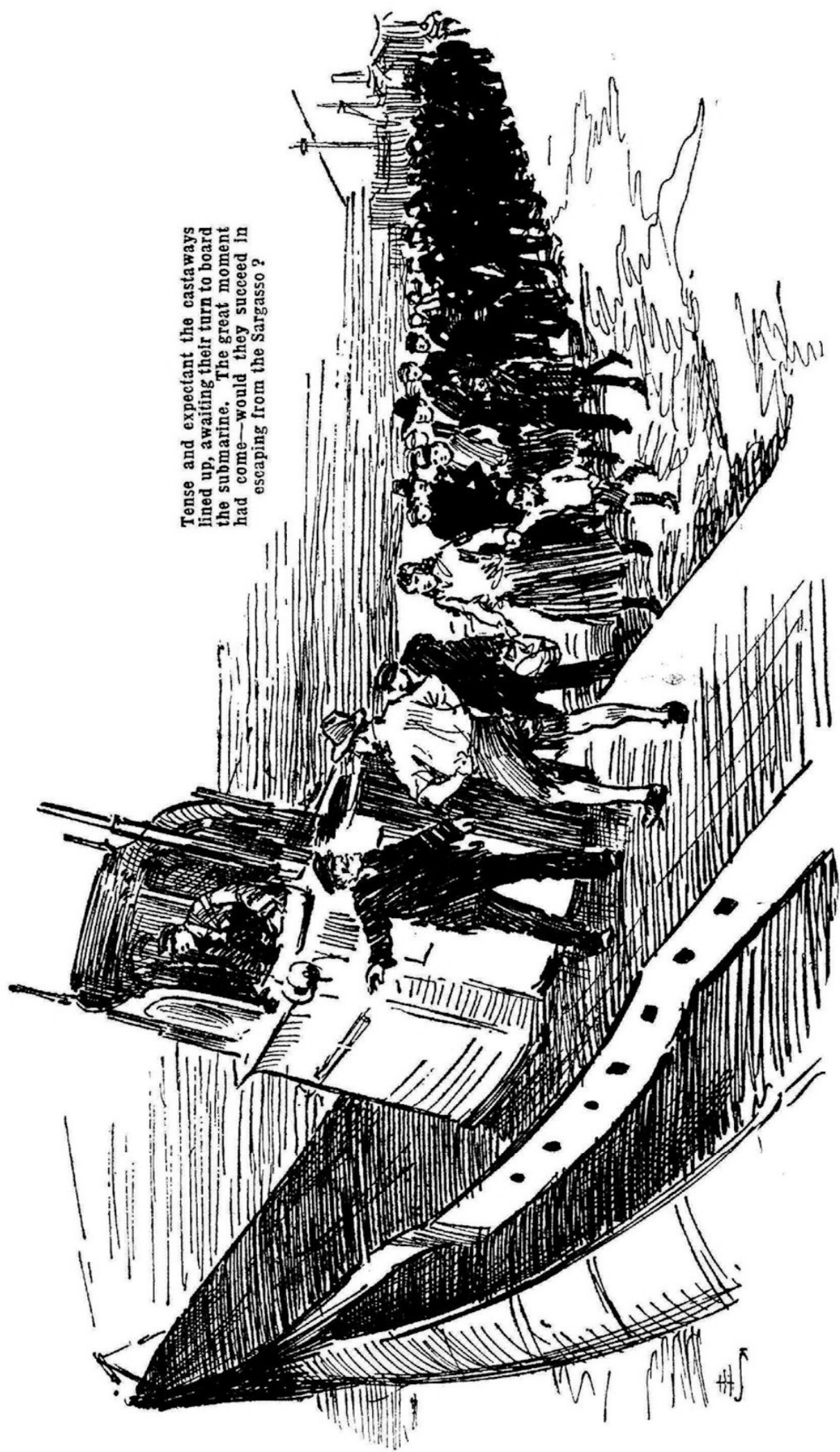
"I leafe my ship? Desert my command?" asked the other, with dignity. "Nein! They entreat me—they beg—but nein! They go—I stay! Und so I drift deeper und deeper into the weed."

He did not seem inclined to pursue the subject; it was obviously distasteful to him. No doubt he had never forgiven his officers and crew for deserting their ship.

Fresh amazing surprises awaited the two boys.

They were taken from compartment to compartment of the submarine; everywhere

Tense and expectant the castaways lined up, awaiting their turn to board the submarine. The great moment had come—would they succeed in escaping from the Sargasso?



the whole ship was glittering. The engines, under the electric light, gleamed and reflected. They were dazzling; burnished to a high polish. It seemed incredible that this one man could have kept the submarine in such perfect condition.

"Why, you must be at work continuously," said Nipper, startled.

"From when I get up until I sleep," explained Von Zimmern. "Nefer do I rest—or the rust and decay will ruin my fine ship."

The two boys, who once more were gazing around them, marvelling at the spick-and-span condition of the submarine, turned quickly at the man's last words.

"Do you mean to say that this submarine is still seaworthy?" asked Nipper.

"Her engines, they are goot," replied Von Zimmern, with pride. "One year I take, but I repair. One day you shall see them—so smooth, so silent. I haf trouble with the batteries, so that under the surface she cannot run for long. Yet even the batteries I keep in order."

Nipper was looking rather dazed.

"Then—then if you had men you could run her?" he asked breathlessly.

"Ach, it is the men," agreed Von Zimmern. "Alone, I can do nothing. I cannot run a U-Boat by mineself. But with a crew I take mine boat back to Kiel, und—"

"Take her back to Kiel!" yelled Watson. "You mean that she's seaworthy—that she'll make the trip?"

"It's a chance for us!" ejaculated Nipper. "There are plenty of men on the island, and this ship is big enough to take all of us. Great Scott! Perhaps we might see civilisation again yet!"

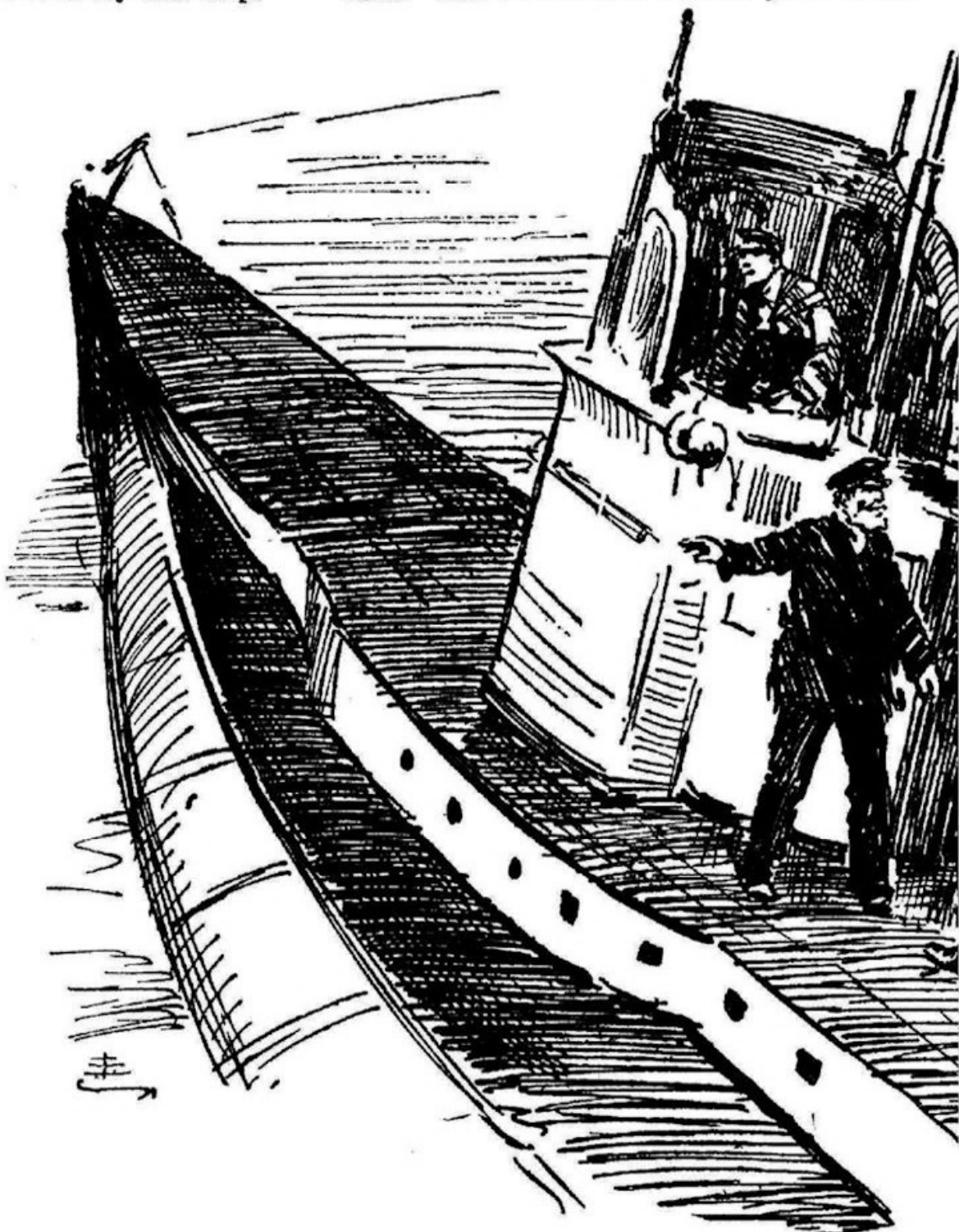
CHAPTER 4.

Returned From the Dead!

DAWN found Nelson Lee still awake. Not many of the island community, in fact, had slept during that dreadful night. Even the women and the

children knew of the tragedy which had befallen the two boys, and there was general sorrow. Mary Weston could not be consoled. It seemed that she had taken a strong liking to Nipper, and the knowledge that he had been abandoned to the Weed Monsters horrified her.

With the dawn came the thick, rolling banks of mist. Nelson Lee, standing on one of the decks, stared out over the endless weed. Md. Adams and Fenton joined him.



"We're getting some search-parties ready, sir," said Mr. Adams. "As soon as this mist lifts we're going out in every direction. The doctor is leading one party, I'll take another, Fenton will lead a third—"

"It is good of you, Adams," said Lee gratefully, "but I fear that all our efforts will be useless—now. Our only chance of success was to find them last night. Heaven only knows what has happened to them by this time!"

"There might be a chance, sir," urged

Fenton. "We *must* search, and we must keep it up until we are exhausted."

"What about Angel, sir?" asked Mr. Adams. "What are we going to do about him?"

"Don't ask me," replied Lee wearily. "The man deserves to be flogged, but that will not bring back the lives of those two boys——"

He broke off, sighing.

Mr. Adams, looking round, caught a glimpse of a slim figure mounting the rigging of one of the ships near by. He stared.

"That girl is as nimble as a monkey," he said admiringly. "Look at her now, Mr. Lee! Hanged if she isn't climbing up to that crow's-nest, and she's got a telescope with her, too."

Tense and expectant the castaways lined up, awaiting their turn to board the submarine. The great moment had come—would they succeed in escaping from the Sargasso?



They all looked at Mary Weston as she climbed. They saw her get into the crow's-nest at the top of the mast. From that point of vantage she could look over the great expanse of weed in every direction, and as soon as the mists lifted the vista would be extensive.

"Poor kid, she's frightfully cut up about it," said Fenton. "Well, if it pleases her to go up there, I don't suppose it will do her any harm. By Jove! Look at that mist! Isn't it rummy how it clears off?"

Almost while he had been speaking a big

bank of the mist rolled away. They could see across the weed for miles. The mist seemed to lift in a great cloud, and it drifted sluggishly away, rising continuously. Overhead the haze was still thick. The sun was rising, doing its utmost to beat through the humid vapour. Within twenty minutes there was scarcely any mist left. And now there were many signs of activity. On several of the ships the search-parties were being prepared. Nelson Lee himself took charge of one.

Up in the crow's-nest Mary, with the telescope to her eye, stood scanning the flat, drab, ugly weedscape. Suddenly she stiffened. She steadied her telescope and stared. A little gasp came into her throat.

"Oh, it is madness!" she murmured. "I must be imagining—— No, no! There are figures! I can see them!"

In a fever of excitement she forced herself to hold the telescope steady. Her breath was quick, and she could feel the tumultuous beating of her heart.

Figures! Figures in the distance!

Once again she steadied herself, and stared through the levelled telescope. The figures came into sharper focus. There were three of them—two much smaller than the third. With a shriek of joy she definitely recognised Nipper and Tommy Watson. The other figure she did not know; but it was a man. They were all walking together, hurrying across the weed, leaping from mass to mass.

Flinging her telescope aside, she leapt out of the crow's-nest. Those

who were watching her thought she had gone mad. She slithered down the rigging with reckless abandon. At any moment the watchers expected her to slip and to crash to the deck below.

"Father!" she cried wildly. "Mr. Lee! Dr. Pearson! Oh, quick—quick!"

"What is it, child?" asked Dr. Pearson, running to meet her as she reached the deck.

"They're coming—they're safe!" she panted, her eyes glowing.

"Mary! What are you saying?" gasped Dr. Pearson. "My poor girl, you must be dreaming!"

"No, no—I tell you they are coming!" cried Mary. "I've seen them—through the telescope! Nipper and Tommy and a third figure—a man! I tell you, they're safe!"

Nelson Lee came running up.

"What is this?" he asked, forcing him-

self to speak steadily. "You say that you have seen those two boys, Mary? If such a thing is possible——"

"Oh, please look!" urged the girl. "Take the telescope! Look!" And she pointed. "Don't you see, Mr. Lee?"

Lee levelled the telescope; he adjusted the lens.

"By Heaven, she's right!" he said tensely. "The boys are safe!"

"You mean it, sir?" asked Sir Montie Tregellis-West, his voice unsteady. "Begad! I'm not a bit surprised—I'm not really! Dash it, Nipper's not the kind of fellow to go under so easily. He generally comes out on top!"

"The amazing thing is—how did they escape?" asked the doctor, who was in a fever of impatience. "In Heaven's name, how? We have always believed that it meant death to be abroad on the weed after dark."

"They must have been helped," said Nelson Lee, his whole manner showing a marked change. "See! There is a third figure. A man, I should think—yes, a man with straggly hair and an unkempt beard," he added, as he took another look through

the telescope. "Have a look, doctor, and see what you make of him."

Dr. Pearson looked, and a puzzled frown came over his face.

"This is very strange," he said. "The man is an absolute stranger. He certainly does not belong to our little community. Ah, of course! He must be one of Captain Angel's crowd!"

"No," said Lee, shaking his head. "That man was not aboard the Vulture."

"Then the thing is more mysterious than ever," declared the doctor. "In fact, it is positively amazing. Where could this man have come from? And how could he have saved the boys?"

"At a rough guess," said Lee dryly, "I should hazard that there must be another wreck, and that this man is a survivor. But it is certainly strange that you have never seen him before."

There was a move to meet the returning boys. William Napoleon Browne, Fenton, Stevens and Tregellis-West were in the forefront. In fact, they leapt down to the weed, and went plunging off over the spongy stuff,

BACKING UP JIMMY!

by Owen Conquest



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so that they should be the first to greet their comrades.

Nelson Lee and Dr. Pearson went down, too. There was great excitement throughout the entire colony. And in this excitement Captain Angel and Mr. Cragg and their ruffianly associates were completely forgotten.

"WELL, here we are again, guv'nor, turning up like bad pennies," said Nipper coolly.

He and Nelson Lee clasped hands. It was not a demonstrative greeting, but that handclasp was tight and prolonged.

"You have given us a fright, young gentlemen," said Lee. "We believed that you were dead."

"I don't wonder at it, sir," put in Tommy Watson, with a shudder. "Oh, my hat! When I think of those horrible weed men! They had us in their clutches—"

"Thanks to that rotter, Captain Angel!" put in Nipper grimly. "We've got a nice little account to square with him, guv'nor."

"You can square it at your leisure," replied Lee. "Captain Angel is a prisoner. But we don't want to discuss him now. You have not yet introduced us to your friend."

"This is Captain-Lieutenant Otto von Zimmern, sir," said Nipper promptly. "He saved our lives—and there's more than a chance that he'll be able to get all of us back to civilisation!"

"What!" went up a general shout.

"It's a fact!" said Nipper, his eyes gleaming. "Wait until we've told you all that's happened. We can't quite believe it even now."

They were standing on the weed near the hull of one of the old ships. And all eyes were concentrated upon Otto von Zimmern.

"I am pleased to find so many goot friendts," said the German quietly, after he had shaken hands. "Ach, is it not strange? Until these poys told me, I did not even know that the war is ended. And you—all of you—are British. Well, in the war I did my duty, but nefer was my heart in the fight. Many happy years haf I spent in London, und the Englanders, I like them."

"How long have you been here, sir?" asked Dr. Pearson.

"Many years—so many, the count I lose."

"And your ship?"

"Mine goot ship is the U. Boat 426," replied Von Zimmern. "She is held in the weed, but with men perhaps I get her out. Who knows?"

"This is very remarkable," said one of the other men. "You say you've been here for years, sir? And yet we've seen nothing of you!"

"That's not very surprising," put in Nipper. "Herr von Zimmern has hardly moved a mile in any direction ever since he became a castaway; he didn't even know that there were any other human beings on the weed—except those awful creatures which grabbed us last night. And his submarine is six or seven miles from here."

"All the same, it is astonishing that we have seen nothing of Herr von Zimmern throughout all these years, and that he has seen nothing of us," said Dr. Pearson. "We do not always have these mists," he added, glancing at Lee. "On a clear day we can see for many miles."

"No matter how clear the day, you would never have seen the U426," said Nipper. "She's right under the weed—and you can only get down to her by descending a small opening which has been cut through the weed."

"Oh!" said the doctor. "That, of course, is different. Now I can understand."

"I haf no time," explained Von Zimmern simply. "Efen now I should be at work. Nefer can I rest. But these goot young friendts tell me that there are many people here—many men. So I come. What I need is men. Perhaps we all escape."

"Don't you see, guv'nor?" asked Nipper eagerly. "Herr von Zimmern has kept that submarine in perfect condition. Perhaps he always thought that there might be some chance—"

"Nein, nein," broke in Von Zimmern. "Not for that reason haf I kept her in repair. Without that work I should have gone mad. You understand?" he added, glancing at the men. "Alone, what hope was there for my sanity? I work—I always work—and so I occupy my mind. Insanity, she does not come."

"A very sensible thing, Herr von Zimmern," replied Lee. "And now your industry might possibly bear fruit. Yet I hardly think it possible that this submarine is still in a seaworthy condition."

"But yes!" protested the German. "You think I tell lies?"

"With all due respect for your optimism, sir, I can hardly credit that one man could have defied the ravages of decay," replied Lee. "There is one point I would mention. How can you be certain of finding your ship again if it is buried beneath the weed? There are no landmarks—"

"Ach, I am not such a pig fool," said the German with a crinkly smile. "Pefore we come, we fix up pole—with mine goot flag bravely waving. We find her easily enough."

"If we can only get out of this weed prison!" said Dr. Pearson fervently. "By Heaven! What a picture! What a dream! We, who have always believed that we shall never again see our homeland! It makes me feel dizzy."

He closed his eyes, and he had even gone pale at the thoughts which quickened his pulse. There was a general move towards the nearest "landing stage." The news had spread throughout that community, and excitement was rife. A chance of escape!

It was intoxicating. The relief of knowing that Nipper and Watson were safe was as nothing compared with this latest sensation. No ordinary ship, no matter how seaworthy, was capable of fighting its way out of the all-clogging weed. But a submarine—

MR. REUBEN CRAGG took a deep, deep breath.

"By golly!" he muttered hoarsely, his eyes gleaming with evil. "It's a chance—a chance for the skipper and the rest of us!"

Mr. Cragg was near one of the windows of an old hulk—an opening which overlooked the weed. He has listened to every word that the boys and Otto von Zimmern had been saying.

CHAPTER 5.

Treachery!

"WHAT the blazes——" began Captain Blackford Angel.

"Quiet, you fool!" hissed a voice out of the darkness. "It's only me."

Mr. Cragg crept like a shadow into the store-room. It was here that his skipper had been imprisoned. The mate, keeping his eyes and ears open, had had no difficulty in locating the prison.

In ordinary circumstances he would never have been able to get near it; it would not even have been possible to set foot on this old ship. For Cragg and the rest of Angel's rascals were confined to their own part of the island.

But now things were different.

The excitement occasioned by Von Zimmern's arrival had caused the inhabitants to become careless. Nelson Lee was under the impression that a look-out was still being kept, and nothing happened to warn him that such was not the case.

Cragg had walked openly across the weed, had climbed aboard this ship, had made his way down to Captain Angel's prison, and not once had he been challenged. Everybody was congregating round the part of the island to which Von Zimmern had been taken—where he was introduced to Captain Weston, and where ways and means of escape were being discussed.

"Cragg!" ejaculated Captain Angel, in a startled voice. "What's the blamed idea? How did you get here?"

"Don't talk," said Mr. Cragg. "Come with me."

He literally bundled the startled skipper out of the temporary prison, and they both climbed up to the deck. A glance was sufficient for Cragg, and he led the way to the rail. They lowered themselves to the weed, and hurried across to that part of the island which was known as Westminster. It was this section which was held by Captain Angel's men.

"Blamed if I can understand all this," exclaimed the skipper, in astonishment. "What's appened? Why ain't we bin stopped? Where's all the men—Lee, an' them cubs of 'is?"

"You'll know soon enough," retorted Cragg. "I thought we'd do it!" he added triumphantly, as they climbed aboard. "Nobody ain't seen us—or, if they 'ave, they're

too excited to take any notice. If we're lively, we'll steal a march on 'em yet."

Schwartz and the other men were loud in their greetings of Captain Angel, but Mr. Cragg soon cut them short. He hustled them all below into the central saloon, or living-room, of this particular ship.

"Oo's skipper 'ere—you or me, blame you?" demanded Captain Angel, at length, with some irritation. "Seems t' me you're gettin' a bit too fresh, Mister Mate!"

"Cut it out!" snapped Cragg. "We're all in the same boat 'ere, an' your orders don't mean a thing, Angel——"

"Look 'ere——"

"Listen to me, an' p'raps you won't be so durned awkward," put in Cragg. "That plan o' yours went wrong. Those two boys you pinched as 'ostages have come back."

"Didn't the Weed Monsters carry 'em off?" asked Angel, in surprise.

"They did—but it seems they was rescued," answered Cragg cunningly. "Not by any o' these 'ere guys, but by the commander o' a German submarine. It seems that this U-Boat is fit to be used. Lee and all the others is havin' a conference now. An' the longer we wait 'ere, the less chance we shall 'ave of doin' 'em in the eye."

"Say, what's all this about, anyhow?" asked Schwartz, staring.

"Why, you fools, what chance will there be for us?" demanded Cragg excitedly. "If anybody's goin' to be crowded out o' this submarine, it's us! If a dozen can't be took well, we'll be the dozen. Don't you see? These guys will look after themselves first—an' after their women an' kids. We shan't get a smell!"

"Durn it, that's true!" said Captain Angel, slowly recovering his old aggressiveness. "There's somethin' else, too—there's somethin' you ain't thought of, Mister Mate. It ain't a lively prospect for us, even if we are took."

"Ow do you mean?"

"Why, you brainless son of a dogfish, ain't you got no brains?" said the skipper tartly. "Ain't Lee a detective? Ain't he 'in' with the p'lice an' the nobs o' Scotland Yard? What's goin' to 'appen to us if we get took back with 'em. Why, we'll be 'anded over to the p'lice—charged w' kidnappin' an' conspiracy. We mustn't forget, neither, that we left 'em aboard the Vulture without water."

"Gosh!" said Cragg, startled.

"That's another reason why we should take things into our 'ands," said Captain Angel. "You say this 'ere submarine is seaworthy?"

"I ain't seen it—it's only what I 'ear."

"If these fellers think they can escape in 'er, so can we," continued Angel. "Where is she? Where does she lie?"

"Seven or eight miles away—almost buried under the weed," replied Cragg. "But we can locate 'er easy enough because they've stuck up a sort o' mast, with a flag on top. If we're fust away, we can snap our fingers at this crowd. Once we're aboard that submarine, even if we only beat 'em to it by a

couple o' minutes, we'll win. Because once we close the conning-tower they'll be 'elpless."

The skipper's eyes gleamed.

"An' if we can slip off without anybody knowin', it'll be better still," he said. "We can take that mast down. See? Then they won't even be able to locate the bloomin' submarine. Then we can take our time. Mebbe we shan't find that craft so easy to 'andle. 'Oo knows anythin' about submarines?" he added, looking round.

"Never bin in one in my life," said Schwartz.

"None of us 'ave," said one of the other men. "Mebbe we'd best not monkey with it, sir. Like as not we'll kill ourselves. Submarines is mighty tricky craft, by all I've 'eard."

The skipper's eyes blazed.

"You fools!" he roared. "'Ave you got cold feet already? Which is better—to let these blighters leave us 'ere for the rest of our lives, or to take a chance on gettin' clear away?"

"They might take us with 'em," growled one of the men.

"Yes, an' when we get 'ome we'll find ourselves in prison!" retorted the captain acidly. "But by pinchin' this submarine we not only get away, but we make sure that we can't be follered. Yes, an' there's somethin' else, too. A submarine is a mighty valuable ship, an' there's bound to be salvage money."

"We can easily fake up a yarn," said Mr. Cragg cunningly. "Lost our own ship with 'arf the crew, found this submarine driftin', an' took command. Why, we'll be 'eroes—an' we'll share an' share alike with whatever money we get."

"That goes!" agreed the captain promptly.

Schwartz and the other men now had greedy expressions in their eyes; they forgot the risks. Here was a chance to get off scot-free—and to receive money for nothing into the bargain.

"Gosh!" ejaculated Schwartz suddenly, as he looked out of one of the windows. "The mist! There's a bank of it comin' over now! Like one o' London's worst fogs!"

The captain and mate stared out. Sure enough, a heavy bank of mist had descended in that fashion which was characteristic of this zone. It came rolling over the weed, blotting out everything in its path. Some of the hulks and derelicts were already obscured.

"It's our chance!" gloated Captain Angel. "We can get away without bein' seen—an' we don't need to waste no time!"

There was a regular stampede.

The men hardly waited to take anything with them. Some gulped a drink, others hurriedly prepared food. For the most part they dashed up on deck and dropped to the weed. Within five minutes they were well away, and the mist was thicker than ever.

"LOOK!" ejaculated Mr. Cragg, his voice harsh with gloating excitement.

It seemed to the mate and his rascally companions that they had been plod-

ding on for ages. They were utterly weary. Six miles across this weed was a greater ordeal than any ordinary twenty-four mile walk—and the close, windless heat made the journey a torture.

There was not much enthusiasm left in the men now. They were beginning to think that the game wasn't worth the candle; far better to have stopped at the floating island where they were safe and comfortable—with plenty of food, drink, and luxurious ease.

Now, at the sound of the mate's voice, they livened up. Mr. Cragg was pointing. At first they thought he had gone mad, for there was nothing to see. Nothing but the dreary, endless waste of eternal weed.

"'Ere, what's the game?" demanded Angel grimly.

"Can't you see?" panted Mr. Cragg. "Ain't you got no eyes? There it is! The flagpole!"

"Sink me for a cock-eyed whale!" gasped Captain Angel, staring. "Boys, 'e's right! Over there on the stabbord quarter."

And then the rest of the men saw. Almost invisible in the haze, a pole was projecting upwards from the weed; no flag was to be seen because there was not a breath of wind to unfurl it. The end of their journey was in sight! And there was no sign of pursuit!

CHAPTER 6.

The Race for Liberty!

"IT won't be easy, gentlemen," said Nelson Lee quietly. "In fact, we must prepare ourselves for a disappointment. It would be foolish in the extreme to count too much on this chance."

"But it is a chance," insisted Captain Weston.

"And there are plenty of us," said Dr. Pearson eagerly. "Surely we shall be able to manage the submarine, Mr. Lee?"

"Always providing that the submarine itself is manageable," Nelson Lee pointed out. "Herr von Zimmern assures us that she is in perfect working order, and there is no reason to doubt that statement, but even the good Herr does not know how deeply she is entangled in the weed."

The German had a dreamy look in his eyes.

"For years haf I waited," he said slowly. "Men—men! All I wanted was men. You, chentlemen, shall help me to navigate mine U-Boat into the open sea."

"We must go cautiously," said Nelson Lee. "There is no immediate hurry, and it would be folly to do anything precipitate. To begin with, I suggest that a party of us should go over with Herr von Zimmern and have a general look round. Then, later, after we have grown familiar with the ship, we can make our big attempt."

"We're infernally short of engineers," said Mr. Adams, frowning. "We can trust to Herr von Zimmern to look after the navigation, but what of the engine-room? A submarine is no ordinary boat; she needs exact,

careful handling, or she can be quickly brought to disaster."

"In such circumstances as these we must take a risk," said Dr. Pearson, his eyes burning. "Heavens above, when I think of it! A chance to return to civilisation—to England! And we had all believed that we were doomed to remain on this weed for the rest of our lives. We feel it, Mr. Lee, far more than you do. You have not been here year after year, with each year becoming more and more hopeless."

"Yes, I think I can appreciate your feelings," said Lee quietly. "And it is for that very reason that I am now urging caution."

"What about these men—Captain Angel and his crew?" asked Captain Weston. "Perhaps some of those men are familiar with engines? We don't like to have any dealings with them, but, after all, they are here, and I suppose we shall have to take them away with us."

"They deserve to be marooned on this weed for the rest of their lives!" said Fenton warmly.

"That would be a fitting punishment, but if there is a chance for us all to escape, we must let them come," said Nelson Lee. "However, they will not escape scot-free. It is a good idea of yours, Captain Weston. There may be some men amongst Angel's crew who can help us. I will see Angel at once."

He left the others—not because he was anxious to see Captain Angel, but mainly because he wanted to be alone. Nelson Lee did not quite like the way things were going. These people were too eager—too hopeful. Before long they would probably get a rude awakening.

Lee believed that Otto von Zimmern had done everything in his power to keep the submarine in working order; but he could not credit that the vessel was really seaworthy. And even supposing she was, the task of disentangling her from this weed was a well-nigh impossible one. All the chances were against success, and it pained Lee to hear these exiles talking as though their escape was a certainty.

There was this great problem of the crew, too. Submarines are handled by specially trained men, and, with the sole exception of Von Zimmern himself, there wasn't a man in this community who knew anything about submarines.

Lee reached the ship where Captain Angel had been imprisoned, and he was startled and disturbed to find that not a soul was in sight. The men on guard, in the general excitement, had left their posts. Lee hurried below, and he was not altogether surprised when he found the door of the store-room wide open, and the bird flown.

"Well, it doesn't matter much," he told himself. "Angel has probably rejoined his companions."

All the same, Lee's footsteps were hurried as he went from ship to ship, crossing staging after staging, making for that part of the island which was known as

Westminster. He noted a complete silence as he approached. His heart began to quicken its beat. Somehow, he had a premonition of evil.

"Hey!" he called loudly. "Captain Angel! Mr. Cragg! Where are you?"

There was no reply. Only the echo of Lee's own voice came back to him. Quickly he searched. He went below into the saloons and cabins. He searched ship after ship. Captain Angel and his men had vanished!

Nelson Lee hurried back across the staging to the other half of the island, and Nipper, meeting him, noted his tense expression. Dr. Pearson and Morrison and one or two other men were there, too.

"What is it, gov'nor?" asked Nipper quickly.

"I don't know—but it looks bad," replied Nelson Lee. "Captain Angel and his men have gone."

"Gone!" went up a shout.

"We must make a quick search—we must look everywhere," replied Lee grimly. "There's mischief afoot without question."

THIS fresh excitement spread rapidly. Before long every available man was joining in the search. After half an hour it was clear that Angel and his men were no longer on the island.

"What can it mean?" asked Dr. Pearson, amazed. "There is nowhere else for them. They would not have been so mad as to cross the weed—"

"There is only one explanation," interrupted Lee crisply. "Some of those men must have got to know of this latest development; perhaps they overheard us talking to Von Zimmern. At all events, I do not think there is the slightest doubt that they have crossed the weed in the hope of finding that submarine and seizing her."

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Dr. Pearson, aghast. "You—you mean that it is their plan to steal the vessel and escape in her, leaving us here to our fate?"

"It is the very thing Captain Angel would do," replied Lee. "Come, we must tell Von Zimmern at once. We must go across the weed without a moment's delay. There is still a chance that we might overtake these rascals."

Excitement had changed to consternation. Von Zimmern was frantic. The possibility of those rogues seizing his beloved ship sent him nearly insane. He bitterly regretted leaving her unguarded.

"Gott in Himmel!" he groaned, wringing his hands. "After mine years of work! Ach, and to think of those pigs of men stealing her!"

"We may not be too late, Herr von Zimmern," said Nelson Lee. "There are many hours of daylight yet—in fact, the better part of the day. Those men cannot shift your boat so easily. I think we shall be able to spoil their game."

When it was fully understood that Captain Angel was bent upon a fresh act of treachery,



From her lofty perch Mary Weston saw, far out across the weed, three figures. They came nearer, nearer—

the rage against him was universal. He had brought discord and evil to this peaceful community, and now, to crown all, he was attempting to deprive them of the only means of escape that had ever come their way.

A big party was soon made up. Captain Weston, owing to his injury, remained behind with the women and children, and one or two other men stayed, too. The party which went off across the weed, led by Nelson Lee, consisted of the cubs, Mr. Adams, Olsen, and those other members of the Vulture's crew who had thrown in their lot with the detective, Dr. Pearson and several more of the exiles.

Hours passed—hours of toiling, labouring progress. Occasionally the mists would come down, blotting out the weedscape. Then, at other times, the air would become clear, and the party would be able to see for miles in every direction. Never once did they catch a glimpse of Captain Angel and his crew. Those rogues seemed to have disappeared completely. What was more to the point, the flagpole had disappeared, too!

Nelson Lee and Von Zimmern had suspected this from the start, and after the party had marched a full six miles over the weed, their worst fears were justified.

"It is here—here!" insisted the German, waving his hands excitedly. "Mine Gott! Could I mistaken be? Haf I not lifed for all these years here? Mine boat, it is here!"

"Somewhere within this mile zone," said Nelson Lee, nodding. "But with the flagpole removed we are baffled. There is no other distinguishing mark—not a wreck—not even a hump of weed?"

"There's a kind of well, sir," said Nipper eagerly. "A shaft, you know, leading down to the submarine's conning-tower."

"Even so, young 'un, looking for that shaft is very much the same as looking for a needle in a haystack," replied Lee. "And do you really suppose that the shaft still exists? Angel is not such a fool. His first task, after removing the flagpole, would have been to fill up that shaft. Thus we are left with no clue whatsoever."

"Great Scott!" muttered Mr. Adams. "You mean that we are absolutely done?"

"I don't like to say so within Von Zimmern's hearing," replied Lee, in a low voice, "but I am afraid there is very little hope."

MORE hours passed, and the evening mists began to collect over the weed. The daylight failed, the sun sinking low, invisible still beyond the upper mists, a brazen glow in the sky alone revealing its whereabouts.

Weary, well-nigh exhausted, the searchers began to collect. They had distributed themselves in pairs and threes over a wide extent of the weed, searching—always searching for that shaft which led down to the submarine. And they had all failed!

Von Zimmern was inconsolable; he was almost like a child, and occasionally he would break down, tears streaming down his lined cheeks.

"Mine poat—mine beautiful poat!" he groaned again and again. "She has been stolen by those pig dogs!"

Browne and Stevens and Nipper, who were with him, said nothing. They had all halted, tired and dispirited. Then suddenly William Napoleon Browne looked sharply at the others.

"Listen, brothers!" he whispered, with a sudden tenseness in his voice. "Possibly I am at fault, but do I not hear a curious, subdued throbbing?"

"Throbbing?" asked Nipper sharply.

"Hush!" urged Browne.

Thud-thud-thud!

Even as Browne spoke, that mysterious sound seemed to grow louder—and nearer. Before long it was causing the very weed to vibrate and quiver. It came from somewhere below—somewhere over on their left. They stared, fascinated.

"Mine Gott!" shouted Von Zimmern wildly. "Gott in Himmel! It is mine U-poat that we hear! They haf stolen her, and she is getting away."

Thud-thud-thud! Throb-throb-throb!

It grew louder and more distinct. The weed quivered and shook. Suddenly a loud yell arose from Fenton and Mr. Adams, who were two or three hundred yards away to the left.

"Look!" came Fenton's shout.

They stared dumbly. The weed was heaving up—billowing into a great hummock. Mingled with the throbbing came the sound of crashing, splintering wood. The weed broke, and great masses of wreckage forced their way upwards. It was an amazing sight.

"Mine poat!" shrieked Von Zimmern suddenly.

A great lean, rusty thing was now projecting out of the weed—the bows of a submarine. The boat was evidently tilting at an acute angle, so that her bows came into the upper air while her stern still remained deep in the water and the weed. She now remained still, and every sound ceased. All eyes were fixed in that direction; all hearts thumped. But only for a moment did this

silence continue; only for a moment did this inactivity reign. Then, with one accord, the hunters dashed towards that strange scene. From all directions they diverged, excited, intense—their weariness forgotten.

At close quarters they found that the greater part of the submarine had thrust herself through the weed. Even the conning-tower was partially visible; and all about her hung an acrid stench. It was the odour of the disturbed weed.

"Those infernal men must have blundered," said Lee grimly. "Not knowing how to control the vessel, they brought her to the surface—perhaps thinking that they were causing her to dive. And look here, Adams!"

"Yes, I see," said Mr. Adams, staring. "What is all this wreckage?"

"She must have struck against this old hulk on her way up—a hulk which has been buried beneath the surface of the weed for centuries," declared Nelson Lee. "Unless I am mistaken, she is the remains of an old Spanish galleon. Look at the age of these timbers; look at—"

Mr. Adams suddenly gave a shout, and dashed forward into a tangled mass of smashed woodwork. Nelson Lee was right. This old hulk, which had been forced to the surface by the submarine, was a part of a Spanish galleon. And Mr. Adams had caught sight of a quaint old sea-chest, lying half on its side, the lid smashed in, the ends burst open.

"Look here, you fellows!" shouted Mr. Adams excitedly. "Gold! Galleon gold!"

He thrust his hands into a heap of dull-coloured metal discs which were escaping from the old sea-chest. Other members of the party had gathered round, and the excitement was more intense than ever.

"Doubloons and pieces of eight, as I live!" said Browne. "Brothers, life is full of strange surprises. It is also full of compensations. Brother Angel takes his men and pinches the submarine, Fate decrees that he shall fail in his enterprise—and in that failure he digs up this old Spanish galleon with its treasure of gold!"

CHAPTER 7.

Success—or Disaster!

GRIM discoveries were made soon afterwards—discoveries which drove all thoughts of gold out of the boys' minds.

For when the conning-tower was opened a shock awaited the party. Captain Blackford Angel was found on the ladder, his dead hands gripping the mechanism which released the hatch. In a last dying effort he had attempted to escape; he had even unfastened the trap, but had been unable to retain consciousness any longer.

A great wave of noxious gas came sweeping out into the air, and Otto von Zimmern and Nelson Lee were forced to stagger back.

"Ach! Now it is understood," panted the German. "These men—the pig fools—understand the mechanism not at all! They start

the wrong engines, you see? Und the fumes, they kill them!"

It was practically dark before any entry could be made into the submarine. With soaked handkerchiefs tied round their mouths and nostrils, Nelson Lee and Von Zimmern and Mr. Adams descended. They found Cragg and Schwartz and the others lying dead in the control-room. They had all been suffocated.

THREE days passed. Three days of hopes, fears, hard work and anxiety.

Von Zimmern found, to his joy, that the submarine was scarcely damaged. Her bows were dented slightly where she had crashed in the old galleon; but no real injury had resulted.

Once Captain Angel and his men had been decently buried, they were soon forgotten. After all, they had brought death upon themselves, and they deserved no sympathy.

Nelson Lee and Mr. Adams and Von Zimmern spent nearly all their time in the submarine, at the engines. Lee was amazed to find how well the mechanism had been looked after. Indeed, he came to the conclusion that this U-Boat was, indeed, seaworthy. She was in no perfect condition, of course, but undeniably she was capable of being navigated.

All the men were appointed to certain stations, and Von Zimmern spent a great deal of his time in coaching these men—showing them exactly what their duties were to be. Through ignorance, Captain Angel and his crew had perished; there was to be no repetition of that tragedy.

Nipper and the other boys had their appointed tasks, too. They had spent a deal of time in going through the wreckage of the old galleon, and they had recovered a very considerable treasure.

"We don't want any of it," said Nipper, "but think how useful it will be to these good people—if we only succeed in getting back to England! It will set them all up! It will enable them to start life again happily and comfortably."

"No, no," Dr. Pearson had said. "We must all share in this treasure—we must all divide equally."

"But that wouldn't be fair at all, sir," said Fenton. "You've been here for many years, while we've only just arrived. It's yours. If we get back, you'll be able to buy a practice, and—"

"No, don't talk of such things," muttered the doctor, a dreamy look in his eyes. "It cannot come true—it is too wonderful."

"And Captain Weston will be able to settle down in a little seaside home with his family," said Nipper. "He deserves to retire after all this, doesn't he? This galleon gold will solve the problem."

But the gold, after all, was of very minor importance. The one great problem was to escape. This submarine, if she proved worthy, would carry all these good people out into the open sea.

It was nearly a week before the great

attempt was made. Some of the men had been keen upon making the experiment earlier; but Nelson Lee calmed them down. There was no hurry—far better to give the old boat every chance. She was overhauled from stem to stern. She was made as perfect as possible. The work that Von Zimmern had done throughout these years was supplemented by the work of dozens now. And by the time the great hour arrived every man was fully conversant with his own duties.

There was a great trek across the weed. The women and children came, Mary Weston amongst them, of course. Mary had wanted to help at the submarine, but she had not been allowed to do so. This was work for men.

Supplies were brought, too—water, food. The submarine was made ready for a full month's cruise, with ample rations for all. Once she dived, there was never any telling what would happen.

The big moment came early one morning. Everybody was aboard, and Otto von Zimmern himself closed the conning-tower hatch.

"Well, we try," he said simply, as he looked at Nelson Lee. "The rest, it remains with Gott."

"Think we shall do it, old son?" murmured Tommy Watson, as he waited, tense and expectant.

"We shall do it," declared Nipper. "The guv'nor says so—and he knows! If only we can get beneath the weed we can reach the open sea. Don't you see? Once we're well underneath, there'll be no danger of the propellers getting fouled. A submarine is the only craft that could escape from the Sargasso Sea."

THROB—throb—throb!

The U426 hummed, and she quivered from stem to stern. Her electric motors were in operation, and Captain-Lieutenant Otto von Zimmern was at the controls. Now that the moment had come, he was cool and masterly. He commanded his ship as in the old days.

Slowly, and under perfect control, the U426 dived. Down she went—down, down into those black, murky waters. Forgotten

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was that region of hulks and derelicts—that weed continent with its queer colony of men-fish.

A sharp command came from Von Zimmern, and he touched signals which communicated with the engine-room.

"We take no chance," he said to Nelson Lee, who was by his side. "We dive to her limit of safety. Lower we dare not go—or death comes swiftly. Ach! The limit, she is reached!"

His eyes were burning now. The throbbing increased, and slowly the submarine slid forward through the water. Her progress was not absolutely smooth. She hesitated now and again, checked, and it felt to those within her as though giant hands were plucking at her, attempting to hold her back. They knew well enough that it was the weed—masses of the growth were fouling the conning-tower, perhaps, for the conning-tower was only just below the floating mass. She dragged again, broke free, and her speed increased.

"We're doing it!" panted Fenton. "We're getting free! She's beating the weed!"

"We've only just started, old man," muttered Stevens.

Then his heart leapt into his mouth, for suddenly the submarine tilted and dived. Down she went, and even Von Zimmern turned pale. But he kept his head. He gave quick orders. Slowly, reluctantly the U 426 came back to a level keel, and she now continued onwards with greater speed.

For the moment, at any rate, she was free of the weed!

HOURS passed, and still the U 426 progressed. By now the air was becoming foul—so foul that one or two of the women had fainted, and were receiving attention. But Otto Von Zimmern was firm. He would continue under water until it was utterly impossible to do so any longer. For, as he truthfully pointed out, any attempt to rise might bring disaster—the submarine might get entangled in the weed again, and this time perhaps she would not break through. That would mean a ghastly, torturing death for them all.

He worked her motors to their fullest capacity, and her speed was now better than ever. Every soul on board was feeling the effects. Fumes were beginning to circulate, and eyes were watering, throats were becoming constricted. Breathing was difficult.

"So!" said Von Zimmern hoarsely. "I read your glance, Herr Lee. We must get to the surface. No longer is it safe to remain below."

"We are caught between two fires," replied Nelson Lee quietly. "If we keep below we shall certainly die, and if we rise there is the chance that we shall find ourselves trapped. But we have been progressing for some hours, Herr Von Zimmern, and we must take our chance."

Then came the most anxious period of all. Foot by foot the submarine rose, the dials

indicating that she was getting nearer and nearer to the surface. Up she came—up, up! Nelson Lee was on the conning-tower ladder, ready. When the dials showed that she was near the surface hopes began to soar. There was no feeling of entanglement—no indication that the vessel was being again caught in the weed.

With a cry of triumph Leo released the catches, and the conning-tower hatch was flung open. Sunlight blazed down upon Lee's head, and a great gust of fresh, life-giving air beat about his face. He breathed lungfuls of the fresh, ozone-laden wind.

"Hurrah!" came a crackling cheer from the boys below. "Sunshine! We're free—beyond the weed!"

Nelson Lee, weak and half-fainting, pulled himself up and gazed round. The blue, sparkling sea was all round the U 426, while overhead the sky was equally blue, with the sun blazing gloriously. Far away astern lay a misty patch—the last glimpse of the dreaded Sargasso Sea.

"Free!" muttered Nelson Lee. "Well, it must go on record that at least one war-time German submarine was built for a good purpose."

THE world received one of its greatest sensations when the s.s. Cynthia sent its startling wireless messages over the ether.

These messages told how a rusty, decrepit submarine had been encountered in mid-Atlantic, how her consignment of passengers had been rescued in the nick of time.

The sea was comparatively calm, but the submarine was unable to fight against the constant buffeting. Cracks appeared in her old plates, and water began to seep through. Still she cruised on, until she sighted the s.s. Cynthia.

To save her was impossible. Less than two hours after the party had been transferred aboard the liner, the old submarine slid down to her last resting-place. Captain-Lieutenant Otto von Zimmern watched her go, tears in his eyes, but joy shining in them, too, for he knew that she had proved faithful to her trust.

The return of the adventurers to England was another sensation. Yet in a surprisingly short space of time Nelson Lee and his cubs were back at Gray's Inn Road, once more in harness. And all those other good people—who had comprised the "Kingdom of the Weed"—were well provided for, thanks to the proceeds of the galleon gold.

Looking back on it afterwards, Nelson Lee and his cubs could hardly believe that they had so recently been trapped in the Sargasso, with little hope of rescue. Now they were carrying on as usual, and that adventure seemed almost like a dream.

THE END.

(Nelson Lee and his "cub" detectives in the Foreign Legion next week! Look out for this corking yarn, chums; it's entitled, "The Legion of the Lost!")



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.

GOOD ADVICE !

Doctor : "If anything comes to worry you, cast it aside."

Patient : "All right, doctor. I'll remember that advice when your bill comes in."

(H. Watts, South End, Burnham, has been awarded a handsome watch.)

TAKE THIS WITH A GRAIN OF SALT !

Two amateur gardeners were coming to town one morning.

"Say, Bill," said one, "what's a good thing to kill slugs ? They're eating up all my radishes."

"That's easily remedied," replied the other. "Get a couple of bags of salt and sprinkle it between the rows."

The next morning the two met again.

"How did the salt work ?" Bill asked.

"It didn't," replied the other. "When I went out to look this morning the slugs were pulling up the radishes, dipping them in the salt and eating them !"

(J. G. White, 5, Curtis Buildings, Thorn Lane, Norwich, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

BRAVE FELLOW !

General (to private) : "I hear of great bravery on your part—that you met three of the enemy, engaged them in bayonet fighting, and made them run their hardest."

Private : "Yes, sir—and then they couldn't catch me."

(A. Oliver, 123, Constable Street, Newtown, Wellington, New Zealand, has been awarded a penknife.)

REMARKABLE !

Many and varied were the tales told at the club ; the air was thick with smoke ; and as the hours became smaller so did the tales become bigger and more exaggerated. The hunter's turn came at last, and with a polite bow he rose and commenced his story :

"Whilst in India it chanced one day that I come upon a very remarkable ant. This ant, tremendous in size, was also tremendously strong, being capable of carrying trees for the natives, and when infuriated has even been known to attack and kill them."

"But," expostulated one club member, "what species of ant is this ?"

The reply came mildly and deliberately : "An elephant."

(G. Partos, 123, Highbury Hill, Highbury, N.5, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

WHAT A CAR !

Used car salesman : "Now, what are you babbling about ?"

The stung one : "Babbling ! Why, every darned part of that car you sold me makes a noise except the horn !"

(G. R. White, 117, Dallow Road, Luton, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

WHAT A SELL !

Mr. Jones : "Well, how do you like Venice ?"

Mr. Smith : "I only stayed there two days because the place was flooded."

(G. Davies, 91, Roker Avenue, Sunderland, has been awarded a penknife.)

A GOOD START !

Two boys put their hands side by side.

"Mine's dirtier'n yours !" exclaimed one triumphantly.

"Huh !" said the other disdainfully. "You're two years older'n me."

(J. A. Budgett, 4a, West Park Avenue, Roundhay, Leeds, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

COULDN'T BE DONE !

"Have you any grouse to-day ?" asked the sportsman of the village shopkeeper.

"No, sir," was the reply, "but we've some excellent pork-pies."

"Don't be a fool, man !" snapped the sportsman. "How do you think a fellow can go home and

say he's shot a couple of pork-pies ?"

(E. Jones, 10, Eastcott Hill, Swindon, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

A SIGHT WORTH WATCHING !

Short-sighted gentleman (to boy who is smiling as he watches a red glow in the sky) : "I am glad to see you are enjoying and appreciating the beauties of the sunset."

Boy : "That's not the sunset ; it's our school on fire."

(J. Palliser, 58, Saville Street, Ripley Ville, Bradford, has been awarded a penknife.)

THIS'LL MAKE YOU SMILE !



A "SOFT" JOB !

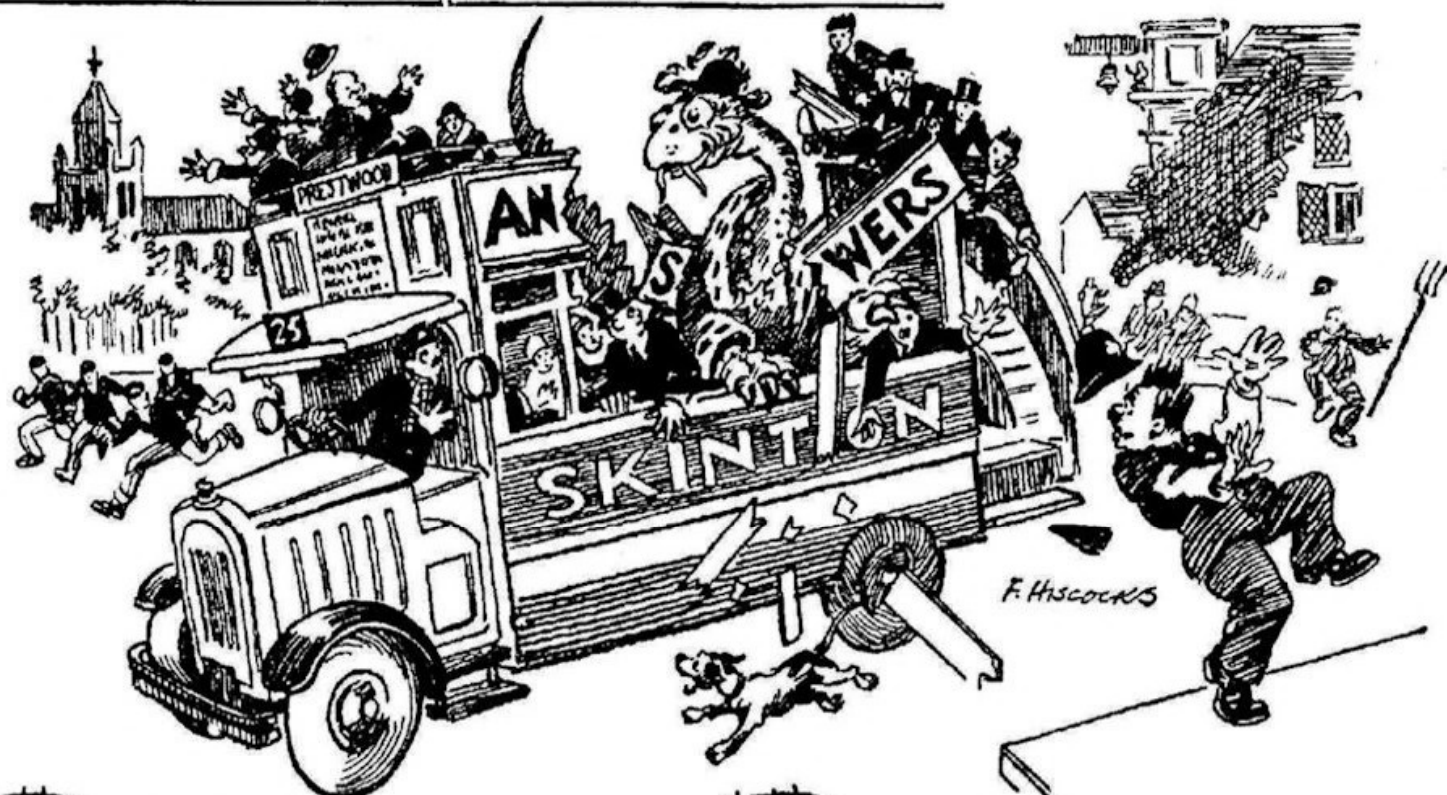
"All those fond of music step two paces forward !" commanded the sergeant at company parade.

With visions of a soft job in the regimental band, half a dozen men stepped forward.

"Now," cried the sergeant, "you six chaps get busy and carry that grand piano in the basement up to the officers' new quarters on the seventh floor !"

(K. Ketley, 29, Passey Road Moseley, Birmingham, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

Dusty the Dinosaur is a Cure for the Blues!



DICK and his DINOSAUR

Dusty Dusts the Head!

"GOLLY, it's cold!"

Dick Daring shivered and sat up in bed. The early morning sun shone feebly through the windows of the Fourth Form dormitory at Skinton School, and as Dick turned to the window facing his bed and saw that it was open to the breeze, he remembered that Dusty, his pet dinosaur, had wrenched the window out on the previous evening in his endeavours to reach the dormitory.

Dick shivered again with the cold, and turned to where Dusty had made himself comfortable on the dormitory floor. Then he understood why he felt so cold. For only a sheet covered him. His blankets and his counterpane were missing. And so were the blankets and counterpanes of every boy in the dormitory.

"Dusty! You blighter!" gasped Dick, and, at his words the dinosaur awoke from sleep and blinked at his master.

Dusty was feeling pleased with himself, and no wonder. For Dusty apparently had decided that the dormitory was too cold for him, so he had calmly helped himself to the bed-clothes, rolling himself into them.

"Grrh! It's cold! Where the dickens are we—in the Arctic regions?"

Jack Jackson, Dick's particular pal, had also been awakened by the chilly breeze. He, too, caught sight of Dusty, who winked one reptilian eye at him. Jack burst out into a roar of laughter.

At that moment rising-bell went, and the

rest of the fellows awakened, shivering as the chill morning air struck them. Then they, too, howled with laughter at the sight of Dusty with the bed-clothes.

Dusty, feeling quite proud of himself, rose and shook the clothes from him. Then he looked round for a snack. A couple of books on a chair attracted his attention, and the books were soon disappearing rapidly down his throat. Dick saw them go—and got an idea!

"I say, you chaps, it's maths. to-day," he said. "Dusty seems fond of books, so I'm going to take him down for breakfast."

The next moment, followed by Dusty the dino, Dick led the way from the dormitory.

Dick opened the door of the Fourth Form-room and Dusty squeezed himself through.

"There's your breakfast, old scout!" said Dick, pointing to a pile of books. "You'll find them a bit dry."

Leaving the dinosaur with the mathematics books, Dick hurried back to the dormitory, grinning all over his face. What Mr. Thwacker, the Form-master, would say when he discovered the books had provided Dusty with breakfast, Dick did not know—nor care. It was sufficient to know that maths. would be decidedly "off" that day!

And maths. certainly *were* "off" that day. Not only maths., but all other lessons, for when the fellows streamed into the Form-room it was to discover that Dusty had accounted for all the books and papers he could find, including those in Mr. Thwacker's desk.

Comedy No. 2: DUSTY—MAYOR OF SKINTON!

Then, taking possession of Mr. Thwacker's desk, he had managed to accommodate himself behind it, and he showed every indication of taking Mr. Thwacker's place as the Fourth Form-master.

Furthermore, when Mr. Thwacker himself pushed his face around the door, Dusty let out a ferocious roar. Mr. Thwacker departed hastily—very hastily.

"Good old Dusty!" grinned Dick. "My hat! This is a jape! Fancy a dinosaur for a Form-master!"

"I wonder what he's going to teach us?" chirruped Jack Jackson.

Dusty did not leave them long in doubt. He waited merely to refresh himself with a drink from a bottle of ink which he had discovered, and then he jerked the empty ink-bottle into the air and caught it on his upturned nose in the manner of a seal. Then, with another jerk of his head, he sent the ink-bottle spinning through the air towards the half-open door.

Crash!

It was extremely unfortunate that Mr. Thwacker, having informed the headmaster of the peculiar new addition to his Form, should be entering the Form-room at that moment, accompanied by Dr. Beatem. The ink-bottle caught the headmaster on his rather prominent nose, and Dr. Beatem fell back with a crash into the arms of Mr. Thwacker. Down they went in a heap on the floor.

This unexpected and painful upset of his dignity caused Dr. Beatem to lose his temper. Snatching up the ink-bottle, he whizzed it back at Dusty. The dino, however, was a born juggler. He caught the bottle on his nose, and jerked it back.

Thud!

Again Dr. Beatem bit the dust as the bottle smote him on the proboscis. Then, for the next few minutes, the laughing boys were treated to the spectacle of their revered headmaster engaging in a battle with the dino. Again and again Dr. Beatem flung the bottle at Dusty. Again and again Dusty caught it and sent it whizzing back.

Dusty seemed to think this was a new game—and it was a game that appealed to him. Looking around, he snatched up any missile he could find, and sent it buzzing at the discomfited Head. Waste-paper baskets, ink-bottles, canes—even the maps which decorated the walls—smote the unfortunate Head, sending him bowling head over heels every time he tried to rise to his feet.

Dr. Beatem decided to beat a strategic retreat. Leaping to his feet, he fled along the corridor. It took Dusty a little time to force his bulk through the door, but he managed it, and was soon chasing after the Head, followed by a howling crowd of boys, who much preferred this to lessons.

Out of the school went the crowd. The boys had never suspected Dr. Beatem of being an athlete, but the way he tore across the quadrangle would certainly have won him the half-mile at the school sports!

Luck was with the Head. Just as he reached the gates he saw a tradesman's delivery lorry starting up for its return journey to the town. With a wild whoop the doctor sprang for it and clambered aboard, just as the driver let in the clutch. The vehicle whizzed off down the road.

Dusty hesitated just a minute, and then, with a peculiar grunt, he started off in a loping run after the delivery lorry.

"My hat!" gasped Dick. "He's making for the town! Come on, you fellows, there'll be ructions when he gets there!"

And Dick was right. There *were* ructions!

Dusty's Day Out!

P.C. COPHAM considered himself to be the pride of Skinton, the little town near which Skinton School was built.

As the representative of law and order, he flaunted his authority, especially when he was on point-duty in the marketplace of the little town.

And when a tradesman's delivery lorry came rushing down at full speed upon him, and refused to obey his orders to pull up, he decided that nothing else would get past him in that manner. He turned to find Dusty bearing down upon him in a series of leaps and bounds. P.c. Copham's eyes nearly jumped out of his head.

"I don't believe it!" he gasped. "There ain't no such animal!"

Whether it was bravery that held him to his post, or funk which held him as though rooted to the spot will never be known. But he certainly remained there, full in the way of the oncoming Dusty. And Dusty, who had never seen such an object as a fat policeman, halted in astonishment.

"Move on there!" commanded P.c. Copham. "You can't come in this 'ere town amaking of a disturbance!"

He felt in his back pocket and produced his truncheon. Dusty evidently imagined it to be something to eat, for he calmly snatched it from the astounded policeman's hand. It followed the route taken earlier that morning by the maths. books.

Then Dusty decided that he would like to see what a policeman's helmet tasted like. The helmet followed the truncheon. P.c. Copham began to be annoyed. Doubling his fist, he launched out at Dusty. The blow merely tickled the dinosaur, but it showed Dusty that Copham was not friendly disposed towards him.

The next moment the police-constable found himself seized by the back of the collar. There happened to be a statue in the marketplace—a statue of a former Mayor of Skinton. It was perched on the top of a very large pillar.

Dusty reared on his hind legs. With one of his flapper-like forelegs he sent the statue tumbling from its pedestal; with the other, as gently as though he was dealing with a baby, Dusty deposited the astounded policeman in its place.

"Let me down, do you 'ear?" yelled the policeman, but Dusty's only answer was a reptilian grin.

It was at that moment that Dick Daring and his chums, who had raced down from the school, came on the scene.

"Gosh! Talk about patience on a monument!" grinned Dick. "Old Copham has risen in the world, hasn't he?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" A burst of laughter drowned P.-c. Copham's violent protestations. It looked very much as though he would have to remain there until the local fire-escape could be brought to rescue him.

Dusty was no longer interested in him. The dinosaur had begun to rummage around the market-square, looking for fresh distractions. It happened that his head was on a level with the first floor windows of the town hall, which stood in the market-place. The inquisitive Dusty could not resist the temptation of an open window, and he poked his head through it.

Although Dusty did not know it, a grand luncheon was taking place that afternoon to celebrate the accession of the new mayor, Mr. Pickles, a well-known local pork butcher. The food had just been placed on the long table around which the civic worthies were seated.

Mr. Pickles, besides being Mayor of Skinton, was also a governor of Skinton School, and as such was entitled to respect. Dusty knew nothing of that, however.

What he did know was that the food set out before the assembled aldermen and councillors smelt remarkably good. Dusty decided to investigate further.

"Fall to, gentlemen," the mayor had just said.

Dusty obliged. He fell through the window with a flop, and the crash of glass made the luncheon-party look round. The sudden appearance of Dusty was sufficient. Uttering wild shrieks, the guests all bolted for safety.

All, that is, with the exception of Mr. Pickles. That gentleman was too terrified to move. However, his terror quickly changed to indignation when he saw Dusty begin to dispose of the sumptuous banquet which he had arranged.

"Shoo! Scat! Get out, you brute!" he howled, snatching up a serviette and attempting to shoo Dusty away like a cat.

Dusty paused in his eating just long enough to snatch the serviette from the mayor's hands and swallow it. Then he went on with the good work.

When Dick Daring, who had hastily run into the town hall and up the stairs to the banquet-chamber, arrived, he found Dusty licking the last scraps off the plates that had been set for a hundred guests. Then the dinosaur, gazing round, became aware of the presence of Mr. Pickles.

Perhaps Dusty's attention was attracted by the gorgeous red robes and the gold chain which the mayor wore. At any rate, he advanced upon the thoroughly frightened Mr. Pickles, and soon had him in a corner. The

red eyes of the dinosaur blinked at the mayor, causing the knees of Mr. Pickles to knock together in terror.

But he need not have been afraid. Dusty meant him no harm. He only meant to possess himself of the gorgeous mayoral robes. Before long Mr. Pickles found himself divested of his ermine-trimmed robe, his cocked hat, and his gold chain of office.

Dusty managed to scramble into the robe and to put his head through the chain of office, and then, with a jerk of the neck, he perched the cocked hat on his head.

Dick threw his head back and howled with laughter, for the sight of Dusty attired in the robes of office of the Mayor of Skinton was too funny for words.

He was still laughing when Dusty disappeared down the staircase. Mr. Pickles, however, was not laughing.

"If that beast belongs to you, my lad, you'll pay dearly for this!" he howled. "I am a governor of your school, and unless my robes are returned at once I shall demand that you be expelled."

"I couldn't help it!" gasped Dick. "You see, Dusty—"

"I have spoken!" yelled the mayor. "Get my robes back at once, or—"

Dick did not waste any further time. He ran down the stairs and out into the market-place once more. As he reached it he heard a tremendous crash, and he knew what that meant.

Dusty had got into further trouble!

Dusty Goes for a Ride!

RED seemed to be Dusty's favourite colour.

Furthermore, it was the colour of a motor-'bus that happened to be standing in the market-square at the time. Dusty had never travelled in a motor-'bus, and he decided to make the experiment now.

With one flop of his massive body he heaved himself up to the top deck of the motor-'bus and scrambled in. But the top deck had not been constructed to take the weight of a half-grown dinosaur.

Crash!

Down toppled the top deck into the interior of the 'bus, and the next moment Dusty was sitting in the midst of the collapsed vehicle, with his long neck poked over the side, making a figure that was all the more ludicrous because of the mayoral robe, chain and hat which he wore.

An instant later the driver, who had turned as he heard the crash behind him, found himself gazing into the enormous face of Dusty. The driver let out a loud yell and let in the clutch.

Whiz!

The 'bus jerked forward, and the people scattered to right and left out of its way. The 'bus was in top gear, and before long it had disappeared down the High Street, the



With one of his forelegs Dusty sent the statue tumbling from its pedestal; with the other he gently deposited the struggling constable in its place.

driver terrified out of his life at the sight of his strange passenger.

Had the 'bus been going slower he would have jumped for it; and now his nerveless hands were incapable of changing gear. He hung on to the steering-gear like grim death, often avoiding disaster by inches.

And Dusty, thoroughly pleased with himself, reclined back in the half-wrecked 'bus and took things as easily as if he had really been Mayor of Skinton.

In the meanwhile, however, trouble—with a large T—was brewing for Dick Daring. The indignant Mr. Pickles had seized him, and was dragging him to a nearby taxi-cab.

"You'll come back to the school with me at once!" he howled. "I'll have you expelled this minute!"

Dick protested, but to no avail. Mr. Pickles was thoroughly annoyed, and almost before Dick knew what was happening, he

was in the taxi-cab and being driven back to the school.

His heart sank when, in the quad, he saw a very red and perspiring Dr. Beatem alighting from a delivery lorry. The look on Dr. Beatem's face boded no good for Dick!

It was not long before the quad was crowded, for the other fellows had rushed back to the school from the market-square.

"Boy!" thundered Dr. Beatem, as his eyes fell on Dick. "You shall pay for this—this work of your creature! I have been insulted, assaulted and——"

Mr. Pickles stepped forward.

"I demand that this boy shall be expelled at once!" he howled. "His creature has robbed me of my robes and my lunch!"

"Expulsion is not sufficient for him!" roared the Head. Turning to the school porter, who had hurried up to see what the excitement was about, he added: "Munster, get me my thickest cane—at once!"

Munster hurried off, and Dick looked glum. Dr. Beatem was pretty good with the cane at any time—now, in his present state of indignation, he was likely to be better than ever. Dick waited in trepidation.

Munster returned with the cane, and a grin on his face.

"Touch your toes!" commanded Dr. Beatem, and Dick had no option but to do so.

Swish!

The cane was raised in the air. Dick braced himself for the downfall of the cane. But, even before Dr. Beatem could bring down the cane, a further interruption occurred.

Crash!

Instantly every eye was turned to the wall of the quad, whence the sound had come. It seemed that an avalanche suddenly precipitated itself over the wall and dropped into the quad. Then the avalanche rose to its feet and revealed itself as—

"Dusty!"

The cry came from a hundred throats. Dusty it was—now looking more dusty than ever! The driver of the 'bus had at last lost control, and the crash had come when the 'bus dashed head-on into the wall of the quad, sending Dusty flying over the wall.

Dr. Beatem took one look at Dusty, and then, dropping the cane, ran for his life. Hard on his heels followed Mr. Pickles! And Dusty, with a gleam in his eyes, snatched

up the cane in his mouth and started in pursuit.

"Stop him!" yelled Dr. Beatem. "Stop the brute!"

The boys howled with laughter. They could not help it. Dusty was still attired in the mayor's robes, and he seemed to take a delight in playing follow-my-leader round the quad.

As for Dick, he waited. He knew that both Dr. Beatem and the mayor couldn't keep this game up for long; that soon they would be forced to ask for mercy.

He was right. At last, unable to run any farther, they grovelled on the ground and pleaded with Dick to call off the dinosaur.

And Dick did—but not until the sentence of expulsion had been withdrawn, and Dr. Beatem had assured him, with tears in his eyes, that he really had no intention of flogging him. Dick then took the cane from Dusty, and the discomfited headmaster and mayor removed themselves to a place of safety.

"Three cheers for Dusty—the new Mayor of Skinton!" yelled Jack Jackson, and the cheers were vociferously given while Dusty, still clad in his robes of office, executed a solo dance of triumph in the centre of the quad.

THE END.

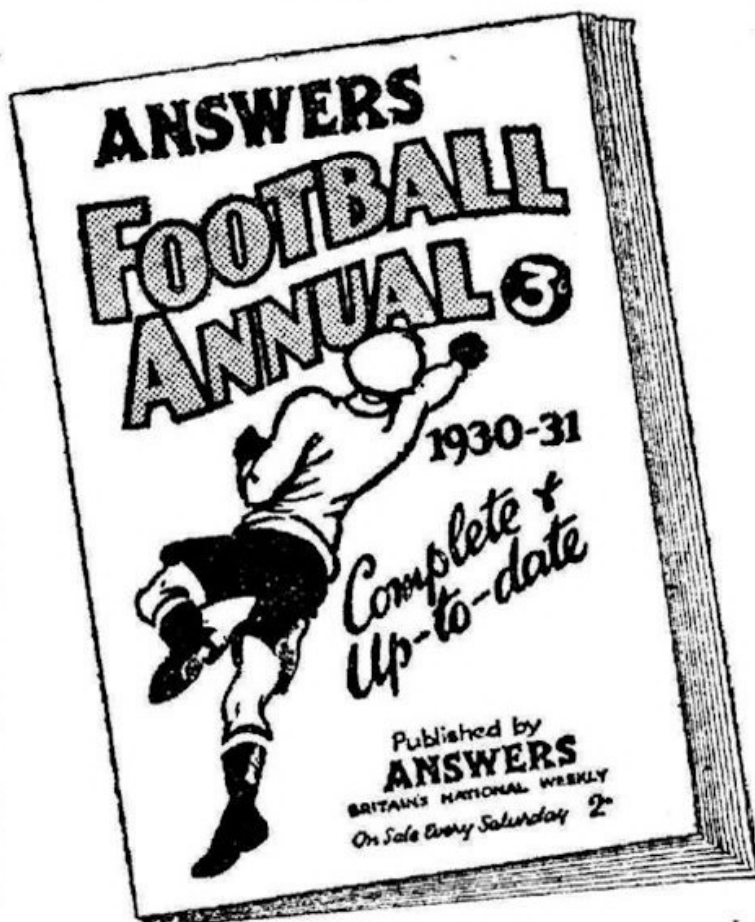
(More about Dusty the Dino in next Wednesday's screamingly funny complete yarn. Don't miss it, chums.)

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Knights of the Road!



**A Romance
of Olden
Times.**

**By
DAVID
GOODWIN.**

Riding the Unrideable!

*In which Dick Forrester takes
the devil out of Black Satan!*

TURPIN was about to break in angrily, but Dick Forrester checked him.

"Rope and saddle your horse," he said quietly to Jacob, "and bring him out into the paddock."

The horse-coper put his fingers to his lips and gave a long whistle. In answer to it, the twisted cripple came hobbling up, making hideous faces. Jacob Astley motioned him into the great horse's stall.

"Saddle Black Satan," he said. "This young gentleman is going to ride him."

The cripple looked at Dick Forrester with sunken, burning eyes. Then he gave a horrible, cackling laugh, took down a saddle and girths, and entered the stall. Satan looked round, and bared his big, white teeth, but he allowed the cripple to saddle and bridle him quietly.

"D'ye see that?" said Jacob with a grin. "That's the man Satan nearly killed—the man whose body he broke an' twisted like a frost-bitten vine. Now he lets the man tend him. There ain't another in England dare go into the stall. Are ye still willin'?"

"You may as well give up trying to frighten me with bogey-stories," said Dick Forrester. "No doubt they're all true, but let's have the horse out in the open."

"Dick," said Turpin, drawing the boy aside, "for Heaven's sake don't tackle that brute—you'll be killed! I didn't bring you here for this."

"Oh, I don't care what happens to me, Turpin," said Dick. "I've nothing to lose, and all to gain. Out

with the horse, I tell you!"

Both Turpin and Astley made way very hurriedly, and the cripple led Satan through the yard into the wide paddock and shut the gate on him. In the meantime, Dick borrowed a pair of spurs and a whip.

"Now," he said, vaulting over the gate, "we'll see!"

The great black horse had begun to graze quietly, but now he looked up. He could hardly believe his eyes as he saw the strong, wiry figure of the boy walking towards him.

Dick stopped. Satan began to pace forward slowly, looking more like some sinuous beast of prey than a horse. His great eyes bulged, and he looked fiendish. Suddenly, darting forward like an arrow, he made a rush, open-mouthed, at Dick.

The boy twisted himself aside, and just missed the snap of the great jaws, which would have taken the top off his skull like the end of an egg shell. He sprang backwards; the horse swerved round and came at him again, this time striking out two whistling blows with his forefeet.

The ironshod hoofs struck nothing but the air, for Dick threw himself aside again, and running back a little, put a dozen yards or more between himself and the horse.

See overleaf for opening chapters in brief.

"Look out for him now, Dick!" shouted Turpin's voice anxiously; and on came Black Satan once more, both hoofs and teeth ready.

But this time Dick gave him no more than bare room to pass, and, closing in as the horse swept by, made a grab at the mane and saddle-horn, and swung himself across Satan's back, helped by the horse's impetus. In a moment Dick had his leg over, and his feet home in the stirrups, snatching up the bridle as he did so.

Satan stopped dead. There was a deathly pause for several moments, and the great horse stood like a statue, only the quivering of his withers showing that there was life in him. His wicked eyes became more devilish than ever—he seemed to be thinking.

Then, like a flash, he flung himself into the air and came down on all four feet with a tremendous shock. After that he was no more than a bounding, squealing, raving whirlwind, his heels lashing out, his teeth clicking, and every trick and device ever known to horseflesh did Satan use, but Dick sat through it all as firm as a rock.

"Well done, lad!" cried Turpin, while the horse-coper stood and gaped. "Stick to him. Don't let him put you down, or you're a dead man! Ah!"

The exclamation was wrung out of him as the black horse, rearing straight up with his forefeet beating the air above his head, flung himself right backwards in an attempt to crush his rider in the fall!

The Taming of Black Satan!

BUT Dick knew the trick of old. As soon as the brute reared, he slipped his feet from the stirrups, and slid off the animal's back as Satan came backwards. The great horse fell with a crash, and, rolling over to raise himself again, badly shaken, found, when he reached his feet, that Dick was on his back once more.

Shaken as he was, the doubly-infuriated horse started his whirlwind performance again. But now the punishment began. At every kick, at every rear, home came the spurs upon his ribs with a ringing smack, and the gut whip curled round him. Had he once got the boy down, Dick would have been a mangled corpse in less than a minute, torn and smashed by teeth and hoofs. But

the young highwayman stuck to him like wax.

Maddened at his failure, beginning to fear he had found his master at last, Satan snatched the bit between his teeth, and with one last plunge, tore off across the paddock. Dick let him go. The pair soared over the fence like a bird, and with the wind whistling in his ears, Dick found himself flying along the road at breakneck speed. For two miles straight they went, and Satan began to slow down.

Then it was that he understood with whom he had to deal. Dick laughed a grim laugh.

"You have galloped far for yourself," he cried. "Now you will go on for me! On! On! On!"

He drove the spurs home, and up hill and down dale he drove the man-killer, stopping for no fence, but sending him on with whip and rowels. To Turpin and the coper they were a mere speck in the distance, till soon they vanished altogether.

"An' that's the end of 'em," growled Astley. "He'll never come back alive, nor the horse neither. Satan'll chuck himself in a gravel-pit, an' kill 'em both!"

"I think not," said Turpin, "for I know a horse as well, or better, than yourself, Jacob, and that one is beat. He knows his master. For all that, I believe he's the devil wrapped in a horse's hide!"

"More likely the youngster is a devil wrapped in a man's hide!" muttered Jacob Astley. "I never see such a thing in all my days. Why, snake alive, here they come back!"

At a slow walk Satan's figure loomed over the crest of a slope on the right, and in the saddle sat Dick, erect and as cool as ever. The great horse was ridden down towards them, and they saw that his hide was white with sweat, and that he trembled slightly. The fierce, cruel glare was gone from his large eyes, which now shone with a frightened, puzzled look, and his nostrils quivered as he turned his head to gaze at his rider, who spoke to him kindly and patted him on the neck. Dick touched him on either shoulder with his whip, and the great horse, chafing nervously at his bit, paced in, with one forefoot after the other lifted high, and set down only when the whip bade him, as a charger paces to the music of a cavalry band. Dick

HOW THE STORY STARTED.

DICK FORRESTER learns upon the death of his father that all the vast Fernhall estates and fortune, with the exception of a hundred guineas, have passed into the hands of his rascally uncle,

VANE FORRESTER. The latter refuses to give the boy his money, and, appointing himself guardian, states his intention of sending Dick and his brother,

RALPH FORRESTER, to Duncansby School—a notorious place in the north of England, from which, once they arrive there, they are not likely to leave. Travelling north by coach, Vane and the two boys are held up by

DICK TURPIN, the famous highwayman. Dick joins forces with Turpin, and after bidding Ralph to be of stout heart and promising to fetch him soon, the two ride away. Vane sets the King's Riders on their track, and Dick is only saved from capture by the resourcefulness of his companion. Later, Dick, being in need of a good horse, they visit the stables of Jacob Astley. The youngster is impressed by one magnificent animal, and Jacob tells him this is Black Satan, who had never yet been ridden and mastered. "Ride him," says the horse-dealer to Dick, "and you can have him as a gift!"

(Now read on.)



No sooner had Dick mounted Black Satan than the horse became a bounding whirlwind which used every trick and device to unseat its rider!

brought him up to Turpin and Astley, who gaped with wonder, and the boy dismounted.

"Well, Master Astley," he said, "is he fairly mine?"

"I never see the like!" gasped Astley. "Ay, he's yours, sir; an' I'll throw the saddle an' bridle in. When any ask you whence he comes, say from Jacob Astley's stables!"

"Ay, and he'll do you credit, Jacob," said Turpin. "Now he's broken there'll be only one steed in all England to compare with him; and that's Black Bess! Come, Dick, he's not too badly winded. Call the cripple to give him a feed and rub down, and we must be off. There's brisk work before us."

"Nay, I'll tend him myself," said Dick, as Satan muzzled his quivering nostrils into his young master's hand. The horse seemed to say:

"You have beaten me—I am yours, whatever happens."

"Come, Satan, you'll look to me for your needs from now, and many a merry race we'll run with death!" exclaimed Dick happily. "Master Astley, I pray you exchange this one for a saddle with holsters—one that befits my trade!"

"Ay, holsters i' faith," muttered Turpin, with a smile, as Dick led Satan into the stable; "there'll be many a fat-pursed squire rue the day that youngster took to the road, till the gallows claim him! Eh, Astley?"

"It's about that that I wished to speak,"

said Astley, in a low voice. "Is he safe? Because I've news for you. Nay, man; I'll tell it to you alone, and you can pass it on to him if you will. Listen here!"

He whispered in Turpin's ear for some moments, and the highwayman's face grew alert.

"Is it so?" he said. "Then, zounds, Astley, we're in luck! 'Twill be a pretty piece of work to blood that youngster on, and one where it will do me no ill to have a brisk helpmate, as I am persuaded the boy will prove! Ho, there, Dick! Is Satan fit for the road, after the handling you gave him?"

"Ay, there are a dozen lives in him yet," replied Dick, leading the black horse out, "provided he is used gently for the next few hours."

"You must husband his strength," said Turpin, "for we shall need it all to-night. Mount, Dick, and let us be going. I have a pretty piece of news for your ear by the road. Farewell, Jacob!"

"Farewell, Master Astley, and my thanks for a good mount!" called Dick; and they rode away down the drive and out upon the high road.

"And now," said Turpin, as they turned the bend of the road and left the copier's farm behind, "since you have got a mount fit for a gentleman of the road, Dick, and a pistol which, if not of the best, will

serve till you get another, I presume you will put them to some use?"

"I was thinking that," replied Dick. "What was it that Jacob Astley whispered to you?"

Turpin cast a sidelong glance at his young companion.

"I was coming to that," he said. "Jacob is often a source of useful news. He tells me that the Norwich Mail, which will pass Gunton Heath this afternoon at about five, carries three hundred guineas in gold for Simon the maltster, at Norwich, in charge of a clerk. Now, it sticks in my mind that it is our plain duty to persuade the carrier to hand those guineas into our keeping, for it would be sad were they to go to foster such an unholy trade as brewing!"

"Why, if 'tis to stop the main you mean," said Dick, "this looks to me like a very good opportunity. I am the easier in mind for what you tell me of the brewer, and it would please me to hold a pistol at his fat neck. If I am forced to gain my fortune on the road, it is my purpose to rob the rich, and let the poor go free with a tithe of the rich man's gains for a gift."

"It is no bad plan," said Turpin, who looked at these matters in a practical light. "If you give to the poor, they will put you on the track of many a fat purse."

Dick frowned a little.

"I do not love a spy," he said; "and these are not the breed of poor men I shall help, but only the honest. I will hunt only game of my own starting."

"You may find that pay better, mayhap," said Turpin; "but for six months I did excellently well by the aid of a youngster son of an impoverished peer. Having no money, but an agreeable person and charming manners, he was in great request, and dined at all the houses in the country, whereby he was able to inform me when any gentleman with money about him would be travelling, and where."

"Gadzooks!" cried Dick, laughing in spite of himself. "You have a quaint way of looking at things."

"I look on the bright side of them," replied Turpin gravely. "I have a very trusting nature, which is the reason so many knaves over-reach me. Why, it is not very long since I and a companion of mine stopped in Quex Woods a man who was evidently a coiner, for he had about him two bags, one containing bad guineas, while the other held genuine gold."

"We divided the good and bad alike, each taking fifteen base guineas and fifteen pure. We slept in the woods that night, and, remembering that my companion was an incurable gambler, who always lost all his gains at dice, I reflected that it would do him no more harm to lose the bad guineas than the good. I therefore took the fifteen pure guineas from his bag while he slept, and put my share of the base ones in their place."

"While he slept!" exclaimed Dick.

"Ay, he was extremely tired, and I was loth to break his rest to explain the matter. That done, I went to sleep. Conceive of my horror and indignation, on waking in the morning, to find the rogue had been up before me, and had ridden away with both my bags of guineas and his own. You would not credit the dishonesty there is in the world, Dick. It nearly broke my heart."

Dick's wonder and indignation changed to mirth, and he laughed till his ribs ached.

Yet, at the back of it all, there was a devil-may-care courage and a good-fellowship that fascinated. He beguiled the way with many a quaint story, and they took their midday meal at a comfortable village hostelry, taking no heed of danger or espionage. So quickly did the time pass that Dick was recalled with something like a shock to the business in hand.

"It is time we were moving," said Turpin. "Sam Gurney, who drives the mail, has good cattle in front of him, and may be before time. We must be off to Gunton Heath, Dick, and do you see carefully to the priming of your pistol."

They rode away across the sandy wastes, and it was not long before the heather and coppices of Gunton Heath lay before them, with the long, white road winding over it. Turpin talked cheerily all the way, but Dick was silent and pensive at the start. He realised at last what a step he was taking.

It was not the earning of a death on the gallows, or the placing of a price on his head that he feared. That had already been thrust on him, although he was, as yet, innocent. But now he was about to earn that punishment in good earnest, and take up the rôle that had been thrust on him. For a moment he wavered; but his fierce, rebellious nature would not let him draw back.

"They have forced it on me when I was innocent!" he cried. "Now let them look to themselves; for, by all the powers, I'll earn the name they've given me!"

There was no one to turn him the right way. He had no companion but the one who rode beside him—a man who could laugh with one hand on his pistol-butt and one foot in the gallows-cart. The right way would have meant death for Dick—a death innocent, but yet one of shame. He did not fear death. What he loathed was to give the victory to his enemies. That was what hardened his heart, and sent his hand to his weapons.

"Come, lad!" said Turpin. "I hear the wheels in the distance. Into the coppice with you!"

They turned aside from the road into a dark spinney of pine and holly trees that stood close by, and Dick waited with a beating heart.

"Do you stop the coachman," whispered Turpin, drawing a double pistol and cocking it, "and watch him well, for there's no more slippery dog than Sam Gurney. Mind, there are no two ways—a bullet in his head if he

plays you any trick. I will attend to the passengers myself!"

On come the coach. Through the screen of leaves Dick could see it rolling swiftly along—the guard behind, three passengers on top, a huge red-faced coachman on the box, and three spanking chestnuts pounding along with their heads up and their swingle-bars touching. Dick's heart drummed against his ribs, a mist seemed to swim before his eyes, and he felt crazy with excitement as he drew and cocked his pistol.

"Now!" whispered Turpin.

With a bound the two black horses broke out of the spinney and their riders sent them right across the road before the coach. Dick flung up his pistol, with its muzzle towards the coachman's head, and cried loudly:

"Hold!"

The Hold-up!

BACK came the three coach-horses on their haunches as the purple-faced coachman pulled them up with a jerk. The coach stopped, amid a general outcry and clatter of swingle-bars, and the guard at the back, who had been just about to level his pistol at Turpin, dropped it with a frightened shout as he found the highwayman's own weapon pointing towards him.

"Another blessed road-rider!" swore the bluff old coachman, glaring at Dick as he pulled in his ribbons. "Gadzooks! How often am I to haul the mouths of my cattle about like this? D'ye hear, you young cockerel with the pistol? If you must stop the coach, why don't ye do it gently?"

"All right, old straw-gaiters!" replied Dick, laughing, but taking care to keep his muzzle lined on the driver's head. "Keep those hands of yours away from your side-pockets, and you'll come to no harm. What have you got inside there, Turpin?"

"Some mighty well-lined fobs, or I'm mistaken," replied the highwayman, holding his pistol to the coach window, behind which rose a great clamour. "Open the door, sir—you inside there, and favour me with that money-belt under your coat. I must trouble you to come outside. Any man who desires a leaden ball by way of sauce has only to draw a weapon!"

The door opened, and, grumbling and whining heartily, out came a well-dressed man, with a very pale face and a bulge round his waist that the highwayman's trained eye detected at once as a travelling money-belt.

"I am a poor man—a very poor man!" he cried, fumbling in his pocket, and producing a shabby purse with a shilling or two in it. "Here is my little all; take it

and let me go! The others have more than I."

"Off with that belt, or I will try a bullet upon it!" said Turpin sternly. "You rogue, you are the wealthiest linendraper in Heybridge, and the way you starve your apprentices is the talk of the place. Off with it! That is better! Now let him who carries the bag of guineas for the brewery at Norwich step out and hand the same to me, lest I seek him with a pistol-ball!"

"Who are the others?" cried Dick, keeping the coachman covered, but reining back until he could see into the coach. "A parson, i' faith, and a lady! Why, on my life, 'tis Cicely Mainwaring!"

A well-fed-looking vicar, very scared at the proceedings, was sitting in the corner, and beyond him sat a marvellously pretty girl with brown hair and deep blue eyes, who seemed not in the least disturbed at the coming of the highwayman. But as soon as she caught sight of Dick she gave a little gasp of astonishment and then laughed merrily. Dick recognised her at once as the daughter of his neighbour at Fernhall, Sir Charles Mainwaring.

"By all the powers, what a meeting!" exclaimed Dick. "Turpin, leave Mistress Mainwaring her purse, and give her no offence, or I will empty this pistol into your own head!"

"Beshrew you, Dick, attend to the coachman, and leave the passengers to me!" cried Turpin, laughing. "I do not rob young gentlewomen, and Mistress Mainwaring"—he bowed gracefully to her—"need give herself no alarm. But do you, Master Clerk, produce those guineas instantly, or your master will receive nothing but a dead knave for his money!"

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NEW SERIES No. 27.

JULY 26th, 1930.