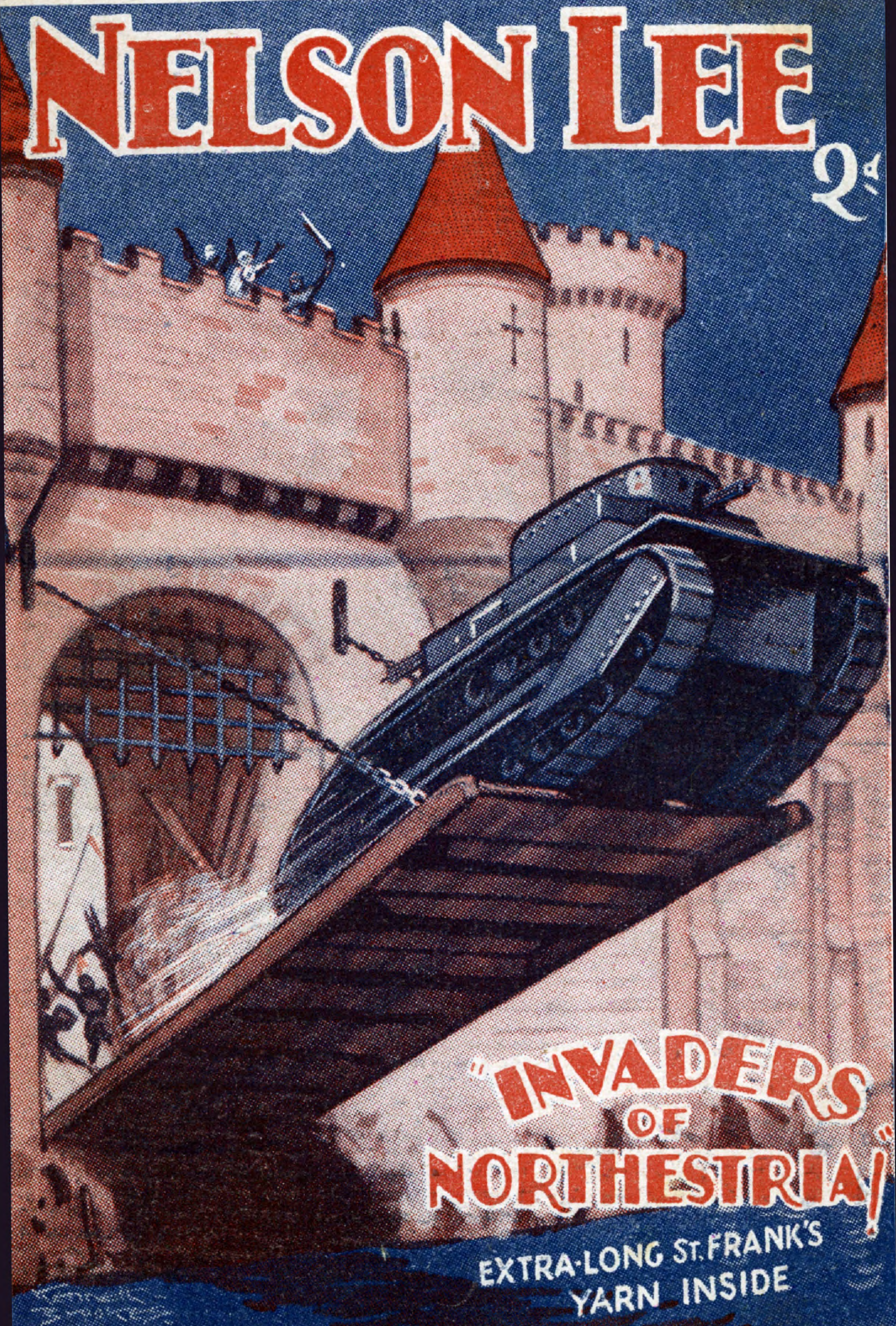


"HANDFORTH'S WEEKLY!"

First issue of a side-splitting
new feature within.

NELSON LEE

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"INVADERS
OF
NORTHESTRIA!"

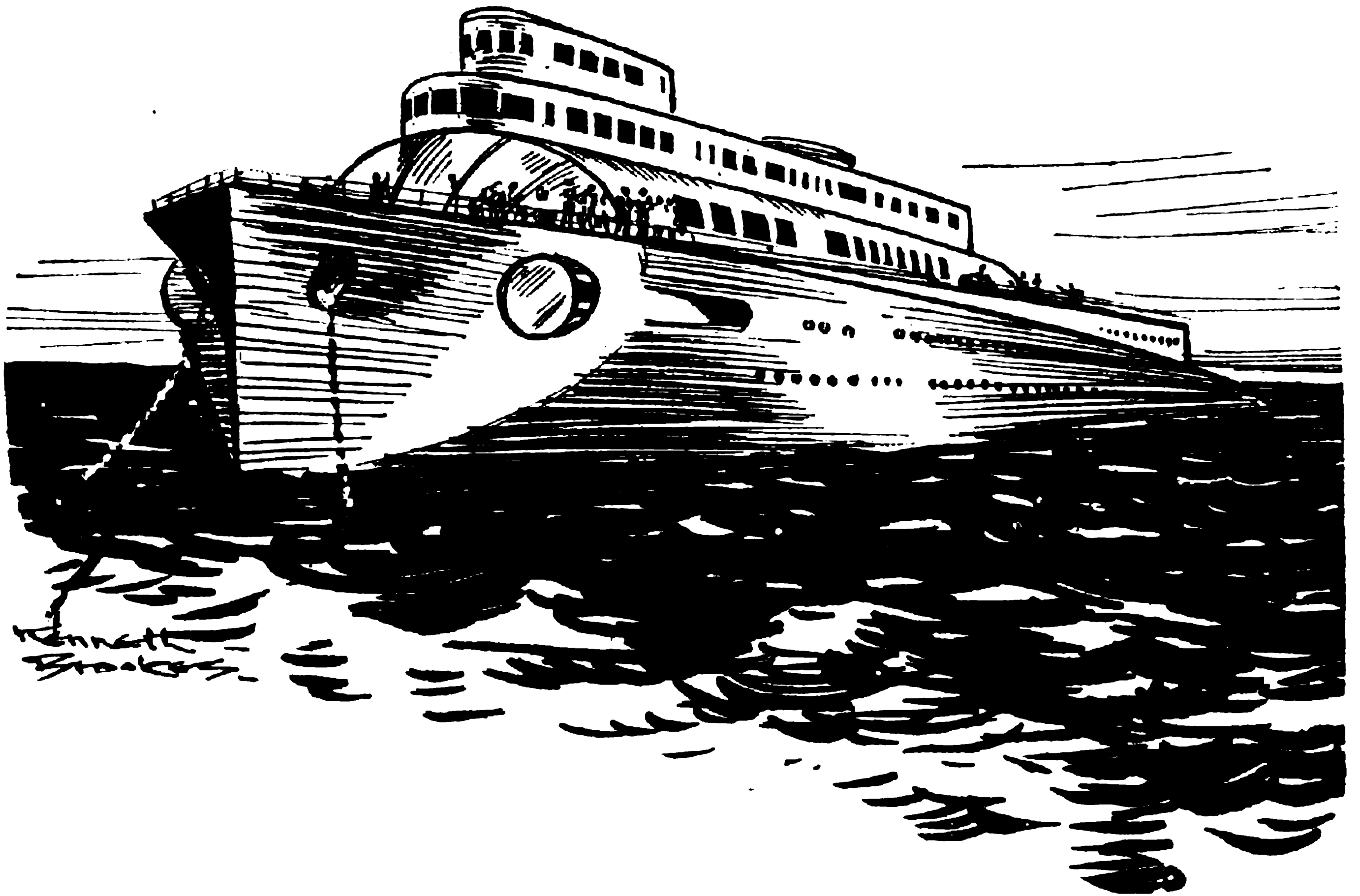
EXTRA-LONG ST. FRANK'S
YARN INSIDE

New Series No. 66.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

April 25th, 1931.

INVADERS OF NORTHESTRIA



CHAPTER 1.

The Land of the Oppressed:

THE super-submarine, Pioneer, at rest a mile from the shore of the lake, was a scene of considerable activity.

The great toboggan-like devices, by which she had been enabled to skim beneath the Polar ice, were being dismantled, and the great vessel, more like a luxurious private yacht than a submarine, was resuming her normal neat appearance. Invented by Sir Hobart Manners, and owned by Lord Dorrimore—who were both on board—she was indeed a vessel to be proud of.

For her achievement, on her maiden voyage, was one of supreme wonder. Diving beneath the eternal ice of the Arctic, she had nosed her way hundreds of miles northwards, through mysterious, uncharted seas.

And now she was

safely in an amazing Arctic haven—a great oasis, surrounded by gigantic mountain peaks, where the atmosphere was well-nigh sub-tropical. By forcing her way through a subterranean tunnel, at the base of the mountains, she had proved herself mightier than Nature itself.

“Phew! Nobody can say that our arrival in Northestria wasn’t exciting!” remarked Nipper, the cheery captain of the St. Frank’s Remove, as he leaned over one of the rails on the promenade deck. “I’m wondering if Cedric will attempt any attack.”

“He’d better not!” said Handforth, the burly, aggressive leader of Study D. “By George! Let him try! I’d like him to give us an excuse to send him and his rotten crew to the bottom of the lake!”

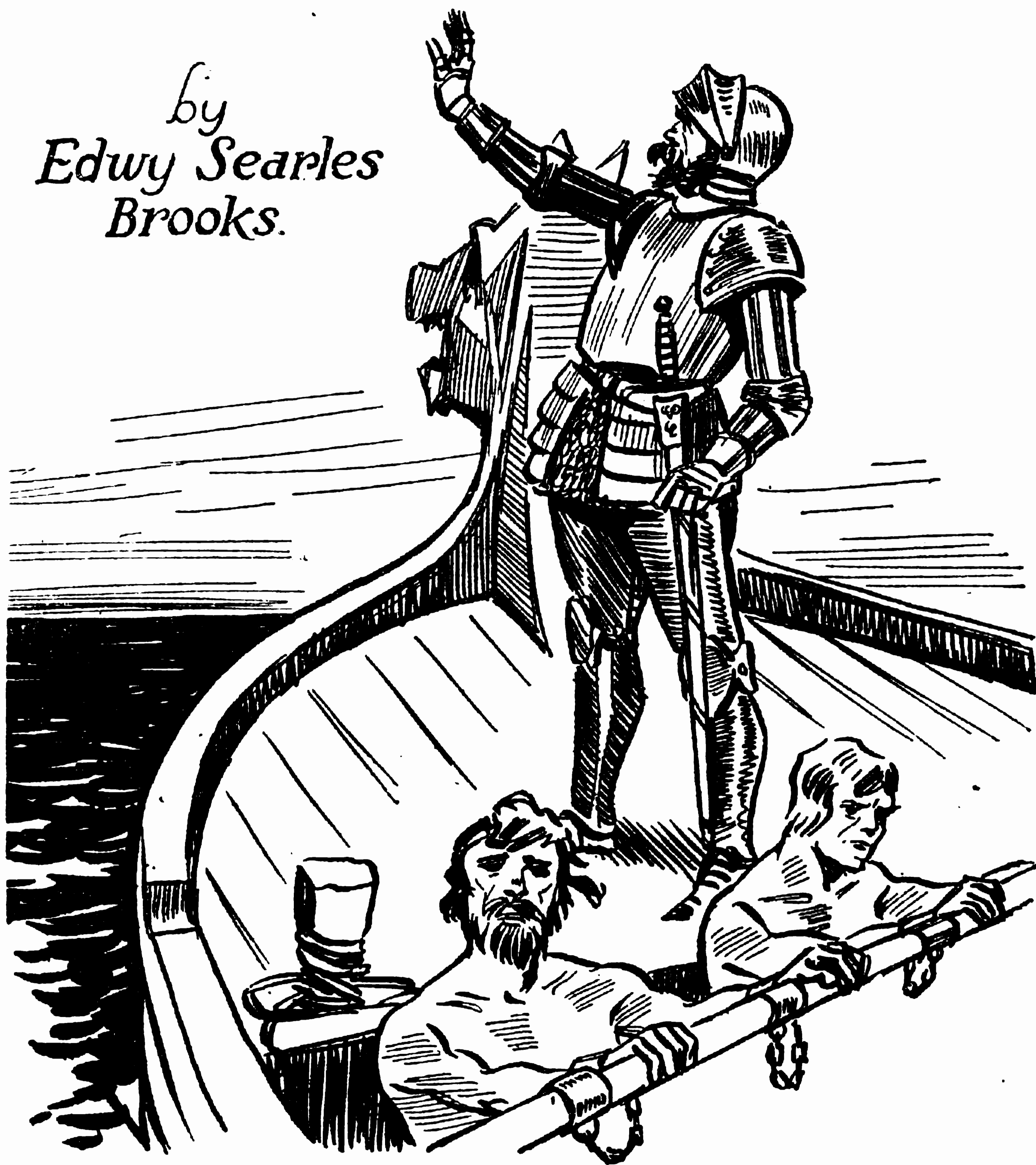
Archie Glenthorne sighed.

“I’m afraid, Handy, old thing, that there’s a frightfully blood-

**St. Frank’s Schoolboys
Put Gothland Army
To The Rout!**

Battle-Thrills For The Chums of St. Frank's!

by
*Edwy Searles
Brooks.*



thirsty strain in your character," he said, shaking his head. "Not that I'm opposed to this present scheme. I'm all for it. The deader Cedric can be, the better, what?"

"I'm glad to hear you say so," growled Handforth. "Burning people at the stake is a bit thick! We only arrived in the nick of time to save Princess Mercia from that ghastly fate. That sort of hideous cruelty isn't done nowadays."

"It all depends what you mean, Brother Handforth, by 'nowadays,'" observed William Napoleon Browne, the long, lean captain of the St. Frank's Fifth, as he joined the group. "I would point out that the period, in this country, is somewhere in the region of 1131. And you mustn't overlook

the fact that in Merrie England, of that date, burning at the stake was a common enough pleasantry."

"You're right, Browne," said Nipper, nodding. "These people are about eight hundred years behind the times. They're still in the Middle Ages. Here, in Northestria, there are feudal castles, overlords, serfs, and all that sort of thing. And it's best to forget that we're really in the twentieth century when we review the customs of this country."

The land of Northestria, which rolled away in fertile hills and valleys all along the shores of the lake, was, indeed, a medieval relic. It extended back for hundreds of miles to the impassable mountain

range that raised its lofty peaks into the eternal mists above. On the other side of the lake, which stretched like a great inland sea, was the smaller country of Gothland.

The St. Frank's fellows knew this Arctic oasis well; they had been here once before, and they had helped the Northeistrians to repel the Gothland invaders.

But since then the Gothlanders, under a new leader, known as Cedric the Cruel, had swept upon the peaceful Northeistrians, and had conquered them. Now Northeistria was overrun by the Gothland soldiers, and the peace-loving people were under the tyrant's heel.

For months, Ethelbert the Red, the ex-Regent of Northeistria, had been exiled in the Gothland fortress, and he had managed to send out an appeal for help in a sealed bottle. He had, indeed, sent hundreds of these bottles, and one of them had got into Lord Dorrimore's hands. And so the millionaire peer had organised this expedition, and it had successfully reached Northeistria.

WHILE the boys were talking on deck, a dignified little scene was taking place down in the spacious saloon.

Less than an hour ago, Ethelbert the Red and Princess Mercia, and her brother, Prince Oswy, had been rescued from the stake, and carried out to the submarine. At Nelson Lee's suggestion, they had been granted an hour in which to recover from the terrors of their appalling ordeal. Meanwhile, their clothing was dried, and prepared again for use.

Irene Manners and Doris Berkeley and a number of the other Moor View girls who were on this trip, had personally attended the fair princess. She now emerged from one of the cabins, showing very few traces of the ordeal through which she had just passed.

Ethelbert the Red and Prince Oswy came into the saloon, too, and on all their faces there were expressions of heartfelt gratitude.

But before they could utter a word, or before Nelson Lee or Dorrie could address them, a stout, ragged figure ran forward and flung himself at the feet of the princess. Reverently he kissed her gown.

"May the gods be praised, fair Majesty, for thy salvation!" he said fervently, the tears streaming down his chubby face.

"Why, I vow 'tis Wynwed!" cried the princess. "Wynwed the Jovial! The former captain of my bodyguard!"

"To see thee alive, sweet Majesty, is to live again!" said Wynwed. "And thou, noble Prince Oswy! Ay, and thou, my lord of Ethelbert! These wonders are such that methinks I shall wake up from a dream."

"You have much to thank Wynwed for, Princess Mercia," said Nelson Lee quietly. "It was he who warned us of your imminent peril; and because of his timely warning, we were enabled to save you."

"Good Wynwed, all my thanks are for thee," said the princess softly.

"Ay, but we must not forget the wondrous service our friends from the outer world have rendered us," said Ethelbert the Red vehemently. "It was they, fair Mercia, who saved us from Cedric's accursed brutality. Did I not have faith, month in and month out, that they would come?"

"'Tis well that ye should reproach me, Ethelbert," said the princess. "But for that great faith of thine, we might e'en now have been dead."

Ethelbert turned to his rescuers.

"Since Cedric did overrun our country, we have been incarcerated in the Gunmarc fortress in Gothland," he said. "We were brought only to Northeistria to die."

"To be burnt at the stake before all your own loyal subjects," nodded Lord Dorrimore. "Well, we've put a kink into Cedric's armour, I fancy. And it's not the first kink, either."

"I vow, thy words bewilder me," said the princess, smiling.

Sir Hobart Manners and Captain Williams were already charmed by these Northeistrians. Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore, of course, had met them on a former occasion, and they were great friends.

"We have much to discuss, methinks," said the ex-Regent. "Even now I marvel at thy coming, good Dorrimore the Brave. By what means didst thou conquer the frozen seas and the mighty mountains?"

"That can wait," replied Dorrie briskly. "There'll be heaps of time for us to talk over that later. What we want to know now—is the precise condition in Northeistria."

"Alas, I know but little!" replied Ethelbert the Red sadly.

"Our exile in Gothland hath been complete," put in the princess. "We knew aught of what took place in Northeistria—save, perchance, a rumour here and there. But we do know that Cedric the Cruel hath proclaimed himself king, and that he hath instituted a despotic rule which is destroying the spirits of all my former subjects."

"But that will be altered," declared Ethelbert confidently. "Our deliverers are here, sweet princess. And they will punish this Gothland oaf!"

"Yet remember that our good friends number but a few," said Mercia.

"Ay, a few—but the equal to an army of Gothland curs!" retorted Ethelbert.

"I hope your faith in us is justified," said Nelson Lee, smiling. "You may be sure, Ethelbert, that we will do everything in our power to assist you. But we did not really come here to engage in warfare."

"Our main object," said Lord Dorrimore, "is to open up Northeistria as a recognised country of the world. We want to put Northeistria on the map—so that it can be visited by the peoples of the world, so that it can be used as a wonderful new holiday resort. With a complete service of submarine cruisers organised, we can bring prosperity to your country. Moreover, it is our desire to plant the British flag here,

so that for evermore you will be under the protection of England. It is our dream to add Northestria to the Empire."

"A dream in which, good friend, we hope to join," said Ethelbert. "But while Cedric maintains his tyrannous rule, naught of that nature can be done. His grip on the land is like that of the deadly octopus. That, at least, I do know."

"We shall have to try diplomatic methods with Mr. Cedric," said Dorrie. "If we can avert war, so much the better. We'll give him his marching orders, and, if he is fool enough to resist them—well, it'll have to be war. I'm not particular, either way."

He could well understand the Northestrians' hatred of the Gothland tyrants. The two peoples were not of the same blood. In the dim ages of the past, the Gothlanders had found their way into the oasis—true descendants, no doubt, of the early Goths. At a later date these other people, clearly sprung from Anglo-Saxon stock, had become entrapped in the oasis, too.

And for centuries the English-speaking people had used the Gothlanders as slaves; then, by slow development, friendlier relations had been established. The Gothlanders were no longer kept on their own side of the lake; considerable trading had been done between the two peoples, until at length the simple-minded Northestrians had treated them almost as equals.

In that they had made a mistake, for the Gothlanders, fired by their new power, had desired even greater power. And now they were the masters. The gentle, kindly Northestrians were being ground down—enslaved.

"Have I permission to speak, my lord?" asked Wynwed the Jovial, his face eager, his eyes burning.

"Good friend, speak on," said Ethelbert the Red.

"There can be no parleying with Cedric the Cruel!" said Wynwed tensely. "He is treacherous, cunning, sly. Were you to sign a treaty with him, he would betray ye at the first chance. Ay, and all other Gothlanders are of the same breed. There can be no treaty with such vermin!"

"Throw them all out, eh?" asked Dorrie brightly.

"Northestria will not be saved until these Gothland hordes are sent back across the lake to their own accursed country," vowed Wynwed. "Alas, I see not how that can be done. But I know of Northestria's agonies, my lord, since I have lived in serfdom there these last seven or eight months."

"Hath Cedric such a grip on my fair land, then?" asked the princess.

"'Tis a grip of relentless iron," said the ex-captain of the bodyguard. "In Dunstane, in Ixwell, in every town throughout the land, Cedric hath erected great fortresses. He hath established garrisons by the score, and his soldiers are empowered to deal out death and torture as they will."

"As bad as that, eh?" asked Lee gravely.

"Martial law is in force everywhere—in every peaceful village and hamlet," said Wynwed fiercely. "Cedric hath invested his soldiers with supreme power. A loyal Northestrian hath but to whisper one word of treason—one word in favour of our fair princess—and his life is forfeit. Ay, women and children are put to the death, too, merely for the breathing of an incautious word. Terror stalketh throughout the land, and the people are in hourly fear of their very lives."

"It's just about time we came, then," said Lord Dorrimore. "Tying a knot into Cedric's tail will give me no end of a thrill!"

CHAPTER 2.

Cedric the Cruel!

"SOMETHING doing!" said Willy Handforth eagerly.

He and Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon—all of the St. Frank's Third Form—were perched perilously on the rail of the promenade deck, for'ard. They were watching the Northestrian shore, in the distance. The quaint, medieval city of Dunstane, the country's capital, could plainly be seen on the slopes—a great walled city, with castles and fortresses standing out loftily above the other buildings.

There had been great movements of soldiers outside the city, and the ordinary people, too, had been outside the city walls in great numbers.

But now something else was happening.

From a sheltered cove just beyond the city, where the lake shore drove inland, a great number of quaint-looking vessels came majestically out upon the open water. They were galleys, propelled by enormous oars. They were the ships of Northestria—now in the hands of the Gothlanders.

"I say, this looks pretty bad!" said Chubby Heath excitedly. "It's the whole giddy fleet! They're coming to the attack!"

Willy laughed contemptuously.

"Let 'em come!" he replied. "Who cares?"

"But there are dozens of those galleys—"

"It wouldn't matter if there were hundreds," interrupted Willy. "Do you think that these antediluvian cockle-shells can hurt us? I say, Ted! Look what's happening!"

"I'm not blind, you young fathead!" roared Handforth, from farther along the deck. "By George! It's the enemy fleet! I hope it tries to attack us—and then we can blow it out of the water!"

The galleys came on in an impressive, sweeping crescent. All the ships were propelled by Northestrian slaves—poor wretches who were chained to the oars—in much the same way as Christian slaves were chained to the galleys of old by the corsairs of the Mediterranean.

"It looks very much like an attack to me," said Nipper, as he watched the oncoming

fleet. "Perhaps Cedric is idiot enough to think that we shall be scared. Perhaps he believes that his superior number of ships will be able to overwhelm us."

But all the boys knew that they were just as safe as if the entire British Navy was at their backs. The Pioneer, with machine-guns and other weapons of defence, could treat the galleys with contempt. Not one of them would be able to get near. They were more than half a mile away now, and, even at this distance, it would have been possible for the submarine's guns to shatter the entire fleet.

Handforth, excited, ran down to the saloon, and burst in unceremoniously.

"Oh, I say, frightfully sorry to butt in like this!" he ejaculated. "But something's happening!"

Princess Mercia looked at him with warm eyes.

"'Tis Handforth the Bold," she said gently. "'Tis good, indeed, to see all these old friends."

"Oh, rather!" said Handforth, feeling helpless. "I wish you'd come up, Mr. Lee—and you, too, Dorrie! Cedric's entire fleet is coming out to meet us!"

"By St. Attalus!" ejaculated Ethelbert the Red, tugging almost nervously at his auburn beard. "The dog means mischief!"

"We'll attend to him—never fear," said Lord Dorrimore crisply. "So he's sending his fleet out, is he? I think we'd better go on deck, Lee."

They all went—Ethelbert and the princess, too. They were in time to see Cedric's galleys sweeping down majestically upon the submarine. It was a fine sight. The galleys looked very picturesque and warlike.

Lord Dorrimore, seizing a megaphone, ran to the upper deck; he placed the megaphone to his lips.

"Hold!" he bellowed. "I warn you that if you come too close, we'll sink every one of you!"

Nelson Lee, at the same time, was giving orders to the gunners—for the Pioneer had been specially prepared by Dorrie for warlike activities.

"Can you understand me?" roared Dorrie. "Proceed at your peril!"

It was clear that his words were heard and understood; for, less than a minute later, the oarsmen in the galleys ceased working, and the entire fleet rested. Then the biggest galley of all, a luxurious craft, came onwards alone.

"Oh!" growled Lord Dorrimore. "So that's it!"

For this single galley had sent aloft a great white flag. The Gothlanders, at least, understood the formalities of war.

The galley came on, and nobody aboard the submarine doubted that this vessel was Cedric's own personal craft.

Ethelbert the Red, watching, suddenly caught in his breath, and his expression became hard.

"I' faith! 'Twas as I thought!" he said fiercely. "See, Lee the Lionheart! Cedric himself standeth upon the galley's deck! The arrogant tyrant! See how he struts!"

There was no mistaking the figure of Cedric the Cruel. A great hulking figure of a man, dressed in gleaming chainmail, with an enormous sword at his hip. A great black beard fell upon his breastplate, and his face, even at this distance, was eloquent of cunning and cruelty.

"Better be ready for him, old man," murmured Dorrie, into Nelson Lee's ear. "If all they say about him is true—and I don't doubt it—he's a treacherous blighter!"

"He'll do no harm, Dorrie," said Lee. "The odds are too many for him!"

The galley swept alongside, and the submarine deck was so low that it was easily possible for the self-crowned King of Northestria to step aboard direct. He did so hesitatingly, a look of doubt in his eyes.

"Who commandeth this strange vessel?" he demanded arrogantly.

"I don't think you really want to see the captain," replied Lord Dorrimore. "I happen to be the owner, so perhaps I'll do?"

"I would remind ye that I come under the flag of truce," said Cedric.

"An unnecessary reminder, my friend," said Lord Dorrimore. "We see your flag clearly enough. You are quite safe, and free to withdraw at any moment you choose."

Dorrie and Lee were tall men, but Cedric almost towered above them.

"How come ye on this lake?" demanded the king truculently. "From whom did ye get permission? And what manner of folly is this, that ye should grossly interfere with my rule, and seize the three traitors who were about to be executed?"

"Not quite so loud, Cedric—we're not deaf," said Dorrie. "I think your name is Cedric? Mine is Dorrimore. You may have heard of me. You may also have heard of Lee the Lionheart—on my left."

"I come to demand an explanation," said Cedric harshly. "Thou hast outraged my royal authority——"

"Talking about outrages, we happen to hold the view that burning people at the stake is a pretty dirty, low-down game," said Dorrie. "And even at the expense of suffering your royal disapproval, we'll do just the same again if the occasion demands. The sooner we understand one another, Cedric, the better."

"Bah! Enough of this!" thundered the king. "Who art thou to question my authority? Strangers, all of ye—men from beyond the great ice, enticed hither by the wailing laments of Ethelbert the Red!"

"'Tis easy to bluster, thou Gothland dog!" said Ethelbert angrily. "But beware! These brave people from beyond the great ice are my friends—they are Princess Mercia's friends. They are the friends of Northestria! 'Twould be as well for thee to adopt a less arrogant tone."

"By my bones!" snarled Cedric. "Thou speakest bravely now, Ethelbert. Think ye,

fool, that this handful of strange men can defy the might of Gothland? I am here to demand an explanation——"

"You have all the explanation we are inclined to give," interrupted Nelson Lee curtly. "But it is well for you to know, Cedric, that we came peacefully. Our mission in this land is not warlike. But when we find you and your soldiers torturing people, we range ourselves on the side of the helpless victims."

Cedric the Cruel glared into Lee's face.

"And who art thou to prattle as to thy opinions?" he sneered furiously. "I, Cedric, King of Northestria and Gothland, demand the instant release of the three prisoners ye so impudently rescued from their punishment!"

"And if we give them into your hands?"

"Burning will be too good!" roared Cedric, beside himself. "They shall be tortured as none has been tortured before. By my marrow and bones! They shall learn the power and might of——"

"One moment!" interrupted Nelson Lee. "We need continue this argument no longer. Your prisoners will not be handed over, Cedric. Your tone is unpleasant, my friend. You may use this arrogance with the unfortunate people you rule, but you cannot use it with us."

"I cannot, forsooth!" shouted Cedric. "Thinkest thou, fool, that you and your handful of men can defy me? I warn ye that if any attempt is made to interfere with my rule in Northestria, then I will bring such vengeance upon the people that the whole land will be horrified. I will make these Northestrians suffer throughout the length and breadth of the land. Blood shall flow like the mountain streams!"

"Boasting Gothlander!" said the Princess Mercia scornfully. "'Twould be well for ye to remember that my noble friends are possessed of powers such as ye cannot hope to combat."

"Get ye hence!" ordered Cedric, glaring from Nelson Lee to Dorrie, and sweeping his hand majestically. "Give these royal refugees into my keeping, and nothing amiss will befall ye. Fail to obey my orders, and I wilt take such reprisals as Northestria hath never seen!"

Nelson Lee looked him straight in the eye.

"I am glad, Cedric, that you came aboard," he said smoothly. "It has given us the opportunity of judging you for what you actually are. We can see quite clearly that you are a brute, a tyrant, a conceited blackguard!"

Cedric recoiled.

"Sayest thou these things to me?" he shouted thickly. "To me—King of all Northestria and Gothland?"

"I say them to your face!" replied Lee contemptuously. "I will repeat them if you wish. You are a blackguard, Cedric. I need no further corroboration of Ethelbert's pitiful story. Northestria is indeed in sore straits, to have you for a ruler!"

"Good man!" murmured Dorrie. "That's the stuff!"

"It is clear that any further parleying with you is a waste of time," continued Lee curtly. "Now, Cedric, I will give you a warning. Withdraw your soldiers from Northestria; take them back to Gothland. Relinquish your stranglehold on this fair land, and we will take no action."

"Thou art telling me this?" asked Cedric in amazement.

"I am telling you that it will be distinctly good for your health to get out!" replied Lee. "And I can tell you, Cedric, that your only chance of saving yourself from extinction is to hand Northestria back to its people."

Cedric was nearly purple in the face with fury.

"Fools!" he growled in a mighty rumble. "'Tis war! Thou hast flung down the gauntlet, and thou hast decided thine own doom! I am Cedric of Gothland, Cedric of Northestria, with thousands—ay, tens of thousands—of soldiers at my command. By the bones of Sarus! Thou shalt soon learn my power!"

And with a great laugh of mocking fury, he returned to his galley.

CHAPTER 3.

The Call to Action!

"A NICE, cheerful gentleman," said Lord Dorrimore, grinning.

"My only hat! I wanted to punch him in the eye!" panted Handforth, who was standing on the deck with clenched fists.

"Couldn't very well do that, old man," said Dorrie. "Don't forget the white flag."

"The awful rotter!" said Nipper. "I'm jolly glad you told him straight, guv'nor!"

"It was the only thing to do, Nipper," said Nelson Lee. "We don't want any misunderstandings with Cedric."

They watched the galley moving away, and Cedric the Cruel was now shouting madly at his men, storming up and down, raving like a maniac.

If they needed any further proof of his brutal character, they were afforded it then. For one of the unfortunate galley slaves, fumbling at his oar in his fear, earned Cedric's disapproval. With one deadly thrust, the King of Northestria drove his sword into the man's heart.

The princess shuddered and closed her eyes.

"My poor countrymen!" she murmured.

"Never fear—we will avenge him!" said Lord Dorrimore grimly. "By the Lord Harry, I feel like sending a couple of shells into that galley, and blowing it to smithereens!"

"That's impossible, Dorrie," said Sir Hobart Manners.

"The white flag," agreed his lordship. "But Cedric won't always be under the white flag—and then, by gad, we'll get him!"

"Thou hast seen what this man is," said Ethelbert the Red. "But, mark ye, Cedric is not the only one. The commander-in-chief of his armies, Guntha the Crafty, is just such a brute. There are others—Attawulf the Terrible, and Redwold the Ruthless. These men are powerful overlords of Gothland, and now their power in Northestria is immeasurable. Ay, and there are hundreds of lesser tyrants, all acting under Cedric's orders."

"I can see that we're going to have a pretty hectic time," said Dorrie contentedly. "To blazes with Cedric and all his might! He's very bold—very confident. He thinks that he'll easily be able to wipe us out. But he doesn't know that this ship of ours is a floating fortress!"

"He can never harm us while we remain aboard the Pioneer," agreed Nelson Lee, nodding. "If all his armies, in one body, were to attack us, we could easily defeat them. For we have modern methods of warfare here which Cedric has never even dreamed of."

Lord Dorrimore and Sir Hobart Manners had a brief consultation, and as a result the Pioneer sprang into life and cruised smoothly out into the open lake, far off towards the centre of that great expanse of water.

"Let him think that we're afraid—that we're bolting," said Dorrie, as he returned to Ethelbert and the princess. "We're going to put some little plan into operation soon, and we need time to think it out. We've seen Cedric, we know what he is, and the gauntlet has been flung down."

"No words of mine, Dorrimore the Brave, can express my gratitude," said the ex-Regent. "But if thou and thy friends are imperilled because of—"

"Don't say it, old man!" interrupted Dorrie. "You may not believe it, but we're going to enjoy this little scrap. What's more, I can definitely tell you that we'll kick Cedric out of Northestria, and we'll restore the country to the princess. We're here to do this job, and we won't leave until we've done it."

"Hurrah!" yelled the St. Frank's fellows, who were eagerly listening.

And even the girls joined in that cheer.

AFTER that little spell of excitement, things calmed down aboard the Pioneer. A meal was ready in the saloon, and everybody went down. The princess, her young brother and Ethelbert, were the guests of honour. Wynwed the Jovial sat at one of the tables, too, and already he was a changed man.

The Northestrians marvelled at the wonders of the table, and they partook heartily of the excellent dishes which were set before them. The Pioneer carried a crew of over a hundred, and, notwithstanding the vessel's novel surroundings, the usual routine was proceeding with machine-like precision.

There was one little matter of routine, however, which Nelson Lee felt it expedient

to drop. Throughout the voyage from England, the St. Frank's fellows and the Moor View girls had daily taken lessons—the boys under Mr. Alington Wilkes, their own Housemaster, and the girls under Mrs. Wilkes. But in the circumstances Lee thought it best to abandon these lessons for the time being. He knew very well that no work would be done, and that the very holding of the lessons would be a farce. Far better to cut them out altogether. Later, perhaps, the youngsters could make up for lost time.

The meal over, a council of war was held in the lounge, and Lord Dorrimore was all for immediate action.

"There's no sense in beating about the bush," he argued. "The sooner we can get a smack at Cedric, the better. He's contemptuous of us—and we want to make him change his views."

"Let it be a good smack, then," said Nelson Lee.

"How about going close inshore and shelling one of his precious fortresses?" asked Dorrie. "That ought to show him that we're capable of doing a bit of damage."

But Nelson Lee shook his head.

"A somewhat rash procedure, Dorrie," he said, smiling. "There is always the chance that we should kill innocent Northestrians. No, we must think of something better than that."

"I'faith, I marvel at thy spirit!" said Ethelbert the Red, in wonder. "I marvel, too, that ye should deem it possible that this one ship can conquer the might of Gothland."

"My friend, you don't know what we've got aboard this ship," said Dorrie. "I might as well tell you that I fitted her out for something more than a mere Polar exploration trip. Don't forget I had your message, and I knew that you were in a tight jam. So we came prepared."

"I confess," said Ethelbert, "that some of thy words are wondrous strange."

"I suppose we do talk in a queer lingo—from your point of view," grinned his lordship. "Well, you'll soon be able to understand us. Now, I might as well tell you that I've got a couple of fighting aeroplanes packed away below. They might come in useful. Both Lee and I can pilot the things, and we ought to be able to put in some good work. Then there are three serviceable guns, with a plentiful supply of shells. Machine-guns, too—over a dozen. Yes, and bombs."

"You didn't tell me all this, Dorrie," said Nelson Lee, in some surprise.

"I thought I'd keep it to myself until we got here," replied his lordship blandly. "You never took a look down in the store-room, below, did you?"

"This ship seems to be a floating arsenal."

"Something like that," agreed Dorrie.

"Oh, and I didn't tell you, did I? I've got a couple of tanks."

"Tanks!"



The St. Frank's juniors were grabbed by the excited Northeistriens and carried shoulder-high.
 "Hail, the Deliverers!" went up the cry.

"Whippet tanks, to be exact," said Dorrie. "Pretty hefty merchants, capable of red-hot work."

"But, man alive——"

"Now, don't go off the deep end!" interrupted Lord Dorrimore. "Didn't we come here to help the Northeistriens—to free themselves from the Gothland yoke? Well, what on earth was the good of coming empty-handed? These two tanks are absolutely the latest thing. They're in sections, of course, but our engineers will make short work of assembling them."

The princess was looking bewildered.

"I know not what ye speak of," she said, half apologetically. "What are these tanks, forsooth?"

"You wouldn't understand—and even when you see them I doubt if you'll know quite what they are," said Nelson Lee. "But I can tell you, princess, that they are weapons of warfare—deadly weapons, too. Cedric the Cruel will receive a shock when he sees them for the first time."

Lee turned aside, and, taking Wynwed the Jovial by the arm, he led him to a quiet corner.

"You are a Northeistrian with a good knowledge of the country, Wynwed," said Lee briskly. "Can you tell me of a quiet spot on the coastline—a place where there is no village, and where there is not much chance of a landing being observed? Some spot, for choice, within handy reach of the capital."

Wynwed rubbed his beard.

"Ay, I know of such a place," he replied eagerly. "'Tis a sheltered cove, with much woodland beyond. The town of Ixwell lies some distance inland, but there is little fear of the good townspeople coming to the lake shore."

"There are none of Cedric's soldiers near?"

"None nearer than the fortress of Ixwell."

"Good! And how far is this place from Dunstane?" asked Lee.

"A matter of ten miles—perchance less," replied Wynwed. "I'faith! Thou hast some scheme in thy mind, Lee the Lion-heart?"

"Yes," replied Lee shortly.

He said no more at the moment, but he

took Lord Dorrimore on deck, and faced him squarely.

"You weren't bluffing about those tanks?" he asked.

"Good gad, no!"

"Then I'm all in favour of shock tactics, Dorrie," said Lee. "Now, you know as well as I do that we've taken on a tough job. We don't want to cause a lot of bloodshed—we don't want to precipitate warfare. But if we could capture Cedric right at the outset by some spectacular means, it would be better than a hundred battles."

"You bet it would!" agreed Dorrie. "But how do you propose to nab his nibs?"

"By using one of your tanks," replied Lee grimly. "A sudden dash into Dunstane—and don't forget that we should have all the element of surprise in our favour. Cedric's soldiers would be terrified at the sudden appearance of a modern tank, Dorrie."

"Terrified?" grinned his lordship. "They'd fly for their lives!"

"A dash right into the castle—the seizure of Cedric—and then return," went on Nelson Lee. "It sounds ambitious, I know, but it might be done. And it would save an awful lot of bother, later. Once we had Cedric in our hands, we could dictate our own terms. We could force the Gothlanders to clear out of Northestria in a body, leaving the country to its own people."

"By the Lord Harry! It's worth a trial!" said Dorrie, with relish.

SOON afterwards the Pioneer submerged—much to the startled surprise of Ethelbert the Red and Princess Mercia and Prince Oswy.

Gliding under the surface, the vessel approached the Northestrian coastline, and she did not come to the surface again until she was well within that cove of which Wynwed had spoken. Here, close inshore, she anchored.

The submarine's motor-boat was launched, and then work was immediately begun on the construction of a rough raft. Meanwhile, other men were bringing up the parts of one of the whippet tanks. It was difficult work, and the electric winches had to be brought into use, for the sections of the tank were of considerable weight.

One after another, they were swung outboard, taken upon the raft, and conveyed ashore, where the assembling was commenced. Other members of the crew stood ready with machine-guns. Two men were at the bigger guns. In case of any interruption, the Pioneer's men were prepared.

Nipper and Handforth and the other St. Frank's fellows, of course, were agog. They soon knew what was afoot, and they wanted to help. In fact, they took the opportunity of going ashore, and they put in some good work.

"There's not much fun in this, after all," declared Handforth, when the tank was beginning to take shape. "Where do we come in? I understand that Mr. Lee and Dorrie

are going in this tank—and that they're going to capture old Cedric. But what's the good of that to us?"

"You'd better ask Mr. Lee to take you with him," suggested Church sarcastically.

"Ass! He wouldn't take any notice of me!" said Handforth.

"I don't suppose he would—but you might ask him," grinned Church.

"All this seems wrong to me," continued Handforth, frowning. "We're simply doing nothing. And, by the look of it, we shan't be called upon to do anything, either! I say, what did Wynwed say about the town of Ixwell? It's not far inland, is it?"

"Only a mile or so, through the woods," said Nipper.

Handforth looked round cautiously. He was itching to do something. He wanted to get to work on his own—to do something big.

"How about sneaking off?" he suggested, looking at the others. "Nobody's watching us, and we could easily slip into these trees. Just pop across country for a look round, eh?"

There were plenty of fellows ready enough to jump at the suggestion.

CHAPTER 4.

The Deliverers!

IF Nipper had been given any special name in this quaint old-time country, he would certainly have been called Nipper the Cautious. For he was naturally careful; he had a habit of thinking twice before any definite action. And Handforth should certainly have been dubbed "Handforth the Reckless."

But in this instance Nipper was every bit as keen as Edward Oswald.

He saw no reason why he and the other fellows should remain spectators.

"Just the same, you chaps," he said, his innate caution tempering his eagerness, "we'd better take it easily. We don't want to get mixed up in any scraps with Cedric's soldiers."

"Oh, don't we?" retorted Handforth. "You speak for yourself, my son! There's nothing I'd love better than a good old mill with those rotters!"

They were proceeding through the woods, and by now they had left the lake shore well behind. They had easily succeeded in getting away from the main party without attracting notice.

"Before we venture out into the open, we ought to make sure of our position," said Nipper. "We don't want to go blundering out into the open, in full sight of a Gothlander fortress. That might bring a horde of soldiers on the spot at once."

"By George, yes!" admitted Handforth. "Mr. Lee wouldn't like that, would he?"

"He'd have something pretty strong to say, I imagine," replied Nipper dryly.

By common consent, they treated the whole matter lightly—almost as though they were on a care-free holiday. Yet, individually,

they knew well enough that this expedition into Northestrian territory was foolhardy. They spoke very contemptuously of Cedric's soldiers; but those same soldiers, if it should come to a "show-down," would have all the advantage on their side.

Not one of the boys forgot Wynwed's grim stories of Cedric's ruthless cruelty. This country, so fair to look upon—so extraordinarily like rural England—was at the mercy of the oppressor.

When, therefore, the St. Frank's fellows reached the end of the wood, they paused and took stock of their surroundings. Just in front of them was a picturesque little valley, with a stream flowing through its centre. There were trees that looked like willows growing along its banks; there were one or two stone bridges, and, occasionally, a cottage. Cattle and horses were grazing, at peace with the world.

A little farther on, in the distance, were the clustered red roofs of the town of Ixwell. Above the roofs were the graceful spires of at least two churches.

"Looks like a bit of Devonshire, dear old fellows," murmured Travers.

"More like Suffolk, to my mind," said Nipper. "Anyway, it looks properly English. All except that!" he added, pointing.

Just outside the town, standing on a bluff, there was a squat, grim-looking fortress, built of grey stone. Somehow, it did not fit into the picture. It was obviously new—erected, no doubt, by Cedric's orders.

"They say that every town has its fortress, and its garrison of soldiers," said Reggie Pitt. "I don't think we'd better go any farther than this, you chaps."

"What rot!" growled Handforth. "There seems to be a road just on the other side of this meadow. Let's go along and have a look at it. By George, I wish I had my Morris Minor here!"

"Sensation, consternation and confusion in Ixwell!" grinned Travers. "Handy arriving in his Morris Minor!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

They were lighthearted enough, and as there seemed to be no danger in venturing onward, they crossed the meadow and soon found themselves on a dusty, narrow road, with wide grass borders. It was very much like the roads of England—before the days of macadam and tar-spraying.

As they broke through the hedge they received a surprise. Two figures were coming round a bend, and the two figures halted, staring with wide-open eyes. The St. Frank's fellows halted, too.

"What-ho!" murmured Archie Glenthorne. "Greetings, old things! Some of the local populace, I gather, laddies!"

There was no need for alarm. The two figures were a boy and a girl, of very much the same age as the St. Frank's fellows. Their quiet, simple clothing stamped them as countryfolk. The girl, who was quite pretty, had her golden hair falling loosely over her shoulders. She was undoubtedly frightened.

"It's all right!" said Nipper cheerily.

"We're your friends. Don't be scared of us."

The Northestrian boy turned with excited, eager eyes to his companion.

"Good sister, 'tis well!" he exclaimed breathlessly. "They are the people we hear so much of! They are from the wondrous ship which floats upon the lake."

"I'faith, Godwin, I believe thou art right," said the girl. "But I am in fear."

"There's no need to be," said Nipper, advancing. "We are the enemies of Cedric—but we are the friends of Northestria."

"Come, Ena, let us meet these good people!" exclaimed the boy. "There is naught to be feared of."

"Ena!" ejaculated Handforth. "Well, I'm jiggered! That's my sister's name."

The Northestrian boy and girl were surrounded before they could attempt to bolt—even if they had so desired.

"But this is wondrous strange!" said Godwin, staring round. "Thou art but boys, like unto myself!"

"Yea, verily, not to say forsooth!" grinned Handforth. "You bet we're boys. What did you think we were?"

"But we have heard that the great ship contains fine men of marvellous prowess and valour," said the boy.

"So it does," said Nipper. "There are plenty of men of marvellous prowess and valour aboard—but we belong to the party, too."

"And, by St. Vitus, we're going to make those Gothlanders dance!" declared Handforth. "I can't get over this girl being named Ena. My sister's name."

He was looking at Ena admiringly, and Church and McClure felt rather nervous. Handforth was always liable to fall head over heels in love with any girl he met; and this Ena was certainly a peach.

"But what doest thou here, friends?" asked Godwin. "Is't possible that ye thought of venturing into Ixwell? My sister and I are for Ixwell, for we hear that there is much rejoicing and gaiety toward."

"Rejoicing and gaiety?" asked Nipper. "But I thought that sort of thing was practically forgotten in Northestria?"

"Ay, but the people of Ixwell have turned upon the Gothlander soldiers," cried the girl, conquering her nervousness. "The soldiers have been thrown out, and the town rejoiceth in its new freedom."

Handforth gave a whoop.

"Did you hear that, you chaps?" he yelled. "Ixwell has chucked out the Gothlander soldiers! By George! Then there's no reason why we shouldn't go into the town and do a bit of rejoicing on our own!"

"I'faith, 'twill be a joyous surprise for the people," said Godwin, his eyes shining. "For thou art our deliverers. Will ye let my sister and me come with ye, that we may share in the excitement?"

"You bet!" said Handforth promptly. "I'll take care of your sister, old man."

"Look here, Handy——" began Church in alarm.

"Go and eat coke!" interrupted Handforth gruffly.

"Wait a minute, you chaps—particularly you, Handy," said Nipper. "I'm not disbelieving Godwin or his sister; but we can't be too careful. We'll go along towards Ixwell if you like, but we'll be ready to do the vanishing trick if the enemy bobs up."

However, it was soon discovered that the boy and the girl were quite correct in their statements.

Not half a mile along the road the St. Frank's fellows came upon a group of North-estrians, who had just come across a foot-path; they, too, were going into Ixwell. It appeared that people were coming into the town from every side, all of them excited, all of them radiant.

And then the outskirts of Ixwell came within sight; and the streets were thronged with dancing, shouting people. It was like a scene from an old English country fair.

The schoolboys were intrigued.

News of their coming had gone in advance

of them, and soon a great crowd of towns-people came surging out along the road, all shouting, all cheering. The boys halted, rather alarmed. This was something they had not bargained for.

"Hail, the Deliverers!" went up the great shout.

"Hurrah!"

"The wondrous people from beyond the Great Ice!"

"Bid them welcome!"

Before Nipper and Handforth and the others could get their breath back, they were surrounded. Crowds of excited men pressed and jostled, and the air was filled with their cries and shouts of delight.

"To the town square! To the town square!" went up the cry.

"Ay, where are your shoulders, men?" shouted one old fellow. "Would ye let these deliverers walk?"

There was more enthusiasm, and the boys, in spite of their protests, were seized. They were raised shoulder high, and in this fashion they were carried triumphantly into the



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town. As they went the crowds increased, cheering with wild excitement. The cry was going down every street and alley, and more and more people were thronging into the great central square.

"The Deliverers are here!"

"Down with Cedric!"

The boys were too bewildered to realise the actual truth. Yet it was simple enough. Ixwell, like many another town in Northestria, was seething with loyal, excited Northestrians.

For many months these people had been ground under Cedric's heel, until they had become sullen and obedient. Then the Pioneer had arrived.

And like a firebrand the news had spread throughout the land. The deliverers had come! The people from beyond the Great Ice! At such a time, and to such an oppressed people, the coming of the Pioneer was like a sign. Submissive as they had been before, open rebellion broke out in every town and village and hamlet of Northestria.

In Ixwell especially, the result was decisive. The townspeople had risen; they had fallen upon the fortress, and had driven out the Gothlander soldiers. The town was freed! The deliverers were at hand!

CHAPTER 5.

The Schoolboy Heroes!

THE central square of Ixwell was an amazing sight.

It was filled with great throngs, and in the very centre the St. Frank's fellows, still carried shoulder high, were being cheered until their ears were almost deafened.

Handforth, of course, was in his element. There was nothing he liked better than the limelight. But most of the other fellows were feeling thoroughly embarrassed. They were glad enough when at last they were allowed to use their own feet again.

"Thou art welcome to our town, good friends!" panted one middle-aged, kindly looking man. "We have heard of your coming—and we know that Cedric the Cruel now sitteth upon a tottering throne."

Nipper could not help feeling a little alarmed.

"We'll do everything we can to help, of course," he said. "But we understand that Cedric has obtained a stranglehold on the country; his soldiers are everywhere."

"His soldiers are no longer in Ixwell, good youth," replied the man, whose name was Edfrith, one of the prominent merchants of the town. "They have been driven forth, and we of Ixwell are filled with rejoicing."

"But aren't you afraid that the soldiers will come back—in even greater strength?" asked Nipper.

"Let them come!" shouted Edfrith. "Now that thou art here, with thy friends, we can defy the tyrant!"

And Edfrith's words were echoed by many others. The boys soon heard that this spirit

was sweeping throughout the length and breadth of Northestria.

Dorrimore the Brave and Lee the Lionheart had come to deliver the land from the oppressor!

"Death to Cedric!"

"By George! This is pretty good, you know," said Handforth delightedly. "Our very arrival in the Pioneer has aroused this terrific spirit of defiance in the people! They've chucked out the Gothlander soldiers, and——"

"And lost their heads," said Nipper bluntly.

"Eh?"

"It's no good blinking at it, old man," said Nipper. "These people are wild with excitement. You don't think Cedric is going to let this state of affairs continue, do you?"

"How the dickens can he stop it?"

"By sending soldiers—and more soldiers!" replied Nipper. "That's what I'm afraid of. These people are expecting rather too much of us."

The boys were being hemmed round, and more of the townspeople were trying to get near them—to look at them—to shake them by the hands. So conversation was rather difficult.

But many of the St. Frank's fellows realised that Nipper was right.

These Northestrians were placing so much faith in Lee the Lionheart and Dorrimore the Brave, and all the other members of the Pioneer party, that they regarded them as gods. Their very coming was the signal for a rising!

It was all very encouraging, but it was putting a tremendous onus upon the deliverers. If this rising should succeed, all well and good—the British party would receive full honours. But if the rising should fail, and wholesale executions followed, by Cedric's orders, then the very opposite would be the case. The people would lose faith in Lee the Lionheart and Dorrimore the Brave.

So this wild enthusiasm was something like a double-edged sword. It might easily defeat its own ends.

"It seems to me, dear old fellow, that the sooner Mr. Lee and Dorrie can make that dash into Dunstane, the better it will be for all concerned," murmured Travers into Nipper's ear. "By Samson! If only they could collar Cedric and hold him as hostage, what a moral effect it would have!"

"It would give these people such strength that they would drive the Gothlanders into the lake," replied Nipper. "I'm glad we came—because now we know how things are going. But we'd better collect the chaps up. Travers. We shall have to be off."

"I was thinking the same," nodded Travers.

Collecting the fellows up, however, was no easy task. They had become separated by the surging crowds.

Then, amid all the joyous cheering, another note sounded. It came from the far end of the square at first, where the main road led out of the town—the main road

to Dunstane. Different shouts were heard in that direction—shouts of alarm, and even fear.

Nipper, quick to note the change, pricked up his ears. He was the first to hear the frantic words:

"The soldiers—the soldiers!"

Nipper gripped Travers tightly by the arm.

"Handy thought I was a chump!" he muttered. "Even that old chap, Edfrith, almost laughed at me! But did you hear? The soldiers are coming!"

The alarm was being spread, and now it was being picked up by hundreds of voices.

"The soldiers! Cedric's guards are coming!"

The change in the people was startling. A moment before they had been rejoicing—laughing, cheering. Now panic spread like wildfire, and amid the screams of frightened women came the alarmed shouts of men.

It had been comparatively easy for these fevered townspeople to drive out the handful of soldiers from the Ixwell fortress. But the soldiers were now returning—heavily reinforced. The result was likely to be disastrous.

"Back! Back! Cedric's soldiers come!"

"Ay, they come to kill!"

In the distance, out upon the main road, clouds of dust were now visible. There came a thundering upon the air. The soldiers were mounted, and they were entering the town at a gallop, charging in with relentless purpose.

"You see their game?" said Nipper, grabbing at Travers and Handforth. "For goodness sake, get the other chaps here! Those soldiers are galloping straight into this central square, where most of the people are congregated."

"But—but——"

"It'll be a massacre, unless we do something!" went on Nipper sharply. "The soldiers mean to gallop in and ride roughshod over everybody—men, women and children! That's Cedric's way! That's how he puts terror into his subjects."

"The brute!" said Handforth thickly.

"No good saying that, old man—we know he's a brute," replied Nipper. "Don't forget that it's up to us. These people will be looking to us to do something."

"But, dash it, old thing, we're only school-boys!" protested Archie Glen-thorne. "I mean to say——"

"Of course we're only schoolboys—but these Northeistrians think we have almost uncanny powers, and unless we live up to that standard our stock will go down with a slump."

There was no time for further talking.

Already Cedric's ruthless soldiers were appearing. The people in the main streets had been able to get out of the way in time; they had fled into alleys, into doorways.

It wasn't the purpose of the soldiers to pause in their mad gallop. They knew well enough that the central square was crowded;

over half the population of Ixwell was concentrated in that one spot. Impossible for the people to get away in time.

And the panic and terror would be overwhelming when the soldiers tore through, using their lances with deadly effect. It was by such methods as these that Cedric the Cruel was maintaining his grip on the land.

Nipper, for one, marvelled at the simplicity of the people. They had pounced upon the small garrison; they had secured a victory—and they had believed that there would be no reprisal! Now they were learning better!

Nipper, Handforth, Travers and two or three others were running at top speed across the square, dodging the frightened crowds. In a minute, the mounted soldiers would burst into that open space—hundreds of them.

"This'll do!" panted Nipper, coming to a halt. "Couldn't find a better spot!"

"All ready?" asked Travers coolly.

"Yes, I think so."

"Then let 'em have it!"

The tumult was terrific. The Gothland soldiers, big, brutal men, dressed in chain-mail, were riding their horses at full tilt. Each man wielded a heavy lance.

It was an impressive sight as the soldiers came galloping into the square. They spread out as they entered, score upon score. In that one charge, they intended trampling the unfortunate citizens underfoot.

Nipper had something in his hand; a second earlier he had struck a match. There was smoke coming from the object—smoke and sparks. Nipper hurled the thing towards the charging soldiers, and at the same moment, Handforth, Travers, Archie Glen-thorne and Church did the same.

For two or three tense seconds, nothing happened; but the boys saw that the objects they had flung had struck the ground. Already the galloping troops were thundering over them.

Then—Boom!

A roaring, devastating explosion rang out. The detonation was nerve-shattering, and the echoes rolled from side to side of the square like so many sharp claps of thunder.

The effect was extraordinary.

The explosion had come from the very midst of the soldiers, and the horses, rearing up, mad with fright, plunged and broke formation. Many of the Gothland soldiers were flung to the ground.

Boom!

Another explosion, and more confusion.

Boom!

Yet again. Nipper and the other St. Frank's fellows stood looking on, watching in anxiety. Handforth was the first to let out a whoop of exultation.

"Look!" he yelled. "They've broken up! They're scared! They're turning round and bolting!"

"Hurrah!"

Scores of the Gothland soldiers had been unseated by now, and many had been

seized by the Northestrians—who were quick to grasp their opportunity. The other mounted men, hardly able to hold their fear-maddened steeds, were galloping away. The explosions had come just in time to prevent the massacre. Quite a number of people had been hurt in the confusion, but that had been unavoidable. The injuries were insignificant compared with what they might have been.

"By Jove!" said Nipper, taking a deep breath. "It's a jolly good thing we brought those maroon rockets with us, you chaps."

"It was your idea, old man," said Tommy Watson. "You suggested that we should put them in our pockets, just as we were leaving the Pioneer."

"Well, it's always best to be on the safe side," said Nipper. "They sound pretty dangerous—and yet they're harmless."

The boys scattered and, running about, they did their utmost to calm the excited people. Very soon it became generally known that the Gothland soldiers had been put to rout by the English boys. Those explosions had been wrought by some marvel which these youths from beyond the Great Ice had brought into use.

The excitement became greater than ever. Nipper and Handforth and the others were again raised shoulder high, and the wild cheering was renewed.

The Northestrians were given fresh courage. They had expected much of their deliverers—and they had not been disappointed. The townspeople themselves fell upon the straggling Gothland soldiers, and they were put to rout.

And once more the St. Frank's fellows were the heroes of the hour.

CHAPTER 6.

Bad News for Cedric!

DUNSTANE CASTLE was the centre of much activity.

The great pile, with its turrets and battlements, stood almost in the centre of the city, dominating every other building. It was a formidable place, surrounded by a deep moat, which entirely encircled the outer walls. The great drawbridge was down, and horsemen were constantly riding to and fro. The people of Dunstane had not seen such comings and goings for many months.

But there was little or no pomp and splendour. There were no courtly knights in armour to be seen; no standard bearers; no trumpeters. These horsemen were hard-riding couriers of the king; grim-faced men who knew that the whole situation in Northestria was becoming acute.

There were many soldiers in the great courtyard—the king's own personal guards, in addition to a great number of men who served under Guntha the Crafty.

Guntha was a great Gothland overlord,

and he had his own troops, bearing his own standard. Many miles of fair Northestrian lands had been granted to Guntha, and, in return, Guntha was using his soldiers and his scrfs in the king's service.

The royal castle formed a wonderful background to that courtyard scene. There were balconies, on which could be seen the ladies and gentlemen of the Court. Many of the women were wearing rich, flowing silks, and tall conical hats.

Within the castle, in the king's council chamber—a great, lofty apartment—Cedric the Cruel sat in a stiff, high-backed chair. With him were his most powerful overlords, and the king was in earnest council.

The overlords were grouped about him: Guntha the Crafty, the commander-in-chief of the Northestrian armies, a huge, powerful, bearded man, almost as big as Cedric himself; Attawulf the Terrible, and Redwold the Ruthless.

These were Cedric's chief advisers. There were others present, too—lesser men. All were looking grave—and troubled—all, that is, except Cedric.

"Bah!" he said savagely. "What care I for these paltry fools who come from beyond the Great Ice? Think ye, Guntha, that I fear them? A handful, by my soul!"

"Ay, your Majesty, but men with strange powers!" growled Guntha. "They come in a wondrous—"

"Not so wondrous," interrupted Cedric. "Have I not been aboard that craft? I will grant ye, Guntha, that it is strange to our eyes. It is made of metal—steel, methinks. And it is of great size. But can these men, even with such a craft, defy me and all my might?"

"Methinks there are other problems, your Majesty," said Attawulf gravely. "What of these Northestrian dogs? 'Twas not so long ago that the men from the outside world were here; and it was they who fired the Northestrians to battle. Kassker the Grim would have prevailed then, but for the interference of these strangers."

"But now we own Northestria," said Cedric impatiently. "We, of Gothland, have invaded this country, and we hold the Northestrians in subjection. Are we to have this rich land wrested from our grasp? Nay, Attawulf!"

"Yet the country is disturbed by the arrival of these strangers," said Attawulf. "The people are fired with enthusiasm. Ere long we shall have tidings. Thou hast heard of the revolt in Ixwell—"

"Speak not of that, Attawulf," interrupted Cedric contemptuously. "A revolt, say ye? By my marrow and bones! I have already dispatched reinforcements to Ixwell, and by now the town will once again be in the possession of my soldiers."

"Ay, Ixwell shall suffer deeply!" said Guntha the Crafty. "I have given orders that the ringleaders of the revolt are to be named and executed. Methinks the people of that town will regret their folly."

OUTSIDE, a horseman came galloping over the drawbridge; he was travel-stained, well nigh exhausted. He was a courier, and without delay he was admitted to the king's presence, in the council chamber.

"What now?" growled Cedric, glowering upon the man. "Is't ill news ye bring, knave?"

"Ill, indeed, your Majesty!" panted the man. "I come from the town of Ina. The people have risen, the fortress hath been stormed, and the soldiers defeated."

Cedric sprang to his feet.

"Another revolt!" he thundered. "Have these Northestrians gone mad?"

"Ay, mad with enthusiasm, because of the arrival of these strangers," said Attawulf.

"What of this rising in Ina?" demanded the king. "Ye say, fool, that my soldiers are in flight? Did they not even stay to give battle?"

"Not only the people of Ina, your Majesty, but the people from the surrounding villages and hamlets gathered," said the courier breathlessly. "Like enraged animals they fell upon the fortress. Many were killed, but others swept on. My Gothland comrades were valiant, but 'twas to no purpose. Ina is in the possession of the Northestrians, and great armies of the people are marching triumphantly to the next town."

"Go!" snarled Cedric. "I like not men who bring me such ill news."

The courier retired, glad to get away from Cedric's presence. And Cedric paced angrily up and down, his chainmail jingling.

"I'faith, what manner of advisers are ye?" he demanded, glaring at his overlords. "Have ye nothing to say? The country is rising. A day ago we held Northestria in the palm of our hand. Now we get naught but tidings of revolt and rebellion. The coming of these strangers hath wrought a miracle, methinks!"

The advisers were impatient and angry. Cedric's attitude was lamentably weak.

Like most tyrants, he was a very bold, aggressive man whilst everything was going in his favour. With his legions, he had swept into Northestria, and he had conquered. It had been easy, for the peaceful Northestrians were not versed in the ways of war; whereas the Gothlanders under Cedric were trained soldiers.

Cedric's predecessor, Kassker the Grim, had paved the way for this invasion; Kassker had trained his men, but Kassker was dead. Cedric had taken full advantage of Kassker's work.

Now that the Northestrians were rising, Cedric was panic-stricken. He knew not what to do himself, and he raved at his overlords because they, too, were in a similar plight.

"Perchance the affair at Ixwell will turn



Crash! Bang! Bang! The maroon rockets exploded under the feet of the Gothland horsemen, causing terror and confusion.

the tide," muttered Cedric, frowning. "When the news spreads that I have made an example of Ixwell, so will these Northestrian fools lose their valiant spirit."

Court attendants came through the great doors of the council chamber, and another weather-stained courier was ushered in. It was clear that the man had been riding hard; he staggered as he approached the throne.

"How now?" growled Cedric. "Bring ye ill news, or good?"

"Ill news, your Majesty!"

"Then let me not hear it!" thundered the king. "I am in no mood!"

"Yet 'twould be better to know what is happening, your Majesty," said Guntha the Crafty, in some haste. "Let the man speak."

The courier, thus encouraged, gave news that was precisely similar to that of the previous courier. The town of Westwold, twenty miles to the south, was in revolt. The garrison had been routed, and the Goth-

lander soldiers were in flight. The people were marching on, fevered by victory, and the shout which rang above all others was in praise of the "wondrous strangers" who had come from beyond the Great Ice to bring deliverance to Northestria.

"By St. Attalus!" snarled Cedric. "Be-gone, knave! Always the same! Always these strangers from beyond the ice! They are the cause of this strife!"

"It behoves us to bestir ourselves, your Majesty," said Attawulf, in alarm. "This ill news is already spreading throughout the capital; and the people here, in Dunstane itself, will rise. We are none so safe in this castle, in the midst of the uprising."

The king laughed harshly.

"I'faith, Attawulf, thy marrow hath turned to water, methinks!" he sneered. "Art afraid? There is no danger here. Inflamed as these Northestrians are, never will they dare to attack Dunstane Castle."

"'Tis none too wise to be sure," replied Attawulf curtly.

And now came another visitor; a brawny Gothlander officer in full military regalia. But he was a sorry spectacle, covered with dust and perspiration.

"What is it, man?" roared Cedric. "Dost thou bring ill tidings, too?"

"My lord, I seek Guntha, my master," panted the other.



"This man is Captain Rufus, the officer of the relief force which went hence to Ixwell," said Guntha sharply, as he strode forward with a jangling of spurs. "Well, Rufus? What news bringest thou? Is all well in Ixwell?"

"Alas, my lord, I can tell of naught but disaster," said Captain Rufus breathlessly.

"Disaster!" bellowed Cedric, nearly foaming with fury. "Always disaster! Always ill-tidings! What now, fool?"

"Speak, good Rufus," said Guntha steadily.

"Your orders were carried out, my lord," said Captain Rufus. "At the head of my men I rode into Ixwell. 'Twas my intention to disperse the mob by the lance and the sword. All went well until we were in the great central square. And, behold, we found a number of these strangers, being acclaimed by the populace."

"The strangers from the wondrous galley?"

"Ay, my lord—and naught but young boys."

"Beshrew thee for a knave!" shouted Cedric, glaring. "Young boys, say ye? So they come ashore, do they? They become daring. No doubt your soldiers cut them to pieces, Captain Rufus?"

The officer flinched under the king's mocking fury.

"Nay, your Majesty," he faltered. "Scarce had my soldiers reached the centre of the square, and disaster overtook them. Without warning, mighty reports shook the town, like unto the crashing of doom itself. Volumes of acrid smoke frightened and confused our horses. Pandemonium broke loose."

"And ye say that these strange youths caused this miracle?" demanded Guntha.

"Ay, my lord," replied the captain hoarsely. "I know not what methods they employed; but my soldiers were ill equipped for such measures. Even had they been willing to maintain the charge, their horses would not allow of it. For every steed reared, and most men were unseated. 'Twas dire confusion."

"And now?"

"My men have scattered, my lord, and they seek naught but safety from the vengeance of the Northestrians," replied Captain Rufus. "By hard riding, I succeeded in getting through. But Ixwell is still in the hands of the rebels, and the situation becomes grave."

CHAPTER 7.

The Capture!

IT was a blow for Cedric the Cruel.

Such a blow, indeed, that he lost much of his fury. The bad tidings had calmed him, and there was a light in his eyes

which clearly told of his fear.

"By the bones of Offa!" he muttered. "Are these strangers devils, then, that they can defy the might of Gothland? What weapons are these that they employ? I grow nervous, I vow!"

He had confidently expected that the re-taking of Ixwell would have a great moral effect upon the people. And now came the news that Ixwell was still in the hands of the rebels!

"By St. Guthric! I will deal with this situation, my lord!" said Guntha the Crafty, his voice grim. "I will send mine own personal guards to Ixwell without delay. Five hundred strong—and every man a war-scarred veteran!"

"Ay, get ye gone, Guntha, and attend to this," said the king dully.

Guntha strode out, and he did not even attempt to conceal the contemptuous curl of his lip. The king had made a bad impression to-day. In this crisis his true character was being revealed.

Guntha, one of the greatest overlords of Gothland, was a power in conquered North-estria. He had visions, indeed, of usurping Cedric and placing himself upon the throne. In times of crisis Guntha was, without doubt, the more resourceful man and a better leader.

And so the people of Dunstane soon beheld a brave sight.

Guntha's picked bodyguard, a formidable force, went galloping through the main streets, out into the open country. The people shrank back, afraid.

The city of Dunstane was completely under the tyrant's heel. There were soldiers on duty in every public place, in every street. A rising here, in the capital, was hardly possible. Yet the people were just as excited—just as fired by the news which kept trickling in.

However, no gatherings were allowed; the soldiers dispersed every crowd which collected. Dunstane was held in chains, so to speak.

The people knew well enough that deliverance would only come if the rebels from the provinces marched upon the capital and took it by force. And the rumours which were abroad indicated that such a joyous event was even possible. For the people were rising, north, south, east and west.

IN Ixwell the celebrations were becoming hectic.

Excitement held the town in its grip. The relief force had been shattered and put to rout! The people went wild with enthusiasm.

The St. Frank's fellows, collecting in one group, watched helplessly. They had been carried shoulder-high. They had been feted. But, at length, they were permitted a breathing spell, and thus they collected together, whilst all around them the people made merry.

"It seems all wrong to me," said Nipper. "These people of Ixwell are taking too much for granted. The Gothlanders are dished for the moment, but how long will it last?"

"For good, I should think," said Handforth enthusiastically. "The people are fed up with tyranny, and they have secured their freedom. They won't let Cedric's soldiers boss them any more!"

"I could believe that, Handy, if these Northestrians showed any sign of organisation," replied Nipper. "But look at 'em! Dancing about like a lot of kids—shouting and yelling and cheering. What's the good

of that? Their only hope of maintaining victory is to organise—to prepare their rebel armies. And they're doing absolutely nothing! If another Gothland force sweeps into this town now, the people will be at its mercy."

"You're right, dear old fellow," said Travers. "And it seems to me, by my halidom, that we'd better be getting back to the Pioneer. We've had our bit of excitement, and it's time for us to vamoose."

"Absolutely," said Archie Glenthorne. "I mean to say, we've used those dashed maroons, and if it comes to another scrap we shall be wallowing about in the ox-tail."

Handy was inclined to protest at this suggestion. He thought it savoured of running away. But, as Nipper pointed out, it was the only sensible course to take. They could do nothing in the event of another attack by the Gothland soldiers.

Owing to all the excitement and confusion, the boys were able to work their way through the crowds. They reached the outskirts of Ixwell, and then proceeded at the double. The distance was not so very far, and it was quite certain that their absence had been discovered, and that Nelson Lee and Dorrie were becoming anxious about them.

They were in the last street, and the open country lay beyond. A quaint inn stood on the left, and a water-mill was opposite. Scarcely a soul was to be seen.

It was at this point that something unexpected happened. Round the bend of the road came a strong force of Gothland soldiers, galloping hard. They were upon the St. Frank's fellows with dramatic suddenness—before the boys could attempt to dodge.

"Great Scott!" ejaculated Handforth. "Look out, you chaps!"

Nipper grunted. Just as he had feared! It was madness to assume that Cedric the Cruel would allow the rebellion to continue in Ixwell.

These soldiers were a part of Guntha's bodyguard. Cunningly, the officer in charge had sent his men in several directions before entering Ixwell, and so the soldiers were now galloping into the town from four quarters at once, converging towards the centre.

It was all over in a moment.

This particular force, sweeping round the St. Frank's boys, surrounded them completely. The officer in charge bellowed out an order, and when Nipper and the others looked round, they found mounted men on every side. To escape was impossible.

"The ox-tail, old boys," murmured Archie regretfully.

"The stranger youths!" went up a shout from one of the soldiers. "Kill them!"

"Ay, death to the dogs!"

Swords flashed out, but fortunately the officer forced his way into the centre of the men.

"Nay, fools, death by the sword for these youths would ill please the king," he said sharply. "Seize them, and bind them. We will carry them into Dunstane as prisoners."

Shouts of exultation went up.

"'Twill be a great victory for us," continued the officer. "With these youths as hostages, the king will have the advantage."

The soldiers were dismounting, and they pressed closer in upon the boys.

"Come on!" hissed Handforth. "Let's make a fight for it!"

His spirit was excellent, but he was too much of an optimist. There was no possibility of making a fight here. There were a hundred men, and there was no way out of the trap. By fighting, indeed, they would only sign their own death-warrant. For they were unarmed, and the soldiers, if it came to the point, would ruthlessly strike them down.

Handforth and one or two others did, indeed, try to force a fight; but the Gothland soldiers were enormous men. Two of them grasped Handforth, and held him as in a vice. The other boys were just as easily seized. Their wrists and arms and legs were bound by leather thongs, and the whole thing was over within a minute or two.

"My only sainted aunt!" gasped Handforth. "We're in a pretty pickle now!"

"I'm not worrying about our own pickle," said Nipper, with concern. "We shall be taken into Dunstane and chucked into the castle dungeons, I suppose. But what about Mr. Lee and Dorrie and the others? Their hands will be absolutely tied!"

Nipper could see what would happen.

Cedric would send an ultimatum to the Pioneer—threatening to put all these boys to death unless the submarine took its departure from Northestria, never to return.

Caution, after all, had its merits. The boys had enjoyed their expedition into Northestria, and they had been of service to the people of Ixwell. But at what cost! By falling into the hands of the enemy they had brought disaster upon their whole party.

Roughly they were thrust upon the horses, and the soldiers mounted again. Then, as prisoners, the young deliverers of Ixwell were taken back into the town.

CHAPTER 8.

Turning the Tables!

"I'M worried, Dorrie," said Nelson Lee bluntly.

"The young beggars won't come to any harm," said Lord Dorrimore, with a grin. "Let 'em have their fling! Don't forget they're young—and they like to have a hand in the pie as much as we do."

"That's not the point!" retorted Lee. "Do you want all our plans jeopardised by some fool prank of these youngsters? I'm not saying they'll deliberately get themselves into hot water—but they don't seem to realise the dangers. When they do come back, I've half a mind to give them a darned good tanning."

"Says you!" grinned Dorrie.

He wasn't concerning himself in the slightest over the disappearance of some of the St. Frank's fellows. He and Lee had been so busy with the tank that they had not noticed the absence of the boys for a considerable time. In fact, they guessed nothing until they heard, in the distance, the booming reports of cannons—or something that sounded like cannons.

Everybody had been surprised. They were quite sure that neither the Northestrians nor the Gothlanders knew anything about modern firearms or explosives. Then what was the meaning of those detonating reports?

After that, of course, Lee had soon discovered that a number of the boys had gone into the woods. The town of Ixwell was only a mile or two away, and those explosions had sounded from that direction. And when Lee learned that Nipper and Handforth and two or three others had provided themselves with maroon rockets, the little mystery was explained.

The tank was practically completed; the engineers were now testing the engines, and making final adjustments.

"Anyway, for a test run we'll go across country into Ixwell," said Lee gruffly. "We'll see what those boys have been doing, Dorrie. Confound them! We've quite enough worry without those youngsters getting into a scrape."

But Lord Dorrimore persistently refused to believe that anything was wrong. He was a happy-go-lucky fellow, as Lee well knew, and he was a bit of a fatalist, too.

"We shall find them all right," he declared. "And if we don't, what does it matter? We'll soon have Cedric where we want him, and then we can dictate our own terms."

"And if these boys have been killed by Gothland soldiers in the meantime?"

"I'm afraid you've got a frightfully morbid mind, old man," said Dorrie, shaking his head. "What a perfectly ghastly supposition!"

"You're hopeless, Dorrie," said Lee bluntly. "I'm going into Ixwell—now."

"Good man! I'm with you," replied his lordship cheerfully.

The tank was a business-like proposition. It was one of the very latest types; it was slate-grey in colour, rakish-looking and formidable.

For a whippet tank, it was large. There were two enormous tractors, one on either side, and right in the nose was a turret with a machine-gun butting out wickedly.

There was accommodation inside for quite a number of men, in addition to the driver and machine-gunners. For tanks of this type were designed for the conveying of troops into the firing line.

Nelson Lee was very pleased with her. It had come as a surprise to him that Lord Dorrimore had brought such massive weapons of warfare. In a country like Northestria, harassed by the Gothland

soldiers, a couple of tanks were worth a thousand men.

"You can call me a pessimist if you like, Dorrie," said Lee, "but I don't think everything is as it should be. Why did the boys fire those maroons? The odds are that they are in trouble—and that they used the maroons to signal us."

"Well, we're going, aren't we?" asked Dorrie. "We can't do more than that."

Nelson Lee found one of the engineers just emerging from the tank, hot, greasy, but smiling.

"She's O.K. now, Mr. Lee," he said. "She'll run a treat, I fancy."

"I'm glad to hear you say that, Mr. Maclaren," said Lee. "Lord Dorrimore and I are going off at once. We want to see what's happened to those boys."

"You'll need me, then, sir?" asked the officer eagerly.

"I'd like you to come, but I want all the available space," replied Lee. "If those boys are in trouble, we shall have to pack them into this tank—and it'll be a tight squeeze."

"I'm pretty thin, Mr. Lee," said Maclaren.

"Go ahead, then," smiled Nelson Lee. "You know how to use a machine-gun, don't you? Then you may be needed."

The young engineer was delighted; he dodged back into the tank, and took up his position. Lord Dorrimore placed himself at the forward machine-gun, and Nelson Lee took the tank's controls.

By his orders, everybody in the cove now boarded the Pioneer's motor-boat and returned to the submarine.

The assembling of this tank was a bold stroke. Hitherto, the entire visiting party had confined itself to the submarine—which, in itself, was a kind of floating fortress. But now that the tank was assembled, it could only remain ashore. Nelson Lee saw the necessity of establishing a land base; and it would need to be a strong position, so that it could be easily held.

However, these were problems which would have to be dealt with later. For the moment, Nelson Lee was confining himself to the immediate task.

A cheer went up from the Pioneer's deck, where the rest of the St. Frank's fellows and all the Moor View girls were collected. The tank was moving up the beach, crawling like some monstrous reptile. Clouds of smoke were issuing from her exhaust.

Nelson Lee deliberately charged at some trees, and they were sent crashing over. The tank, lurching and swaying and slithering, charged onwards without even checking her pace.

She skirted the wood, crossed a meadow, plunged through a hedge, and then arrived upon the dusty road. Lee, who was driving, was glad of this. He knew that the road led straight into Ixwell.

"Look out, you two!" he shouted. "I'm going to put on some speed."

"Go ahead!" came Dorrie's hail. "The more speed, the better! What can this bus do, all out?"

Dorrie was surprised, a minute later.

The tank was a triumph of engineering skill; she increased her speed, tearing over the dusty road, leaving an immense cloud of dust in her rear. Faster and faster—until Lee saw, by the speedometer, that she was touching forty miles an hour.

Lee slowed down after a bit, and when Ixwell came within sight the tank was only doing about twenty. But even at this speed she ate up the road, and thundered into Ixwell.

At first glance of the deserted streets, Nelson Lee knew that something big was happening in the town. Occasionally, he caught a glimpse of frightened men and women and children. Some of them scuttled out of the way, down alleys, and into doorways. People stared from windows, pale faced and frightened. They were obviously terrified by this noisy monster which had come roaring down the street.

There were more people farther on; the deeper the tank got into the town, the greater were the crowds. Groups of North-eastrians stood back, aghast. Others were fleeing for their lives.

Nelson Lee, who had no desire to frighten the populace, thought it as well to call a halt. So he brought the tank to a standstill, stepped out, and beckoned to some of the nearest men.

"Don't be afraid!" he shouted. "I am your friend. I am known to you as Lee the Lionheart."

A shout went up, and it was echoed and re-echoed.

"Lee the Lionheart!"

"The wondrous strangers have come to deliver us!"

"Hurrah!"

"Lee the Lionheart!"

The people lost their fear, and they came surging round, freshly excited. But they looked at the tank askance, for it was still emitting clouds of smoke and was purring ominously.

"Thou hast come opportunely, my lord!" panted one of the townsmen. "But we know not what to think. This monstrous object affrights us——"

"Do you know anything of some youths who entered this town?" asked Nelson Lee. "They are members of our party."

"Ay, good Lee the Lionheart!" said the man. "They are captives."

"What?"

"'Tis sad news I impart, but thy young friends are captives in the central square—seized by the brutal Gothland soldiers."

"Captives!" said Lee sharply, and with some relief. "They are not harmed, then?"

"I faith, I marvel that the Gothlanders have not put them to death," said the other. "Perchance the brutes have some more deadly punishment in store."

(Continued on page 24.)



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EDITORIAL STAFF.

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Editor E. O. Handforth
Chief Sub-Editor
E. O. Handforth
Literary Editor
E. O. Handforth
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MY CUP FINAL PROGRAMME

HALLO, everybody!

What do you think of Number One of my Weekly? Marvellous, isn't it? (By George, if anyone disagrees they're asking for a biff on the boko!) The Weekly is in response to millions of letters from millions of admirers in every corner of the globe.

The idea came to me when I was dotting Churchy in the eye for being a cheeky lubber—he called me a clumsy clodhopper because I'd upset some ink down his best suit, or something trivial like that.

Because I want this number to be a howling success, I have decided to write everything myself. Some of the other chaps tried to butt in, but I told them to play marbles. After all, they write such silly piffle, and it wouldn't be fair to them to compare it with mine. Later on I might let them have a try—if they behave themselves properly.

Meanwhile, stick your noses into Number One of the Weekly and glue your eyes to its masterly contents—but don't send me your tailors' bills for burst waistcoats or your doctors' bills for split sides. And don't forget to write and tell me what you think of the Weekly. Cheerio till next week.

E. O. HANDFORTH
(Chief Editor-in-Chief).

THE IMPOSSIBLE ACHIEVED.

Next week's number of my Weekly is better than ever. Take a tip from the horse's mouth and order your copy in advance, otherwise you'll be an also rank

E. O. H.

HAVING entered a competition in which I shall win twelve free tickets for the Cup Final at Wembley on Saturday, I intend taking a party of St. Frank's fellows to witness the match. The following is the day's programme, although it will depend to a large extent upon the fiver which I have asked the pater to send me.

6 o'clock. Time to get up—and anybody who isn't up will get a basin of cold water over him.

7 o'clock. Charabanc and a lorry due to arrive at St. Frank's. Lorry will be stocked with grub, which I shall pay for out of that fiver. Food will be transferred from lorry to charabanc by a series of pulleys while travelling at full speed. (This apparatus is my own invention, and if successful I'll become a millionaire.)

9 o'clock (approx.). Arrive at London, where we shall see the sights, including the Tower of London, Houses of Parliament, King's Cross Station, etc.

12 o'clock. Posh dinner at a posh hotel.

1.30 p.m. Start for Wembley in the charabanc. Arrive at the Stadium and take our seats in the stand. If there's anybody occupying them, biff 'em out on their necks. Watch the game, which will be won by the club scoring most goals.

4.30 p.m. Back to London. Tea. Film show in the evening and after that, if there's anything left of the fiver, sausages and mashed in a posh West End restaurant.

10 o'clock. Back to St. Frank's.

NORE.—Handy didn't win the twelve free tickets—and he wouldn't have got the fiver from his pater.—N. L. Ed.

PICTURED PROVERBS



"Rolling stones gather no moss,"
as demonstrated by Fatty Little.

HANDY'S HINTS—No. 1

How to Play Footer

By the celebrated junior goalkeeper of St. Frank's

ALTHOUGH the author of these hints is a goalie, he reckons he can play in any position on the field, so his advice will be of immense value to budding footballers. After you have read this article you should all be good enough to play for your country.

Centre - forward.—It's the centre-forward's job to score goals, so it is essential that his shots should be like cannon-balls, fired with the rapidity of a machine-gun. He must learn to shoot with both feet and with no feet—that is to say, he must be able to use his head, too.

Inside-forwards.—Your job is to feed the centre-forward with passes so that he can score goals as described above. Don't be frightened to feed him too much; this kind of feeding won't make him fat, and costs you nothing. Must be able to diddle opposing defenders standing on his head or his feet.

Outside-forwards.—The speed merchants of the team, who should be capable of running like the wind, storming past defenders like lightning, sending hurricane passes to the centre-

forward, or zephyr-like passes to their inside men—in other words, they're supposed to put the breeze up their opponents.

Half-backs.—These gentry have a responsible position and—well, I was going to say that they have plenty of work, too, but I won't, because that might put some of you slackers off. It is their duty to help the forwards in attack, and to assist the full-backs in defence. So if you have all the qualities of the forwards aforementioned, and the qualities of the full-backs aftermentioned, you'll do.

Full-backs.—If I were captain of a team I should tell the backs that if they let any of the opposing forwards past them once they could expect a thick ear. They're there to stop the opposition from worrying the poor goalkeeper. All backs should be able to kick the ball from one end of the field to the other end and back again.

Goalkeeper.—Goal-keeping is easy. All you've got to do is stop the ball from entering the net. Any idiot can do that. I ought to know, as I play in goal myself.



GRIM IN THE SOUP!

A VISITOR, guv'nor!" announce Splinter, coming into the consulting-room of his master Trackett Grim, the most marvellous detective the world had ever seen and was ever likely to see.

Not that he could be seen at this moment for he was hidden behind terrific clouds of tobacco smoke that would have made London's worst fog look silly.

"Who is it, Splinter?" came Grim's magnificent voice from behind the smoke screen; and Splinter's reply caused a bombshell that made even his celebrated master's false teeth rattle.

"Knock-kneed Nesbitt!" was the lad's shattering answer. And although Trackett Grim had received rotters of all types in his consulting-room, the news that the king of London's Underworld wanted to see him caused him to swallow half a ton of his own tobacco smoke.

"Really! I am honoured!" said Grim with grim humour; and as Splinter burst his sides with laughing at the clever joke: "Come, cease this frivolity, Splinter!" he added severely. "Show the gentleman up."

Still doubled up with laughter at his master's keen sense of humour, Splinter staggered out of the room, while Trackett Grim sprang into tremendous activity to safeguard himself against the dangerous, ruthless, terrible crook who was coming to interview him. The great detective was afraid of no man; but to be on the safe side, he armed himself with two revolvers, a machine-gun which he propped up beside his desk and a dozen or two gas bombs. Then he put on his huge briar pipe again and puffed out another thick smoke screen.

"Put that popgun away!" snapped Trackett Grim harshly. He had heard Knock-kneed Nesbitt enter the consulting-room, owing to the banging together of his knees as he walked; and his wonderful eyesight, able to pierce the thickest smoke, saw the notorious criminal draw his gun on entering. Nesbitt dropped his weapon as though it had become red-hot. He couldn't



The crook snags gun away from him and turned it

EXCHANGE AND MART

FOOTBALL FOR SALE.—Brand new except for two splits in case, and sixteen punctures in bladder. Wonderful bargain. Will exchange for toffee-apple. Apply Juicy Lemon, Third Form, St. Frank's.

REMARKABLE OFFER.—To the first junior who applies for "Latin Grammar and Syntax—in six volumes" (a birthday present from doting aunt) the owner will give, free, gratis, and for nothing, a pen'orth of peanuts. Apply C. de Valerie, Remove Form.

WHO WANTS A "SOAK-EM" WATER PISTOL?—Guaranteed to shoot straight for a distance of six inches. Owner settling down in life and wants to lead a quieter life. Will exchange for game of Ludo. Apply Owen Major, Remove Form, St. Frank's.

MOTOR-BIKE WANTED.—Willing to sacrifice all personal belongings—penknife with a broken blade, piece of string, a bent farthing, and two buttons, one in the middle of a chunk of toffee—in exchange. What hopes? Any offers? Don't all rush at once. Apply Reggie Pitt, West House.

LATEST INFORMATION concerning St. Frank's on any and every topic supplied at moderate fees by Teddy Long. All clients must wear carpet slippers, and give the password, "Pax."

BIRDS' EGG COLLECTORS. Half a dozen ripe eggs (origin doubtful) waiting to be disposed of by owner, who is a conjurer. What offers? (Free use of gas-mask to all prospective purchasers.) Apply Yung Ching, Remove Form, St. Frank's.

TRACKETT GRIM—MASTER CRIMINAL!

A super-super detective-thriller story, specially written by the world-famous author, E. O. HANDFORTH.

see Grim, of course, and he was as surprised as the dickens.

Knock-kneed Nesbitt, king of the Underworld, criminal genius, ruthless gunman and killer, was a vicious-looking brute. It was easy to see why everybody—except Trackett Grim and Splinter, of course—trembled at the very mention of his name. His ugly dial was enough to frighten a cat.

"What do you want, Nesbitt? Spill a mouthful!" came Trackett Grim's voice from somewhere in the room.

After about five minutes searching through the smoke, the crook found Grim, seated in a deep armchair, a machine gun resting on his lap.

"Don't try any funny stuff, you ugly-faced, brute!" warned the detective.

"I know you, and I'm taking no chances. I've got you covered, and if you so much as breathe I'll plug you until you look like a sieve."



had the machine—
Trackett Grim,
on the detective.

Knock-kneed Nesbitt didn't like the insulting references to his personal beauty, and he scowled ferociously. But he knew that the magnificent figure before him was his master, and he swallowed his feelings with a noisy gurgle.

"Aw, cut it out, Grim.

I give you best. Let's be matey over a glass of water——"

"Matey! Pah!" Scorp sizzled out of Trackett Grim's flashing eyes.

"Matey with a scoundrel like you! No, sir—no, ten thousand million times. Say, can all this junk, and let's get down to brass tin-tacks. Why have you come here?"

Knock-kneed Nesbitt's teeth showed in a snarl. He was jolly annoyed because Grim had refused to drink a glass of water with him.

"Listen, you dumb defective, and I'll tell you. I've come to ask you to join my gang. You've been jolly rude to me, but I'll forget that. What about it, bo?"

It took a lot to surprise Trackett Grim, but the crook's statement certainly succeeded in doing so now. And just for one moment his amazement caused him to relax his vigilance;

(Continued at foot of next column.)

CLASS-ROOM CLIPPINGS

BY George, you chaps! There was a terrific sensation in the Sixth-Form lecture hall the other morning. Professor Sylvester Tucker, the absent-minded St. Frank's science master, was due to give a lecture. He arrived dressed in his pyjamas and night-cap. He proceeded to lie on the table, mumbled "Good-night" to the seniors, and promptly went to sleep. He thought it was time to go to bed!

Another sleepy story. This happened during Fifth Form lessons. Mr. Pagett asked William Napoleon Browne to give his views on the cause of the fall of the Roman Empire. Browne got on his legs and talked solidly for an hour and a half—at the end of which time everybody, including old Pagett himself, was fast asleep. (I don't wonder at it, either!) Browne hasn't got over this waste of his oratorical powers yet.

Masters are spoil-sports. And they always turn up when they are not wanted. Jerry Dodd was giving an exhibition of lassoing in the Remove class-room recently. Old Crowsfeet (ahem! I mean, Mr. Crowell—he might see this!) was out of the room. Jerry had just lassoed the blackboard when—in walked Mr. Crowell, got his hands left the machine-gun on his lap. It was the moment Knock-kneed Nesbitt had been waiting for.

Quick as a flash, he grabbed the machine-gun and turned it upon the detective. The tables were turned.

"Call yourself a detective!" sneered the crook triumphantly. "Why, you couldn't detect a bad kipper." His tone suddenly became harsh. "Get out of that chair away from those bombs and things and stand in the middle of the room. And now I'll tell you why I came here. Not to ask you to join my gang—ho, ho! what a joke—but to get those sparklers that Lord Bilton left in your charge. They're worth a cool million, if a penny, and I want 'em. Cough 'em up, Grim—and don't start any hanky-panky, else I'll plug you!"

(To be continued.)

mixed up in the rope, with the result that the blackboard fell on his pet bunion. Jerry hasn't given another exhibition since—neither has he been able to sit down with any degree of comfort.

I had to go into the Third Form class-room the other day. Mr. Suncliffe wasn't there, and the fags were indulging in the thrilling sport of ink-slinging with their pens. My minor caught me a packet in the eye, and so I promptly went for him. I was in the thick of it, with about five thousand fags all clawing on to me, when Sunny toddled in. (Didn't I say that masters are a hopeless lot?) And, would you believe it, he ticked me off for fighting boys smaller than myself. It's a hard world!

TO FELLOW-SUFFERERS

TO those of you who have survived reading the first issue of Handy's Weekly, the Editor of the NELSON LEE has asked me to say a few words of explanation. (By the way, this notice has been inserted without Handy's knowledge, and I'm expecting a few black eyes as a result.)

Apparently Handy barged into the Editor's office on press day and demanded that 43 pages of the paper should be devoted to his latest Trackett Grim "masterpiece." Because he wanted to get rid of E. O. pronto, and because he thought a "comic supplement" would be a bit of a novelty, the Editor rashly agreed to let Handy produce a magazine, to be incorporated with the NELSON LEE—and these three pages of piffle is the result.

Anyway, the NELSON LEE Editor has asked me to tell you not to take too much notice of Handy's nonsense. He absolutely refuses to be responsible for anything that may happen as a result of Handy's piffle. If you are told to stick your face in the fire to improve your complexion—and Handy's quite capable of that—don't do it. Cheerio, Nelson Leeites, and please accept my heartfelt sympathies.

WALTER CHURCH.

INVADERS OF NORTHESTRIA!

(Continued from page 21.)

"We'll see about that," said Nelson Lee grimly. "In the central square, eh? Straight ahead? Good!"

He went back into the tank, slammed the great steel door, and the monster lurched forward once more—the people scattering on all sides. The tank plunged on and, leaving the quaint old cobbled streets behind, went charging into the big, open space in the very centre of the town.

And here, indeed, was a great spectacle.

On every hand were throngs of Northestrian townsfolk. They were being kept back by the Gothland soldiers. In the centre of the square were more Gothlanders, mounted; and in their midst was the small party of St. Frank's fellows.

An officer on horseback was reading something aloud—a proclamation. The boys were in a group, securely bound and roped one to the other. Apparently they were soon to be marched out of the town.

But the arrival of the tank made all the difference.

A tumult started amongst the townsfolk, and it quickly spread. Handforth, looking in that direction, felt his heart give a great jump.

"My only hat!" he gurgled. "Look, you chaps! A tank!"

"Good gad!"

"It's Mr. Lee—and Dorrie!"

"Hurrah!"

The Gothland officer, interrupted in his speech, turned round, his horse prancing nervously—scenting trouble already.

"Silence, you young dogs!" commanded the officer harshly.

"Rats!" roared Handforth. "This is where you get it in the neck—you and your rotten Gothlanders!"

Other shouts were ringing out now, mainly from the soldiers; shouts of consternation and dismay. For the tank, increasing its speed, was thundering across the cobbles—right towards the centre of the square.

For the first few moments the Gothlanders were struck dumb. They just stood motionless, staring. A modern tank, advancing to the attack, is a formidable enough sight for anybody. To the Gothlanders, who knew nothing of tanks, and who had never seen such a thing in all their lives, it was a sight which paralysed them into terrified inactivity.

Nelson Lee had told Dorrie and Maclaren to withhold their machine-gun fire until the very last moment. They were not to use their weapons unless they were compelled.

As events turned out, the machine-guns were not even needed.

The sight of the tank was enough. If the soldiers were scared, so were the horses. They were practically unmanageable, and they were prancing and leaping madly. Yells of terror arose from the nearest soldiers, and they fled.

The panic spread, and it swept through the square like wildfire. Within twenty seconds

all the Gothland soldiers were either galloping or running away.

The St. Frank's boys were left standing alone in the centre of the square.

"Hurrah!"

"We're rescued, you chaps!"

"Good old Mr. Lee!"

"Down with the Gothlanders!" roared Handforth. "Didn't I tell you chaps that everything would be all right?"

The tank, swinging round, came to a halt.

The steel door opened, and Nelson Lee stepped out. A fresh shout of joy went up from the boys.

"Yes, you can cheer!" said Lee sharply, as he ran towards them, opening a big knife. "You seem to have got yourself into a pretty nice mess, eh? It's a good thing we finished this tank in time, so that we could come to your rescue."

"Awfully sorry, sir!" panted Nipper. "It wasn't our fault, really. We were taken by surprise."

"Well, you can give me your explanations later—when we're safe," replied Lee. "Thank Heaven you're all here—and unhurt!" He cut through their bonds quickly, and they were soon all released. "Into the tank—all of you!" he ordered briskly.

"Is there room for us, sir?" gasped Church.

"You'll be squashed, but you'll find room," replied Nelson Lee. "Hurry up! We command the situation at the moment, but we mustn't forget that there are hundreds of soldiers at hand, and if they recover their nerve things will go badly for us."

The boys, shouting excitedly, piled into the tank. And, as though to prove the truth of Nelson Lee's warning, arrows came hurtling against the tank's sides. The Gothland archers, partially recovering, were making a half-hearted attack.

Ping! Ping! Ping!

The arrows, coming in greater numbers, splintered against the tank and on the cobbles. Lee plucked one of the arrows from his sleeve.

It was certainly getting hot!

CHAPTER 9.

The Proclamation!

AS the last boy squeezed himself into the tank, Lee took a quick look round. The Gothlanders, finding that their horses were too terrified to face the tank, were now advancing on foot. Officers were shouting encouragement, and suddenly the soldiers charged to the attack.

Lee squeezed himself into the tank, and slammed the door. He could hear the boys talking excitedly. They were packing themselves into the confined space, for the interior of this monster of war was very much like a Chinese puzzle. The boys had to squeeze themselves just where they could find room.

But Lee got to his driving seat, and his old coolness had returned. He knew that the

danger was now over. Every boy was safe, and this tank was stronger than any of Cedric's fortresses.

"Three cheers for Mr. Lee!" came Handforth's excited voice. "Get off my chest, Church, you ass! Don't dig me in the ribs, Travers!"

"Awfully sorry to put you to this trouble, sir," came Travers' voice. "But perhaps it's all for the best. You're scaring the Gothlanders out of their wits with this tank!"

"And giving them a premature sight of it, young man," retorted Nelson Lee. "We wanted to keep this tank in reserve—for our dash into Dunstane. However, there may not be a great amount of damage done."

"I grabbed that proclamation, gov'nor," came Nipper's voice. "The officer dropped it, and I thought it might be interesting."

"Keep it—we'll have a look at it when we get back to the submarine," replied Lee. "Now, hold steady, boys. You're going to get a bit of a jolting."

Through his spyhole in front of the wheel, he could see that the Gothland soldiers were gathering round in ever-increasing numbers. They were gaining confidence, and some of the more daring spirits, armed with great axes, dashed right up, hammering at the thick plates of the tank.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

The tank resounded with metallic clangs. But the Gothlanders were staggered and freshly frightened when they found that the only damage was wrought to the axes themselves. The hafts splintered, the metal heads were blunted, and some were cracked. No harm came to the tank.

Then Lee revved up the engines, and with a terrific roar he let in the clutch. The tank lurched forward like a living thing, and yells of consternation arose. The Gothland soldiers bolted madly.

"Go it!" grinned Lord Dorrimore. "I'd like to pepper 'em with this machine-gun—but it wouldn't be playing the game."

There was no mistake about it. The tank sent terror into the hearts of the enemy soldiers. Even the townspeople were almost as badly frightened. Yet they knew that the tank contained their friends—they knew that it had come to help them. Thus their fear was tempered with hope.

URGENTLY as Nelson Lee wanted to get back to the submarine, he delayed.

There were hundreds of Gothland troops in Ixwell, and the chances were they would wreak their vengeance upon the harmless townspeople once the tank had gone. Therefore it would be as well to terrorise the soldiers to such an extent that they would flee from the place. So Nelson Lee, at the wheel of the tank, gave the Northestrians a brilliant exhibition of tank tactics. Charging straight across the square, hot on the track of the Gothlanders, the tank suddenly swerved, shot after another group of soldiers, and chased them in the same way. Then,

swinging round again, it repeated the manoeuvre.

In the end, the Gothlanders, well nigh exhausted with their exertions and with fear, bolted from the town. The tank pursued them. It scattered them, it disorganised the entire force.

And the townspeople, now joining in the hunt, did their own part. They fell upon the isolated groups of soldiers, disarmed them, and made them captives.

"I think we can leave them to it now," said Nelson Lee cheerfully. "I'll guarantee that not ten of those Gothlanders have escaped. I don't know what will happen to the rest—but I hardly think these people will kill them."

"That's the trouble with these Northestrians—they're too soft," came Dorrie's comment. "Still, better be that way than brutal. Anyhow, we've smashed Cedric's force in this town, and it's a victory for us."

The tank thundered out of Ixwell, went along the dusty road, and presently arrived at the sheltered cove. Nothing had happened here. The Pioneer was still riding at anchor, just off shore.

Nelson Lee left the tank on the sands, with four men in charge. With machine-guns, they could easily hold off any Gothland force. There was little or no fear of the tank being captured.

Lee went aboard the Pioneer with the boys, and he listened gravely as they told him of everything that had happened.

"Well, there's no harm done," commented Lee at length, with some solemnity. "But you boys might easily have been killed. You musn't do anything so foolhardy again."

"But, dash it, sir, we saved Ixwell from being retaken by Cedric's men!" protested Handforth.

"Yes, you saved a massacre," agreed Nelson Lee. "But for your presence with those maroons, the Gothland soldiers would undoubtedly have murdered some hundreds of innocent women and children. And for that reason I am not going to say anything more about the matter. Events have shown that your little expedition was justified. Well done, boys!" His expression changed, and he patted some of them on their backs. "Splendid work!" he added warmly. "I'm proud of you all!"

They went below to have a wash and change, for they were dusty and grimy. They left Nelson Lee and Dorrie to tell the Princess Mercia and Ethelbert the Red of the recent excitement.

"Well, Mr. Lee's a sport!" declared Handforth contentedly. "We thought he was going to cut up rusty at first—but he's the real goods!"

"Rather!"

"And here we are, back on the good old Pioneer, safe and sound," said Travers. "By Samson, we do see life, dear old fellows!"

"This is better than all your trips to the giddy North Pole!" said Handforth, as he commenced to wash. "And the fun's only

just beginning! Wait until we get Cedric properly on the run! We'll drive him and his rotten soldiers completely out of Northestria!"

AFTER they had had a thorough wash and a change, they felt themselves again. And then Handforth suggested that they should go on deck, collect Irene & Co., and tell the girls all about it.

"Wait a minute!" said Nipper. "I've just remembered that proclamation I bagged. We only heard the beginning of it, and then the tank came. But it may be important."

He took the crumpled and torn sheet of parchment from his pocket. And after the first few moments his expression changed. Alarm leapt into his eyes.

"I say," he burst out, "this is awful!"

"What's wrong?" asked Tommy Watson, staring.

"Come upstairs—to Mr. Lee!" replied Nipper. "He must see this at once!"

They all went crowding on deck, filled with curiosity. They found Nelson Lee and Dorrie, also washed and changed, talking with the princess.

"This proclamation, sir!" said Nipper. "You've got to read it!"

Nelson Lee did so, and, although his expression did not change, his eyes hardened. Everybody else stood round, tensely silent.

"This is bad, Dorrie," commented Lee.

"If the news is ill, Lee the Lionheart, do not hesitate to tell me," said Princess Mercia. "My fair country is in such torment that an added blow will not increase my hurt."

Lee looked at her for a moment, and then decided.

"Perhaps it is as well, princess, that you should know of this," he said quietly. "The proclamation runs in this way:

"To My Subjects Of Northestria!

"Know ye, all People of Northestria, that I, Cedric, King of Gothland and Northestria, am determined to maintain Law and Order throughout this Realm.

"It hath come to mine ears that there is rebellion, and that many of my soldiers have been attacked. All men who take up arms against the soldiers of Gothland are traitors to the Throne; and all men who are proven to be traitors will be put to the death.

"Now, it is known to all people in this land that I had planned to execute the arch-traitors, Princess Mercia, Prince Oswy, and Ethelbert the Red. 'Twas my will to have these accursed three burned at the stake. But owing to the intervention of the strangers who have come into our midst, these arch-traitors have been snatched from me.

"It is well known that two of the rescued prisoners are of Royal blood, and the third, Ethelbert the Red, is a noble of high rank. Had they accepted their lot with the fortitude expected of Royal blood,

they would not have earned my displeasure. But it was they who sent messages to these strangers who have come from beyond the Great Ice. Thus must they die.

"But while they are with these strangers they are safe. Ere long, my soldiers shall defeat these interfering dogs who had come into our land. Meanwhile, it is my will that there shall be a great reprisal; and I deem it that one hundred commoners are the equal of one member of the Royal family.

"Therefore shall three hundred picked citizens of Northestria be burnt at the stake this day, at the evening hour.

"Thirty shall be executed in Dunstane; thirty shall be executed in Ixwell; thirty shall be executed in Ina; and so, in ten towns of this Realm, shall thirty commoners be put to the death by the stake.

"This is my will, and let ye be warned that death shall befall all who attempt to frustrate my rule.

"CEDRIC."

A chorus of horrified exclamations arose as Nelson Lee finished reading.

"Three hundred Northestrians—burnt at the stake!" ejaculated Lord Dorrimore, with a whistle. "By the Lord Harry! The fellow's a greater scoundrel than I believed!"

"And yet, Dorrimore the Brave, I did tell you of Cedric's ruthlessness," said Ethelbert sadly. "Alas, my poor country!"

The princess was weeping.

"Better that we should have died, Ethelbert!" she cried, suddenly raising her head. "We live, but for each of our three lives one hundred innocent men must die! Three hundred in all! Oh, 'tis horrible!"

"The hound!" said Sir Hobart Manners angrily.

The boys were thunderstruck. They could hardly believe that the proclamation was really true.

Three hundred Northestrians to be burnt at the stake—that very day! And not one of those people was guilty of any wrong. That was the horrible part of it. They were merely being executed because Cedric had been balked of his original prey.

The situation was, indeed, desperate!

CHAPTER 10.

The Attack!

OF course, Cedric's object is palpably clear," said Nelson Lee quietly. "His desire is to quell the rising at its birth. He believes that this proclamation will put such fear into the hearts of the Northestrians that they will lose their fighting spirit."

"Something's got to be done," said Dorrie. "Hang it, man, we can't let this outrage take place! We came here to help the Northestrians—not to bring about this torture!"



The tank lumbered on, and the Gothland soldiers, uttering wild cries of terror, scattered in all directions.

Dorrie had hit upon the point.

As a direct outcome of the submarine's arrival, three hundred Northeistriens were to be burnt alive! It was a tragic thought.

"Let a message be sent to Cedric!" said the princess suddenly. "Let Cedric be told that I am willing to die."

"Ay, 'tis a solution!" said Ethelbert the Red. "We will go to the stake, Lee the Lionheart, and thus these three hundred good people will be saved."

"My brother is of good courage—he will consent," said the princess proudly.

But Nelson Lee shook his head.

"I admire the spirit which prompts this offer, Princess Mercia," he replied. "And if I thought that the lives of these three hundred men might be saved by your action, then I would consider. But if Cedric were to get hold of you now, he would burn you alive—and he would burn the three hundred also. You would sacrifice yourselves for nothing."

"There's a better way!" growled Dorrie. "We'll stop Cedric from putting his dirty plan into execution!"

"But how, good Dorrimore the Brave?" asked the princess quickly. "I vow I have

faith in thy courage, and I know that Cedric will be ultimately crushed. But no matter what victories we gain, those victories will not bring back the lives of these three hundred innocents."

"I want you to leave this to us, princess," said Nelson Lee quietly. "We will do everything in our power to prevent Cedric from carrying out his intention. We are not magicians—we cannot work miracles—but we have certain modern mechanical marvels at our command which will be of considerable help."

Leaving it at that, he took Lord Dorrimore aside.

"Well, old man?" asked Dorrie, looking him squarely in the eyes.

"It can't be, of course," said Nelson Lee. "We've got to stop it."

"Absolutely!" agreed his lordship.

"We've got to put that plan of mine into execution—at once," said Nelson Lee. "There's no sense in waiting, or in beating about the bush. We'll make that dash into Dunstane!"

"In the tank, eh?"

"In the tank," nodded Nelson Lee. "If we succeed—and I am telling you candidly, Dorrie, that the chances of our success are remote—the whole situation will be changed. We've got to capture Cedric!"

"We'll do it—don't worry. And once we've got his Nibs locked up, we can dictate our own terms to his bally nobles. They'll never dare to let the executions take place while we hold Cedric as a hostage."

"You're right!" said Lee. "We'll even threaten to put Cedric to death unless Northestria is evacuated by every Gothland soldier in the country."

NO time was lost.

That proclamation had made all the difference. Even now Cedric's soldiers were gaining the upper hand again in the towns and villages of Northestria.

The proclamation was being read throughout the length and breadth of the land. And the effect of it, as Cedric had anticipated, was tremendous. The people were stunned. Their enthusiasm and their fire died down. Thirty prominent citizens of each big town were to be burnt at the stake! It was, indeed, sufficient enough to quell their ardour.

But if Cedric and his men were active, so was Nelson Lee. Without delay he went ashore, and he only took Lord Dorrimore and Maclaren, the engineer, with him. They made their final preparations; they saw that the machine-guns were in perfect trim;

they tuned up the engines; they filled the tanks.

And while the monster lay there on the beach, the Pioneer slid out into the lake, off on a mission of her own. Captain Williams, the commander, had his orders. He knew precisely what he was to do—and the exact minute at which he was to do it.

There was no attempt to submerge the submarine. She glided along on the surface in full view of the Northestrian shore. She skirted the coast-line, and in due course she arrived off Dunstane. Here, coming even nearer to the shore, she anchored. Her coming had already been noted, for running figures were to be seen near the great city walls. Soldiers were massing, and excitement reigned.

"What's the giddy idea?" asked Handforth, who was on deck. "Why have we come here?"

"Better ask Sir Hobart, or one of the officers," suggested Church. "Awfully careless of Mr. Lee, but he didn't tell us his plans before he left."

"He might have taken us in that giddy tank!" growled Handforth. "He and Dorrie are getting all the excitement—and we're kept aboard where we're nice and safe!"

"You needn't grumble, you boulder," said McClure. "We had our excitement earlier, didn't we? And, in my opinion, we've had quite enough for one day. I'm glad enough of a rest."



Jokes from readers wanted for this feature. If you know a good rib-tickler, send it along now. A handsome watch will be awarded each week to the sender of the best joke; pocket wallets, penknives and bumper books are also offered as prizes. Address your jokes to "Smilers," Nelson Lee Library, 5, Carmelite House, London, E.C.4.

SEZ YOU!

Father: "Now, Tommy, don't let me hear you say 'Oh, yeah' again, or I'll stop you going to see these American films."

Tommy: "Okay, chief."

(M. McLean, 454, Garseube Road, Glasgow, has been awarded a handsome watch.)

EXTRA-LARGE!

"Two dozen loaves, please," demanded the zoo-keeper.

"Are you having a party?" asked the baker, in amazement.

"No," replied the keeper. "The kangaroo kicked the elephant, and I want to make a bread poultice for him."

(A. E. Jones, 52, Waterloo Crescent, Countesthorpe, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

LABOUR SAVING.

Loving Uncle: "What would you do if you were a king, Jimmy?"

Jimmy: "Buy a car. Then I wouldn't have to run when flying a kite."

(D. Joannides, Miniati Street, 29, Athens, Greece, has been awarded a book.)

TAKING WAYS.

Binks: "And do the people next-door borrow much from you?"

Jinks: "Borrow? Why, I feel more at home in their house than in my own."

(H. Grubb, 143, Long Street, Atherstone, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

A REAL SPORT.

A boy, having been engaged by a firm of builders, turned up at the yard next morning to commence work.

"Brought your cards with you?" asked the foreman.

"Shure, I have," answered the lad. "And I'm bringing a Ludo game to-morrow as well."

(F. Evans, 33, St. John's Road, Wolverhampton, has been awarded a book.)

ABSURD.

"I hear you are having a new house built."

"Of course. Did you ever hear of anybody having an old house built?"

(R. Pover, 26, Chilton Road, Richmond, has been awarded a penknife.)

"Well, perhaps there's something in that," admitted Edward Oswald. "But why are we here? What's the idea of coming right close to Dunstane like this? We're not going to make an attack, are we?"

Irene Manners and some of the other girls who were within earshot, joined the boys.

"If anybody ought to grumble, it's us," said Doris Berkeley. "You fellows have had a spree ashore, by all that I can hear—but we girls didn't even get a look in. We've done just nothing."

"Well, girls are different," said Handforth, with a wave of his hand. "Girls aren't supposed to fight."

"But we like to be in the swim just the same as you boys," said Irene warmly. "But there! Boys always get all the luck."

"I may be wrong, old girls, but I believe there's going to be a bit of excitement pretty soon," said Vivian Travers. "Something tells me that we shall soon be in the thick of it."

ON the battlements of Dunstane Castle, Cedric's Guards were the first to behold the coming of the Pioneer.

Word was immediately sent down to the king, telling him of this latest development. He received the news with a coarse laugh.

"They seek to affright us by bringing their wondrous ship to the capital," he said contemptuously. "What care I for their tricks? This new plan of mine will stamp out the

rising utterly. Already couriers are coming in with news that the people are subdued."

Cedric was a different man now. His fear had gone. He was his arrogant self again. The posting of those proclamations had wrought a great change throughout Northestria. It was only possible for Cedric to know of the events in the nearer towns; but fast riders had been dispatched to the distant cities, to say nothing of strong bodies of soldiers.

There were no telegraphs in Northestria; communication could only be made as it was made in England in the Middle Ages. The distant towns and villages were practically cut off from the coast-line and from the capital.

Cedric was purposely hurrying the executions. Thousands of men were already at work in the capital, in Ixwell, in Ina, and in other towns, preparing for the burnings.

A third great force of soldiers had gone into Ixwell, and now the town was quiet. That proclamation had done more to quell the rising than all the efforts of Cedric's men.

"These burnings will show the people that I am a man of purpose," said Cedric, clenching his fist. "By my marrow and bones! Should there be any further rebellion, then will I execute another three hundred! I am the king! I will show the people my strength!"

He walked out upon a balcony, and stood surveying the great courtyard. Hundreds

GO HON.

Willie : "May I go out and play, ma?"

Mother : "What, with those holes in your trousers?"

Willie : "No, with the boy next-door."

(A. Preston, 105, Calais Road, Burton-on-Trent, has been awarded a book.)

A FOOTBALLER.

Teacher : "What is a wasp?"

Tommy : "A fly wearing a football jersey."

(D. Miller, 2, Acorn Cottages, East Hill, Dartford, has been awarded a penknife.)

GIVING THE GAME AWAY.

Little Boy : "Mr. Smith, do drink your tea. I am awfully anxious to see you drink."

Mr. Smith : "What makes you so anxious, my lad?"

Little Boy : "Oh, ma said you drink like a fish!"

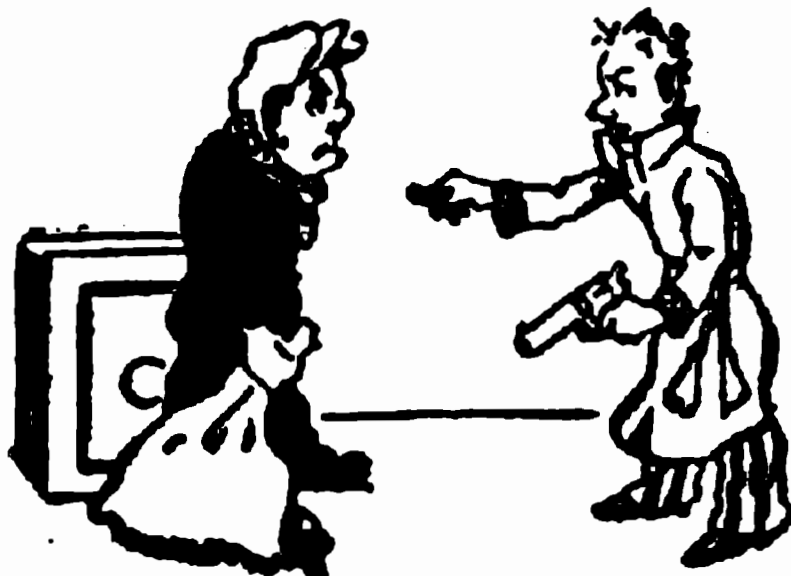
(W. O'Connor, Cluttakina Cottage, Cappoquin, Ireland, has been awarded a book.)

THE BORROWER.

Householder : "Put all that stuff back into the sideboard at once."

Burglar : "Be fair, guv'nor; not all of it. Half of it belongs next-door."

(P. Turner, 14, Osborne Road, Romford, has been awarded a penknife.)



NOT NECESSARY.

Insurance Agent : "Your side-shows are all wood. You ought to take out a fire insurance."

Showman : "Why should I? I've got a fire-eater on the premises."

(B. Duffin, 53, Openview, Earlsfield, S.W.18, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

SHE KEPT A SHOP.

"Grandma, give me another penny to give to a poor old woman who is lame."

The old lady was touched by her grandson's solicitude for this object of pity.

"Well, Willie," she replied, "as I like to encourage your little sympathetic heart, here it is. Now, I hope you are not being imposed upon?"

"Oh, no, grandma," said Willie, as he clutched the penny in his hand. "Every time I give her a penny I get two nice oranges."

(N. Humphreys, 30, Greenbank Avenue, Sudbury, has been awarded a penknife.)

NINE LIVES.

Citizen : "I want a gun."

Shopkeeper : "Six-shooter?"

Citizen : "No; I think I'd better have a nine-shooter. It's for the cat next-door."

(H. Gournier, Rosemont, Pinewood Avenue, North Gosforth, Newcastle-on-Tyne, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

of soldiers were below, and large numbers of them were being marched across the great drawbridge. They were off to enforce Cedric's rule.

"Thou hast done well, Guntha," said the king approvingly. "'Tis what I like to see—more and more soldiers."

"But soldiers are costly, your Majesty," said Guntha the Crafty. "It requires much money to maintain this vast army in Northestria."

"Who careth?" said Cedric. "Do not the people of Northestria pay for the soldiers? They are taxed—they are helpless. And while I keep them under my thumb, so will they remain helpless. Didst send the galleys across the lake as I ordered?"

"They are gone some hours, sire," replied Guntha. "In due course, a thousand more soldiers will come into Northestria."

"We need not fear these strangers," continued the king, with a great laugh. "What can they do? They have but one ship—and they seek to overthrow my throne! By the bones of Offa! If I could but think of some plan to entrap them——"

Boom!

From the lake came a dull, reverberating report. The very walls of the castle shook, and Cedric the Cruel started round, tugging nervously at his beard.

"What was that?" he asked sharply.

"Nay, my lord, I know not," said Guntha. "But a guess is not so difficult! Thou hast heard that the strange ship is anchored just off the city. These people from the outer world are practising more of their miracles, it seemeth."

"Let us to the battlements!" said Cedric fiercely.

They went out into a great, stone-flagged corridor, mounted flights of circular steps, and at last came out upon the battlements of Dunstane Castle.

From here they could gain a clear view of the lake, beyond the city walls. In the city itself, they could see the people moving about restlessly—but always prevented from forming crowds by the soldiers.

Out upon the lake rested the Pioneer. As the king looked, a big puff of smoke appeared from her side, accompanied by a tremendous report.

"I like it not, your Majesty!" growled Guntha. "These people have devices of much cunning. What is this thing which makes such a noise and which sends such smoke?"

Guntha was suspicious—he was uneasy. So far, there had only been those reports. Nothing else. But the very power of these strangers from the outside world was startling. If they could do these things, they might just as well do other things—things which would bring death and destruction upon Dunstane.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

The commotion was getting more violent. The guns were being fired rapidly and repeatedly. But, by Nelson Lee's orders, only blanks were being fired. The object was to

create a lot of noise—and to distract attention. It was a strategic move only. It would not suit Nelson Lee's plan to have the castle shelled.

And the effect was tremendous. Even Cedric became nervous. Down below, in the courtyard, the soldiers were restless. No longer was there any drilling; the men were standing about in groups, talking. Even their officers made no attempt to round them up. All were affected by the same fear. And Cedric, as he looked, growled out an oath.

"Come, Guntha!" he snarled. "See what is happening in the courtyard! Our soldiers grow indolent! There is naught to fear from these people of the lake. They make much noise and display, but what else? They seek to affright us, as I have already said. Bah! Are we children, to be disorganised by fear?"

Cedric went storming down, and after a few moments Guntha the Crafty followed. Guntha was vastly uneasy. He did not like the look of that strange vessel upon the lake which was sending out puffs of smoke and making such violent noises.

He would have been even more uneasy had he known that Nelson Lee, at the wheel of the tank, was, at that very moment, entering the southern gate of Dunstane!

CHAPTER 11.

In the Enemy's Camp!

"**N**OW for it, Dorrie!" sang out Nelson Lee.

"Let her rip, old man!" yelled Lord Dorrimore. "Who cares! Neck or nothing, eh?"

The tank was thundering along a road in the neighbourhood of Dunstane. Turning a bend, the tank had come within sight of the grim, city walls.

Lee had seen, to his satisfaction, that the great gates were standing wide open. There were soldiers on duty, guarding the entry; and sight of the approaching monster had set them jumping about in fear and excitement.

Nelson Lee knew that everything would depend upon this first rush. If he could get through to the castle, all well and good. Fortunately, he knew the geography of the town well. He and Lord Dorrimore had been in Dunstane before. They had spent many weeks here during their previous visit to Northestria; they knew every street and every square.

Lee had already planned out his precise course of action. Everything would depend upon speed. The whole success or failure of this venture depended upon the element of surprise. One hitch might ruin everything—one minute's delay might bring disaster upon the daring adventurers. They were taking a big chance, and they knew it.

But the game was equally big. If they only succeeded in their efforts, then three hundred innocent Northeistrians would be saved.

Nelson Lee muttered an exclamation as he saw the great gates being closed. He had half expected it, although he had been hoping that the tank would get through before the soldiers recovered from their surprise.

But it was not to be—the gates were closing. The guards had sufficient presence of mind to attempt to shut out this monstrous thing which was charging down upon them with so much noise.

There was no other way into the city, for Dunstane was a walled city, with four main gates.

"Look out, Dorrie!" yelled Lee. "We're going to test the strength of this tank!"

Dorrie, who was at the forward machine-gun—and thus able to see everything—gave a chirrup.

"Right-ho, old son!" he replied. "They're pretty hefty gates, but its marvellous what these tanks can do when they really make up their minds! I'll be ready for the shock!"

There was a mighty roar as the tank engines were revved to their highest. The monster came hurtling forward, her speed increasing. Nelson Lee gripped the wheel hard, and the massive gates leapt towards him. He closed his eyes in readiness for the shock.

Cra-a-a-sh!

It was an amazing sight. Strong as the gates were, they crumpled up like match-wood before the charge of the tank. It went clean through them, charging onwards almost as if the gates had not existed.

Nelson Lee and Maclaren, within, felt a terrific jerk, a giddy jolt, and then it was over. Maclaren, at the rear machine-gun, had a clear view of the damage—and he could not help chuckling. The gates were still standing, but there was an enormous jagged hole in their centre. The tank charged on at terrific speed. Soldiers fled in terror before the monster which swept down upon them.

Boom! Boom!

The Pioneer was carrying on the good work—adding to the confusion in the city.

Swerving as it entered the square, the tank skidded madly over the shiny cobbles, veering round and sweeping broadside. But Lee, at the wheel, soon regained control. On went the monster again, plunging out at the other end of the square, down a narrow street, and then on towards the castle. Hoarse shouts, shrieks, and cries of fear were rising upon the air from every hand.

"We're doing it, old man!" came a roar from Dorrie.

Lee was feeling the same thrill as the millionaire peer. There was something in this mad charge into Dunstane which was ten times more exhilarating than a "blind" round Brooklands at a hundred and fifty miles

an hour. Dorrie, who was always on the look-out for a new thrill, was in his element. He was enjoying himself immensely. The danger never occurred to him—and he didn't care, anyhow.

On went the tank, and now the great draw-bridge, leading into the courtyard of the castle, was within sight. Nelson Lee sent up a silent prayer of relief. His one fear, ever since the start, had been that the drawbridge would be up. Then, indeed, would he have been baffled. Yet he had known that the odds were really against the drawbridge being up. With so much coming and going of soldiers and couriers, it was far more likely that the drawbridge would be in position. And it was!

Opening the throttle to its fullest extent, Lee steered for the drawbridge, and the tank, creating a terrific din, took the bridge in its stride. This was a deliberate attempt to be spectacular—to drive fear into the hearts of the soldiers in the castle precincts. There was another reason for Lee's mad charge, too.

The drawbridge looked strong—and it was strong. But was it capable of carrying the enormous weight of this tank? By dashing over it in one flying leap, the odds were not so great. The tank was over in almost one tremendous leap.

The drawbridge sagged, it creaked and groaned—and then the tank was in the courtyard itself. Right in the castle grounds—beneath the frowning walls of this grim fortress!

The audacity of the thing was startling. These three men had not only penetrated into the heart of the capital, but they were now actually within the king's own personal domain. By sheer daring, the almost impossible had been accomplished.

But as yet the real objective of this wild dash had not been accomplished.

Nelson Lee's eyes were extra keen as the tank swung round at slackened speed. And he was quick to see the figure of Cedric the Cruel. Cedric was standing on some big steps at one of the main entrances of the castle. As the tank appeared, he turned on his heel and ran. He vanished into the building—and Nelson Lee felt a pang of chagrin. He knew that it would be almost impossible, now, to seize the king.

But like a flash he turned the tank round. He had seen another figure. The monster came to a stop, and the steel door was flung open. Lee leapt out—to come face to face with Guntha the Crafty.

Guntha, with considerable courage, had been shouting to his soldiers to attack the invader. But Guntha was nonplussed when he found the tall, wiry, lightly-clothed figure of Lee in front of him.

Crash!

Nelson Lee wasted no time in words. With all his strength he crashed his clenched fist into Guntha's face. It was the best way—and the quickest. Guntha staggered, and as he reeled back, Lee half tripped him. Dorrie

had arrived by now, and in a twinkling they pushed Guntha inside the tank.

"Smart work, old man!" gasped Dorrie. "In with you!"

As a hundred arrows came fleeting towards them, they entered the tank and slammed the door. Lee plucked one of the arrows from his arm, and blood was flowing.

"Good thing it hit the ground first, or my arm would have been torn to shreds," he said coolly. "Sorry we couldn't get Cedric, Dorrie, but this fellow might do as well."

"I haven't had the pleasure of being introduced," said Lord Dorrimore.

Guntha, inside the confined space of the tank, could hardly turn, especially as Dorrie was sitting astride his chest, busily engaged in roping up his wrists.

"Sorry about this, my friend," said Dorrie apologetically, "but we're not inclined to take any chances."

"Thou fool!" snarled Guntha. "Think ye that——"

"I'm not thinking at all just now, if it's all the same to you," interrupted Dorrie. "Life's too hectic at the moment for thinking. Let her go, Lee!"

Nelson Lee, back at the wheel, was setting the tank into motion again. He had half an idea of charging through the main entrance of the castle, and making a desperate attempt to capture Cedric himself. But common-sense prevailed. The tank might easily get trapped amidst the falling masonry.

Indeed, Lee was glad to get hold of Guntha the Crafty. Guntha was Cedric's commander-in-chief; he would do almost as well as the king himself!

In fact, Lee was congratulating himself upon the success of the enterprise. He had hardly dared to hope that the plan would succeed. But he and Dorrie and Maclaren were not out of the wood yet. They had reached the castle—but they had to escape.

For Cedric, keeping his head whilst most men were panic-stricken, ran through the castle like a madman. He shouted thunderous orders to his soldiers.

"Lower the drawbridge, fools!" the king was bellowing. "Lower the drawbridge and close the great gates. Do ye not see that we have these dogs trapped?"

The men flew to do his bidding. Some of their fears left them. It was a fact that the tank would be trapped if only the drawbridge could be raised.

Nelson Lee had not lost sight of this possibility. That was why he was so anxious to get away, now that he had captured Guntha. Every second that he remained within the castle was fraught with danger.

With uncanny skill he manœuvred the tank, swung it round, and discharged at the great archway through which he had come.

"Look!" came a yell from Dorrie. "They're raising the drawbridge, Lee!"

But Nelson Lee had already seen. The enormous gates were closing—and the drawbridge was being raised.

They were trapped!

CHAPTER 12.

The Ultimatum!

NOT for one second did Nelson Lee hesitate.

Escape from the courtyard lay only in one direction—through the gates and over that bridge. And Lee, jamming his foot down on the throttle, took the chance.

He wasn't particularly afraid of the gates. They were stronger than those gates at the city wall, but not much. Men fled in fear as the tank came on; two of them were caught and thrust aside, badly injured. The gates were only just closed, but not fastened.

Crash!

The tank thudded against them, splintering them, sending them flying open. The drawbridge was now half up—a steep, giddy incline, with a sheer drop at the other end.

The way in which the tank climbed up that half-raised bridge was startling. Even Nelson Lee was surprised. The great machine settled down to the task, and climbed valiantly. The drawbridge creaked and groaned, and the chains which held her—enormous things—protested audibly, too.

"Good heavens!" came a shout from Dorrie. "We shall topple over the edge!"

It seemed inevitable that this would be the case. And that would be—the end. For the tank, plunging into the deep waters of the moat, would sink like a stone to the bottom, and those within would be caught like rats in a trap—drowned, or suffocated by the fumes which would arise as the water penetrated the interior.

The tank hurtled up the drawbridge, hovered momentarily on the edge, then—

Crash!

It seemed like the end of the world. Lee felt a jolt that jarred every bone in his body. Jerked forward, his chin crashed against the steering wheel. Dorrie was flung from one end of the tank to the other.

Yet the tank had not toppled over the end of the bridge and plunged into the moat. For the great chains which held the drawbridge had smashed under the weight of the tank!

One broke first, and this was rather fortunate, since it eased the force of the fall. Then, a second later, the other broke. The drawbridge crashed down into position, and the weight of the tank caused it to crumple up like matchwood in the centre. The bridge was broken, a splintered, sagging mass of wreckage, with the tank, like some grey spider, clinging to the shattered fragments.

Lee was half dazed by the fumes, and he had an idea that one of the tractors was damaged. But he kept his head. He opened the throttle to its widest again, and gradually, valiantly, the tank started climbing, amid the roar of the exhaust and the smashing of splintered woodwork.

Amazingly the tank extricated herself from the trap—or what had nearly been a trap—and at last she topped the edge of the moat, swayed over, and reached the level ground.

"Done it!" yelled Maclaren. "Bravo, sir!"

Nelson Lee was in too much pain to answer. His jaw felt as if it were broken. He was concentrating, too, upon the control of this strange steed which had accomplished so much. But the rest was easy.

Now that the tank was free from the castle, it charged across the city, and once again the soldiers fled before it.

IN the meantime, the Pioneer had moved away from Dunstane.

Captain Williams, keeping to his timetable, was returning to that quiet cove down the coast. And everybody aboard the vessel wondered what had been happening ashore. It was an anxious time.

"We know now!" Handforth was saying. "We only went to Dunstane to do a lot of

gun firing, so as to distract attention. By George! I wonder if Mr. Lee and Dorrie were successful? I wonder if they got to the castle, and if they grabbed old Cedric?"

"It seems impossible to me," said Church. "Even that tank can't do miracles."

Nipper was looking almost haggard.

"When you come to think of it, you chaps, it was a pretty mad thing to do," he said soberly. "I mean that dash into Ixwell was pretty all right, but going right into the capital, into the very castle itself—well, I mean, it's asking for trouble!"

"That tank can force its way through anything," said Tommy Watson.

"But a hundred things might happen," replied Nipper. "Tanks aren't so handy, you know. And I'm thinking of the moat. Supposing it fell into the moat?"

"Dear old fellow, stop sup-

posing," said Travers. "It doesn't do, and it only worries you. We shall know, one way or the other, before very long. Try to keep calm."

The submarine was at anchor now in the cove. Many of the officers and crew were going ashore in the motor-boat, to await the return of the tank.

At it happened, there was not long to wait. Nipper was the first to see a movement—some distance inland, beyond a clump of trees. It wasn't exactly a movement, but a cloud of dust. He looked eagerly.

"Tommy!" he muttered, grabbing at the fellows nearest to him. "Montie! Can you see something over there?"

"Some dust, dear old boy," said Tregellis-West. "Horsemen, I suppose—"

"No! It's the tank!" yelled Nipper. "Look! I just caught sight of her!"

Lord Dorrimore pushed the prisoner inside the tank. At the same moment a shower of arrows whizzed down from the castle battlements.



"Hurrah!"

"The tank's coming back!"

"They've succeeded!"

The girls joined in the cheering just as heartily as the boys. And before long there were no longer any doubts. The tank herself came plunging down the slope to the beach, and at last she halted. The door in her side opened, and the first figure to emerge was Nelson Lee.

"Good old guv'nor!" muttered Nipper, his eyes glowing. "I was sure he'd do it—although I was as funky as the dickens! I say, you chaps, he's a giddy marvel!"

"There's Dorrie, too!" yelled Handforth. "Oh, good egg! They're back! They're safe!"

Everybody was wildly excited. And the excitement grew even more intense when they saw the huge figure of a man in chain-mail brought out of the tank. He had a big beard, and he was clearly a man of some importance—although, by his dress, he did not appear to be Cedric.

Another man came out, too—an ordinary Gothland soldier. This fellow was badly frightened, and he was easily handled.

It had been Lee's idea to capture this man. Just before leaving the city, almost at the gates, Lee had halted the tank, and he had made a quick dash out and captured this fellow. He was needed.

The motor-boat returned to the submarine, bringing Nelson Lee, Dorrie, and their two prisoners. Maclaren remained with the tank.

"Well done, sir!"

"Good old Dorrie!"

"Three cheers for Mr. Lee!"

As the motor-boat neared the submarine, the boys and girls shouted themselves hoarse. Even Princess Mercia and Prince Oswy and Ethelbert the Red were as excited as the others, and they shouted loudly. The decks were crowded when the victors came aboard with their prisoners.

"I'faith! 'Tis Guntha the Crafty himself!" exclaimed Ethelbert, in amazement.

"I confess, good Ethelbert, I am bewildered," said the princess. "How do these wondrous people effect such miracles?"

"Ask me not, Fair Majesty," replied the ex-Regent. "By St. Attalus, there seemeth to be no end to their capabilities!"

Guntha the Crafty, glowering with rage and fear, came aboard. His bonds had been released by now, for he was a prisoner of war, and he was being treated with the usual formalities.

"So we meet again, Guntha," said Ethelbert coldly. "Thou art not so brave now, thou Gothlander brute!"

"Think ye that Cedric will allow this?" sneered Guntha. "All the might of Gothland will be set against you and your friends!"

"But all the might of Gothland will be of no avail," retorted Ethelbert.

He gloated. He knew that Guntha the Crafty was the most powerful man, next to the king, in all Northestria. He was the commander-in-chief of Cedric's armies; he

was an overlord of tremendous riches and power. Such a captive was, indeed, a prize.

Guntha's rage at his capture was tempered by his bewilderment. Everything had been happening so swiftly—his ride in the tank had jolted him about so much—that he hardly knew whether he was on his head or his heels. He was in mortal dread, too, that his captors would execute him out of hand. However, such fears as these were soon set at rest.

"Guntha, let us have a clear understanding," said Nelson Lee quietly. "You are



COMING NEXT WEDNESDAY!

our prisoner, and we intend to hold you as a hostage."

"Ay, to hold me!" sneered Guntha savagely. "But for how long, fool?"

"We won't go into that now," replied Lee. "And I think it will pay you, my friend, to remember your manners. As a prisoner of war, you will be granted every consideration. A cabin of this ship is at your disposal. You will, of course, be guarded, but you will be allowed certain hours for exercise. But, during our pleasure, you will remain a prisoner."

"And with what object?" blustered the Gothland commander-in-chief.

"We will go to your cabin now, Guntha," replied Lee smoothly.

They went, and they sat down. Paper and ink were placed in front of Guntha.

"You will write to your king," said Lee, pointing. "You will tell him that unless the arrangements for the burning of three hundred Northestrian citizens are cancelled, you will be put to death."

"By my bones!" gasped Guntha.

"You will be shot by a firing squad, and your body will be delivered to Cedric," continued Nelson Lee, his voice now very grim. "It is for Cedric to decide your fate, my friend. Should he desire your life, then you will live—and remain a prisoner. It is your life in exchange for the lives of three hun-

the jaw sent Guntha staggering backwards. Swiftly Lee followed up, and another crashing punch, again to the face, caused Guntha to topple to the floor with a clattering of chainmail.

The officers on guard outside, hearing the noise, immediately rushed into the cabin, and Guntha was quickly secured. Breathing heavily, he was hauled to his feet. Guntha was beaten, and he knew it. At a second bidding he wrote the letter to Cedric the Cruel without demur.

THE captured Gothland soldier was used as a messenger.

Bearing Guntha's letter, he was set free—with express instructions to go straight to Dunstane, and to deliver the letter to one of Cedric's personal officers. In order to expedite matters, the submarine had, meanwhile, cruised up the lake. So the Gothland soldier was set ashore only a short distance from the capital.

Then came the wait. But it was not a long one. An hour passed; and at the end of the hour a galley came out from the shore, flying the white flag.

Everybody crowded on the Pioneer's decks as the galley swept alongside. There was no written message—only a verbal one, delivered by a Gothlander officer.

"I come from Cedric, King of Gothland and Northestria!" he announced contemptuously. "His Majesty has received the ultimatum, and his reply is that the three hundred executions shall take place."

"What!"

"Great Scott!"

"Then—then the wheeze has failed!"

The St. Frank's fellows were aghast, and there was tremendous excitement as the galley swept away. The message had been delivered—but it was the wrong message! Cedric the Cruel, in his rage, was willing to sacrifice the commander-in-chief of his armies!

Strangely enough, however, Guntha laughed scornfully when he was told:

"Heed not that message!" he declared.

"Cedric will never dare to keep his word! Cedric will not burn three hundred Northestrians. By the soul of Offa! Am I not the most powerful overlord of Gothland? If Cedric allows me to go to my death, my men in their hundreds—ay, in their thousands—will turn against him. Without me, without my men, Cedric could never have conquered Northestria!"

And as the hours passed, so it proved that Cedric's bluff had failed.

Guntha the Crafty was right. Cedric, on second thoughts—his rage subsiding—had decided that he could never risk the issue. Proclamations were sent forth that the executions were cancelled.

And thus the situation remained—with all the honours having gone to Nelson Lee and his fellow adventurers.

But there were to be plenty of thrills and dangers in Northestria yet!

THE END.

"St. Frank's In The Lists!"

By E. S. Brooks.

Nipper & Co. captured by Cedric the Cruel

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dred innocent people. And if Cedric values his commander-in-chief, then he will agree."

"I vow, 'tis a risk!" panted Guntha. "A murrain upon ye!"

"Never mind the murrains—get busy with that letter," said Lee, pointing again.

Guntha scowled from under bushy brows, but at Nelson Lee's dictation he proceeded to write.

There were only these two in the cabin, although armed officers were standing outside on guard. But Guntha was a courageous man; he must have known his chances of escape from the submarine were slim, yet he made an attempt to gain his freedom.

Suddenly he flung down the pen, and his hand swept towards the ink-pot. But before he could throw it at his captor's head, Lee's bunched fist flashed out. A terrific blow to



BETWEEN OURSELVES

Edwy Searles Brooks, popular author of the St. Frank's stories, chats with readers of the "Nelson Lee."

THIS week I specially want to acknowledge a letter which has turned up from Cedric L. Woods* (Brandon). Of course, I am writing this before the first of the new "Between Ourselves" chats has reached your hands. But I acknowledged a good few letters last week, and I can turn to them now, as I promised, and make a few comments on various matters which they deal with, and which I also think will interest you.

* * *

But before I turn to them, I'd like to remind you all that the more letters I receive, the better is my chance of dropping on points of universal appeal. I am expecting heaps of letters soon, and here's my address in case any of you have mislaid last week's copy of the Old Paper: Edwy Searles Brooks, care of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

* * *

While it's in my mind, here's a tip. Try, if you can, to remember to sign at least one of your Christian names, and to give me a hint, at the same time, of your age. I like to visualise you all as you sit at this "Round Table" of ours; and it's a dickens of a job to do so if my only clues consist of a neatly written, or typewritten, letter, signed, say, A. E. Smith or T. M. Jones. The age of the writer might be anything from fourteen to forty, and the sex is equally in doubt. So, if you will sign your full name I shall know whether you are feminine or masculine, and if you give me your age I shall know whether you are boy or man, girl or woman. And that helps a lot in replying.

* * *

I can hear some of you saying that all this is silly, as the Old Paper is a boys' paper. Of course it is. But heaps of girls read it, and heaps of grown-ups, too. And we want them all at our Round Table. If you can send me your photographs—good, clear-cut, snapshot portraits will do—so much the better.

* * *

You can see me, anyhow, although I must ask you to regard the photograph which appears on this page with caution. The chances are that it flatters me (anyhow, let's hope it doesn't do the other thing), but at least it gives you a

sort of general idea of the upperend of my chassis. Besides, as I've said before, a picture of one of you will also shortly begin to appear each week on this page.

* * *

J. O. Y. Barnes, of Tottenham, a reader of many years' standing (by the way, his name is John, and I thank him for so signing himself), has recently written me, and I hope he will be pleasantly surprised to see this reply, as he bemoaned the fact that the "Between Ourselves" days seemed to be over. The St. Frank's characters, in his opinion, actually live, and he tells me that when he is reading my yarns the characters seem to "almost step out of the pages." I only hope that other readers share a view which is naturally very encouraging to me, especially as I always strive to achieve this object.

* * *

I hope that Cedric L. Woods, of Brandon, from whom I have received two letters during the last fortnight, will be pleased with the series now running. He expressed a keen desire to read more of Northestria. I think he must have had a bit of a surprise when he found that a new series with this background had already been arranged for. In fact, when his hope was expressed, I had already written several of the stories. Let's hear from you again, Cedric, old man, as I would like your views now that you have got what you wanted. But I'll bet you'll have written long before this comes out in print! I trust you won't tell me, in the general way of the world, that now you have got what you want, you don't want it.

* * *

Leonora Baber, of Portsmouth, suggests that the recent St. Frank's stories have not come from my pen. Well, I hope she won't continue to labour under this delusion. Every St. Frank's story that has ever appeared in the Old Paper under my name has come from my pen.

Edwy Searles Brooks

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The VALLEY of HOT SPRINGS



The Battle!

"**T**IME!" exclaimed Danny.

Crouching down and holding his shield in front of him, and a spear in the other hand, the old pugilist edged towards the centre of the barricade. The guards were charging forward; Jackson hung back in the rear.

"Jackson, you dirty dog! You white-faced sewer rat! Take that and tell me how it feels!"

At the sound of Danny's voice, Jackson turned swiftly, his eyes blazing, his white face twitching. Instantly Danny's right hand, which gripped the spear, went back. Then, swinging forward with all the impetus of his body, he hurled the weapon straight at the traitor.

The spear hissed through the air, past the charging guards, causing them to halt abruptly. In horrified silence they watched the missile hurtle towards their leader.

Jackson saw the flying spear and ducked swiftly, pressing himself against the passage. But the space in which he stood was too confined to enable him to escape. The point of the spear caught him in the ribs just below the heart. The force with which it was thrown made him stagger to his knees.

Eric heard the man curse, and then pluck frantically at the spear which had pierced his golden mail shirt. His little baneful eyes, which seemed suffused now with blood, glared at Danny.

"I'll make you pay for this!" he snarled.

One of the guards had rushed forward and, seizing the spear, had drawn it out. Beneath the rent in the golden mail, Eric could see that Jackson's fur coat was tinged with blood.

"All the points so far, Mr. Eric!" Danny shouted. "Here goes for another shot at him."

He stooped down and picked up one of the spare spears he had left on the floor ready for

use. Before he could rise again, however, the boy called out warningly:

"They're coming, Danny! Look out!"

With the lightness that he had learned in the ring, Danny slipped sideways to the protection of the stone wall. The next moment the heavy metal furniture was being frantically torn aside, to open a gap for their assailants. Clearly the wound inflicted on the Angekok whom, on account of the symbols he wore they regarded as sacred, had roused the guards to a berserk fury.

"Jab at 'em, Mr. Eric. They're only a lot of soft mutts. Keep propping 'em off. I'll do all the in-fighting."

That old familiar jargon of the boxing ring steadied the youngster. As the tables and chairs and couches were dragged aside, he thrust at the heads and bodies that appeared in the widening gap, using his long spear effectively. And then he saw Danny, his body crouched, the shield he carried on his left arm completely guarding him, glide out from cover.

The battle axe in his right hand made a circular sweep. Eric heard the old pugilist give that peculiar snort which always accompanied one of his punches when properly delivered. One of the men, tearing at the barricade, went down as the blade of the axe bit through the mail of his helmet.

"More points on us, Mr. Eric. We'll tame 'em in time, but keep your eyes skinned and fight canny."

They could hear Jackson's voice, high-pitched, screaming in English to the guards, urging them on, and mingling with these admonitions fearful threats as to the fate that awaited the three men he had betrayed.

Under the spur of his urgency, the guards swept forward down the passage. The mere weight of their charge carried them through the gap that had been already made in the barricade. Even if those in front had wished to retreat, it would have been impossible so great was the pressure behind.

"Keep your place, Mr. Eric, and go on jabbing. Don't let them shift you."

Danny's voice was perfectly cool. With tight set jaw, with his great shoulders hunched and the shield covering every vital part of his body, he was now moving lightly on his feet in front of that rent which had been made in the barricade. As the golden-clad guards attempted to squeeze through the broken dam, so the battle axe rose and fell.

A curious picture, even at that moment of crisis, flashed across Eric's mind. He fancied he saw the axe-men behind the wooden barricade on the hill at Senlac, crowded round the mail-clad figure of King Harold, and driving back the assault of the Normans. Nine hundred years had vanished, and here was Danny, like one of his ancestors, with the same blue eyes and the same grim determination—which would never recognise defeat, even in death—fighting with the same weapon as they had used.

As he jabbed and thrust, following strictly the orders he had received, Eric had time to notice how the old pugilist managed his weapon.

It was not only the edge of the blade he used. Now he employed the haft of the axe as a mace, feinting with a fierce swing and then suddenly reversing the blow, so that the back of the axe caught an unguarded opponent under the chin and knocked him senseless.

He was making use, Eric realised, of all those punches and swings he had learned in the ring, delivering them, however, with the axe instead of a boxing glove.

The gap in their defences was filling again, filling with the mailed bodies of the fallen. But still that human flood pressed on; still Jackson's high-pitched voice screamed curses and imprecations.

Three men leaped suddenly on to the summit of the barricade, one of them balancing himself on the heaped forms of his comrades. Eric drove back one of the soldiers with a spear thrust, but the other two, guarding their legs with their shields from the blows of Danny's axe, sprang down into the passage.

For a moment Eric, seeing Danny's predicament, was tempted to disobey orders and

HOW THE STORY BEGAN.

ERIC DENNING, a cheery, adventure-loving youngster, lives with his uncle, **PROFESSOR DENNING**. The professor, absent-minded and interested in nothing save his studies, is expecting a visit from John Peters, an Arctic explorer who has discovered a narwhal's horn, on which is written in Runic writing the key to tremendous treasure, in Greenland. The horn arrives, but not Peters. For Peters is dead—murdered by one of a gang of scoundrels, the leader of which is

BOSS MAUNSELL. Maunsell attempts to capture the narwhal's horn, but is frustrated, largely owing to the activities of

DANNY, the professor's man-of-all-work and an ex-pugilist. The professor deciphers the writing on the horn, and he and Eric and Danny travel to Greenland, and start out for the Valley of Hot Springs. They capture Maunsell, who has been trailing them; he gives his name as Jackson. Passing through a tunnel in the glaciers, they arrive at the mysterious valley. They are captured by the Angekok, or ruler of the valley, but he is killed by Jackson, who assumes his place of office. Jackson turns traitor, and he causes the soldiers to mutiny. Eric, Danny, and the professor erect a barricade; the soldiers charge forward to the attack!

(Now read on.)

rush to his assistance. As if realising what was passing through the boy's mind, the old pugilist shouted to him:

"You stand fast, Mr. Eric. These guys are my meat!"

Even as he spoke he ducked to the right, avoiding a fierce spear thrust, and then brought up the blade of his axe under the lifted shield arm of his opponent. The man went down, but the other was springing at him. His spear-point drove straight at Danny's uncovered neck. It would have reached its mark had there not been an altogether unexpected interruption.

The professor had all this time been following strictly the tactics and strategy which Danny had outlined. It was his business to hold the opening from which an attack from the temple might be expected. But though the fight had been now going on for nearly twenty minutes, nobody had appeared from that quarter.

The sounds of the struggle in which he was taking no part had been almost too much for the professor, and when, glancing over his shoulder, he had seen Danny's predicament, he could stand it no more.

With a guttural cry, dropping the weapon he carried, he sprang on the guard from behind, seized him round the waist and, lifting him bodily up, hurled him with a back throw against the other figures that had now appeared at the top of the barricade.

"Ha!" he said, his red beard bristling.

Spinning round, he faced the oncoming rush, his arms stretched out like a wrestler waiting to get at grips with his opponent.

"For the love of Mike, guv'nor, get away!" Danny gasped. "This ain't your show. You stay at your post."

At that moment, seeing the three men on the barricade about to leap, he pushed the professor aside and charged at them with whirling axe. All three toppled over on the other side of the defences.

"Get back, guv'nor! You ain't supposed

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to be in this. Mr. Eric and me has this show."

"Are you a drivelling idiot, my man?" the professor boomed. "Do you imagine I'm going to stand contemplating a collection of piled-up metal furniture, while your lives are imperilled?"

"Don't do any scrapping then, guv'nor," Danny entreated. "You're in the way—look at that! I nearly missed that bloke!"

With an upward stroke of his axe he shattered the shield of a man who had sprung over the barricade.

"If you want to be useful, guv'nor, you can be a stretcher-bearer party and clear the ring. Shift this lot that has taken the

count out of the way. I can't move properly."

HAVING found occupation for the professor, which he hoped would keep him out of harm's way for a time, Danny concentrated himself upon the fight. And not a moment too soon.

On the other side there was a man who had lived his life in organising deeds of crime and violence—Jackson, alias "Boss" Maunsell, who had been one of the uncrowned kings of London's underworld.

In the fury of disappointment that his treacherous scheme had miscarried—maddened by the wound he had received—Jackson still kept a cool head.

He must have realised that, with the barricade still holding, it was impossible to get full value out of the superior force he possessed. At the most only three men could attack at a time, and then under conditions which gave the defenders all the advantage. But if those overturned tables and chairs and couches could be shifted, and the passage cleared, then he could attack in full force, and in one wild rush sweep away his three enemies.

There came a sudden lull in the fighting—a lull which lasted some minutes. From what Eric could see of the passage beyond,

It was empty. No longer were the golden helmets of the guards visible over the top of the barricade. Danny, wiping the perspiration from his forehead, was standing there, watchful, his old battered face a picture of concern.

"What are they up to, Mr. Eric?" he whispered. "How would it be if I got the gov'nor to give them some of that Tormansuk stuff? It'll keep him good and quiet, and might put the wind up 'em."

But before he could put that plan into execution, what was afoot became abundantly clear. Suddenly a whole section of the barricade moved, and a heavy table was jerked from its position and drawn down the passage. Three chairs followed. Creeping along the floor so that they could not be seen, some of the enemy had fastened long hide ropes to the various articles that formed the barricade, and were now drawing them through the entrance.

"Got to stop this, Mr. Eric!" Danny gasped. "This is where we have a counter-attack. Come behind me and keep prodding at 'em."

As he spoke he leapt through the gap. Eric, following, could see the heaving of his broad shoulders. That picture of Danny, clad in his golden mail, rushing forward against overwhelming odds, was to remain a

vivid memory with the boy forever—an unforgettable scene!

On rushed Danny without a sound. In the doorway were crowded the articles of furniture which had been drawn clear from the barricade. With a leap he was over them.

"Pile 'em up again, Mr. Eric!" he shouted over his shoulder, and then he was through the opening.

With a feeling of utter despair, Eric told himself that he had seen the last of his old friend. All alone he had gone to meet the overwhelming numbers of his foes. He was sacrificing himself for their sake—he was laying down his life for the professor whom he had so faithfully served. How could he possibly escape?

But before going to meet his death he had given his orders. And Eric, though it seemed utterly useless, had too strong a sense of discipline not to obey. Cutting the leather thongs fastened to the furniture, he struggled back with it, repiling it in its former position, reconstructing the barricade.

"Where's Danny?"

The boy had just completed his task when Professor Denning asked him that question.

"He went out to hold them while I did this, uncle," Eric replied miserably. "I don't see how he can escape."

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The professor's reply was to scramble over the piled-up furniture. Eric caught him by the arm.

"Uncle, what are you going to do?"

The professor turned and glared at him.

"Take your hands off me, boy! Do you imagine that I am going to allow Danny, who has served me faithfully all these years, to die out there without my making an effort to save him?"

"But you can't, uncle."

At that very moment a voice he never expected to hear again, rang down the passage.

"Pull the guv'nor back, Mr. Eric, for the love of Mike! Stand fast! They're coming!"

Eric looked up, his heart seeming to give a leap. There was Danny—an extraordinary object. Blood was pouring down his face from a gash in his forehead, his chain mail was ripped and torn. All that was left of the battle axe he had wielded with such effect was the broken haft. And in his arms, struggling feebly, was the figure of Jackson.

With a shout Eric released his uncle and scrambled on to the top of the barricade. Panting and breathless, Danny came up to him.

"Here, you take him, guv'nor, and sit on him!" he cried.

As he spoke he almost flung Jackson into the professor's arms, sending him toppling backwards on to the other side of the barricade.

"All right, I've got him, Danny!" the professor called.

"Keep a tight hold on him, guv'nor. Take that fancy gear off him. Punch him on the jaw if he starts making trouble. I'd attend to him, only I've got to get busy."

Danny was standing by Eric's side. There was no danger of an attack at the moment; not a soldier was in sight. Danny turned to the boy.

"I've given 'em something to think about, Mr. Eric; but the only thing is, they won't think too long."

Dazedly he wiped the blood from his face, and then glanced at the broken handle of the battle-axe.

"Got to find another of these here weapons, Mr. Eric," he muttered.

As he spoke, from the curtained doorway behind them appeared the Daughter of the Sun, the girl whom they had befriended and who had already proved such a useful ally.

In her hands was a golden bowl filled with water. Her face was very pale, but her blue eyes were shining with an expression of wonder.

"Oh, thou, upon whose face Tormansuk has set his mark, great and wonderful fighter are you! See, I bring water for you to bathe your wounds."

Danny did not understand a word of what she said, but her gestures bridged the difficulty of language.

"Thank you kindly, my dear. If you could find another of these little things for me, I'd be grateful."

He showed her the broken haft of the battle-axe, and instantly she turned and disappeared. Danny put the bowl to his lips and drank half its contents. The remainder he splashed on his face.

From the other side of the barricade came the muttering of voices. Danny, leaning against the wall and breathing hard through his nose, his whole body relaxed, winked with one clear blue eye at his young companion.

"Given 'em something to chew on, Mr. Eric. Took 'em right off their guard and jumped in with some real snorters. You never saw such a scrap while it lasted. I went right through 'em, same as if they were paper. And coming back, I sees our old pal Jackson. 'Here, you come along with me,' I says. I picks him up—he was still groggy after that spear-thrust I gave him—and brings him along."

"Danny, you infernal old idiot, come here immediately! This man's dying, I believe."

Without moving his position, Danny glanced over his shoulder down the passage to where the professor was bending over the figure of Jackson.

"He's only kidding you, guv'nor. Watch him, or he'll start some of his monkey-business. Anyway, I can't come, because we're going to be busy here in a moment."

At the same instant a small hand was placed on Danny's arm. The Daughter of the Sun was standing there with another battle-axe.

"Thank you, my dear," Danny replied gratefully. "That's just what I wanted. And I guess, thanks to you, I'm feeling the goods again."

Abruptly he paused, and seizing the girl by the arm, thrust her forcibly through the curtained doorway.

"You 'op it, Miss Sun, and many thanks! Mr. Eric—out of your corner and get busy!"

The lull in the fight was over. Recovering from the shock of Danny's counter attack, and worked up now to a kind of religious fury by the forcible abduction of the Angekok, the guard were rushing down the passage, evidently bent on a determined effort to sweep aside all obstacles.

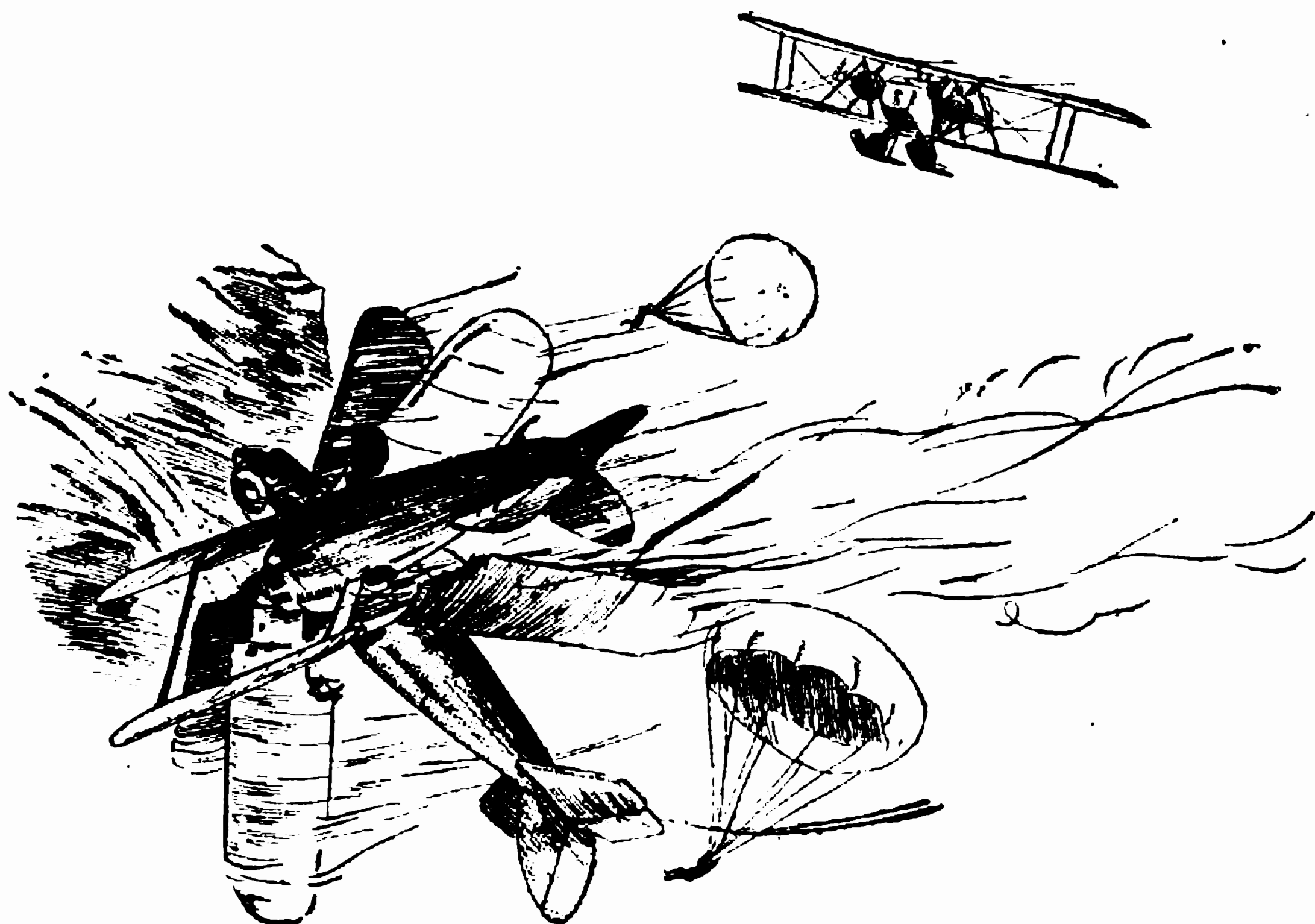
"Tormansuk! Tormansuk!"

With the name of the ancient Esquimaux god upon their lips, they hurled themselves furiously at the barricade. In another moment Eric and Danny were fighting for their lives!

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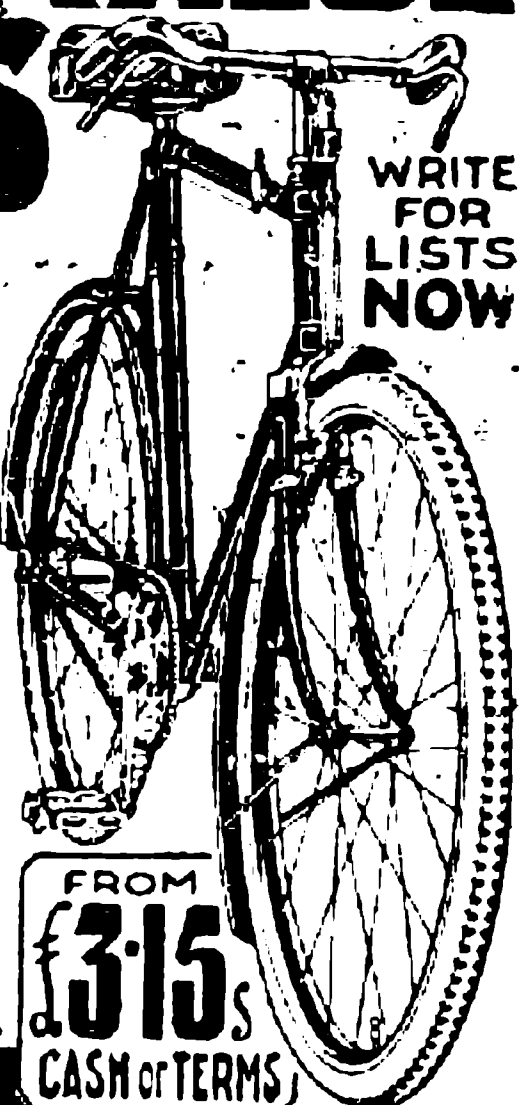
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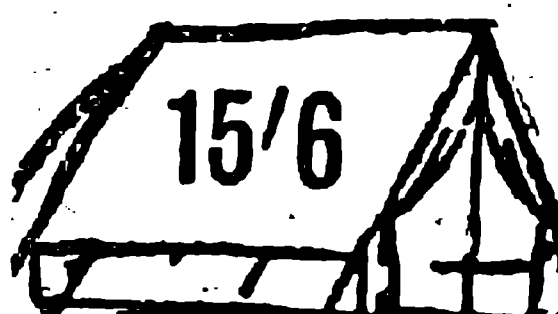


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