

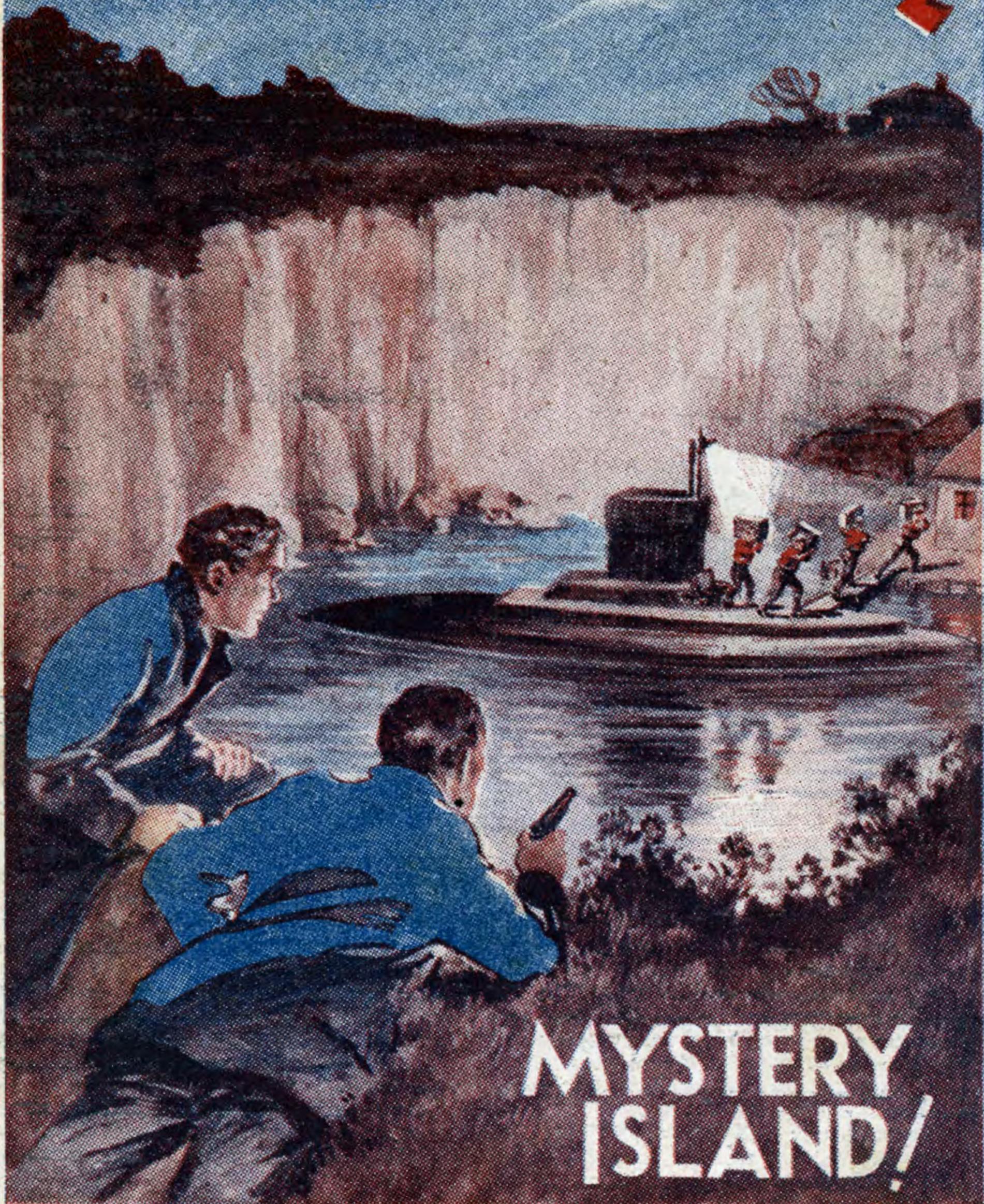
LONG COMPLETE DETECTIVE-THRILLER

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MYSTERY ISLAND!

New Series No. 124.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

June 4th, 1932.

MYSTERY



CHAPTER 1.

Out of the Mist!

CAISTOWE Bay was enshrouded in mist. The spring evening was calm, and, directly overhead, the stars were twinkling bravely. The white mist clung to the calm water, spreading inward over the peaceful countryside.

It had been very fine that day, the sun shining gloriously from a cloudless sky ever since dawn. The mist had been predicted by the local fishermen, for they were common enough on this part of the coast during calm weather.

A quaint, stumpy little vessel, with her deck almost awash, was anchored in mid-bay, her port and starboard lights twinkling vaguely in the mist. Caistowe was not a little excited about her, in fact, for she was none other than

the *Ossipee*—and the English newspapers had had quite a lot to say, recently, about the *Ossipee*.

She was a privately-owned American submarine; something absolutely new in submersible craft. Her inventor and owner, Mr. Russ Freemantle, was making a world cruise, for the especial purpose of demonstrating his vessel's amazing qualities.

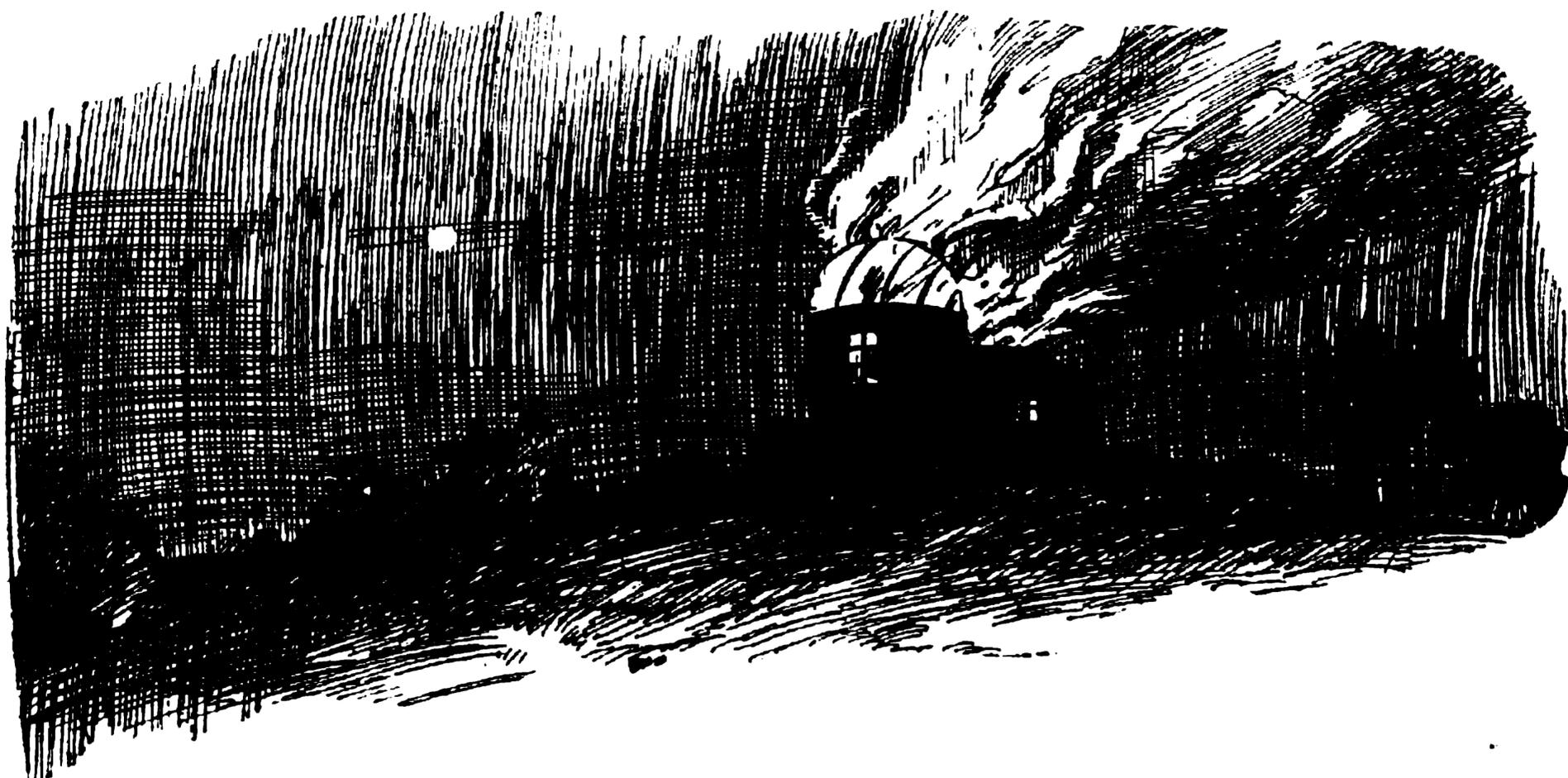
He claimed that the *Ossipee* was unsinkable, even in the roughest seas. And, certainly, she had crossed the Atlantic triumphantly, weathering at least two storms without coming to any harm.

She was very much smaller than any naval submarine, and it was Mr. Freemantle's boast that she could be handled, above water or below, by a crew of twelve men.

Mr. Freemantle, with typical American enterprise, was making a triumphal progress

... Dramatic Story of Nelson Lee and The Boys of St. Frank's!

ISLAND!



Surf Island cloaked in mist and darkness. . three lost schoolboys adrift at sea. . that is the beginning of this amazing detective-thriller in which Nelson Lee, the famous detective, finds himself again crossing swords with Professor Zingrave, master-crook.

But all the resources and pluck at Lee's command are called upon to meet this new menace against law and order!

up the Channel, making certain that he obtained great publicity. At Falmouth, his first port of call, he and his vessel had been photographed from every conceivable angle for the talkie news reels; Mr. Freemantle and his officers and crew had been entertained by the civic authorities.

He had passed on to Plymouth, then to Weymouth and Portsmouth, and in due course, no doubt, he would ultimately reach London. By then, Mr. Freemantle judged, he and his submarine would be well known to the British public; and if he didn't receive a handsome reception at Westminster, off the Houses of Parliament, it wouldn't be his fault.

Caistowe was highly honoured by the unexpected arrival of the *Ossipee*; for Caistowe, being a comparatively small seaport, had never expected to see the celebrated craft. Mr. Russ Freemantle thought it unnecessary to mention that a slight mishap to the engines

—which had now been corrected—hinted that a brief stay in Caistowe Bay would not be unprofitable. Mr. Freemantle was a man who believed in making a virtue out of a necessity.

The mayor of Caistowe believed that he had invited Mr. Freemantle and his officers and crew to a banquet in the council chamber. Actually, Mr. Freemantle had invited himself, and the mayor, all unsuspecting, had aided and abetted him.

Anyhow, Mr. Freemantle was getting the publicity, and that was his main object.

So the *Ossipee* lay anchored in Caistowe Bay, and one officer and four men were in charge.

The officer and three of the men were below. The other man lounged on the narrow deck, smoking. Somewhere in the mist he heard the gentle creaking of rowlocks, and the splashing of oars. Shadowy and vague, two boats, with at least six men in each, materialised out of the pall.

"Submarine ahoy!" called an authoritative voice.

"Boat ahoy!" answered the look-out man.

"Stand by; we're going to board you."

The two boats drew alongside, and a moment later half-a-dozen men, in neat uniform, were on the deck. The officer-in-charge was full of assurance.

"Who's in authority here?" he asked briskly.

"Mr. Webley, sir," said the look-out man.

"I'd like to speak to him. I'm Lieutenant Nash, of the Customs Service," said the officer-in-charge.

The man wonderingly went to an open hatchway and called down. And presently Mr. Webley emerged, and he gazed in some surprise at the shadowy figures on deck.

"What's the general idea?" he asked. "We're not breaking any of your port regulations, are we?"

"Well, in a way, yes, sir," replied Lieutenant Nash. "I understand that Mr. Freemantle and your captain are ashore?"

"That's right."

"How many men have you aboard?"

"Four, in addition to myself."

"I'm sorry to trouble you, Mr. Webley, but I'd like you to call those men on deck."

"Why, sure; only too pleased," said Mr. Webley amusedly.

He imagined that some trifling port regulation had been neglected, or broken. He gave some orders to the look-out man, and a minute later the rest of the skeleton crew had mustered on deck.

"Well, here we are," said Mr. Webley good-naturedly.

"There are no other men below?" asked Lieutenant Nash.

"No."

Mr. Webley had failed to notice that the other men from the supposed Customs boats had boarded the submarine. But he saw them now, as they advanced in the mist. The five Americans were now surrounded.

"Say, don't you think I'm entitled to some sort of explanation?" asked Mr. Webley, losing his good temper. "In the absence of the skipper——"

He got no further. He felt himself suddenly seized from behind, and something hard crashed down upon his head. He crumpled to the deck without a sound.

And as he fell, so the other four men fell. Not one of them had had the slightest chance of putting up a defence. They were all ruthlessly struck down, taken completely by surprise.

"Smart work, boys," said Lieutenant Nash, in a low voice. "The Chief told us it would be easy. Now, you know what to do. Get busy!"

Calmly, deliberately, the "Customs" men proceeded to rope up and gag their victims.

The *Ossipee* was captured; it had fallen into the hands of these raiders without a blow being exchanged—for all the blows had been on one side.

And it had fallen into the hands of none other than the infamous League of the Green Triangle!

The mist had made the capture possible. Not twenty minutes later the *Ossipee* silently raised her anchor, and with her motors purring so softly that no sound penetrated the mist to the shore, she stole away into the Channel like a shadow.

And, astern, she towed two boats. There were three bound and gagged men in one boat, and two in the other.

Half-an-hour later, those boats were cut adrift, and the *Ossipee* glided onwards into the night.

CHAPTER 2.

Three in a Boat!

"IT'S no good!" said Church mournfully.

"We're lost!"

Two answering grunts came out of the darkness. Walter Church rested on his oars, staring into the mist and darkness, vainly trying to penetrate the pall.

It was an ordinary rowing-boat, and it contained three schoolboys—three youngsters belonging to the Remove Form of St. Frank's. They were weary, dog-tired, and not a little scared.

"Lost!" came the voice of Arnold McClure, the Scottish junior. "And whose fault is it we're lost?"

"Handy's!" replied Church.

"You—you ungrateful rotters!" came the indignant voice of Edward Oswald Handforth, the celebrated leader of Study D. "My fault, is it? Didn't I bring you out on this fishing trip as a favour? How the dickens was I to know that we should be swallowed up in a beastly mist?"

"We warned you the mist was coming, didn't we?" asked McClure, who was fed up to the teeth. "What notice did you take of us?"

"Oh, well, it's no good arguing," said Handforth gruffly.

It wasn't. He was in the wrong—and he knew it. If he hadn't been so pig-headed, he and his chums could easily have reached the shore.

Their plight was simple enough.

Taking advantage of the fine evening, and the smooth sea, they had rowed out to do some deep-sea fishing—as Handforth called it. He thought it quite a lark. River fishing was all very well, but why not go out for something really worth while?

So he had persuaded his chums to accompany him ; but they only went, really, because they were afraid of letting Handforth go by himself. He had insisted upon rowing far out from the shore, forgetful of the fact that a strong current was assisting them considerably—and that that same current, when they came to row against it on the way back, would prove troublesome.

Church and McClure had pointed this out, but Handforth, with his usual airiness, had told them not to bother him. He had had visions of catching a codfish or two, to say nothing of some plaice, and an assortment of haddock and whiting. Handforth, in fact, had apparently had the idea that he would catch enough fish to provide the whole of St. Frank's with a hearty supper.

He had certainly had one of two bites, and as the evening had been growing misty, he had hauled in a wriggling denizen of the deep, weighing anything between five and seven pounds.

This gave him such encouragement that he scoffed at the mist. And then, suddenly, before he could quite realise it, the mist had closed down. The boys found that they could no longer see the shore. And when, at last, they had commenced rowing, they had completely lost their bearings.

Since then they had taken the oars alternately—rowing aimlessly, more or less at the mercy of the tide and the currents. Now and again they paused, listening—hoping to hear the sound of breaking surf. But all they heard was the occasional "thud-thud-thud" of some distant steamship's engines.

"Trying to find the shore in this mist is like looking for a needle in a haystack," growled Church, after another silence. "I'll bet we're somewhere in mid-Channel. You know what these giddy currents are."

"I thought I heard waves breaking just now," said Handforth hopefully.

"We shall be lucky if we don't find ourselves swimming for it," said McClure. "A steamer is liable to loom up at any minute—and cut us in two. Or we might get swamped in the wash. We're in a pretty awful pickle, Handy."

"Don't talk of pickles!" grunted Handforth. "You make me feel hungry—and I'm starving."

"Don't you think we're starving, too?" asked Church. "What's the time, for goodness' sake? Nearly midnight, I suppose?"

"Fathead! It's not much after eight."

"Well, it feels like midnight," said Church. "We seem to have been drifting about for hours and hours. If only this giddy mist would lift we'd be all right."

"Would we?" asked Mac. "If we've drifted out into the Channel, it'll take us best part of the night to row back—even if the mist lifts, and we can see the shore. Deep-sea fishing!" he added disgustedly.

"All right—don't rub it in," growled Handforth. "I'll admit I was an ass. But what good does that do? We're still in a mess, aren't we? Let me take those oars for a bit, Churchy."

They changed seats, and Handforth, pulling on the oars, caused the little boat to move at quite a smart pace over the smooth sea.

"It's so jolly exasperating," remarked Church, looking up. "I mean, we can see all the stars clearly—and that proves that the mist is only lying on the surface of the water. I don't suppose it'll go until the sun gets up, in the morning."

"We shall be somewhere off the coast of France by that time," said McClure resignedly. "Unless, of course, some steamer has cut us in two, meanwhile. We shan't stand a dog's chance if a big ship suddenly looms out of the mist—"

"Listen!" muttered Handforth in a curiously-strained voice.

He had ceased rowing for some moments, resting his aching limbs. Church and McClure did not quite realise it, but Handforth had done a great deal more rowing than both of them put together. But he hadn't once complained about his swollen wrists or blistered hands. And, like his chums, he was feeling desperately alarmed.

"It's no good, Handy——" began Church.

"Listen, I tell you!" insisted Handforth. "I'll swear I heard—— There! Can you hear?"

There wasn't a doubt of it. Out of the mist ghostly but unmistakable, came the sound of breaking waves. And that could mean only one thing—that they were comparatively near the shore.

"There's a beach—and it's right ahead of us!" said Handforth exultantly. "What did I tell you? You and your mid-Channel! I'll bet we're not half a mile from Shingle Bay."

His chums were so excited that they failed to remember that the Shingle Head lighthouse was very near to Shingle Bay. And they would certainly have seen the welcoming beam, or heard the monotonous hooting of the lighthouse's foghorn.

Presently, Handforth eased the oars again. Yes, there was a beach comparatively near at hand, and——

"Look out!" gasped Church suddenly. "Rocks!"

"By George, you're right!" ejaculated Handforth.

He pulled hard on one oar, and the boat skimmed past some black, jagged rocks which jutted out from the sea. A moment later the little craft jarred upon a shingle beach, and the waves were breaking noisily.

CHAPTER 3.

Not So Good!

"THANK goodness!" gasped Handforth breathlessly.

He and the others had leapt out of the boat, and, dragging it well up the shingle, they now stood like ghostly figures in the mist. Their relief at being ashore was unbounded.

To feel solid ground beneath their feet—even if it was no more solid than loose shingle—was a sheer joy. They had really been through a most trying ordeal, and it wasn't until now that they quite realised how faint and sick they were feeling.

"Let's sit down for a bit," suggested Church abruptly.

He did not like to admit that his legs were trembling. He sat down, and the others followed his example. The sound of the small waves breaking on the shingle, and the hiss of the backwash, was good to listen to. And being strong, healthy youngsters, they were soon feeling a great deal better.

"Well, we shan't be long now," said Handforth. "Better be making a move, you chaps."

"Any idea where we are?" asked McClure.

"We can't be a great distance from a road, anyhow," replied Handforth. "And once we find a road, we can get to a village."

"We might have drifted twenty miles down the coast."

"Who cares? We can find a telephone, can't we?" said Edward Oswald cheerfully. "We'll 'phone through to the school, tell them that we're all right, and then hire a car, or something."

"It mightn't be a bad idea to get a bite to eat, too," suggested Mac.

Handforth's chums realised—not for the first time—that it was long past calling-over, and that there would be some anxiety concerning them at St. Frank's.

This was perfectly true.

Mr. Alington Wilkes, their own housemaster, at that very moment, was making the most stringent inquiries—and he was becoming a very anxious man. So anxious, in fact, that he even sought the headmaster—the celebrated Mr. Nelson Lee.

It cannot be truthfully said that Nelson Lee was alarmed. He knew Edward Oswald Handforth too well. And he remembered, too, that there was a remarkable American submarine anchored in Caistowe Bay. Everybody at St. Frank's had been talking about it that day. It was more than likely that Handforth & Co. had gone to Caistowe; and it was even conceivable that Handforth, with his usual cheek, had persuaded the good-natured Americans to show him over the boat.

All the same, Nelson Lee instituted some inquiries—and it wasn't long before he learned, from Nipper, the Remove captain,

that Handforth and his chums had gone out fishing. Sea fishing, too. And Nelson Lee knew full well that a mist had suddenly developed.

"Come on—let's be making a move," said Edward Oswald, rising to his feet. "By George! I'm aching in every giddy limb!"

They plunged across the shingle, which rose steeply, and soon they found themselves at the foot of a rocky cliff. It wasn't sheer, however, and they decided to climb it. Better than walking along the beach—for they might have to walk a mile or more, before they found a gap of any kind.

Having climbed the cliff, they were relieved and gratified to find that the mist was much thinner at this higher level. They could see some scraggy-looking bushes and trees not far off. And, presently, they found themselves walking across grass.

But although they strained their eyes in every direction, they could not see any glimmer of light; neither could they hear any familiar sound.

The silence was disquieting.

"It's rummy, you know," said Handforth uneasily, after a while. "We can't be very far down the coast—and you'd think we'd hear a distant motor-car, or a railway train. But there's nothing."

"Not even the barking of a dog," said Church. "I never knew there was such a lonely part of the coast. But we *must* strike a footpath, or a lane, soon."

They went down a grassy dip, and the mist was thinner here. They could see the untidy, wind-swept bushes—bushes which leaned all in one direction. And down in this hollow, too, they found a curious formation of rocks. They rose, tier upon tier, almost like a pinnacle. And there was something in the formation of those rocks which caused Handforth to suddenly come to a halt, and a startled ejaculation rose to his lips.

"What is it?" asked Church eagerly. "Can you see a light, or something?"

"No," said Handforth. "Look! Look at those rocks!"

"What about them?"

"Don't they seem familiar to you chaps?" asked Handforth. "My only sainted aunt! There couldn't be two pinnacles like that! No wonder we can't hear any sounds of dogs or motor-cars or railway trains!"

"Why, what do you mean, Handy?" asked Church, clutching at his leader's arm.

"We're on Surf Island—that's what I mean!"

"What!"

"And Surf Island is uninhabited!"

"Oh, my goodness!"

"So now you know," said Handforth gloomily. "Good-bye, supper! What a frost!"

Surf Island was an uninhabited, rocky islet quite a distance from the mainland—but visible enough, during the daytime, from the cliffs at Langdon Bay.

“Anyway, we know where we are,” went on Handforth, with a sort of gloomy satisfaction. “We didn’t drift down the Channel, as you fatheads reckoned.”

“Does it make any difference?” asked Church mournfully. “We’re on an uninhabited

CHAPTER 4.

The Secret of Surf Island.

THE men who had seized the submarine, *Ossipee*, were crooks, but they had certainly been chosen well.

Professor Cyrus Zingrave, the Chief of the League of the Green Triangle, was a brilliant man. It wasn’t many weeks since he had appeared at St. Frank’s as its headmaster.



The boat ground against the shingle and the lost schoolboys scrambled out into the water and pulled their craft up the beach. About them the mist swirled in ghostly shadows.

island, without any food or beds or—or anything!”

“It’s a bit of off-side,” admitted Handforth. “Still, we shall have to stay here until the morning. Too risky to get in that boat again.”

And his chums heartily agreed. Unpleasant as the prospect of spending the night on Surf Island was, the thought of that boat was infinitely more unpleasant.

Yet, if the chums of Study D had only known what the night was to bring forth, they would have scrambled helter-skelter for the beach, and they would have pushed off in their boat, mist or no mist, away from that rocky islet!

Nelson Lee had smashed up that affair, and a great many Green Triangle men had been arrested. But Zingrave, with his usual slipperiness, had managed to get away.

He was soon getting busy at his old games!

The *Ossipee*—which, by the way, had been named after Lake Ossipee, in New Hampshire, U.S.A., where Mr. Russ Freemantle had made his earlier experiments—proved an easy craft to handle. At least two of those Green Triangle men were clever engineers; the others had seen service in sea-going steamers.

And the submarine’s new “officers” were in no hurry. They knew that it would be two or three hours before the *Ossipee*’s loss was discovered; and more hours would pass

before any search could be made for her in this mist.

Her trip was to be a very short one, so there was plenty of time for cautious experimenting. On the surface she ran on internal combustion engines; when submerged she relied solely upon electric motors. This was the normal submarine practice, but Mr. Freemantle had incorporated many new safety ideas in the construction of his craft.

Her new owners soon found that they could handle her with confidence. A mile or so from the shore, hidden by the mist, the craft was submerged, and she was put through a few brief trials.

Thus, by the time the *Ossipee* crept cautiously through the mist towards Surf Island, the men in command of her were certain of success.

But it was a ticklish business, all the same.

She crept along the southern coast of the islet—the opposite coast from where Handforth & Co. had landed. So those three adventurous youngsters knew nothing of what was taking place.

On this side of the island the cliffs rose sheer from the water. There was no beach at all. And at high tide and low tide there was a considerable depth of water immediately beneath the frowning rocks.

Low down on the cliff, near the water's edge, two lights were glowing vaguely, mysteriously, through the mist. As a matter of fact, they were miniature searchlights, but their penetrative power was restricted. Three or four hundred yards away they were completely invisible.

It was only after a careful search that the men on the submarine saw those dim lights. But, having located them, the rest was comparatively easy. At least, at first.

The craft crept nearer and nearer. The lights glowed like beacons, thirty feet apart, and only just above the water's edge. Obviously, they were intended as a kind of signal—and as a guide, too.

For the *Ossipee* was sent directly towards them, making for the spot exactly between them. And when comparatively close, orders were given, and the vessel slowly submerged.

Here came the real test. The calmness of the sea made the thing possible. For down there in the cliff, some feet beneath the surface, even at low tide, there was a great cavity in the rocks—a tunnel.

And these daring Green Triangle men were actually bent upon taking the *Ossipee* into that hidden harbour—where, indeed, she would be perfectly hidden.

Afterwards, of course, the business of getting her in and out would become comparatively easy; but this first trip was fraught with deadly risk. It was true that the underwater channel was deep enough, and wide enough, to accommodate a vessel twice the

size of the *Ossipee*; but it was, nevertheless, a plunge into the Unknown. There might be dangerous currents which would upset all calculations.

The submarine was the very last word in craft of her type; she had enormous searchlights which could be switched on when the vessel was submerged. And now, with men on the look out, and with a strong hand at her wheel, she crept slower into the tunnel.

Once in—and the exact spot of entry was easy to find, thanks to those two guiding lights—the rest was a matter of careful judgment, with a smack of luck.

Fortunately, there were no tricky currents. The *Ossipee* crept onwards. It was a particularly long trip, but it had a surprising end.

For at length the submarine rose to the surface. Actually to the surface, with the stars gleaming overhead!

She had come up almost in the *middle* of the island, and was in her harbour—in a rock pool, which looked for all the world like a shallow pond. Those who had casually explored the island knew that this "pond" was filled with sea water, and that it was somehow fed from the outer ocean. But nobody dreamed of its real depth, and of its real secret.

The *Ossipee's* hatchway was opened, and the men who had brought her into this secret refuge wiped their perspiring brows, and their faces were glowing with triumph.

"We've done it!" said the man who had been in command. "Gosh! The Chief will be pleased, boys!"

"We're all pleased, aren't we?" said one of the other men. "Ships will be searching up and down the coast for this blamed submarine—they'll be searching the oceans everywhere."

"And here we are—not ten miles away!" gloated the other. "Who'll ever dream of searching for a missing submarine in the *interior* of an uninhabited island? Boys, we've got to hand it to the Chief!"

CHAPTER 5.

Nelson Lee Takes Action!

THERE was a serious conference in the headmaster's study at St. Frank's.

Nelson Lee presided, and with him were Mr. Alington Wilkes, the housemaster of the Ancient House; Fenton, the school captain, and Nipper. As this was a matter concerning only the Ancient House, the masters and prefects of the other Houses had not been called in.

"Yes, I'm afraid we must now start worrying in earnest," Nelson Lee was saying. "It's already eleven o'clock, and not a word has come from those three boys. I'm beginning to fear that something bad has happened to them."

very like a Green Triangle stunt! Mysterious men appearing out of the mist—stunning the *Ossipee's* watch—and making off with the craft. It was a Zingrave project all over!

Nothing had been seen or heard of Professor Zingrave for some weeks now—and Lee, to tell the truth, had been expecting some dramatic move. He was thinking, too, of Handforth & Co.

Those three boys, by some curious chance, had been lost in the mist on this particular night. Was it possible that they were somehow mixed up in this matter of the missing submarine?

CHAPTER 6.

The Glow in the Mist!

"WHAT was that?"

Handforth asked the question in a hoarse whisper; and Church and McClure, who were falling off into troubled sleep, started up. They had found a kind of inland cave—a rock cavity in the side of a gully, where they were protected from the chilly night air.

There was a good deal of loose, dry sand here, too, and by smothering themselves with it they obtained a little warmth. Hungry and tired, they were prepared to wait for the dawn hoping to get a little sleep meanwhile.

"Chuck it, Handy!" protested Church irritably. "I was just dozing off——"

"But listen!" muttered Handforth. "I can swear I heard voices just now."

"Voices!"

"Yes, I heard——"

"You're crazy!" said McClure. "You know as well as I do that this island is uninhabited."

All the same, they not only sat up, but got to their feet and ventured out of the rock cavity.

And Church and McClure jumped as they heard, eerily through the mist, the unmistakable sound of men's voices!

"There," whispered Handforth, "what did I tell you?"

"I say, let's get out of here and find those men," said Church eagerly. "They may be in the same mess as we are—I mean, they may have landed in the mist."

The three juniors scrambled out of the gully. It seemed to them that the voices had been coming from the higher ground above; and they had not yet explored that higher ground, since there had seemed no object in doing so.

They knew Surf Island fairly well, and they were quite aware of the fact that there was a fairly biggish hill towards the centre of the island. And there was that strange rock pool, too. It was rather dangerous to prowl about Surf Island at night, particularly in this quarter. For on one side of the pool there was a sheer cliff, and it would be easy enough to fall over the edge and plunge into the water.

"Great scot!" ejaculated Handforth, in amazement.

He and the others were out of the gully by now and they could see across the higher ground. The mist at this elevation was very much thinner, although in the starlight they could see the white masses of it on the lower levels.

But it wasn't the mist which caused Handforth to utter that startled ejaculation. He was looking at some glowing spots of light, and they were not far distant.

"Well I'm jiggered!" murmured Church. "These men can't be here by accident. They wouldn't have lights with them. Besides, those lights look as if they're coming from a couple of windows."

They stood stock still, holding their breath. Again they heard a faint murmur of voices; and, unmistakably, there came the sound of a thudding door. And then—silence.

"I say, there's something funny about this!" muttered Handforth, his voice quivering.

They crept onwards, and it wasn't long before they made out the unmistakable outline of a building—on this uninhabited island!

"Idiot! Fathead! Jackass!" exclaimed Handforth abruptly.

"I hope you're talking about yourself?" asked Church.

"I am!" growled Handforth. "Why the dickens didn't I think of it before? We've always thought that this island was uninhabited, haven't we? But don't you remember some talk about an astronomer chap buying it?"

"I didn't hear it," said Church.

"Neither did I," added McClure.

"Well, somebody told me," replied Handforth. "Weeks ago—months ago. We haven't been to Surf Island since last summer, remember. Now I come to think of it, the lighthouse-keeper told me. He said that Surf Island had been bought by a chap, and that he was building a bungalow on it—and an observatory."

"It's a pity you didn't remember that an hour ago!" growled Church, in exasperation. "You hopeless ass! There's somebody on this island all the time and you don't even remember it—until we find it out by accident! My goodness, what a chap you are, Handy!"

"Well, dash it, you couldn't expect me to remember a thing like that until I was reminded!" protested Handforth. "It all comes back to me now. Come on! We'll get some supper and, if we're lucky, we'll sleep in real beds."

They were about to move forward when they checked. Unexpectedly, a number of men—five at least—had come into view from behind a scraggy clump of stunted trees. They were just visible in the thin mist; and two of them were carrying lanterns. They all went

towards the bungalow, and a patch of glowing light came out as the door was opened. The men went in, and the door was closed again.

"That's jolly queer!" said Church, in a puzzled voice.

"Queer!" echoed Handforth, speaking in a whisper. "It's more than queer, my sons! I heard that an astronomer chap had bought the island and that he believed in living in solitude. If you ask me, the whole thing looks thunderingly fishy."

CHAPTER 7.

The Capture!

CHURCH and McClure had been thinking exactly the same thing; and, truth to tell, they were rather surprised at Edward Oswald Handforth's attitude. It would have been more like him to blunder forward, yelling at the top of his voice. But for once Handy was cautious.

"We must have spotted eight or ten men altogether!" he muttered. "What are they doing on Surf Island? You can bet your boots that they're not interested in astronomy!"

"Of course, there may be a perfectly simple reason for them being here," said Church. "We don't want to jump to sensational conclusions."

"That's all very well," said Handforth. "But do you chaps realise that it's midnight? What are these men doing on the island at midnight—and in this mist? If you ask me, they're crooks."

"Now, look here, Handy——"

"Smugglers, I expect!"

"For goodness sake——"

"Of course they're smugglers!" said Handforth eagerly. "That astronomy stunt is a bluff——"

"They might be coiners," suggested McClure wearily.

"Eh?"

"If they're not smugglers, they're coiners," said McClure. "It stands to reason. Anyhow, that's what you always say, Handy, and——"

"This is no time for rotting!" growled Handforth. "I vote we creep up to this bungalow and do some investigating."

"Well, that vote's going to be squashed—by two votes to one," put in Church promptly. "What chance should we have, you ass, if it came to a scrap? Three of us against eight or nine men. We shouldn't stand an earthly."

"That's true," admitted Handforth reluctantly.

"We'd better find our boat and push off," said Church. "It's not a very pleasant prospect, but——"

"What was that?" interrupted McClure suddenly.

He pointed. He fancied that he had seen something moving fairly near at hand. And

he was not mistaken, for a moment later three figures leapt out of the misty darkness at the boys.

"Here, what the——" began Handforth.

"Kids!" gasped a voice. "Here, grab them!"

Not until it was too late did Handforth & Co. realise that they had been somewhat incautious in standing there talking. Not all of those men had gone into the bungalow. Others, walking silently and hearing the murmuring voices, had crept nearer.

"Hi! Lights!" yelled one of the men. "Here—quick!"

Each man had grabbed a boy, and he was holding grimly. The juniors, realising their peril, were struggling and fighting with all their strength. The very tone of these men told them that they were crooks.

If they had had any chance of getting away, this chance quickly passed. For men came running from the bungalow, some of them carrying lanterns. And then, before Handforth & Co. could renew their efforts, they were brutally seized by other hands and held.

"Blame me if they ain't boys from the big school!" panted one of the men. "Gosh! The Chief will be stark, raving mad when he knows about this!"

"But how did they get here?" asked one of the others, and his voice was charged with alarm.

"You let us go!" panted Handforth. "We're not doing you any harm, are we? We got lost in the mist, and our boat happened to come ashore on the island."

"Where are the rest of you?" asked the man who was holding Handforth.

"There aren't any rest—only us three."

"Oh! That's just what I wanted to find out," said the man. "Only you three, eh?"

"Why, you beastly rotter, tricking me like that——"

"I'm not tricking you, son," said the man. "So you three kids got lost in the mist, did you? And it was like your nerve to come ashore on this island."

"We can't let them get away, Sam," said one of the other men. "They've seen too much! If they get back to the shore they'll talk."

"Does anybody know what's happened to you kids?" asked the first man sharply.

"How can anybody know that?" retorted Handforth. "We went out fishing, and our boat drifted in the mist. We were all alone, so nobody knows where we are or what's become of us. I'm not telling you any secret by saying that."

"It might have been worse, boys," said the man who was apparently in the lead. "These kids drifted out to sea and—— That's useful! It's a darned good thing we found them, that's all! They won't be able to blab about what they've seen or heard." He

stared into Handforth's face. "What have you seen?" he added grimly.

"We've seen you men, and we jolly well know that you're a bunch of crooks!" retorted Handforth boldly. "And if you think you can keep us here against our will——"

"That's enough!" said the man. "Hold them tight—and bring them along."

For a wild moment the juniors thought of yelling for help. But then they knew how useless it would be. Even in the clearest weather their voices could not carry to the mainland, and in this mist they would not be heard three hundred yards away.

And it was the mist, too, which enabled the Green Triangle men to go about the island openly carrying lanterns.

The boys were pushed roughly along, two men holding each. As they came near to the bungalow they saw that it was, indeed, a new building—and quite a picturesque building, too.

The door was opened and they were thrust inside, and soon they found themselves in an astonishingly comfortable living-room.

A man was waiting, having been warned of their capture. And as the boys grew accustomed to the light they opened their eyes wider in astonishment—and alarm.

For they were face to face with Professor Cyrus Zingrave!

CHAPTER 8.

Professor Zingrave's Retreat!

"BY George! We might have known!" muttered Handforth.

Reckless and plucky as he was, he now felt his very skin tingling with apprehension. And it took a great deal to scare Oswald Handforth.

"We meet again, then!"

Professor Zingrave spoke softly, gently. Yet there was a world of menace in his voice; and his eyes, as he turned them upon the young captives, burned with unutterable hatred.

"We meet again!" he repeated. "But this time, my young friends, you have blundered into a death-trap."

"What are you going to do with us?" asked Handforth, trying to speak calmly.

Zingrave ignored him.

"Release them," he said to the men. "But stand by, in case they should start any nonsense. You are quite sure that there are no other boys on the island?"

"There's a search going on now, Chief," replied one of the men. "These kids blurted out that they were the only ones, and I think they came ashore by accident. They got lost in the mist——"

"Yes, yes, I understand that," said Professor Zingrave. "Very unfortunate—indeed, very tragic."

"Are you trying to scare us?" demanded Handforth, with some truculence. "You're only a lot of crooks! You daren't harm us! There'll be a search, and if you injure us in any way——"

"A search!" said Zingrave ominously. "After all my careful planning, am I to have everything wrecked because you three school-boys lose yourselves in a rowing-boat? Answer my questions—and answer them accurately! Were there any other boys with you when you ventured out upon this ridiculous fishing trip?"

"No," said Church.

"I'll do the talking!" growled Handforth, glaring at his chum. "You don't think I'm going to answer any of these questions, do you?" He turned back to Zingrave. "You can't frighten me with your threats!"

"An arrogant boy, I see," returned the professor, and his voice was so silky that it contained an untold menace. "I do not think you quite realise the position, young man. Not a soul on the mainland knows that you came to this island."

"What of it?" asked Handforth.

"It is rather an important point," said the professor. "I am glad that you have told me what I wanted to know."

He relapsed into silence, and the men who had brought Handforth & Co. in stood by, waiting for orders. The boys had time to look about them, and to note the extreme comfort of this apartment.

This bungalow was no hastily-constructed shack; but a substantial building, fitted and furnished on a lavish scale.

It was, in fact, one of Professor Zingrave's carefully arranged secret retreats.

The Chief of the League of the Green Triangle had many such "bolt holes" in various parts of the country.

A fugitive from justice, he was compelled to work secretly—unless he could so arrange things that he appeared in the open in the guise of another man.

And here, there and everywhere, Professor Zingrave had established these "safety zones." Months earlier one of his agents, an apparently bona fide professor of astronomy, had purchased Surf Island, and had had the bungalow erected.

And Zingrave had known that this retreat was ready for him, should he need it. He needed it now. For several weeks, in fact, he had been living quietly and unobtrusively on Surf Island. He had been gathering his strength for another campaign against society.

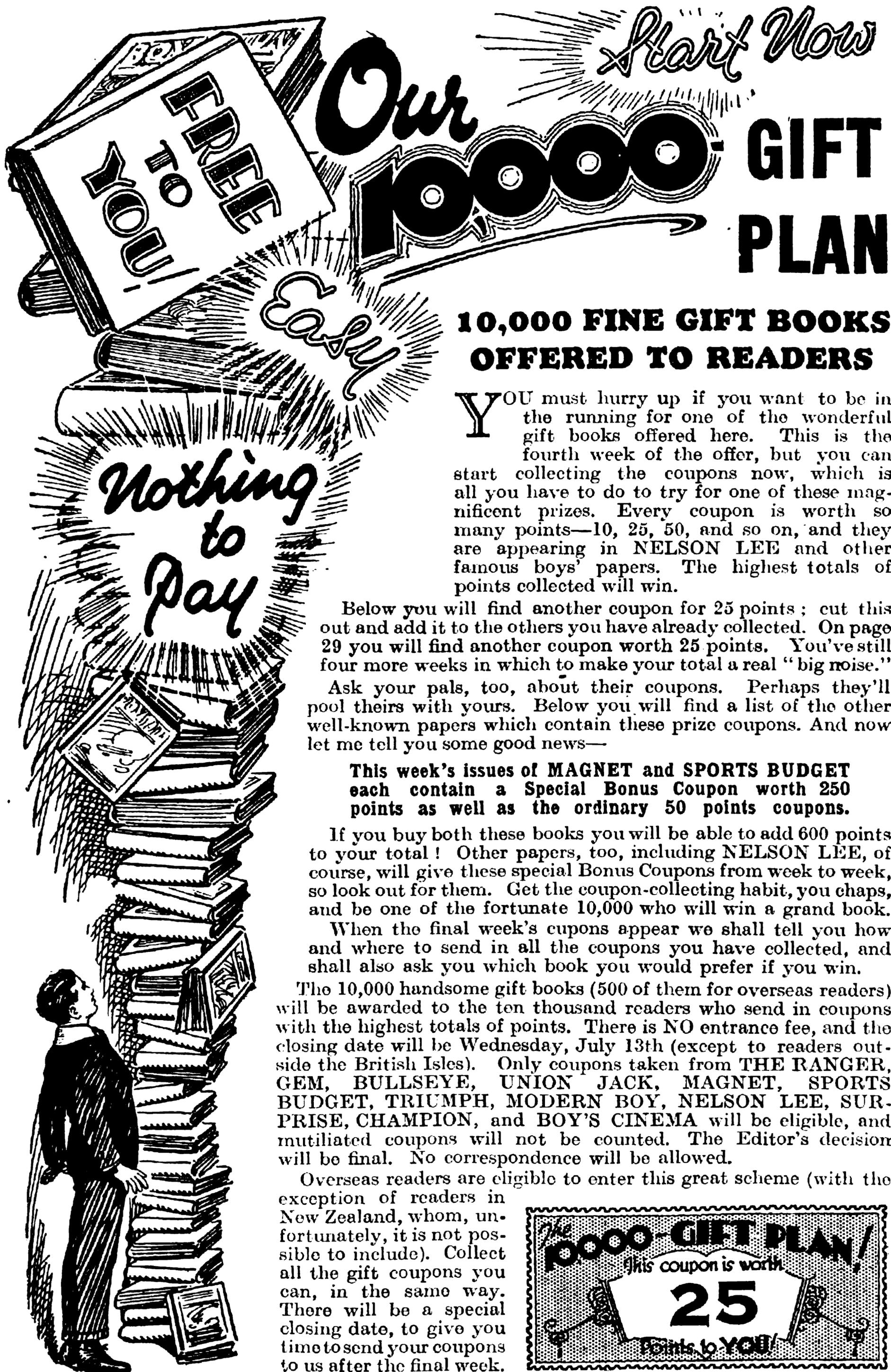
He had had no definite plans, in fact; he had been content to lie low, nursing his bitter grievance against Nelson Lee, the man who had wrecked his plans so often.

Then, Zingrave had seen the various reports in the newspapers, concerning Mr. Russ Freemantle's wonderful submarine. Zingrave had followed those reports with interest—but not until the vessel had unexpectedly visited Caistowe had he conceived the daring plan which had now been put into operation.

It was the queer formation of that rock pool which had given Zingrave the big idea.

During his weeks of enforced idleness he had very carefully explored that rock pool; he knew its depths; he knew of the wide channel which connected the pool with the open sea. When, therefore, that privately-owned submarine had dropped anchor in Caistowe Bay,

(Continued on page 14.)



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Zingrave had decided upon an adventure which startled even his own lieutenants.

For the seizing of the *Ossipee* was only the beginning of the plan.

That much had been done—with glorious success. The submarine had been captured, and even though a thousand vessels searched the seven seas for her, she would remain hidden. This retreat was a perfect hiding-place.

Luck, in a great measure, had favoured the master-criminal's enterprise. And now, on the night of all nights, these three schoolboys had blundered unwittingly upon Surf Island! Small wonder that Professor Cyrus Zingrave regarded them with eyes that burned with a murderous light.

A tap sounded on the door—a peculiar, erratic tap.

"Open it!" ordered Zingrave, motioning to one of the men.

Two other men entered.

"We have found the boys' boat, chief," said one. "It contains fishing tackle, but no food, or other evidence that they intended camping. We have traced their footsteps, too, and there is clear proof that no other boys accompanied them."

Zingrave nodded.

"Good!" he said dispassionately. "It means then that these three went fishing, were lost in the mist, and drifted to Surf Island by the merest chance."

"We told you that ourselves, didn't we?" said Handforth.

"My friends, we are not going to have our projects ruined by these blundering schoolboys," continued Zingrave, addressing his men. "Their boat drifted out to sea—far out to sea. Unfortunately, that boat was caught in the wash of a passing steamer and overturned. The three boys were unfortunately drowned. You understand me? Take them!"

CHAPTER 9.

The Dive Over the Cliff!

SO cold, so ruthless, was Zingrave's tone that the boys did not realise, for some moments, the purport of his dread orders.

"Look here——" began Handforth.

"I am genuinely sorry that this step should be necessary," interrupted Zingrave, looking at him steadily. "You are young, and I do not, as a rule, wage warfare against schoolboys. But you know too much, and therefore you must die."

"Die!" gasped Handforth. "But—but you don't really mean——"

"Take the electric launch," continued Zingrave, turning to his subordinates. "It is noiseless, and suitable for this work. Speed is essential, for the school authorities might already be searching; and under no circumstances must they be allowed to connect the disappearance of these boys with Surf Island. Take them two or three miles out, and after

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you have dealt with them as I have ordered, cast their rowing-boat adrift, so that it floats bottom uppermost. Let there be silent evidence of a tragedy. But it must appear to be accidental."

"You can't mean it!" panted Church, white to the lips. "You're not going to murder us like that?"

"Take them away," ordered Zingrave, waving a hand.

"You devil! You—you——"

Handforth & Co., horrified by Zingrave's ruthlessness, were forced out of the bungalow into the thin mist.

"Better take it quiet, kids," said one of the men. "You won't do yourselves no good by kicking up a fuss. You heard the Chief's orders."

"But you won't obey them!" exclaimed Handforth hoarsely. "You wouldn't kill us in cold blood——"

"Shut your trap!" snarled the man. "We've got ourselves to think of, ain't we? Think we're going to let you kids blab everything you've seen on this island? The Chief's right; the only thing to do with you is to finish you off!"

Church and McClure, at least, were cool enough to look at the thing from Professor Zingrave's standpoint. They were sick with horror. They knew Zingrave to be a man of absolute relentlessness, and he would think nothing of sacrificing three schoolboys if such a step meant safety.

In blundering upon Surf Island, they had signed their own death-warrant!

Zingrave's plan was so simple. How easy it would be for the electric launch to tow the rowing-boat out to sea. It would not even be necessary for these Triangle men to knock their victims on the head, for such injuries would leave tell-tale marks. No; it was only necessary to throw them overboard several hundred yards from one another. They would swim on for a while, but, fully dressed as they were, the end would swiftly come.

And when they were found—when the derelict boat was found—the inference would be obvious. Just another boating tragedy! Fool-hardy boys on a fishing trip, neglecting to come ashore when a sea mist had crept up, and then——

Oh, yes, it was amazingly simple!

The boys were silent as they were being marched along. Even Handforth was under no misapprehension now, and he was almost physically sick, for he knew that it was his folly which had brought Church and McClure into this dread trap. He would not have been human if he had not thought of himself, but his anguish was more on their account than on his own.

And the hopelessness of the situation frightened him.

There were six men here—three in front and three behind. Any chance of escape was out of the question. There was not even a possibility of making a decent fight for it. Like unwanted mongrels, they were to be taken out to sea and drowned! It was unbelievable, unthinkable! Yet, knowing Zingrave as they did, they were compelled to believe the unbelievable.

"It's all my fault, you chaps," muttered

Handforth, in agony. "I brought you to this. If I hadn't been such an obstinate fool——"

"Don't, Handy!" said Church chokingly. "You're only making it worse!"

"Let's show these devils that we know how to keep a stiff upper lip!" said McClure pluckily.

"By George, you're right!" said Handforth.

Even now he had a wild notion that it was all a bluff. His innate optimism was unquenchable.

These men wouldn't dare——

He caught his breath in sharply as he saw something. His eyes had grown accustomed to the starlight by now. He and his chums were being marched along a rocky path near the centre of the island, and here, where the ground was fairly high, there was little or no mist. And Handforth could see on one side a blank chasm, for the path ran alongside the deep drop which marked the peculiar sea-water pool.

An impulse seized Handforth, and he bent his head nearer to his chums.

"Quick, now's our chance!" he hissed. "We'll dive for it! We might get away! Here—the pool!"

They understood on the instant and, with their very lives in the balance, they were ready enough to take any chance.

"Now!" yelled Handforth suddenly.

Crash!

He drove his powerful right into the face of the nearest man, and with a tremendous shove he sent one of the others sprawling. Church and McClure, wrenching themselves free from the clutching hands of their captors, dived clean over the edge of the rocky chasm.

"Done it!" gasped Handforth. "Good egg! I'm coming, you chaps!"

Wild curses sounded. Two men leapt at Handforth, but they were a split second too late. He was diving after his chums.

CHAPTER 10.

Touch and Go!

DOWN—down!

Splash!

Handforth struck the water awkwardly, for he had not been able to make a graceful dive. In any case, he was not a particularly good diver.

He came to the surface spluttering and gasping, and, indeed, partially stunned. He found Church and McClure quite near him in the waters of the pool. Even now the boys scarcely realised how they had eluded their captors.

Beams of light were shooting down from the rocks above. The men were frantically signalling, and shouting, too.

"You all right, Handy?" came a gurgle from Church. "Great scott, we dodged 'em! Come on—swim!"

"We might be able to find a cave or a crevice," said Mac. "Our only chance is to hide."

"It's—it's like some awful nightmare!" exclaimed Handforth dazedly. "I can't believe it, you chaps!"

"You'd better believe it," said Church tensely. "They mean murder!"

They were swimming steadily, making their way towards the frowning rocks on the other side of the pool.

"Look! What's that?" asked Handforth suddenly, treading water.

His chums saw it, too; a queer, greenish glow under the very surface! If such a thing hadn't been impossible, the boys would have

tell-tale light, they found themselves near some rocks. They hauled themselves out of the water, and half-a-dozen men, appearing as though from nowhere, pounced upon them. Numbed by the cold water as they were, breathless from their swimming, they could not put up any fight. Ropes were passed round their waists; other ropes tethered their ankles.

"Young whelps!" snarled one of the men. "I was feeling sorry for you, blame you;



"Dive for it!" yelled Handforth, and let drive with his fist into the face of one of the men. Instantly his chums broke free from their captors and dived recklessly over the cliffs into the blackness below.

sworn that some lights were glowing on the very bed of the pool! It was the water itself which rendered those lights vague and greenish.

"Let's swim over there," urged Handforth. "I've never seen anything so runny——"

"No, no!" broke in Church. "We can't waste time——"

And then his words died on his lips, for suddenly, out of the darkness, a monstrous object, like some fearsome denizen of the deep, rose to the surface. The hitherto still waters of the pool swirled and eddied. Those lights which had looked greenish became dull yellow. Down at this low level, the mist was thick, but the boys knew the truth in a flash.

"A submarine!" ejaculated Handforth, in amazement. "But how did it get in here?"

"Swim, and swim for your life!" panted Church.

The bright beam of a searchlight suddenly slashed through the mist. It hovered, and then it steadied itself. The three boys were caught in the relentless glare of that light.

Alas for their high hopes!

Swimming desperately, still focused in that

but after this I'll be glad to carry out the Chief's orders!"

"The sooner the cubs are done away with the better!" said one of the other men savagely. They were carried up a rocky path, and then down a steep slope until they reached the shingle. Here the mist was laying like a blanket over the calm sea. The three boys were bundled into their own boat, and one man sat with them. An electric launch was already at hand, and the tow-rope was fixed.

They started off into the misty gloom, heading straight out into the open channel.

Nothing broke the silence but the quiet hum of the electric motor and the rhythmic churning of the little propeller, accompanied by the swishing and swirling of the wash.

The three schoolboys, all hope dead, were tortured by their thoughts. They wondered how long it would be before this journey came to an end. And when it did end——

They were vaguely aware of the fact that the electric motor had ceased humming. The pilot of the launch, in fact, had switched off. He was standing up in the pilot's seat, filled

with alarm. For, through the mist, he had suddenly seen the whitish reflection of a miniature searchlight.

"Ahoy, there!" came a long-drawn-out cry, as though shouted through a megaphone. "Handforth—Handforth!"

"Help—help!" gurgled Handforth, trying to struggle up as he heard the distant calling.

"Keep quiet, you young dog!" grated the man in the rowing-boat, giving Handforth's head a vicious kick. "Say, you fools! We're heading for trouble, ain't we?"

The pilot of the electric launch was sick with apprehension. He knew in a moment, that he was heading towards one of the search parties. The St. Frank's authorities were making a really determined search for the missing boy's!

The man started the electric motor again,



and he sent the craft gliding away from the danger zone. Scarcely had it covered thirty fathoms, however, before there came another shock.

Right ahead loomed, suddenly, a cumbersome motor-boat; the "put-put-put" of its engine sounded noisily, as it came suddenly through the mist.

With a curse, the launch's pilot twirled the wheel.

"Ahoy, there!" came a hail. "Any luck?"

"No!" shouted the man in the crook's launch. "No sign of 'em!"

He had taken a chance—but a very necessary one. The people in the motor-boat were unsuspecting; they continued their own course.

Two narrow escapes! By the merest fluke, the Green Triangle men had avoided direct contact with the search parties. And this was too risky—too fraught with deadly danger to the whole of Professor Zingrave's elaborate plot.

To throw the boys overboard here would be

madness. There was only one thing to be done—and the Green Triangle men did it.

They went straight back to Surf Island, and they took Handforth & Co. with them. Thus, indirectly, it was Nelson Lee's promptness in organising the widespread hunt that had saved the lives of those three doomed schoolboys.

CHAPTER 11.

The Secret Cavern!

PROFESSOR ZINGRAVE listened calmly but with a steely glint in his eyes, to the report. Handforth and Church and McClure, still bound, and each in the hands of two men, stood before him. The unfortunate boys were more or less exhausted after their strenuous adventures.

"Yes, you did the right thing," said Zingrave,

at length. "It would have been dangerous to proceed with the plan."

"More than a chance that one or two of the kids would have swam for it, and been picked up, Chief," said the leader of the men. "The sea is fairly swarming with those searching boats! It's more than likely that some of them will be put ashore here—just to make inquiries."

"We must be ready!" said Zingrave keenly. "Give orders that every man is to stand by. What about the boat? The one those boys used?"

"It was pulled ashore, and covered with seaweed; it was all we could do at such short notice."

"And the electric launch?"

"Hidden in the cave, Chief."

"Then we must get those boys concealed without delay," went on Zingrave. "You know what to do with them."

The professor spoke calmly, but he was literally seething with maddened fury. On this night of all nights, the sea which should

have been utterly deserted was swarming with motor-boats—and motor-boats, moreover, which were equipped with searchlights! And all on account of these infernal schoolboys!

There was even a chance that Zingrave's careful plans would suffer shipwreck. A lesser man would have cursed in his fury; but Zingrave maintained an outward calm which was even more deadly.

"Take the boys—you know where they are to be placed," he said, pointing. "Catling, you will immediately go to bed. Take Bates with you."

He gave other orders. They were clear-cut and concise. Men went about their various duties with an orderliness which was astonishing. Surf Island, in fact, became a feverish centre of activity. Yet it was a hidden activity, a stealthy, mysterious activity.

Handforth & Co., only vaguely appreciating the situation, numbed with the cold, tortured by their bonds, were half-dragged, half-carried into the bungalow's kitchen.

No lights were allowed—except the single beam of an electric torch.

One of the Green Triangle men went across to the heavy, substantial cooking-range. It was not built in, but stood on a scrupulously clean square of glazed tiles. Everything seemed very solid and immovable.

But when the man pulled a knob, which looked like an innocent flue control, a sharp metallic click sounded. With a swift movement the man disconnected the solid cast-iron chimney. The heavy stove itself slid backwards, as though on a pivot and with it went the tiled section of the flooring.

A narrow captivity was revealed—with rock steps leading straight downwards into the mysterious depths of the earth. It was a cunningly-devised "get-away." Even when a fire was going in that range, it could be tilted up in just the same way.

"Down with the kids!" said the man who was in charge. "Sharp's the word!"

And Handforth & Co., to their fresh bewilderment, were forced down the steep rock steps. The ropes had been removed from their legs, and they were no longer carried. They were compelled to walk.

One of the men preceded them with the light. Down, down. And the boys catching glimpses of this mysterious stairway, had an impression that it was no modern innovation. They soon saw that the steps were worn, and indicative of great antiquity. As a matter of fact, this steep stairway led right down into a veritable catacomb of caves and caverns. In the dim ages of the past Surf Island had been the headquarters of many a notorious gang of smugglers.

And Zingrave, with his usual brilliance had converted those old smugglers' relics, and was using them for his own ends. Surf Island, looking so innocent, was full of surprises.

At last the stairway ended, and Handforth & Co. warmed up by this activity, were forced down a steeply-sloping tunnel. In places the roof was so low that they were obliged to crouch. At length a halt was called. A great oak door, black with age, was flung back on its ancient hinges.

The boys were thrust through into the dark

interior. Not a word was spoken. The door slammed to, and great bolts were shot home.

And on the bungalow's wide veranda, professor Zingrave waited. And soon a figure materialised out of the thin mist.

"They're here, Chief!" said a low, urgent voice. "One of those boats has come ashore, and some men—"

"Enough," broke in the professor. "You know what to do. If any man fails me in this hour he shall suffer the penalty of death!"

CHAPTER 12.

The Harmless Dr. Catling!

NELSON LEE, having sprung ashore, helped Nipper to pull the small motor-launch safely up on to the shingle.

Near at hand, another motor-boat, a more powerful craft, was being secured by Mr. Fielding, its owner. He was a great sportsman, and he had enthusiastically entered into this hunt. Mr. Wilkes, of the Ancient House, was here, too, to say nothing of two of Mr. Fielding's men.

"We cannot neglect any possible avenue," said Nelson Lee, as he ploughed his way over masses of deep seaweed towards the others. "There's just a chance that the unfortunate boys drifted ashore on this island. Before we continue the search, we can go round the island and make sure."

"An excellent idea, Mr. Lee," said Old Wilkey. "But I must confess that I am growing very despondent. I suppose this is Surf Island? I haven't the faintest idea of my bearings. This mist is most bewildering."

"Yes, we're on Surf Island, sir," said Nipper. "I've been on this beach before—I'd know it anywhere, fog of no fog. There's generally a lot of this seaweed choking the beach. What do you think we'd better do, gov'nor? Go round the island, shouting?"

"We can do that later," said Lee crisply. "It would be courteous however, to get the owner's permission before disturbing his night's sleep."

"My only hat! I'd forgotten the owner," said Nipper. "Of course! Surf Island isn't uninhabited now, is it?"

"I think there's an astronomer chap living here," said Mr. Fielding, nodding. "A Dr. Gatling, or Catling, or some such name as that. I met him once, in Caistowe—a charming man."

Mr. Wilkes was suddenly excited.

"Perhaps the boys *did* land on the island," he said eagerly. "In that case, they would have gone to this man for shelter, would they not? It is a splendid idea of yours, Mr. Lee, to make inquiries before we do any shouting. I hope to heaven that we find the boys."

It was a feasible enough plan. Having located Surf Island, it followed, as a matter of course, that the island should be scoured for the vanished trio. No avenue of search was left unexplored.

With many electric torches gleaming, the party moved upwards from the beach, and presently a sort of gap was found, and they reached the higher ground.

"The bungalow is built on a little plateau, towards the centre of the island," said Lee.

"I haven't been here since Dr. Catling entered into residence, but I have sometimes admired the bungalow from the cliffs. This way, I think. The mist, up here, is fortunately thin."

They hurried on. Surf Island was now like a place of the dead—silent, black, without a trace of any living soul. Professor Cyrus Zingrave and his men had scuttled, like underground creatures, to their hidden burrows.

Presently, with Nelson Lee and Nipper leading, the little party came within sight of the picturesque bungalow. It stood in complete darkness. But Nelson Lee did not hesitate; he strode straight up to the front door and, finding neither bell nor knocker, he hammered upon the panels with his clenched fist. The others waited with dwindling hopes. The very darkness and silence of the bungalow indicated that the lonely astronomer had not been disturbed by shelter-seeking schoolboys.

"Are you sure that anybody really lives here?" asked Mr. Wilkes, after Nelson Lee had hammered again. "It hardly seems possible that any sane man could choose such an isolated habitation——"

He broke off as Mr. Fielding uttered an exclamation. A sound had come from somewhere above. Standing back, so that they could look beyond the veranda, the visitors now beheld a flickering light in an upper window. For the bungalow had at least one upstairs room—the room, in fact, which was occupied by Bates, the servant.

And Bates was standing at the open window, a flickering candle in his hand. He was in his nightshirt, and he wore a sleeping-cap, too.

"Who is it?" he asked nervously. "Who are you? What do you want at this hour of the night?"

"Are you Dr. Catling?" shouted Mr. Wilkes.

"No, sir," replied the man, recognising the gentlemanly voice. "I'm Dr. Catling's servant, sir—Bates. I'm sure I don't know why you should come here, in the middle of the night, making all this noise."

"We're sorry to disturb you, but we are looking for three schoolboys," said Nelson Lee. "We thought, perhaps, that they had come ashore on Surf Island, and had sought shelter——"

"No, sir," interrupted Bates. "No schoolboys have been here. I'll come down sir, and open the door. I'm sure I don't know what the doctor will say——"

He withdrew, mumbling to himself. In the meantime, however, the visitors heard the sound of a shooting bolt, and the front door was suddenly opened.

A tall, elderly man, with a dressing-gown over his pyjamas, and wearing a smoking-cap and felt slippers, stood in the doorway. He was holding a big oil-lamp in his hand.

"Upon my word!" he exclaimed. "Really, this is most disturbing! May I inquire what this—this unwarrantable intrusion means? Are you aware that this island is private property?"

It was all very well done—all very convincing.

"You must allow me to apologise, Dr. Catling," said Nelson Lee, stepping forward. "My name is Lee; I am the headmaster of St. Frank's College, and three of my boys are

lost. They are believed to have drifted out to sea in an open boat, and there was just a chance that they had come ashore on this island——"

"My dear sir! I did not understand the seriousness of the position!" interrupted Dr. Enoch Catling earnestly. "Of course, I withdraw my earlier protests. Come in, gentlemen—come in! If there is any way in which I can help you, please command me."

And thus, openly, Nelson Lee was admitted into Professor Cyrus Zingrave's secret retreat. But how was it possible for even Nelson Lee, with all his shrewdness, to guess the true nature of this amazing situation?

CHAPTER 13.

Drawn Blank!

DR. ENOCH CATLING, upon closer inspection, proved to be a learned-looking man; a pleasant man. It was the very harmlessness of his appearance which had earned him this responsible job; for he was one of Zingrave's ablest men. And he was all the more valuable because he had no police record; and because his appearance was one of benevolent respectability.

He listened with deep concern as he heard about the three missing boys. Bates had come into the room now—with an overcoat thrown over his night attire. Bates, too, was a harmless-looking specimen.

"It is with intense regret, gentlemen, that I must tell you that the boys have not been here," said Dr. Catling, at length, as he shook his head. "Bates and I would assuredly have heard their shouts if they had approached the bungalow. I do not think the boys can have landed on the island."

"It is a severe blow—for we had built up our hopes," said Mr. Wilkes. "I had, at least. You have heard nothing whatever of an unusual nature to-night?"

"Nothing whatever," lied Dr. Catling.

"It's been very quiet to-night, sir, on account of the mist," ventured Bates. "It isn't likely we'd hear any shouts, not from the beach. Even if the boys had landed, we shouldn't have known anything—not unless they came across the island, which ain't likely."

"Then all we can do is to apologise and to retire," said Lee.

"You are quite at liberty to search the island if you think there is any chance of the boys being here," said the alleged astronomer, with the utmost willingness. "But I must warn you, gentlemen, that it is dangerous work in the darkness. There is a deep pool not far from here, and there are many treacherous gullies and chasms. I do not think there is the slightest possibility of the boys being inland, as I might put it. However, I think it would be a splendid idea to cruise round the island and to shout. If the boys have landed anywhere they will certainly hear you and answer."

"Even that is dangerous—as you should know, Dr. Catling," said Lee. "There are many treacherous rocks off the shore of this island."

Dr. Catling nodded.

"I believe there are," he replied frankly. "Yet it may surprise you to learn that I know very little about the coastline of Surf Island. I

live a quiet, secluded life, devoting most of my time to astronomy. You may have noticed my little observatory on the higher ground? I am a lonely man, and I seldom go ashore to the mainland. Bates brings all the necessary provisions. He and I, as you probably know, live quite alone on the island."

He turned to Bates.

"Get some refreshments for our nocturnal visitors, Bates," he ordered. "You will honour me, gentlemen? I am sure you can do with a little stimulant, and the delay will be trivial."

Bates hastened to serve the drinks, and Lee took the opportunity to proffer his cigarette-case.

"No, no!" said Dr. Catling. "You must have a cigar with me, gentlemen. As a matter of fact, I do not smoke cigarettes. And only very occasionally do I indulge in a cigar."

"Then Bates will join me, no doubt?" said Lee, smiling.

But Bates was a non-smoker. He brought out cigars, and everything was very friendly and polite.

"I am greatly distressed by what you tell me," went on Dr. Catling. "I do hope these poor youngsters have come to no real harm. I am grieved for them. What a terrible experience, to be adrift at night in a small boat."

Mr. Wilkes and Mr. Fielding were impatient to be off. They felt that they were wasting their time. They were rather surprised at Nelson Lee, in fact, for the detective was in no apparent hurry to go.

However, Lee did not delay longer. He shook hands with Dr. Catling, apologised once more for disturbing him, and went out into the night. And soon the party had reached the boats again, and a cautious circuit of Surf Island was made, a sharp look-out being kept for the treacherous rocks.

They shouted until they were hoarse: but no answering hails came from the black, mysterious beaches and cliffs of that rocky islet.

"I'm afraid we've wasted a good hour," said Mr. Fielding, at length. "The boys are certainly not here."

"We must continue our search, then, along the coast and out to sea," said Nelson Lee. "And we can only hope that some of the other boats have been more successful."

"Amen to that!" said Old Wilkey fervently.

Mr. Fielding's motor-boat vanished into the mist, and Nelson Lee and Nipper were left alone in their own small launch.

"Rather a frost, gov'nor," said Nipper, very worried. "Where do we go now?"

But Nelson Lee did not answer. He had turned the launch about and it was gliding away from Surf Island, the searchlight in the bows sending its beam through the mist.

Suddenly, however, Lee turned a switch, and the searchlight died away. Then, with the engine throttled down until its purr was almost inaudible, Lee turned the launch about, and now it was creeping cautiously back towards Surf Island.

"What's the idea, gov'nor?" asked Nipper wonderingly.

"The idea, young 'un, is that Surf Island is not so innocent as it looks!" replied Nelson Lee.

CHAPTER 14.

Nelson Lee Makes Sure!

NIPPER fairly gulped.

"Guv'nor," he ejaculated, his heart throbbing, "what—what do you mean?"

"I'm not going to commit myself, but I am by no means satisfied with Dr. Enoch Catling," replied Lee softly. "A very soft-spoken gentleman, Nipper—a charming man, in fact. But I didn't like his eyes."

"Great scot! You're not suspecting him of fooling us, are you?" asked Nipper, in amazement. "And a man can't help his eyes."

"Bates, too, impressed me badly," continued Lee. "Didn't it strike you, Nipper, that Bates was in an exceedingly jumpy condition?"

"But I can't see what you're getting at, sir," protested Nipper. "What possible reason could those two men have for fooling us?"

"That's just what I want to find out—that's just why I'm determined to make a secret landing," replied Lee. "We've visited Surf Island openly, Nipper, and now we'll visit Surf Island stealthily. It might be a profitable experiment. Don't you think Dr. Catling and Bates were an unconscionable long time in answering our knocks? Surely they are not such deep sleepers? It struck me that they rather overdid it: they kept us waiting just a shade too long for the delay to be convincing."

"Yes, but even so——"

"You may have noted that Dr. Catling smokes nothing but cigars—and those only occasionally. Bates, if we are to believe his word, is a total abstainer."

"Is that important, gov'nor?" asked Nipper, more than ever puzzled.

"Very important—in view of the many cigarette ends."

"Eh? What cigarette ends?"

"I'm afraid, Nipper, that my training hasn't been as successful as I should like," replied Lee. "You don't use your eyes enough."

"Oh, look here, gov'nor——"

"During our brief sojourn on the island I saw at least ten cigarette ends lying on the ground," continued Lee grimly. "One or two on the higher ground near the bungalow itself; another one actually on the beach, two or three more in various places. Not ancient cigarette ends, Nipper, but fresh ones. To put it bluntly, those cigarettes were smoked to-night. And it is remarkable, to say the least, that there should be these interesting relics when you consider that Dr. Catling smokes only cigars and that Bates smokes nothing."

"You—you mean that other men have been on the island, sir?" asked Nipper breathlessly.

"For all we know, they are still on the island," retorted Lee. "I would remind you that this place was once the resort of smugglers. There are many secret caves on Surf Island, young 'un. I am very suspicious, and there is another idea at the back of my mind. Quite a startling idea. But I won't say anything more of that at the moment."

Nipper was vastly intrigued. He was quite certain that Nelson Lee was right in his conjectures. And now Nipper could understand

(Continued on page 24.)

Special Summer Hiking and Rambling Number of . . .



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June 4th, 1932.

THE EDITOR'S CHIN-WAG

RAMBLINGS ON RAMBLERS!

By VIVIAN TRAVERS

SUMMER is here—that is, according to the calendar—and so we naturally think of the great outdoors, with old King Sol shining on high from a perfect, cloudless sky. (By George! I always knew I was a born poet!) Unfortunately, that's all we are able to do in this country—think about it. Which is perhaps rather hard lines on fatheads like Long and Snipe, for they haven't the necessary apparatus with which to think.

To them rain is rain, snow is snow, and gales are gales. In my case, however, I get my stupendous brain to work and I imagine that the raindrops are heat spots, that the snow is a myriad of butterflies, and that the gale is merely a gentle breeze.

I'll admit it's rather hard to imagine that a gale is a gentle breeze when it lifts you off your feet and deposits you unceremoniously in a puddle, but there, again, I'd imagine that I was bathing in the briny.

S'marvellous thing, my imagination! I imagine that my imagination must be the most imaginative imagination ever imagined—if you get what I mean.

Oh, sorry! I was talking about the great outdoors, wasn't I? Readers and admirers all, you have in your hands this week my super-sizzling, special Summer Number—guaranteed to do you as good as a dose of ultra-violet rays, for it will make you go purple in the face with laughing.

Incidentally, I am writing this Chin-wag in the Triangle of St. Frank's. To get the right atmosphere, I shifted the Editorial sanctum from Study D into the quad, and—

Regret I shall have to come to an abrupt conclusion. There's a big black cloud overhead; it looks like raining cats and dogs, and I haven't got a gamp with me. Pardon my hasty exit. So long!

E. O. H.

OUR learned Editor has asked me to contribute a short article on ramblers and rambling.

I must admit I am mildly surprised, for I should have thought that this subject would not be appreciated by readers of HANDFORTH'S WEEKLY. However, a request is an order when E. O. Handforth issues it, so I hasten to put pen to paper.

Ramblers are so named because they ramble all over the place, but it is usual to let them ramble up sticks or archways or trellice-work, thus producing an extremely pretty effect. (By George! What is the duffer talking about? —E. O. H.)

Ramblers continue to grow for ever, once planted, and within a year or two their limbs are many yards long. (My hat! The fellow's mad!—E. O. H.)

Unlike other varieties of roses, ramblers do not need much attention—

(Help, help! You idiot! I told you to write about ramblers—not ramblers! You know—people who walk—who ramble over the countryside—not up sticks and archways! For your information I've chucked the remainder of your silly, piffing article into the waste-paper basket. —E. O. H.)

ST. FRANK'S FAGS FOLLOW THE TRAIL.

Special trip for the Third Form fags, arranged by Juicy Lemon. Details of route to be taken as follows:

Start from St. Frank's Triangle, then through the ditch bordering Bellton Lane. Across Farmer Holt's muddiest meadow, thence onwards through the duck-pond. Turn here and return to St. Frank's by the same route. Repeat journey until everybody is completely covered with mud.



HANDY'S PICNIC PAN

"SURE you haven't forgotten anything, Handy?"

Arnold McClure asked the question rather doubtfully as he and Walter Church and Edward Oswald Handforth descended the steps of the Ancient House into the Triangle at St. Frank's. It was a half holiday, and the weather was warm and fine. Handforth had suggested a picnic on the Sussex Downs, and the three chums of Study D were just about to start out in Handy's Morris Minor.

Handforth turned to regard McClure scoffingly.

"Of course I haven't forgotten anything," he retorted. "Did you ever know me to forget anything—"

Yet apparently he had forgotten he was descending the stone steps at that moment, for in turning to speak he missed his footing, with the result that he completed the remainder of the journey down the steps on his back. Bump! That was Handforth landing on his car at the foot of the stairs, and it was immediately followed by a tinkling crash.

"My records!" howled Church wrathfully. "You clumsy fathead—"

"Never mind your mouldy records!" groaned Handforth. "What about me, you heartless rotter? I've broken about five hundred bones."

In spite of this disablement, however, Edward Oswald showed considerable liveliness as he picked himself up, so it is to be assumed that he had broken only four hundred and ninety bones.

He regarded the wreckage, and then smiled contentedly.

"Why, there's only eleven of the twelve records smashed," he pointed out lightly. "What are you grouching about, Churchy? Don't quibble, but buck up and jump in the 'bus. We shall never get anywhere if you delay us like this!"

Breathing wrathfully, Church retrieved the one remaining intact record and clambered into the back of the Morris, alongside a big tuck hamper, a portable gramophone and a small

spirit stove. McClure squatted beside Handforth in front.

"We're off!" announced Handy.

They were, and soon they were bowling merrily down Bellton Lane, and now everything seemed all set for an enjoyable afternoon in the country.

But not for long. Disaster soon overtook the picnickers.

Bang! A loud report came from one of the rear wheels, and Handforth frowned blackly as he pulled the car to a standstill.

"Bother! A puncture!" he exclaimed. "I say, Churchy, you ass, have you been chucking those gramophone needles about?"

"Why don't you get out and repair it instead of making idiotic remarks?" replied Church politely.



Handforth saw the wisdom of his chum's remark and jumped out of the car.

"We'll soon have this repaired," he said briskly. "Mac, get out the jack. You'll find it under the seat—oh, my hat!"

"What's the matter now?"

"By George! I lent the jack to old Brown of the Fifth, and he forgot to return it."

"You mean you forgot to ask for it back," retorted Church tartly. "Oh, you prize idiot—"

"Look here, Walter Church, if you start calling me names—"

"Oh, don't quarrel, you two!" broke in McClure wearily. "Perhaps two of us can lift the car up while you take the tyre off, Handy. Anyway, where's the repairing outfit?"

"By George! I'd forgotten. I lent that to Nipper to repair a puncture on his motor-bike," said Handforth reluctantly.

Followed another bright interlude of polite remarks between the three chums, during which Mac said Handy was a hopeless duffer, and Church likened his memory to a broken sieve without a bottom to it.

Fortunately there was a garage near at hand, and in a quarter of an hour the puncture had been repaired. Once more the three picnickers set off—optimistically hoping for the best, but fearing the worst.

Surprisingly enough, however, every-

thing went smoothly, speeding through prettily having turned off the main road, all sides stretched the country, the mering beautifully in the sun. As the sweltering sun. An ideal camping site in off the road. Nearby stream.

"Here we are, you f Handforth happily.

Handforth backed the car and then the chums juggling the tuck hamper, gramophone on to a patch by the gurgling stream.

All three were in the car and soon the solitary gramophone played upon the grass. It played it over and over was no tune left, and the needle ended to pierce the wax.

Then Handforth brightly produced Tins of salmon, apricot jam were produced from the car, a loaf of bread, and sun

"There you are, my boy, say I'd forgotten nothing for Handforth, beaming with self-satisfaction if I'd left everything to you."

"Where's the kettle, Church abruptly. "Without a kettle for boiling water—"

"Eh? By George! I left it on the study table."

"And where's the meat put in Mac."

"And the butter?"

"What about matches? I left the stove without matches."

"And the tin-opener? God of all this tinned opener?"

Balefully Church and Handforth and their dismayed leader regarded each other anxiously.

Handforth, in a moment of tentativeness, hastily backed the car, advanced threateningly upon the stream, and was most unfortunate in falling in—and the gramophone.

He stumbled over the stones and promptly collapsed on the bank, some of which must have been punctured. This time it was Handforth who was punctured!

"O-o-o-oh!" he yelled to his feet—just in time to groundwards again as the chums hurled themselves upon him. More howls from Edward Oswald this time—and when McClure desisted, he lay on the ground, wrecked by a bludgeoning cane all at once.

(Continued at foot)

RTY

THE HANDFORTH HIKING CLUB

A Report ! ! * !

Soon they were y rural byelanes, main road, and on countryside, glim- golden rays of last they spotted a shady wood just rickled a winding

ellows!" chortled "this'll do fine!"

car into a clearing, mped out, trans-, the stove and the delightfully grassy stream.

est of spirits now, record was being amophone. They again until there the needle threat- ax right through. y suggested tea.

cots and peaches e hamper; cakes, dry other articles.

7 lads! Didn't I g?" asked Hand- atisfaction. "Now ou two chumps—"

Handy?" asked e can't have tea ing the water."

I—I believe I ,—" thylated spirits?"

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McClure regarded : Then they re- d nodded signifi- eading their in- away as they ad- upon him. Which dr Edward Oswald . In backing away

ho portable and a box of needles, ve been upturned. ndforth who was

owed, and jumped ime to be hurled his two suffering elves upon him.

Oswald—louder ally Church and oked like a scare- zard and a hurri-

of column 4.)

E. O. HANDFORTH announces the inauguration of the *Handforth Hiking Club*. The opening meeting, held in Study D, was attended by a large gathering (Handforth himself, and Church and McClure), amid tremendous enthusiasm (on the part of Handforth).

After electing himself president, the celebrated Edward Oswald declared that the motto of the club would be: "Hike for Health."

Church and McClure heartily applauded this very laudable statement, but then proceeded to show obvious signs of doubt after Handforth had read out to them the club rules.

They declared emphatically that they would not join the club—not even if paid to do so—and that the worthy president was off his silly rocker. It is to be regretted that the meeting ended in wild disorder.

Despite intense advertising, canvassing—and threats—on the part of Handforth, since the club still has its president but no members.

For anybody who is idiotic enough to think of joining, the rules are herewith appended:

1. That a prospective member must prove to the president that he is a good hiker, and he will be called upon to walk a minimum of fifteen miles before breakfast. He will be accompanied by the president himself—who will ride in his Morris Minor—to see that he covers the full distance.

2. Before an applicant be eligible to join the club, he shall allow the president to duck him in the fountain. This is to prove his powers of endurance, and to harden him for long tramps on rainy days.

3. That anybody desiring membership shall undergo a mud bath—to prove that he doesn't mind getting muddy.

4. That a would-be member shall go about bare-footed for one whole day. In no circumstances whatever shall he wear even socks.

5. That the president shall be exempt from all these rules by virtue of his high office.

There are numerous other rules of a similar nature, but the writer does not wish to emphasise the worthy president's mental condition, so he will forbear to print them.

MIKE and be MERRY

In opposition to Handforth's Hiking Club, Archie Glenthorne summoned up enough energy to instruct Phipps to form a rival club on his behalf.

This is to be known as the Glenthorne Miking Club. Its motto is: "Mike and be Merry."

There are only two rules, which read as follows:

1. That members shall mike on any and every conceivable occasion.

2. That members shall not in any circumstances disturb the president when he is carrying out his duties. The penalty for waking up Archie shall be expulsion from the club. No excuses or appeals considered.

(Continued from previous column.)

And so, instead of a tip-top tea, the picnickers were reduced to dry bread and cakes, and their tale of woe was increased when, driving home, they ran out of petrol at a spot miles away from a garage. Once again Handforth's forgetfulness had, landed them in the soup—almost literally, for it came on to rain heavily.

All things considered, Handforth's picnic party could not be termed a success. Even Handforth's vivid imagination failed him in this case!

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MYSTERY ISLAND!

(Continued from page 20.)

Lee's apparently unaccountable loitering. He had dallied on Surf Island deliberately, his mind full of suspicions.

"There is one matter in particular which I wish to look into," said the detective presently. "Easy now, Nipper. We're getting quite close in shore. And we mustn't make any sound. If you want to talk to me, talk in whispers."

He was guiding the launch cautiously, and now, with her engine quite shut off, the tiny craft slipped between two black masses of rock and soon nosed her way into the shingle. Nelson Lee leapt ashore and pulled the boat up. Nipper joined him.

All about them complete silence reigned, except for the monotonous murmur of the waves as they broke, and the swishing swirl of the backwash. Surf Island itself brooded in the shroud of the mist.

"What do we do now, s.r.?" whispered Nipper.

"Follow me."

Nelson Lee was getting his bearings. They had landed, as nearly as possible, in the same spot as before. But Lee now saw that they were two or three hundred yards further to the eastward. They ploughed their way across the thick seaweed which choked the beach.

"This is the place, I think," murmured Nelson Lee, at last.

It was difficult to be certain, in that gloom. The mist was dense on the beach, and it was risky to flash an electric torch, even for a moment. Lee's hand was never far from his automatic pistol. He was ready for any emergency.

"But what are you looking for, gov'nor?" breathed Nipper.

"When we were on this beach, before I climbed over these piles of seaweed," replied Nelson Lee. "Now, seaweed is spongy stuff, and when I find myself walking across a patch of it which gives a hollow sound—yes, this is it! Here we are! Now we'll make sure, Nipper!"

He had stopped on a spot which looked exactly similar to the rest of the beach; near the water's edge there was the rough shingle, but higher up the seaweed lay—where it had been left by the high tide.

Nelson Lee was pulling at the wet seaweed dragging masses of it away. Suddenly he caught his breath in, and Nipper almost cried aloud in his excitement and surprise.

For the detective, by his efforts, had uncovered the stern of an upturned rowing-boat!

CHAPTER 15.

Zingrave Passes Sentence!

IN the bungalow, behind heavily-curtained windows, Professor Cyrus Zingrave heard Catling's report.

"It seems satisfactory," he said at length. "By heavens! To think that Lee was here—actually within my grasp! And I could do nothing! What a pity he and Nipper did not come alone!"

"Even then it would have been risky to interfere with them, said Catling dubiously. "I mean, they might have told some of the men in the other boats that they were coming to the island. We don't want any inquiries, do we?"

"Lee is deadly poison!" muttered Zingrave, frowning. "He has left the island—but how can I be sure that he will not return? He plays cunning tricks. He is clever—devilish clever. Never forget that, Catling!"

"Clever or not, chief, he suspected nothing here," said Dr. Catling confidently. "I fooled him completely—and it was easy. The men can move about now——"

"You fool!" broke in Zingrave harshly. "Nobody must move about—not even you. Not a man must show himself during the rest of this night. Mist or no mist, I'm taking no chances with Nelson Lee!"

He was thoughtful for some minutes, then he suddenly turned to Bates.

"What of those boys?" he asked. "As the original plan had fallen through, we must keep them prisoners. But I am not a torturer, and they'll need food. Have they blankets?"

"No, nothing," said Bates, in surprise. "They were taken into that old smugglers' cavern——"

"Prepare some food at once—a few sandwiches will do," said Zingrave. "And get some warm blankets. We don't want those boys ill on our hands. As they must be kept prisoners, they might as well be kept healthy. Upon the whole, it will be safer to keep them here, under lock and key. I have a plan."

Bates, puzzled, obeyed orders. He quickly prepared some sandwiches and a big can of hot tea. Then, with Zingrave leading the way, they went down those old stone stairs to the cavern with the heavy door.

The bolts were shot back, and Zingrave, carrying a powerful vapour-lantern, entered. The unfortunate chums of Study D were huddling in a heap against one of the walls. It took a great deal to rob Oswald Handforth of his natural arrogance, but he was subdued now.

"Cut their ropos, Bates," said Zingrave shortly.

"Think it'll be safe?" asked Bates. "They're as tricky as monkeys——"

"Do as I say," interrupted Zingrave. "There is not much trickiness in them now."

The ropes were removed, and Handforth and Church and McClure, numbed with the cold, cramped from being bound, were scarcely able to move their limbs without agony.

"Well, we're whacked!" muttered Handforth, with some return of his old spirit. "What are you going to do with us now?"

"You are reprieved," said Zingrave.

"You wouldn't reprieve us unless you were forced to," said Handforth bitterly. "Those underlings of yours couldn't carry out your orders—because there were boats out, searching for us. That's why we were brought back——"

"We need not enter into any discussion," broke in Zingrave curtly. "I have decided that you three boys shall remain here. You will be prisoners for a week, perhaps, or even for a month. Take your clothes off."

"But——"

"Do as I say. There are warm blankets here."

They managed to undress, and after they had rolled themselves in the blankets, they were feeling better. The hot tea, too, and the food worked wonders.

"Let me advise you not to hope for rescue," said Zingrave deliberately. "To-morrow you will be presumed dead; and there will be no further hunt."

The boys listened eagerly. Their reprieve had brought new hope to them. But there was always the chance that Zingrave was lying. Perhaps this reprieve was only temporary. When everything was quiet, they might be taken out and drowned, according to the original plan.

Zingrave seemed to read their very thoughts.

"No; I shall not kill you now," he said calmly. "On second thoughts, such a step would be far too dangerous. Furthermore, after my present plans are completed, I might make use of you. Your parents are wealthy. After you have been presumably dead for some weeks, your parents will be glad to hear that you still live—so glad, in fact, that they will be willing to pay, and ask no questions."

Zingrave laughed softly, and without another word he went out of the cavern, Bates following him. The door was closed and bolted. The professor examined those bolts very thoroughly.

"There is no possible escape," he commented. "Our long deceased friends, the smugglers, knew how to build doors, Bates. You have the clothing?"

"Here, Chief," said the other.

"Bring it."

They went back up the tunnel, mounted the rock steps, and were soon in the kitchen of the bungalow. Dr. Catling was looking troubled.

"I'm not sure that it's wise, Chief, to keep those boys alive," he said. "The school authorities won't be content with one search——"

"I think they will," interrupted Zingrave. "I am not sending any more boats out—it's too dangerous. But there is no reason why the submarine should not make a trial trip in this mist."

"I don't get your meaning," said Catling.

"Yet it is obvious," replied the professor gently. "The boys' boat can easily be lashed to the submarine's deck. It will be conveyed to mid-Channel, and then freed, so that it floats on the surface. It is certain to be found during the hours of daylight—and the finding of it will lead to another search. But it will be in mid-Channel, Catling—not in the vicinity of Surf Island."

"Yes, yes, that's true," said Catling eagerly.

"And I don't think the search will be entirely barren, either," continued Professor Zingrave. "These St. Frank's caps will float—and they are quite distinctive. We can even let the boys' jackets go adrift, too. A subtle touch, Catling. Imagine the scene! These unfortunate boys, adrift in the Channel; their boat upset by the wash of a passing steamer; fighting for life in the water, they divest themselves of their jackets, and swim. The story will be so very commonplace! There will be no second search—not even for the bodies. For the Channel is deep, as you may know."

"And we shall have no more visitors," said Catling, nodding. "You're brilliant, Chief."

CHAPTER 16.

Voices in the Mist.

NIPPER, quivering with excitement, helped Nelson Lee to examine the rowing boat which had been uncovered by the seaweed.

"By Jove, guv'nor, you were right!" whispered Nipper. "This boat hasn't been here for more than an hour! It's not an old wreck, flung up by the tide."

"That is what I wanted to make certain of," replied Nelson Lee. "This boat is quite sound, and has been recently used. Look at these polished rowlocks! And here are the oars, underneath. No, the boat was overturned, and covered with seaweed deliberately. Our coming took the people on this island by surprise; they concealed the boat hastily."

"And you knew it was here all the time, guv'nor," said Nipper breathlessly.

"I claim no credit for that—it was only by the merest fluke that I made the discovery," said Lee. "The possibilities are immense, Nipper—not to say ugly. I am quite convinced that Catling and his alleged servant were lying to us. There are other men on this island. The question arises—who are they?"

"A smuggling gang, perhaps?"

"Something more dangerous than that, I fancy," said Lee slowly. "Have you forgotten the mysterious men who, dressed as Customs officers, made off with the submarine *Ossipee*?"

Nipper's jaw dropped.

"But—but you don't mean——" he began.

"Why not?" snapped Lee. "That daring exploit took place earlier to-night, and here, on Surf Island, we find evidence of mysterious men! I know the danger of jumping to conclusions, but there must be something more than coincidence in this. We know, definitely, that Handforth and his two chums landed on this island, and, presumably, they were seized, and they are now being held captive."

"But why, sir?" asked Nipper.

"Really, that's a most unnecessary question!" admonished Lee. "Isn't it obvious to you that those three boys blundered upon some discovery here? Having made that discovery they became dangerous. The mystery men dare not let them get away. Therefore, they were captured."

"Yes, of course, sir—that's clear enough now that you explain it."

"We must find those boys," continued Lee, an anxious note in his voice. "But it might be dangerous going, and——"

He suddenly broke off, and laid a warning hand upon Nipper's arm. They both stood listening intently.

"Come!" whispered Lee abruptly.

Nipper had heard nothing, but he knew that his "guv'nor's" ears were sharper than his—and more acutely trained, too. They moved off like shadows. Lee had covered the rowing-boat with seaweed again, leaving it just as he had found it.

"Down—quick!" hissed the detective.

They were near some rocks, and they both fell flat, crouching closely against the rocks. Leo pulled some half-dried seaweed over them, and they both lay motionless.

"I heard nothing, guv'nor!" breathed Nipper.

"Hush!"

Straining his ears, Nipper fancied that he heard the "thud-thud" of footsteps further along the beach. But he wasn't sure. Once, too, he had an impression that whispering voices sounded. But again, he couldn't be sure.

Nelson Lee, during this time, was filled with acute anxiety. For he was thinking of his own motor-launch—lying openly on the beach, only two or three hundred yards away! If these mystery-men should find that launch——!

The minutes passed. It seemed to Nipper that Nelson Lee would never make a move. But the great detective possessed the patience of Job himself. He did not move a muscle until fully twelve minutes had elapsed.

"I think they've gone!" he whispered, getting cautiously to his feet. "But we mustn't be too sure."

"Do you really think there were some men on the beach, here?" asked Nipper. "I thought I heard something, but it might have been my fancy."

"It wasn't your fancy," replied Lee. "There's something I want to look at, lad. Follow me—and be ready to drop at the first sign."

Lee was retracing his steps along the beach, taking care to tread on the soft seaweed, so that no sounds were made. And presently they came to the spot where the boat had been hidden. Lee easily recognised it in the gloom—for he had marked it, in his memory, by some neighbouring rocks.

"I thought so!" he muttered, pointing.

The seaweed was all disturbed—and the boat had gone!

"My only sainted aunt!" exclaimed Nipper breathlessly. "Somebody's taken Handy's boat! I say, sir, do you think Handy and Church and McClure came here, and——"

"No," broke in Lee. "They would have made far more noise. Besides, I heard men's voices; I heard the faint squeaking of the rowlocks. I expected to find the boat gone. Some of our mysterious friends have taken the boat out to sea. Why? I must confess, Nipper, that I dislike the look of this intensely."

He did not remain long on the beach. Presently he made a move towards the low cliffs, and he and Nipper climbed cautiously up. Thanks to the mist, their own little motor-launch had not been seen by the enemy.

"Where are we going, guv'nor?" asked Nipper, after a while.

"There's an interesting pool in the centre of this island, isn't there?" said Lee, in a strange voice. "Do you happen to know anything about that pool, Nipper?"

"I've seen it, guv'nor, and I know that it's fed by the sea, because it's a seawater pool, and it rises and falls with the tide."

"Do you know how deep it is?"

"Pretty deep, I believe."

"And it rises and falls with the tide," murmured Lee. "That means to say that the sea enters by some subterranean rock channel.

I wonder how big that channel is? An interesting problem, young 'un!"

"Are we going to that pool now?"

"I have a fancy to get a look at it," replied Lee. "I would prefer to do my investigating on a clear night, but——"

Again he cut himself short, and he made a quick grab at Nipper's arm.

"Down!" he hissed.

But Nipper himself had heard the voices this time. They both flattened themselves to the ground near some stunted bushes, rolling into cover.

Down at this level they distinctly heard the thudding of approaching footsteps.

Two men, walking slowly, loomed out of the mist. It was inevitable that they would pass within a foot or so of the prostrate pair.

"... better to have stuck to the original plan and dropped the kids into the Channel," came the voice of one man. "The only safe way to deal with 'em after what they've seen to-night."

"Well, it's not our business," said the other man. "The Chief knows best. And don't forget that the sea's swarming with those search boats. It would be crazy to take the kids out again."

"They're locked up, ain't they?"

"Yes, and they'll remain locked up for weeks," came one of the voices. "I've just had a word with Catling. The chief means to keep these kids—and look after 'em well, too. Some stunt for getting money out of their people, I think. But that's after this other business is finished with. The kids can keep. Everybody'll think they're dead, anyhow——"

The voice died away inaudibly in the mist.

"Our luck's in, lad!" whispered Lee exultantly. "A useful little scrap of conversation, eh? We won't bother about that rock pool now. Come!"

They slipped off, and at length they reached the beach and they found their motor-launch, and Nelson Lee cautiously pushed off.

Not until the tide and the current had carried them some distance from the island did the detective venture to start the engine, and even then he kept it throttled down until they had covered nearly half a mile.

"All things considered, we're lucky to get away," said Lee, at length. "For I have come to the conclusion that there are quite a number of men on that island, Nipper."

"And Handforth and Church and McClure are being kept prisoners!" whispered Nipper. "We know that much, anyhow! They're being well looked after, too."

"So we can rest comfortably for twenty-four hours," said Nelson Lee. "As long as I know those boys are safe I shall not worry, and one of my first duties will be to communicate secretly with their parents so that they will not be unduly alarmed."

"But if they're on the island, sir, why not rescue them at once, and save their parents from any alarm at all?"

"Because the immediate rescue of those three boys might lead to the getting away of Zingrave and his entire gang."

"Zingrave!" almost yelled Nipper.

"Didn't you guess?" asked Lee, with a chuckle. "Yes, my son! If our old friend,



The window of the strange building opened and a white face peered forth into the night. "Who is it?" came a voice. "We are looking for three lost schoolboys," replied Nelson Lee, in a grim tone.

Professor Zingrave, isn't at the bottom of this audacious plot, I'm a flatfooted rural constable!"

"Ye gods and little fishes!" gurgled Nipper.

"Surf Island is just another of Zingrave's secret retreats," continued Lee. "And I fancy I know just what the professor's new 'racket' is. So we mustn't spoil things by precipitate action, Nipper. We'll go easily, and I fancy we're in for an adventure after our own heart."

CHAPTER 17. Clues!

THE next day was a day of sensations at St. Frank's—and elsewhere.

With the rising of the sun the sea mist had cleared as though by magic. Other boats, more powerful boats, were now pressed into the hunt.

Nelson Lee, Mr. Wilkes, and the others, tired out after their night's search, had gone back to the school. But Lee and Nipper were the only two who had the faintest inkling of the real truth.

And they were in such a position that they could say nothing to alleviate the general anxiety. Even when the more definite news came—which it did about mid-day—they were forced to hold their own counsel.

For if they had told others of their discoveries and this had leaked out—as it undoubtedly would—those crooks on Surf Island would have taken alarm. Nelson Lee had no positive proof of his theory yet, and he was certainly not ready to take definite action.

So the truth about Handforth & Co. had to be suppressed.

Lee sent a trusted messenger to London with special letters for the boys' parents, and in these letters Lee urged the parents to take no notice

of the reports they saw in the newspapers. Handforth and Church and McClure were safe; Lee knew where they were, and very soon he would rescue them. In the interests of justice it was necessary, however, that the boys should remain where they were. Lee did not explain where they were; in fact, he was quite vague. But his letters, at all events, were reassuring, and he pledged the parents to secrecy.

At St. Frank's, where only the supposed facts were known, there was consternation. Handforth & Co. had gone out in a boat the previous evening, and they were lost! Many were the head shakings, many were the fears.

The school, too, was wildly excited about the dramatic news from Caistowe—the audacious act of piracy which had led to the seizure of the American submarine *Ossipee*. The Channel had been scoured from end to end practically, and Mr. Russ Freemantle, frantic, was sending urgent telegrams to the Admiralty, requesting that the entire British Navy should get on the job.

By mid-day came the dramatic news that Handforth & Co.'s rowing-boat had been found somewhere in mid-Channel, floating bottom upmost. One of the oars had been picked up a mile away. Two school caps had been found, too, to say nothing of a jacket. Grim, significant finds!

That a tragedy had occurred nobody doubted.

Drifting in the mist, the boat had been overturned in the wash of some big steamer. The whole thing was as clear as daylight. Handforth and Church and McClure were dead—drowned. Just another boating tragedy.

Nelson Lee went to Caistowe, where the boat was lying, having been towed in. The detective examined it with great care, even going over some parts of the little craft with his powerful magnifying lens.

People who watched him wondered. What was the need for this careful inspection? And what good would it do now, anyhow? The boys were dead, and it was any odds that their bodies would never be recovered.

So Nelson Lee's painstaking efforts looked like a mere waste of time.

But the detective had a very definite object, and he made some intriguing discoveries.

The keel of the boat, for example, showed some peculiar marks in two places. An ordinary observer would not even have noticed those marks, but Lee was looking for them. He came to the conclusion that the boat had been lashed down, bottom upwards, and those marks were caused by the heavy ropes which had been used for the lashing. For the keel, in these two spots, showed evidences of chafing.

Lee made another discovery—far more significant—but one which supported the first. Along the edges of the boat, where it had been in contact with the object to which it had been lashed, were traces of grey enamel.

They were very minute, and they were sticking, here and there, to the original paint, which was of another colour. Very carefully, very painstakingly, Lee scraped this grey enamel free. Later, he examined it under a microscope, and was satisfied.

He interviewed Mr. Russ Freemantle, a haggard and distraught man.

"The most amazing robbery I've ever heard of in all my life!" said the American inventor for the fiftieth time. "The crooks in my own country are daring enough, heaven knows, but this thing beats all! Where can the boat be? Where can these scoundrels, whoever they are, have hidden her? A submarine isn't an easy thing to hide, Mr. Lee. And they couldn't remain submerged all this time."

"How is the *Ossipee* painted, Mr. Freemantle?" asked Lee abruptly.

"Painted? Does it matter?" said the American impatiently. "Grey. A distinctive bluey-grey."

"Is the deck also painted with this enamel?"

"Certain sections of the deck, yes," replied the owner. "For'ard of the conning tower there is a smooth expanse of metal plates, and they are painted like the rest of the vessel."

"Don't spend any more money on a wide-spread search, Mr. Freemantle," said Lee briskly. "I think I can promise you that you'll have your submarine back within a few days."

The American fairly gaped at him.

"But—but what do you know about her?" he asked, clutching at Lee's arm.

"Very little—but that very little may lead to a great deal more," replied Nelson Lee, with provoking vagueness. "I'll tell you more, Mr. Freemantle, when I have definite news. All I can say to you now is—don't worry."

But Mr. Russ Freemantle did worry. He nearly worried himself ill.

Nelson Lee went back to St. Frank's entirely satisfied with his trip to Caistowe. He knew that the rowing-boat had been lashed, bottom upwards, to the deck of the *Ossipee*; thus the boat had been taken into mid-Channel, and cast adrift.

And the great detective had a shrewd suspicion where the submarine lay hidden. He was getting on the track, and the trail was red-hot.

CHAPTER 18.

The Secret Investigation!

THE sea was as calm as the proverbial mill-pond, and the tiny Canadian canoe, skilfully paddled by Nelson Lee, made no sound as it slid through the water. Nipper, squatting for'ard, was looking intently and eagerly at the dark bulk of Surf Island.

It was pitch-dark to-night, but there was just a shade of difference between the sea and the sky; Nipper could see where the horizon was blackened by the rising bulk of the island.

Overhead, the sky was overcast; not a star twinkled. A dead calm prevailed. To-night there was no trace of mist, and Nelson Lee was glad of this. The mist had served him last night; but he could work better, now, without it.

The detective paddled steadily. He had deliberately chosen this method of conveyance; it was far better than a rowing-boat, since it was nippier, and could be easily concealed. It was more silent than a motor-launch. Lying low in the water, it was practically invisible, and would pass unnoticed even if there were men on the watch, on Surf Island.

And the calmness of the sea permitted the use of such a frail cockle-shell. It was not particularly late—somewhere about ten-thirty Lee was prepared for a long night, for he was visiting Surf Island with a definite objective.

"I'm not at all sure that I was wise in listening to your entreaties, young 'un," he murmured, as he paused in his efforts. "I fancy this is a job I could have tackled better single-handed."

"Have a heart, gov'nor," protested Nipper. "I'm in this as much as you—right up to the eyes. You wouldn't have had the heart to leave me behind."

"To tell you the truth, I'm thinking of the risks," confessed Lee. "If these crooks are Green Triangle men, as I think—if Zingrave is on the island—we are going into a hornet's nest. And I'm not sure that I'm justified in subjecting you to the danger."

"We've been on many an adventure together gov'nor, and I'm not scared of Zingrave," whispered Nipper confidently. "You'll win! Zingrave's clever, but you're a darned sight cleverer. I'm terribly thrilled about this adventure, sir, and I think it's awfully decent of you to let me come. I promise you I'll be useful."

Nelson Lee inwardly chuckled. He was glad of Nipper's company, to tell the truth—and he knew, moreover, how well he could rely upon the lad's help in a tight corner.

"You've got that gun I gave you?" he murmured.

"Yes, gov'nor."

"You must only use it as a last resort. If we fall into Zingrave's hands you know what it will mean. He has sworn to 'get' us."

"What are you trying to do, gov'nor—scare me?" grinned Nipper. "Come on—let's be moving again."

Nelson Lee dipped his paddle, and the canoe slid forward.

The detective knew exactly where to make for—a tiny, rocky cove where there were many shallow caves; and where the cliffs, although steep-looking, could be easily climbed. Lee was well prepared for this expedition; during the evening, while Surf Island had been bathed in sunlight, Lee had sprawled full length in the grass on the cliff tops, above Langdon Bay.

With a powerful telescope, he had scrutinised every little bay, every cove, every foot of cliff. He had memorised all he had seen—so that when he and Nipper made the landing, in absolute darkness, they would have a good general idea of their bearings.

Such thoroughness was characteristic of the detective. He did not believe in doing things by halves.

Like a tiny shadow, the canoe slipped into the rocky cove. It nosed its way into the narrow cave which Lee had mentally selected

—a slit in the rocks so small that nothing larger than a canoe could have entered.

"Well, we're here, young 'un," Lee whispered. "Lend a hand—we'll lift the canoe on to this ledge."

They had already scrambled out, and were standing on the rocks, within the cave, some feet above the water's level. The sea was gurgling and heaving mysteriously, but the motion was remarkably slight.

"Supposing the tide comes up higher, gov'nor?" murmured Nipper. "We don't want to lose the canoe——"

"Why do you think I chose this particular hour?" interrupted Lee. "It was high-water twenty minutes ago. The tide will not rise further. Are you ready? Come along, then."

Nelson Lee led the way. Clinging to the rocks he worked his way out of the cave, and, afterwards, it was easy enough to climb the cliffs.

At intervals they paused, listening—watching.

But Surf Island seemed like a place of the dead.

At length they reached the top, and without a sound, now, they advanced over the grassy ground towards the island's centre.

"Careful!" warned Lee suddenly.

He pulled Nipper up almost on the brink of the chasm. Lying flat down, they were able to look over into that strange rock pool, far below.

Fate had timed their arrival amazingly well; for even as they stared down, they saw an unearthly, greenish glow in the very waters of the pool.

CHAPTER 19.

Nelson Lee Takes Action!

IT was a fascinating sight. The pool itself, owing to the intense gloom, was practically invisible; yet, in the depths of the water, that eerie glow could be seen.

"Great Scott!" breathed Nipper, his heart thudding. "What is it, gov'nor?"

Nelson Lee did not answer. He was watching intently; and his blood coursed more warmly through his veins as he knew that he was gazing upon the proof of the theory he had formed.

"It's moving, young 'un!" he murmured.

"That glow—yes!" said Nipper. "But what is it?"

"The beam from a searchlight."

"What!"

"Don't you recognise it?"

"But how can there be a searchlight far beneath the surface of——" Nipper suddenly paused, catching his breath in. "You don't mean—that stolen submarine?"

"That's exactly what I do mean, lad," muttered Lee grimly. "Rather a neat hiding-place, eh? While ships are scouring the open

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seas, the submarine lies here, tucked away in the very interior of Surf Island! I had an idea that a wide subterranean channel connected this pool with the open sea."

"My only sainted aunt! I'll bet my boots that you're right about Zingrave!" said Nipper stoutly. "There's not another crook with enough audacity for a stunt like this! It's labelled 'Zingrave' all over!"

Now that he had been told, Nipper could see that the greenish glow in the pool was indeed caused by a searchlight, he could even trace the beam. And it was moving slowly, gradually edging over towards the far side of the pool. And presently the glow died away completely, leaving the water incredibly black.

"It's gone!" muttered Nipper.

"Into the channel—yes," agreed Lee. "Come; if we take our bearings by the spot where the searchlight disappeared we can form a pretty accurate guess as to where the submarine will come out."

As they hurried away there was no sign of life on the island. Dr. Catling's bungalow and observatory were both hidden by a rising bill-

side. There seemed to be no men on guard. Lee had not expected to find any.

Skirting that rocky gully which contained the sea-water pool, the pair reached more open ground, where they could make quicker progress. And at length they found themselves on the very cliff edge, overlooking the sea.

The cliff was sheer here, and, lying flat, they stared down. They could dimly see the faint line of foam caused by the tiny waves as they broke against the rocky cliff face.

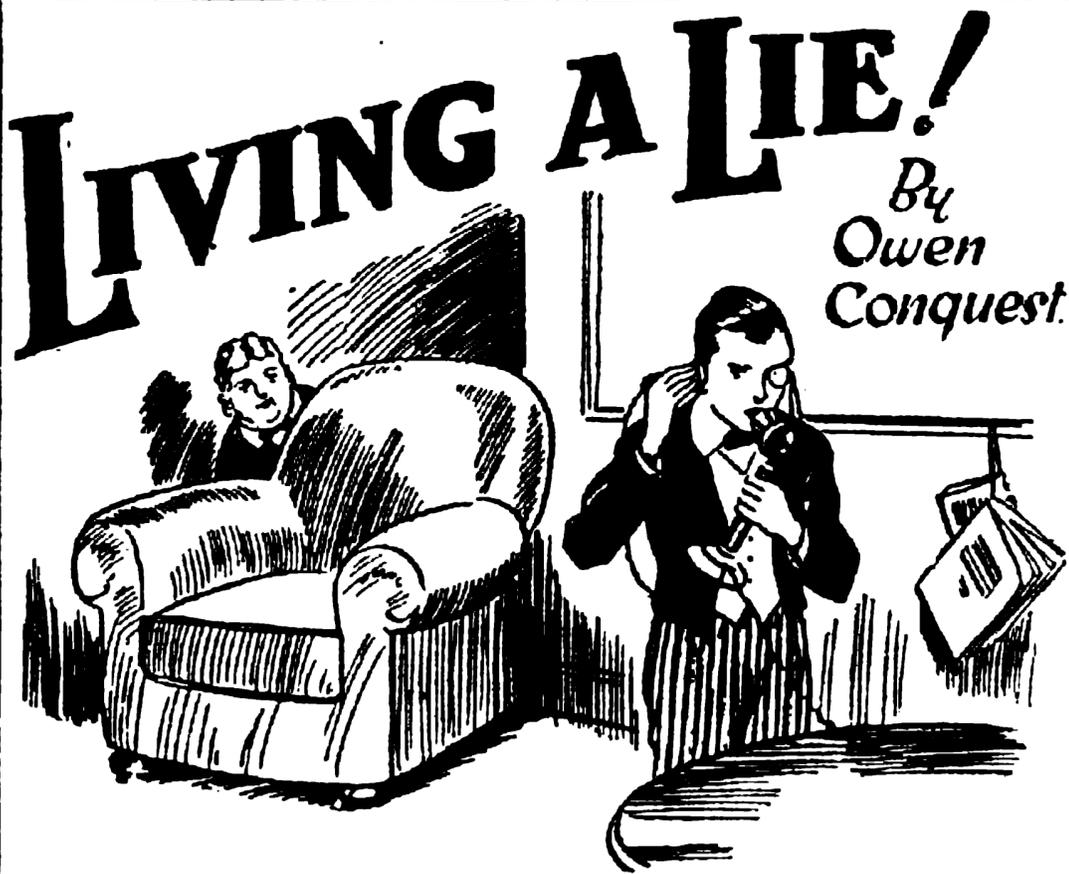
"No sign of anything, guv'nor," whispered Nipper.

"Be patient," said Lee. "It must be a ticklish business, getting that submarine out."

They waited, and the minutes ticked away. Even Nelson Lee was beginning to think that the submarine had eluded them, when he pointed

"There she goes!" he said contentedly.

Again there was that greenish glow; but now it was much fainter, proving that the submarine was more deeply submerged. Only for a few moments did the watchers see it. There was



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not even a ripple on the surface of the sea ; not a sound.

"I do not usually believe all that Americans say, but I fancy I owe Mr. Freemantle an apology," whispered Nelson Lee. "I had regarded his talk about the wonders of the *Ossipee* as so much 'hot air.'"

"'Bolony' is the right word, guv'nor," grinned Nipper.

"A submarine that can negotiate such a channel is indeed a wonderful craft," continued Lee. "She must be very much handier than the ordinary type of undersea vessel. Well, she's gone, and I think we can rely upon her being absent for some little time."

"What do you think they're doing with her, guv'nor?"

"I have a shrewd idea, but we needn't discuss that now," replied Lee. "We have our own work to do. And the coast seems to be fairly clear."

They rose to their feet and, still taking every possible precaution, they made their way across the island towards Dr. Catling's bungalow.

"Zingrave might be here, but I doubt it," said Lee presently. "It's any odds that he is on the submarine, for it is bent upon grim work to-night. I'm quite prepared to find that Surf Island has been left to the care of the admirable Dr. Catling and his highly respectable servant, Bates."

"We ought to be able to manage those two all right, sir," said Nipper eagerly. "If we take them by surprise——"

"Oh, no ; nothing so crude," broke in Lee softly. "We've got to go slowly, lad. We're on a voyage of discovery to-night, not out for battle. That will come later, at the right time."

They were within sight of the bungalow now, and a warm, homely glow showed in one of the windows. It looked very peaceful. Rather to Nipper's surprise, Lee did not attempt to approach the bungalow. He veered off, making for the squat building on the higher ground—a little place with a most peculiar roof. It wasn't the roof at all, really, but a species of glass dome. In a word, Dr. Catling's private observatory.

"What are we going here for, guv'nor?" whispered Nipper.

"You'll see soon," replied Lee. "Even if Catling were a bona-fide astronomer he would not be making any observations to-night, for there isn't a star winking in the sky. So I think we can be assured that the observatory is quite deserted."

Nipper wondered what the game was, and when he found out he was considerably astonished. Nelson Lee's first move was to carefully examine the door of the little building. It was securely locked. But, with the aid of a cunningly devised picklock of Lee's own invention, the door was quickly opened.

Like shadows the pair entered.

When the door was closed, Lee flashed on an electric torch, keeping the beam directed towards the floor.

The place looked quite comfortable. There was a nice carpet on the floor, there were some easy chairs, and, in the centre, a really fine telescope.

"This will do admirably," murmured Lee, in a satisfied voice.

He had found a bamboo table under one of the windows. He took a tube of something from his pocket, unscrewed the cap, and pressed the jelly-like contents over the lower part of the table, spreading it with his hands.

"That's a tube of solidified fuel, isn't it, sir?" asked Nipper, in wonder. "The kind of stuff they use in automatic lighters?"

"Exactly," said Lee. "Get that door open, young 'un, and stand ready."

He shifted one of the easy chairs so that it was near the table, and then, very deliberately, he struck a match and applied it.

There was a burst of flame, and the next moment the interior of the observatory was lurid with fire. The flames leapt up angrily, catching the curtains.

"Now!" said the detective crisply.

They hurried out, and it was only the work of a moment for Nelson Lee to relock the door.

"Now, Nipper, we must watch for results—and hope for the best," said Nelson Lee coolly.

CHAPTER 20.

Strategy!

DR. ENOCH CATLING had not enjoyed his supper. He was irritable.

"I'm afraid we shall soon be shifting, Bates," he said, almost savagely. "We've had a pleasant time of it here during these past months. No work to do, good pay, and not a trace of danger."

"No reason why it should end," commented Bates.

"I wouldn't mind the Chief coming if he only used the island as a hiding-place," went on Catling. "That's what he originally intended. But this business with the submarine scares me. It's too infernally dangerous. Men swarming all over the place——"

"There aren't any here now," interrupted Bates. "They've all gone off on this job. There are only two left, and they're stationed down on the outer cliff ready to give the signal when the sub, comes back."

"This sort of thing can't go on," grumbled Catling. "I wish the Chief wouldn't take such risks. If this game blows up we'll all be finished."

Bates rose reluctantly to his feet.

"Better be getting some grub for those kids, I suppose," he said.

"Yes, those boys, too—they worry me," said Dr. Catling, frowning. "They can't escape, of course, but I don't like them being here."

"Better tell that to the Chief," said Bates. "He'll probably be interested."

"There's no need for you to get sarcastic!" snapped Catling. "Well, if you're going to prepare that food, go and do it."

"I'll do it when I like—I'm not taking orders from you," said Bates coolly. "You may be my boss to the world in general, but to me you're a nasty pain. What are you croaking about? The Chief's paying us extra, isn't he? Everybody thinks those kids are drowned, and we shan't have any more busybodies nosing round the island."

And Bates went off to the kitchen to prepare some rough food for the young prisoners.

An enamelled jug, filled with tea, was simmering on an oil-stove. Bates merely took a loaf of bread, and a hunk of cheese, and put them into a basket. Then he operated the secret lever of the cooking-stove, and it pivoted back, revealing the stone steps.

He was picking up the enamelled jug and the basket when he paused. From outside had come a peculiarly sharp crack, not unlike a pistol shot.

"What was that?" asked Catling, from the other room.

"How should I know?" retorted Bates. "You'd better go out and look, hadn't you? You're doing nothing."

Catling grunted, got to his feet and opened the front door. Then he uttered a startled yell.

The observatory was in full sight—but the observatory, instead of being in darkness, was glowing redly with flickering fire.

"Here—quick!" yelled Catling. "Bates! The observatory's on fire!"

Bates, who was about to descend, nearly dropped the jug of tea. He set it down hastily, flung the basket aside, and raced to the front door.

"Gosh!" he gasped. "You're right! But how could it have happened? I don't understand——"

"Quick! Get the patent fire-extinguisher from the kitchen," shouted Catling. "There's another one here. We've got to do something."

Wildly alarmed and excited, they grabbed the fire extinguishers and went dashing across the open ground towards the observatory—leaving the front door of the bungalow wide open.

"It has worked quite neatly, Nipper," murmured Nelson Lee complacently.

They were waiting behind some neighbouring bushes, but they did not move until the two men had reached the observatory. By this time Lee was quite satisfied that nobody else was in the bungalow—at least, no more enemies.

The fire had got quite a good hold—even better than Lee had intended. It had not been his plan to completely destroy the observatory. In order to attract the attention of the men he had at last flung a stone at one of the observatory windows—and it was the cracking of this which the men had heard.

"By Jove, sir, it's a brainy wheeze!" said Nipper admiringly. "You've tricked them out—and now the coast is clear for us."

"And I fancy that Messrs. Catling and Bates will be kept busy for some little time," said Lee, with a chuckle. "Come on, Nipper! It's safe for us to sneak in now—and if those boys are anywhere in the bungalow we'll soon locate them."

But it was not even necessary to search the bungalow. For as soon as Lee and Nipper had passed through into the kitchen they beheld the steaming tea, the basket containing the loaf and the hunk of cheese. More significant still, they saw that tilted range—and the black cavity in the floor, with the stone steps leading mysteriously downwards.

CHAPTER 21.

The Rescue—and a Plan!

NELSON LEE'S eyes gleamed with satisfaction.

"Luck is certainly with us, Nipper," he said crisply. "You see all this? Bates was actually taking food down to the boys when Catling sounded the alarm. Just look at the trouble it has saved us! The man did not even bother to close the secret trap-door."

"Why, it's a cert!" gasped Nipper. "Hand-forth and those other chaps are down here."

"And that's where we're going—leaving everything just as it stands," said Lee. "And if we can get away from Surf Island without those men knowing anything of our little raid it will be entirely satisfactory."

He led the way down into the blackness of that stairway, switching on his electric torch almost at once.

There was no doubt that the detective's act of strategy was brilliant; for Catling and Bates were battling madly with the fire. It had gained a firm hold by now. The bamboo table was destroyed, other articles of furniture were blazing furiously; the curtains had gone, and there was grave danger of the entire observatory going up in flames and smoke.

"We've got to put it out—we've got to!" gasped Catling frantically. "This fire will show like a beacon, and it might attract people from the shore. If the chief comes back and finds a lot of interfering strangers here——"

He broke off, appalled by the very thought. And he and Bates redoubled their efforts.

And while they worked, Nelson Lee and Nipper penetrated deeper and deeper into the bowels of the earth. Once or twice Lee paused, carefully examining the worn steps and the rocky walls.

"Ages old, Nipper," he said. "A relic of smuggling days. Centuries ago Surf Island was a smugglers' stronghold."

They were in a rock tunnel now; it shelved steeply downwards. Hurrying along, twisting and turning, they passed narrow side openings here and there—and occasionally a blackened oak door. Clear proof that these catacombs had once been used as storage quarters by smugglers.

"Careful!" warned Lee, abruptly.

They had turned a sharp corner, and now they only pulled up just in time to save themselves from plunging headlong into the pool. They were on a wide rock ledge, and the water stretched in front of them. It was not absolutely still, but it surged with a slow, insidious movement, as though it had a life of its own.

"What do you make of it, guv'nor?" asked Nipper. "That man wasn't going to bring food and drink all this way, was he?"

"We'll go back," replied Lee. "I think we must have overshot the mark."

He remembered the old doors he had seen, back along the tunnel. Retracing their steps, they came to the first door which was standing ajar. Lee pulled it open, and flashed his torch into a shallow cave.

They went on again, and found a similar cave. But it was a case of "third time lucky."

For when they came to the next door, it was closed—and two enormously heavy bolts were shot into the sockets.

"This looks more promising," murmured Lee. "Here, hold the torch."

He pulled the bolts back, and he found that the door swung open noiselessly on oiled hinges.

"About time, too!" said a grumbling voice. "If you mean to starve us——"

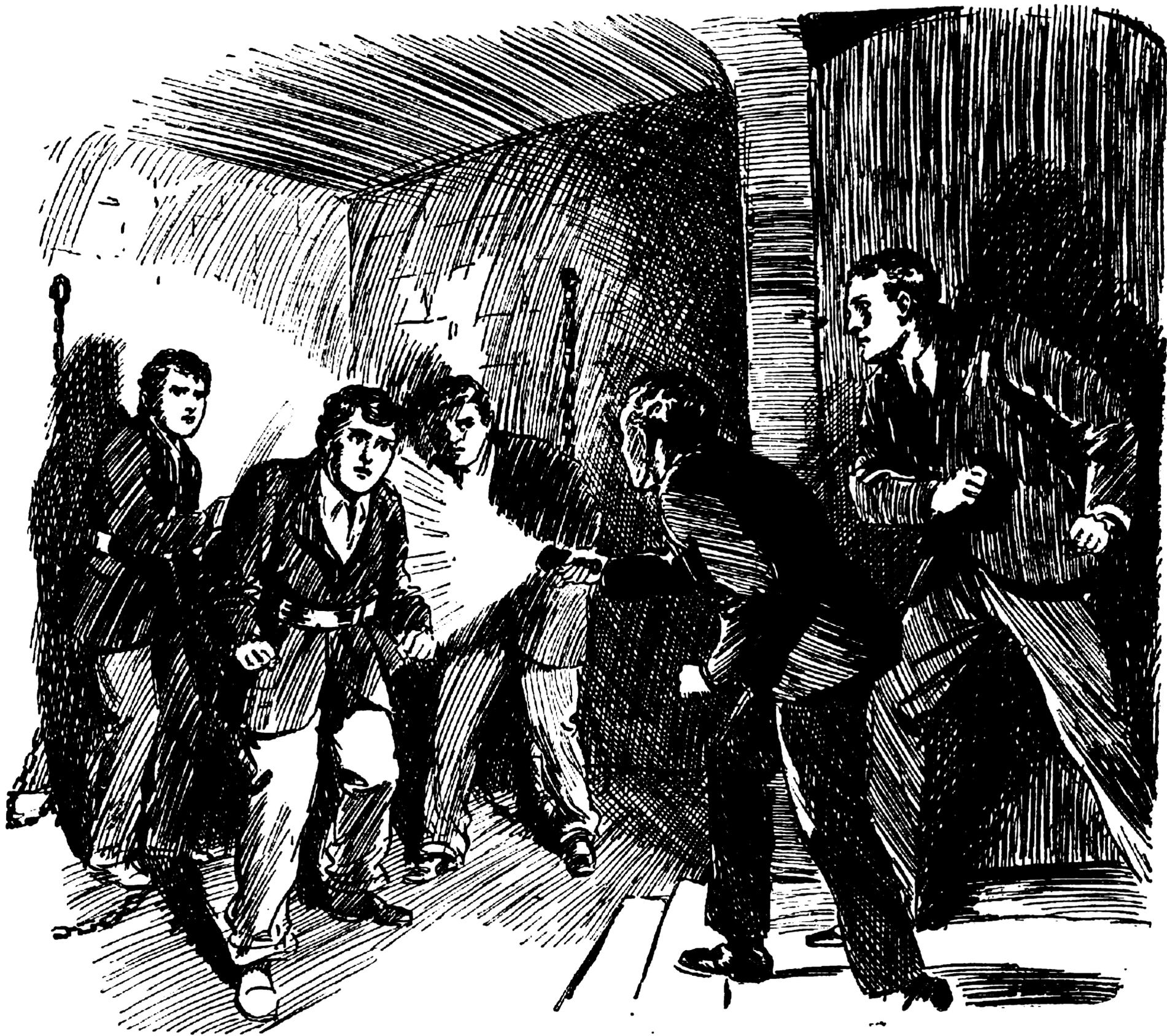
"Handforth!" ejaculated Nipper exultantly. "We've found you at last!"

"Steady, boys—steady!" said Lee, as they pressed round him so vigorously that they nearly knocked him over. "Don't be so excited—and don't make so much noise."

"What did I tell you chaps?" panted Handforth, his voice charged with triumph. "Didn't I say that Mr. Lee would come and rescue us?"

"Did you?" said McClure. "I don't remember it."

"What does it matter?" broke in Church. "Mr. Lee is here—and Nipper! Oh, crumbs! I'm dizzy! We're saved!"



Nelson Lee swung the massive door open and stepped into the secret dungeon. Nipper's torch stabbed the darkness and rested on three figures chained to the rocky walls. "Handforth! We've found you at last!" he yelled.

"Great jumping kangaroos!" came a yell. "Am I dreaming, or—— Here, keep that light away, for goodness sake! You're blinding me——"

"It's Mr. Lee—and Nipper!" yelled Church. "Oh, thank goodness!"

Three grotesque figures, chained by long chains to the wall, were revealed in the beam of the torch. They were dressed in nondescript clothing—men's clothing, much too large for them. Their own having been taken away, Zingrave had provided them with this rough and ready garb.

Lee was regarding them with entire satisfaction. He could see that the three boys had come to little or no harm. And the very fact that food was to have been brought to them proved that Zingrave had no murderous intentions—now.

"How are you going to get us away, sir?" asked Handforth eagerly. "Can you break these chains? They started putting them on us at night time. By George! What a sensation when we get back to St. Frank's! Won't the chaps be green with envy! We'll be able to talk of this for the rest of the term!"

"Here, just a minute!" said Nipper, in sudden alarm. "If we take these chaps away, guv'nor, Zingrave will know that somebody has rescued them, and he'll take fright and——"

"Zingrave!" almost babbled Handforth. "My only hat! I was going to tell you about that, sir! Zingrave was going to kill us at first——"

"Ah!" Lee grasped Handforth's arm so tight that the burly junior winced. "Then I was right! Zingrave is in charge here?"

"Rather, sir! We didn't know it at first," said Handforth. "We were suddenly collared, and we were taken into a house, and there was Zingrave——"

"Tell me everything—as briefly as you can."

Assisted by Church and McClure, Handforth blurted out the full story.

"So the plan is to keep you here—imprisoned?" said Lee, at length. "Well, boys, you've come to no harm—thank heaven!—and I don't think there is any danger of Zingrave taking drastic steps. I don't see how I can get rid of these chains now, so I wonder if you'll be plucky enough to remain here?"

"Remain here, sir!" gasped Handforth. "But—but haven't you come to rescue us?"

"If I thought that you were in danger, I'd do all I could to break those chains and take you away at once," replied Nelson Lee. "But you can help my plans very considerably by consenting to remain here, as prisoners. I will let your people know, and secure their promise to secrecy. I have found you, and I am satisfied that you'll come to no harm. If you'll be patient, and trust to me——"

"No need to say that, sir," interrupted Handforth impulsively. "You know that we trust you—and we'll do anything you say."

CHAPTER 22.

Nelson Lee's Promise!

YET, even as Handforth said the words, the expression on his face was eloquent of his disappointment. Church and McClure too, were looking suddenly downcast.

"It's tough luck, boys," said Lee kindly. "You may think that my work has been for nothing to-night—but that is not so. Until I found you I was filled with grave uncertainty—and it was impossible, indeed, for me to proceed with the plan which, I hope, will ultimately lead to the downfall of Zingrave and his entire gang. Don't you understand? Now that I know, I can go ahead with that plan."

"Can't you go ahead with it, sir, if you rescue us?" asked Church hopefully.

"No; Zingrave and his men know that you could not possibly have escaped without outside help," replied Lee. "If they return and find that you have gone, they will know that somebody has been here——"

"And they'll know that that 'somebody' was you, guv'nor," said Nipper shrewdly.

"They will suspect it, at all events," agreed Lee. "And Zingrave, being warned, will almost certainly take the alarm and escape. And we can be quite certain that he will escape in that stolen submarine——"

"By George, yes, sir! I'd forgotten the submarine," said Handforth.

"My aim is to get that submarine back for the owner—and to smash Zingrave's new gang," said Lee tensely. "I can only do so, boys, if you help me. And you can only help me by consenting to remain here, giving no inkling to your captors of what has happened to-night. I promise you that your ordeal will not be prolonged. I'll have you out within a day or two."

"We're game, sir," said Handforth promptly. "Aren't we, you chaps?"

"Of course," said Church and McClure, with the utmost readiness.

"Now, Handforth, take this," said Lee.

Edward Oswald gasped as he saw what Nelson Lee was handing him.

"An automatic pistol!" he ejaculated. "But—but I can't use that, sir! I know how to fire it, of course, but even if it came to a pinch, I couldn't kill anybody——"

"Take it," insisted Lee. "Hide it carefully away—and only use it in an acute emergency: I shall feel more comfortable. I had better explain that this is not a lethal weapon, Handforth."

"Not a which, sir?"

"It looks deadly, but it isn't," continued Lee. "When you aim this pistol and pull the trigger, a jet of chemical is projected, effective at a range of anything up to ten yards. And that liquid is guaranteed to incapacitate any man for at least fifteen minutes. There are seven 'cartridges.' Take it, and hide it. But don't use it unless you are compelled to."

And three minutes later, after shaking hands all round, Nelson Lee and Nipper left Handforth & Co. to their imprisonment. And the chums of Study D had got over their disappointment by now, and they were feeling exultant. They were helping in the detective's great plan! It brought them immense satisfaction.

AT just about the time Lee and Nipper were leaving, Dr. Catling and Bates were standing in the observatory, looking about them with satisfaction. Both men were well nigh exhausted.

They had had a strenuous battle, and for some time it had been touch and go.

Thanks to the patent fire-extinguishers, the worst ferocity of the conflagration had been subdued at once. After that the men had made many frantic journeys to the bungalow and back again, carrying buckets of water.

And at last, with most of their breath gone, and with their limbs aching, they surveyed the observatory. The last spark had been blotted out; a great deal of damage had been done inside, but the building, in the main, had suffered no real harm.

"I don't think the fire could have been seen on the mainland," said Catling. "There weren't any outside flames. I've been worrying about the coastguards. But if they did spot anything, they would have mistaken it for a bonfire, or something like that. Anyhow, there's no danger now. Pah! What an infernal stink!"

"What a rotten mess!" growled Bates. "Most of this furniture ruined—and the telescope damaged, too. Gosh! The chief will

have something to say—and I don't think it'll be pleasant."

"I can't understand how the fire started," went on Catling. "The place was locked up—nobody had been in it for hours. There wasn't a fire, or a lamp, or—or anything! What do you make of it, Bates?"

"No good asking me," said Bates wearily. "Anything might have caused the fire—something smouldering, perhaps. Some of those men were in here earlier, and they might have been smoking. You know how blamed careless they are. Anyhow, the Chief can't jump on us."

And they went back to the bungalow, begrimed from head to foot, but triumphant. And never for a single second did the true explanation of that mysterious fire occur to them.

CHAPTER 23.

The Return of the Raiders!

"LOOK out!" murmured Nelson Lee abruptly.

He and Nipper were in the rock tunnel, and with a sudden movement Lee switched off his electric torch. He almost dragged Nipper into one of those catacomb-like branch tunnels.

For his quick ears had heard noisy footsteps. A glow of light now showed. And presently Bates came down the tunnel, carrying the delayed supper for the prisoners. Over one of his arms hung a vapour-lantern, giving forth a dazzling light.

Lee and Nipper did not move. They heard the man shoot the bolts back; they heard him say a few words to the boys; and then, immediately afterwards, the bolts were re-shot.

Bates went back immediately, and soon complete silence reigned.

"We had just sufficient time—and only just," murmured Lee. "I imagine that our friends must have subdued the fire, young 'un. H'm! This means that we cannot get out of here by that rock stairway to the bungalow."

"It doesn't matter, sir," said Nipper. "There's that ledge beside the pool, and you can climb up the rocks in several places. I've done it before—in full daylight, of course."

"Come along then—the sooner we get away from Surf Island the better," said Lee. "Our mission is accomplished—and now we must make our preparations for the big coup."

It was ticklish work. Reaching the ledge, they felt their way along for some distance, and at last they came to a likely spot. The rocks were not quite sheer here; the gully rose steeply, but not impossibly. The darkness was intense, and that climb resolved itself into a matter of feeling.

Lee led the way, and he tested every piece of rock before he trusted his weight to it. Thus, by arduous endeavour, they mounted higher and higher.

It took them just over an hour to reach the summit. In full daylight they could have accomplished the same journey in ten minutes. Lee knew that there were probably several other ways out of that steep gully—far easier ways. But it was quite impossible to look for them in the intense gloom.

"Phew! That was a nasty business, Nipper,"

said the detective, at length. "Well, we know where we are now. We can easily get back to our canoe——"

"Just a minute, gov'nor," whispered Nipper. "I thought I saw—— Yes! They're back! Look!"

They both crouched low, staring down that rocky cliff to the pool. And Nipper was pointing to a greenish glow.

The submarine had returned!

Only for a minute did Nelson Lee hesitate. The "safety first" principle urged him to hurry away, and to get to the canoe before the Green Triangle men made a definite appearance. But curiosity won the day; Nelson Lee decided to remain.

And there was very little risk. He and Nipper, lying flat, were quite invisible. They were able to look down into the bottom of that rock-basin, and what they saw fascinated them.

The greenish glow became more pronounced. At last it was in the very centre of the pool, and now the water became uneasily disturbed. Many ripples appeared; little waves slapped against the rocky sides. And then, with a sudden swishing and swirling of foam, a monstrous thing broke the surface.

The sound of clanging metal came; two hatchways were opened simultaneously, and men climbed out upon the deck. Low-voiced orders were given; foot by foot the submarine edged towards the rock ledge, and soon two or three of the men were able to leap ashore. Hawsers were flung across, and after that it was only a matter of minutes before the *Ossipee* was securely "berthed."

Powerful electric lamps were now in evidence. Two men emerged from one of the tunnels, carrying vapour-lamps. The whole scene was eerily illuminated—and it looked strange, indeed, to those two watchers above.

"I wonder they dare show lights like this!" breathed Nipper into Nelson Lee's ear.

"Safe enough!" replied Lee. "The lights can't be seen beyond the island. "This is an amazingly safe harbour for the submarine—and all the safer because it is so near to Caistowe. What man, in his right senses, would think of looking for the vessel so close at hand?"

"Look, gov'nor," hissed Nipper suddenly. "There he is! Zingrave himself! The kingpin of the whole picnic!"

Although they were looking down upon the heads of these men, they easily recognised Professor Cyrus Zingrave.

And what happened after that was vastly interesting.

CHAPTER 24.

Modern Pirates!

A DOZEN men, at least, came up from the bowels of the *Ossipee*, and for some time there was intense activity.

Professor Zingrave, standing on the rocks, gave directions. From one of the hatchways small wooden cases, evidently of enormous weight, were hoisted out. A kind of gangway had been fixed up, and, struggling under the weight of these cases, the Green Triangle men carried them ashore.

After that came more normal-looking boxes—quite a number of them.

"What do you make of it, sir?" whispered Nipper, in wonder.

"Well, to my mind the thing is as clear as daylight," replied Lee grimly. "Loot, Nipper! That's what our friends are carrying ashore."

"You mean that they've been out on a raid?"

"They have been out on an act of piracy, unless I am very much mistaken," replied the detective. "Yes, that's the secret of it, young 'un. Zingrave has turned pirate, and he is using this stolen submarine for the purpose of preying upon innocent shipping. Surely it is one of the most daring 'rackets' that even Zingrave conceived!"

"What a pity we can't nab the blighters straight away," said Nipper regretfully.

"We'd better be going—or the 'blighters' will nab us," replied Lee. "We have stayed far too long as it is. It is foolhardy to endanger our very lives in this way. Make no mistake about it, Nipper, if we're caught we shall be destroyed like rats."

But they weren't caught.

In the darkness they slipped away to the cliff on the outer edge of Surf Island; they descended like shadows of the night itself. And gaining their canoe, they slipped out upon the calm sea, and were soon paddling for the mainland.

NEXT day came the staggering news. Nipper's schoolfellows at St. Frank's little dreamed, that morning, that he had spent half the night on high adventure, for he obeyed the rising bell with the others, and was down bright and early.

The Romove was not quite itself these days, for it had not yet recovered from the shock of losing Handforth & Co. in such tragic circumstances.

The morning newspapers did not contain the stupendous news; but St. Frank's heard well before mid-day. Caistowe was seething—as, indeed, was every other seaport on the coast of the English Channel.

The story was stark in its simplicity.

During the night an incoming South American liner had been ordered to heave-to in mid-Channel; a submarine of no established nationality had given the order, and the startled liner's captain had been curtly told that if he offered the slightest resistance a shell would be fired into the vessel's waterline.

Armed men, all heavily masked, had boarded the liner. None of the passengers had been disturbed, for they were all sleeping. But the officer and crew, menaced by the deadly automatics of the modern pirates, had been compelled to obey orders.

The strong-room had been looted—and twenty cases, containing silver in bullion, had been removed. It was a consignment worth tens of thousands of pounds, from an important Argentine silver mine.

Not by a word or a sign had the raiders revealed their identity. For once Zingrave was cautious. He was not yet letting the world know that this was one of his enterprises—that the League of the Green Triangle had re-

commenced its deadly operations against society.

Frantic wireless messages for help had been sent out, of course, but long before any assistance could reach the liner the raiders had gone—the submarine had sheered off, submerging and vanishing.

It was all the more daring because vessels, at that very moment, were searching for the missing *Ossipee*. And here the *Ossipee* had boldly appeared in the open, and had looted this liner!

The affair caused a world-wide sensation.

It was now known why the *Ossipee* had been seized—but it was certainly not known where the *Ossipee* was being hidden, or how it was possible for her to appear and vanish so brazenly.

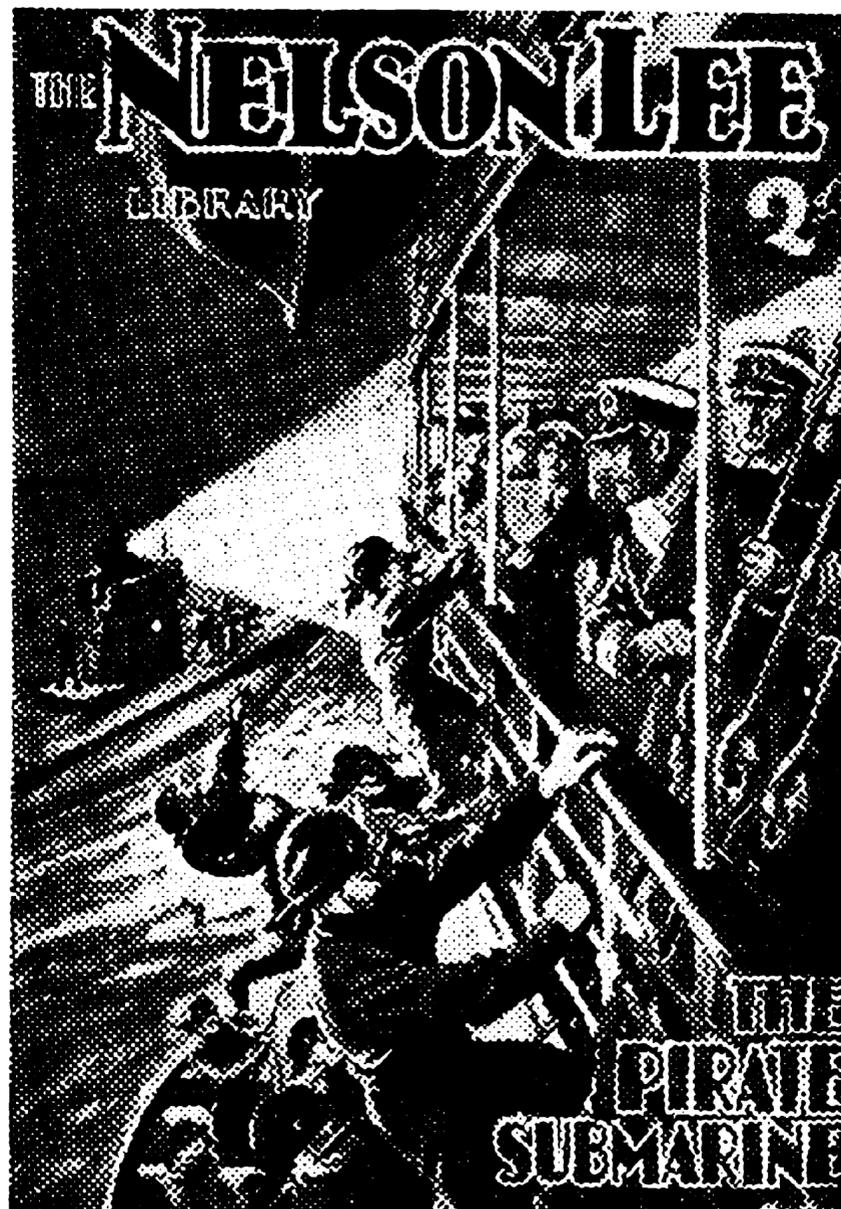
Naval destroyers, grim sleuths of the sea, were hunting. Naval seaplanes flitted hither and thither across the sky. But every effort was unavailing.

The pirate submarine had come, and it had gone. There was only one clue—and Nelson Lee was the only man who knew that this was a "red herring across the trail." Mysterious lights had been seen off the coast of Normandy, and never for a moment did Lee doubt that Zingrave was responsible for those lights. A blind—to lead the authorities to believe that the submarine lair was situated somewhere along the coast of France.

Nelson Lee was quite complacent whilst the world wondered. For the great detective was ready for the next move—and he was eager to cross swords with these twentieth century pirates.

THE END.

(The Big Thrills of the week are all in next Wednesday's Gripping Long Complete Detective-Thriller entitled: "The Pirate Submarine!" Don't miss it.)



Our Weekly Pow-Wow Between the Editor and His Pals!

MY DEAR CHUMS,
—The appearance of a paragraph on hiking in this chat has had some remarkable results. Personally, I am fond of hiking. I regard it as a splendid exercise and a tonic, and I said as much in this paragraph. As a result, I have received dozens of letters from readers who are all keen hikers.

One reader from the north has sent me several long letters describing his club's outings, and from them I gather that he has some jolly fine times. Summer is in full swing, and the call of the open road is heard above the clattering of trams, rumbling of carts and buses, and other nerve-racking noises of city and town. To be away from it all, that's the thing—to feel the soft springing grass under one's feet, and to fill the lungs with pure country air. Gee, I'm getting quite poetic. That must be the result of the sun streaming in through my office window!

But the great point is this: The open road makes its appeal to us all. Now, you hikers, you ramblers, let's hear from you. Let me have news of your doings, your adventures on your next tramps. You will find a keen audience in not only your editor, but hundreds of fellow-reader hikers.

Your Free Gift Coupons

must be mounting up now. Stick to it. Don't let an opportunity go by of collecting as many of these Free Gift Coupons as you can. You will find two more coupons in this week's issue, and in a few week's time, I am giving you a **SPECIAL BONUS COUPON TALLING 250 POINTS**. That's an extra-good bit of news, eh? 250 points all on one coupon!

Don't forget our companion papers, the "Ranger," "Gem," and "Magnet" are also giving away coupons in this 10,000 Gift Plan. If you want to add to your collection buy any of these fine papers.

PRIZES FOR READERS' JOKES

"Bother my bad memory," exclaimed the professor to a friend at a reception.

"What trick has it played you now?"

"Why, I loathe these crowded functions, and I intended to forget to come, yet here I am, having forgot to forget!"

(H. Ralph, 2, Raleigh Street, Tantony Estate, W. Bromwich—a pocket wallet.)

Angry Gent.: "Hi! Waiter! Come and have a look at this sausage."

Waiter: "why, there's nothing wrong."

Angry Gent.: "The ends are too close together for my liking—that's what's wrong."

(C. Fairweather, R.A.O., Camberley, Surrey—a penknife.)



Letters to the Editor should be addressed to **NELSON LEE LIBRARY, Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.**

Teacher: "Your essay on 'Our Cat' is word for word the same as your brother's."

Jimmy: "Yes, sir. It's the same cat."

(F. Hughes, 1, Braemore Road, Hillsborough, Sheffield—a penknife.)

Boastful Traveler: "Ah! You should just see the beautiful sunset in the east."

Old Salt: "I should like to! I've never seen it set anywhere but in the west."

(A. E. Speight, "Queensmead," 291, Sheen Road, Richmond—a pocket wallet.)

Doctor: "If you want to get thin, you must eat only fruit, toast, lean meat, and drink orange juice."

Patient: "Before or after meals?"

(Miss N. Clifton, Colinso, Gratton Road, Cheltenham, a pocket wallet.)

Second: "Pull yourself together, Darkie! Say to yourself, 'I'm going to win this fight,' and you will."

Darkie: "Doan you be so suah! Ah knows just how I tell lies!"

(V. Hemming, Eaves Green, Meriden, near Coventry, a penknife.)

Chemist: "Fetch me a blue bottle, quick, boy."

Assistant: "Please there isn't a bluebottle here. Will an ordinary housefly do?"

(H. A. Harris, King Edward Ward, King George Hospital, Ilford—a pocket wallet.)

A man put his fingers into a horse's mouth to see how many teeth it had. The horse closed its mouth to see how many fingers the man had. The curiosity of both was satisfied.

(H. Kent, 28, Emerson Avenue, Toronto, Canada. A grand prize.)

Mac said he could feed his family of six on half a pound of steak, but his friend said it was not possible.

"Hoots, mon, of course it is!" said Mac. "And I hae some over. Ye ken it's this way: At dinner I say to the bairns, 'Who'll have some steak or threepence?' and they all hae threepence. Then when the puddin' comes along I say, 'Who'll hae some pudding for threepence?' and they all hae the puddin' and I get my threepences back. D'ye ken the noo, mon?"

(L. Smith, 126, Hoof Street, Grafton, N.S.W., Australia. A grand prize.)

YOUR EDITOR:



THE CITY OF GOLD!

Tom Cook, a young explorer, has been crowned king by the people of a mysterious city in the heart of Africa. Things prove happy for the new ruler until he learns that Gobo, a cunning high priest, is plotting his downfall. As Gobo is in hiding, Tom sends his Zulu servant, Lulu, with a native woman who knows his whereabouts, to bring him to the palace!

Trapped!

SOUPSA, the native woman who was leading Lulu to the hiding-place of Gobo, seemed to be making a discreet round, so as to avoid any habitation.

But the experienced old warrior could follow pretty well the direction they were taking by glancing at the stars as he had taken direction many times and oft on the veldt on scouting and hunting expeditions.

After an hour's walk he gathered that they had made a complete circuit of the city and were now somewhere near the temple itself. There was a low tumble down looking hut of the usual beehive shape right in his immediate path, and at this the fat woman paused, and motioning to the Zulu to come closer, whispered:

"Enter, Lesardu, mighty commander of the army. I, your slave and lover, will follow later. I watch awhile. Enter, lord of my life."

There was not a speck of light to show the Zulu where he was going, and for a second he paused to peer into the hut's dense blackness. Then a shoulder like a bullock's haunch gave him a violent shove, and as he went spinning into the darkness Soupsa's mocking voice called:

"Enter, white man's servant who repulses Soupsa the Brave. Maybe, Lesardu, you will repent your slurring words when Gobo has done with you."

He hardly heard more than her voice, for next second his feet shot out from under him and next second he was squatted on his haunches shooting downwards on some smooth surface into complete darkness.

As he shot down he muttered:

"Now where may Ben Bold be? If he has followed me as he promised he may yet fetch baas—"

Whoosh!

Something came hurtling down behind

him, and a weight struck his shoulder as a familiar voice moaned:

"Thet heifer's done me; she's sure sol' me a pup thisyer time, and whar poo' ol' Nugget is— Sufferin' wild cats!"

A bright light shone into their faces and they slid down a shaft into a large underground den brilliantly lighted by the temple lamps. Lulu was up in a flash and fighting with all his strength as half a dozen men grabbed him, but it was no use, and he was hauled to his feet to stare straight into the malevolent blinking eyes of the aged Gobo. But Lulu looked beyond the monkeylike countenance; beyond the grinning faces of the hundred odd priests above their heads to a grating where a dozen great lions sniffed and pawed, and he knew that he and his little American comrade had been trapped to afford old Gobo and his priests the last cruel joys of watching defenceless prisoners fight the unequal fight against the forest-bred brutes.

The High Priest's Vengeance!

"WELCOME, Lesardu, commander of the army, mouthpiece of Tomkuk the Great, the priests of the great god bid ye welcome!"

The sneering, sarcastic words were snarled out by the old priest as he peered closely into the face of the giant Zulu with malevolent glee; but he bit the sentence off short and stared harder still for a moment, whilst an expression of mingled wrath and bewilderment crossed his wrinkled old face.

"Bring me a torch, quick!" he snarled; and as one was thrust into his hand he waved it before the Zulu's face until Lulu was almost choked with the smoky fumes.

"Lift me the casque from his head; I would see his face," ordered Gobo, his voice huskier than ever with wrath. The chain-mail helmet was lifted from the Zulu's head, which he threw back proudly as he faced the trembling old fury with pride and dignity.

Again Gobo peered closely, the torch scorching the Zulu's face.

"So you are not Lesardu!" hissed the old priest. "You are an impostor!"

"No impostor I!" replied the Zulu proudly. "It was you and your lovely granddaughter who called me a Lesardu. 'Twas you who showed me the tricks of the temple and how to speak through the idol in the voice of Tomkuk the Great. It was you who had the surprise of your wicked life when your supposed slave used other than the words you had put into his mouth. It was you who fooled yourself. Oh, Gobo, who has fooled the people for so many years!"

With a snarl like an enraged hyena the priest brought the flaming torch crashing across the Zulu's mouth. It left a black mark and a blistered burn, but Lulu never flinched. Instead he stared back at the priest with cold contempt, and he muttered:

"Some time I'll make you pay for that blow, Gobo the priest, the traitor! It is the

act of a brave man to smite a prisoner with his hands held behind him, is it not? Only an ape would do so!"

Gobo fairly gibbered, but even he could feel a sense of shame at being taunted with cowardice by a prisoner before his own priests. He dashed the torch to the ground, whilst an evil smile wreathed his lips.

"A little later we will see just how brave a man you are, and how long it takes so brave a man to die slowly, ah, slowly, hung by the shoulder-blades on red-hot hooks. Then shall your body be given to the lions. Where, then, is Lesardu?"

Lulu threw back his head and laughed, though his burnt mouth made it a painful thing to do.

"All that is left of your warrior lies yonder in the dungeon from which the gates of the arena are worked. Do you remember you heard the sound of a struggle and a cry? That was when Lesardu met his end and I took his armour. Then did you tell me all the secrets of the temple. But you made one mistake, priest. You said that Tomkuk was but a legend and never existed; that this white-faced lad is but an impostor taking advantage of a chance resemblance. Fool!"

Well did the Zulu know how to play upon the superstitious fears of such a man as Gobo, who, whilst fooling others, could be so easily fooled.

"Know that Tomkuk the Great lives!" thundered the Zulu, his great voice ringing through the vaults. "His magic is mighty; so mighty that yours is but as the breath of a child to a whirlwind. You cannot kill me, Gobo; your knives would turn to putty against my breast, your spears crumple up, and your swords be as parchment!"

As a matter of fact, he was trying to enrage the old priest so that his end should be a speedy one, for he did not think there was a chance of their escaping this time, and he had no fancy for hanging in agony by the shoulder-blades on a red-hot hook and being fed piecemeal to the lions raging a few feet away.

"If we cannot kill you, then it would be but waste of time to try yet!" mumbled the priest with a sarcastic grin. "But what about the little white-faced man? Being a servant of Tomkuk, maybe he, too, cannot be killed. Bring him hither!"

Being so small and slight, the priests had not bothered much about the engineer, whose wrists were somewhat loosely tied behind him whilst he was supported by two stalwart priests who gripped his skinny arms under the armpits and propelled him forward at Gobo's command.

"How now, can you, the servant of the mighty Tomkuk, too, defy death?" sneered Gobo, thrusting his face close to Ben's to peer short-sightedly into his eyes in expectation of reading the fear in them. "Have ye no fear of the lions tearing your flesh, of hot hooks boring into—"

"Aw, put a sock in it!" cried Ben, turning his head away and blowing. "I dunno what in heck yer sayin', an', brother, yuh

oughter take somethin' for thet breath. Gee, I dunno what yuh been eatin', but it must ha' been dead some time. Crow-bait, I guess. Phew!"

Gobo could not understand what he said, of course, but his expression of disgust was quite sufficiently insulting, and the enraged priest brought his skinny old hand across the American's mouth, or, rather, he aimed to, but one of the quickest side-stepping boxers on the American ring just moved an inch, then swung on the supporting arms of the priests, whilst his feet flashed up in a lightning kick that caught old Gobo right under the chin and lifted him to the other end of the dungeon.

There was a roar of triumph, a scream of pain and terror from the old priest, and as he did a somersault out of reach of the questing paws of the lions in the cage at the other end, it was seen that his long robe had been slit from top to bottom and that a good quarter of a pound of steak had been torn from him. He danced around, foaming at the mouth and yelling with pain until one of the priests rushed into the temple and returned with some cooling balm which he applied to the injured part, whilst Gobo cursed him for a clumsy fool.

Ben grinned at his distorted face and chuckled:

"Mebbe thet'll be a lesson to yuh to keep yer dial cut'n free-born Amurrican citizen's clock, mister man! If yuh think yuh kin come an' breathe on muh jest how an' w'en yuh like—yuh've got another guess comin'!"

Gobo spoke a few words in an undertone to the priests, and two of them supported him away, whilst the priests filed out after him, giving the two prisoners malevolent grins as they passed.

The gates clanged to behind them and were double locked, the prisoners being left alone with the lions prowling to and fro a few feet away.

"Come on, big guy, open out an' spill what th' game is! What is th' programme, an' w'en does it start? What air they goin' to do to us? Somethin' sticky, I'm thinkin'!"

"'Tis so," assented the Zulu somewhat gloomily. "After hanging us by the shoulder-blades on red-hot hooks the old witch-doctor says we feed the lions, slowly, piecemeal!"

"Vurry kind of him; a verrry purty thought!" murmured the little American. "Th' only thing is—I guess we won't be hyar w'en th' entertainment starts."

Lulu glanced at him in surprise. The little man's wrists were still tied behind him, and their weapons had been taken from them. What chance could they have against the number of priests and those ferocious forest brutes pacing a few feet away?

"Little man, you are a good feller and a brave man, but this time I think we face death, sure and slow—death!" Lulu said.

"Sez yuh!" grinned Ben. "I've faced it slow an' sure an' quick but unsartain so many times thet I've come to th' conclusion thet nuthin's finished 'til th' balls stopped rollin' on this green airth. Have a bit on yer uncle.

Yuh kin betcher life I didn't come monkeyin' with ol' Gobo wit'out bein' pree-pared. I knoo he wuz as full o' tricks as a blue-faced monkey—but so'm I! Hyar's one on 'em. Houdini taught me thet up in Montreal one time. I knoo it'd come in mighty useful one day!"

He showed his wrists free with the rope still tied, dangling from one of them.

"But thet's on'y a beginnin'," he continued. "I guess it's up to us to teach these yer hully men a lesson, an' we'll make a start wi' 'Daniels in the lions den'—but yuh an' me ain't goin' to be th' Daniels, boyee! Not on yer life. Them parts is goin' to be filled by said priests—an' so's th' lions!"

Facing the Lions!

"WHAT you mean to do, little one?" asked the Zulu, his eyes rolling with excitement as he saw that Ben Bold was free. "We cannot get out of here; every way is closed, and the lions——"

"Th' lions air goin' to do ther stuff w'en th' time comes, don't worry!" said the American confidently. "Jest keep yer peepers an' yer ears open while I take a peek at th' walls yarnder. I guess this yer private torture den is some pecooliar constructed!"

He glanced around him at the stone walls on which were grim stains, relics of past occupants who had suffered at the cruel hands of the ghastly priests of Tomkuk temple. But the little American was quite unperturbed. He strolled round whistling under his breath, fishing in a belt concealed right under his clothing next to his skin and transferring its contents to the pocket of his shirt where they would be handier.

Lulu watched him in goggle-eyed amazement, but keeping his ears open to catch any sound of the return of the priests. The silence was only broken, however, by the shuffling of the great beasts' pads and an occasional snarl as the front ones snapped at one of the weaker who had pushed his way to the front.

Ben peered out between the bars, peering out beneath his hand at the opposite side of the lions' cage. He nodded his head approvingly and approached a gate in the wall of their own prison. Through this was another, much narrower cage, with a wall which sloped sharply upwards. It was scorched from high up to within a couple of feet of the ground, and he gave a grim chuckle as he read the sign.

"Vurry purty!" he said. "Loo, yuh an' me is goin' to have a sorter leetle cat an' mouse game, wit' us playin' th' leadin' parts o' th' mice an' Leo th' lion as the cat! Least-ways, thet's th' programme as sketched out by Gobo an' his feller clergy. But mebbe thar's goin' to be some li'l alteration o' cast!"

He pointed to the scorched walls of the narrow cage next door.

"We're buzzed in thar; see it's jest narrer 'nuff for yuh to stand upright ag'inst th' wall leanin' back so's Mister Leo cain't reach. Thet's all right; but when red-hot bars are let down yuh air between th' devil an' th' deep sea. Yuh kin take yer ch'ice between havin' yer flesh burnt off or takin' a chance wit' th' lions' claws thro' th' bars. Natterally thet takes some time, an' affor's much amoosement for th' hully priests!"

"Little man, can you let me loose?" pleaded the Zulu, almost piteously, as he watched his pal strolling leisurely about. "I'd like a chance to fight for my life!"

"Not necessary, bo; tho' I'll loosen yuh up a piece so's yer circoolation won't suffer. But promise muh thet whatever yuh see, however they start treatin' me, thet yuh won't butt in 'til I'll give yuh th' word? If yuh did—yuh'd plumb spile everythin' an' we'd likely cash in our checks; promise!"

Lulu promised readily enough, and Ben loosened his bonds sufficiently to permit the blood to flow freely and so that he could even wriggle free with an effort, but again he warned him not to attempt anything until he got the word.

"Say, 'tend to this an' git it straight," Ben whispered. "W'en th' time comes I wanter be th' first to do th' Daniel trick an' go inter th' narrer cage to amuse th' lions; git muh? Now, th' cunnin' ol' priests 'll reckon thet th' bravest man will give 'em th' bestest time, see? Will yuh kind o' act skeered to blazes, all gone to t' pack an' wobbly at th' knees whiles I act brave an' face death with a smile, git muh?"

"Show cowardice before my enemies?" cried the Zulu haughtily. "I am a warrior!"

"Yuh're a blamed fool, yer big stiff!" snapped the American. "Listen, yuh poor mutt! We gotta git out'n hyar, ain't we? I've gotta cast-iron cert plan for doin' it an' beatin' theseyer guys at ther own game an' pinchin' ol' Gobo so's—'Ssh, quick, jump to it—they're comin'—act like yer skeered stiff!"

He was back in his old place, lolling against the wall with his hands tied behind him, whistling shrilly and looking at the Zulu contemptuously.

To give the latter his due he put up a wonderful performance as two stalwart priests entered the den. It was impossible for him to turn pale, but he gave every other indication of extreme terror as the lions raved at the bars in anticipation of their approaching meal. His eyes bulged out of his head with terror, the sweat was already pouring down his face from the heat of the place. By some means he managed to foam at the mouth, whilst his knees sagged beneath him, and he hung in his bonds with trembling limbs, begging feebly for mercy.

Ben, who had picked up a few words of the language, mostly terms of abuse, spat in his direction and jeered at him for a coward, laughing at the priests and taunting them to do their worst.

They glanced from one to the other and grinned at the shaking Zulu.

"Ho, ho! Look at the great one whose breath is death; the mighty leader, the chief of the army who knows not fear; the elephant whose tread shakes the earth. Pah, you should be ashamed, great bullock! Even your little white friend does not quiver with fear as you do! Come, small man who shows not fear. You shall go first and show us some sport ere this man mountain of flesh is given to the lions to play with. Come!"

He did not trouble to examine the little American's bonds, but sliced them through with a sharp knife, then shoved him through the iron gate into that little narrow cage outside which the lions leapt and raged. As the gate clanged to behind him Ben cast a glance across. As he expected the priests were gathered at the opposite side in a sort of private box protected with massive bars, whilst old Gobo was in a stone place by himself, too high up for the lions to reach.

"Psst, I fear we shall not have much sport with the great elephant after all!" muttered the priest disappointedly. "Fight for your life and jump out of reach of the beasts' claws, small man, and if ye do well, maybe we will keep ye for another day. Life is sweet even with mangled limbs!"

"I dunno what yuh're sayin', yuh putty-faced heathen!" muttered Ben. "But I guess it's no compliment. If 'twasn't for sp'ilin' th' show I'd give yuh a haymaker in th' Darbey kelly that'd make yer refuse food for a month! But if I don't put it acrost yuh hully men in another ten minutes—call me a wall-eyed hambone. All set, Loo?"

He leant against the wall out of reach of the dabbing paws of the lions. The bars of the cage ascended an inch or two so that the questing claws could come a few inches farther under. He glanced upwards at a sound from above, and, as he had expected, caught sight of a grim face of a glowing red-hot bar of steel, balanced ready to be lowered on a chain. This was to drive him away from the safety of the wall into the lions' clutches, and a roar of delight and approval came from the priests as he skipped agilely out of the way of a long-legged lion's talons.

"Yuh'll be laffin' th' wrong side o' yer mouths in a li'l while!" he muttered; giving a glance behind him at Lulu and seeing that the big man had worked his way out of his bonds. "Hallo, here comes the blinkin' grill; guess I'd best make a start!"

As the long bar of iron was let down from above he dived into his shirt pocket and brought out a tiny capsule, and as a great paw dabbed beneath the bars he snapped the end of the capsule and let the beast have it right in the face.

"Woof!"

The lion coughed and spluttered as the highly concentrated gas entered his open jaws, and a couple more who jostled him got a dose of the same medicine. A howl of surprise and wrath went up from the priests at the other side of the arena as the lions retreated, coughing and barking, for, as Ben had been deprived of his weapons, they

could not see how he could possibly drive the savage beasts back.

But the American gave them little time for either surprise or action. He gave a piercing whistle which was the signal to Lulu and then pelted the other lions with the capsules, so that they were driven, coughing and snarling, to the other end of the arena. They were rolling over and over, fighting for breath like cats dosed with pepper!

Then Ben threw a shining, silver-plated tabloid bomb at the bars of the cage he was in. There was a flash, a dull roar, and the bars had melted away, leaving the cage open for the lions to enter. Then Lulu dashed through the opening and joined the little engineer.

"All cl'ar on th' western front, an' we'll durn soon cl'ar the back!" grinned Ben, as he threw a couple more gas bombs amongst the lions. The priests, with some idea of stopping the ravages this little white man was causing in their cages, jumped over the barriers, and were making their way behind the bars where the coughing lions tumbled.

"Now, I've gotcher whar I wantcher!" yelled Ben, and hurled one of the bright little explosive bombs full at the bars with the throw of a baseball pitcher. As it exploded the lions rushed through, glad to escape from that choking gas into fresh air which streamed through the open door. Priests and lions met in a struggling mass and, needless to say, the priests stood no chance.

"Git ol' Gobo," yelled Ben. "Gimme a back, long 'un!"

They raced across the arena to where old Gobo was sitting dumbfounded at the sudden turn of events. Lulu crouched against the high barrier, and Ben, taking a short run, leapt to his shoulders and thence into the "box" where the old priest sat.

"I've owed yuh one for a long time!" breathed the American ex-pugilist, and swung for the jaw. Gobo dropped senseless, and, picking up the scraggy form, Ben lowered him over to his pal. "Now, you know the secret way thro' th' temple, long 'un, beat it muy pronto, an' mebbe we kin git this ancient stiff to th' pallis wi'out causin' a riot!"

By the King's Command!

"**W**E have to ree-port, your Royal Lowness, that we have carried out said dooties as per schedule, and have hyar th' goods intact an' ready for use. Lulu, show yer bawss th' sample we have brought for his appro."

Lulu had wrapped the skinny form of the priest up in his cloak, and now unrolled him and dropped him to the marble floor. He was only just recovering from the knock-out punch Ben had given him, and was half-smothered by the manner in which he had been carried through the city. This was necessary, as there were still many adherents of the priesthood amongst the superstitious, and even Tomkuk's presence might not have

stopped a riot if the high priest had been seen to be a prisoner.

"Hully fly, where have you two fellers been?" gasped Alva Vandeck, adjusting his eyeglass and surveying the two tousled smoke and bloodstained figures and the old priest who was gasping and writhing on the floor like a newly-landed fish.

Between them Ben and the Zulu told the story, and the two cousins roared with laughter as they told of the trap into which they had fallen.

"All's well that ends well, but you ran a fearful risk," said Tom. "If Ben hadn't been able to get at the gas bombs——"

"Gotta take a risk sometimes, an' it was worth it to see Lulu givin' an imitation o' a feller in a blue funk!" grinned Ben. "Now, what air we goin' to do with this hully man?"

"Baas, let me kill him!" suggested Lulu, whetting his blade on the palm of his hand. "I do it quick so's he don't squeal and bring his pals?"

"No, you bloodthirsty old savage!" laughed Tom. "Leave him to me and the counsellors. You and Ben had better go and carve into some grub. I can recommend the chickens, and the buffalo hump is tender as a mother's love, whilst the native beer is——"

"Okay, chief, 'nuff said!" interrupted Ben. "C'mon, thar, yuh terrified stiff, I'll race yuh to th' eats!"

"I say, yuh're surely not goin' to give this old stiff a chance of gettin' off, kid?" asked Al, staring at Gobo with disgust through his eyeglass. The old priest had worked and shuffled his way across the marble floor like a loathsome monkey, and now sat mumbling to himself and squinting up at Tom with his squinny eyes like a malevolent baboon's. "He's still got friends in the city, maybe even amongst the councillors, as you say yourself. Supposin' a verdict was brought in that let him off scot-free?"

"I don't think so. Anyway, I'm not goin' to interfere with ancient native customs, ancient rights. They had a special ritual where one of noble blood or a priest is concerned, and I want them to follow that. They have to have a public trial, with all the citizens assembled, at a certain spot, and as old Gobo has so much influence I guess it would cause more trouble not to comply with the customs than to run the risk of his getting off. Besides, don't you see that we shall be able to find out who are his friends on the council, and therefore traitors to the throne, by the way they carry on. I have my suspicions, and I'd like to confirm 'em!"

"Yuh sure are a funny sorter feller boyee," said his cousin. "I can't rightly make yuh out. Yuh are taking your job just as seriously, as if yuh were in reality Tomkuk the Great, instead of it bein' just a coincidence. Why worry about these Golden Citizens, anyway; they're nothin' but a lot o' durned savages when all's said and done!"

"Think so?" said Tom quietly. "You wouldn't call old Metla, the chief counsellor, a savage or an ignorant man, would you? Why, man alive, he's got as high principles as great a regard for the welfare of his country and its people as a great statesman at home! He's been through the history and the archives with me, and, believe me, these were once a very fine and advanced people. Another thing, I am convinced that Tomkuk the Great was my actual ancestor, and th' records show that he was the grandest king that the country ever had, and did more for the good of the people than any other. That's somethin' of a tradition to live up to, huh?"

"Phew!" Al whistled. "I'd say it was. But say, boyee, it sounds like yuh'd settled down hyar for keeps? Is that so? Would you chuck up civilisation, your own people to settle down right here in savagery, just to be a king?"

Tom laughed.

himself, going to stand behind the great chair where he could whisper to his cousin if necessary. "It's his bein' so natural that lets him get away with it. I'd be fumblin' all th' time, but not our Tommy!"

In a few minutes the council filed in, led by old Metla in his robes as chief counsellor. He bowed to Tom and stood before the chair at the other ends of the great table. Then all the councillors raised their right hands and gave the royal salute:

"Baihete, Tomkuk the Great! Baihete!"

"Hail, oh, my counsellors, be seated," said Tom quietly. "I am aware that it is your custom that when a priest or noble is charged with a crime that a certain trial must be given him, though in this case this man's guilt is known to one and all. I wish you to carry out that custom without interference from me. As you know—by the power given me I could blast this man with one word and his place would know him no more. But,

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ON PAGES 13 and 29.

"I might do worse. At any rate, I should be doing a bit of good instead of just grubbin' along as a cattle-rancher on the Zambesi! Of course, I'd have to go back home first and bring dad along back with me. My, how he would revel in this country——"

"Um, I've got a hunch that if ever you get away from th' Golden City you'll never come back again!" said Al. "Good job, too; it's a bit too cut throaty hyar for white men. Look at this ol' reptile, frinstance. Why, I believe he's tryin' some of his spells on us right now!"

Tom glanced at the ragged figure crouched there, still clad in the dirty tattered robe which had been rent by the lion's claws. Gobo was squatted looking at him with a fixed gaze, and muttering to himself nineteen to the dozen, fumbling at something under his robe and making mystic signs in the air.

"He can't hurt me—I've got my fingers crossed!" laughed Tom. "But it's about time we had old Metla in and call a council meeting to decide what's to be done with this old baboon. Ikinla mohasla homein Metla!" he called to one of the big negro servants who crossed the chamber at the moment.

He went to a great iron-bound chest and took from it the crown and sceptre and sat himself down in the great carved ivory throne with the gold embossed sides which occupied the end of the table.

"A blinkin' king to the manner born, and takes it just as natural!" muttered Al to

though Tomkuk reigns in my person, it is the wish of him, your ruler and god, that the laws and customs of the land, as they have been carried out from generation to generation may still be observed!"

There was a sardonic chuckling laugh from the crouched-up figure on the floor, but in another second he was lying back in a shrivelled-up heap on the floor, for a blinding flash had come from the direction of the throne and something fiery, squiggling like a serpent, flashed across the floor with hissings and sparks flying, and went off with a bang almost in his face.

"Mercy, great Tomkuk!" he muttered in fright, hiding his monkey face in his robe. "Mercy, O king!"

"Dost laugh, Gobo?" said Tom sternly. "Beware lest your next laugh chokes ye!"

"I did but sneeze, great one!" wheezed the old humbug.

"Then sneeze in silence!" warned Tom, half-choking with laughter; then said under his breath: "What monkey tricks are you playin', you big stiff?"

"S all right!" chortled Al. "I could see th' old ape was goin' to guy th' show. I thought I'd give him somethin' to think about. Just a touch o' magnesium flash and a fiery dragon. I always keep some fireworks handy round these parts. Never know when they'll come in useful."

"Now, my counsellors, Metla will take charge, and you will proceed exactly as if

"I were not here," said Tom, with a smile around the board; those big keen eyes was noting that significant glances were passing between two of the counsellors and the old man.

"Pipe th' guy with th' black beard and th' sawn-off stiff with th' bald dome!" whispered Al. "If they're not in cahoots with Gobo—I'm th' fairy queen!"

"I've got 'em!" whispered Tom, out of the corner of his mouth. "We'll fix 'em later on. Metla's got 'em taped, too!"

Sentenced!

A SPARK of hope seemed to burn in old Gobo's breast, for he scrambled up off the floor and shuffled towards the table, keeping a wary eye on Tomkuk.

"Brothers, we all know with what a grave charge the priest and witch-doctor stands charged," said the chief counsellor, amidst an impressive silence. "That of dealing with the hereditary enemies of our race, and conspiring with them to take possession of our city and give our people to the sword or slavery worse than death. By the mercy and power of Tomkuk the Great, not only was this fate averted, but our enemies wiped out for all time, the dwarfs of the forest who have menaced our land for so long blotted out utterly!"

"Praise to Tomkuk, Baihete!" chanted the counsellors, extending their hands in salute, knuckles upwards. Tom glanced across at the bearded counsellor and his bald friend and saw that they had their hands palms upwards with only two fingers extended, which was the sign for warning off the evil eye. "Praise to Tomkuk!"

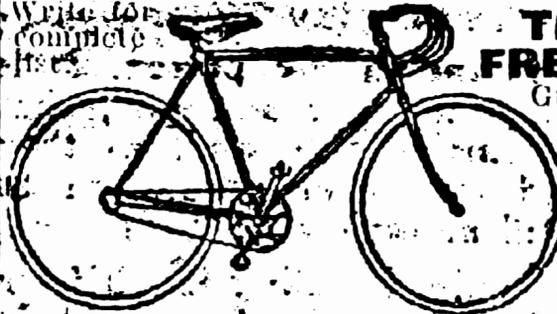
"Praise to Alva Vandeeck and th' jolly old Flyin' Fish!" murmured Tom under his hand. "Look at old Gobo, he looks quite cheery and hopeful. Wonder what he's got up his sleeve?"

"A dirty arm, judgin' by the sample of his mitt," whispered Al in reply. "But don't worry, ol' Metla's got him set. I'm bettin' he's got somethin' up his sleeve as well!"

"As Tomkuk the King has ordered, the trial of Gobo the priest will take place as ordained by the rules of the State from time before time!" droned Metla, reading from a tattered old parchment with an enormous seal. "Therefore, proclamation shall be made throughout all the city that at noon to-morrow, all shall assemble at the place of trial—THE ISLE OF DEATH!"

(There are sensational and amazing developments in next week's chapters of this great African adventure story. Tom, Cook and his pals are well in the thick of perils, but they keep smiling.)

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