

**POWERFUL DETECTIVE-THRILLER AND
SPARKLING SCHOOL STORY INSIDE!**

THE NELSON LEE

LIBRARY

2d



**SOUTH
SEA
LOOT!**

New Series No. 136.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

August 27th, 1932.



SOUTH SEA LOOT!

CHAPTER 1.

The Plotters!

ON the deck of the forty-ton ketch, the *Ambra*, whose white sails were flopping lazily under the gentle pull of a south-westerly wind—a wind that blows for eight months in the year, and makes the journeying to and fro from the islands a mere lazy swing from bay to bay—two ragged, half-naked white men were discussing the problem of how to encompass the death of a third.

The man they wished to kill was Bo Haversley, the skipper and the owner of the ketch *Ambra*. By every precept and law Bo Haversley deserved death, for he had been a law unto himself for years. He had

ill-treated the black fellows, forcing them to go to distant islands to work on the plantations, and when he shipped them back to their homes with their hard-earned wages, Bo Haversley would gamble with them and cheat them out of their money. He had, as a matter of fact, got back the wages he had paid these two white men, his mates, by cheating at cards.

But what really sealed his doom was when, in drunken folly, he had discussed his private affairs with the two white mates, and had disclosed the fact that he had hidden his stored wealth on a certain island, the whereabouts of which was noted on a chart which always reposed in his pocket-book. Dan O'Connor and Steve Holt, the two white men, smarting under the loss of their wages,

—In the South Seas, Featuring Nelson Lee and Nipper!



The slaying of the night-watchman of a museum—the theft of a grisly skull! What mystery lies behind this amazing crime? Nelson Lee sets out to solve it, little knowing the perilous adventures in the South Seas into which the trail of the killer is to lead him!

swore to get that hidden fortune, and the arrival of the ketch at the island of Tamwaio seemed to be their opportunity.

In the first place, it was proof of Bo Haversley's courage that he should return to Tamwaio so soon. Not four months previously he had gone there, landing fifteen destitute men, ex-plantation hands, who had been supplied to him by the chief, Ma Poago, and who had been robbed by Haversley himself.

Now, the island of Tamwaio, although by no means important, is densely populated. Ma Poago, for a native chief, had a brain well above the average, and was something of a Napoleon in his way, for he handled his people with a masterly hand, and was, indeed, a king in his own little country.

Dan O'Connor and Steve Holt had witnessed the handing over of those fifteen rum-

befuddled labourers to Ma Poago, and had also heard the violent altercation that had broken out on the beach when the boat from the ketch had turned back again.

Ma Poago himself had come running down to the edge of the sandy cove, and had brandished his fists and yelled something at the ketch. The meaning of the words could not be gathered, but his actions were unmistakable. He was calling down the wrath of all the evil spirits that he knew on the head of the grinning Bo Haversley.

"It's like this here, Steve," Dan O'Connor said. "Ma Poago was just raving mad, and he isn't the sort to forget or forgive. Ma Poago is hankering after Bo's skull, all right, and if we're clever enough he can get it."

His voice sank into a whisper then and Steve Holt, leaning his elbows on his knees,

listened intently. A look of horror crossed Holt's face, and he made a half-frightened movement.

"No, no, Dan! Darn it, we can't do that!"

Dan O'Connor shot out a rough fist and grabbed his companion by the arm.

"We've got to do it," he said. "It'll be a fair division. Ma Poago will get Bo Haversley's head, and we'll get his body—his body and his pocket-book."

Then, as Steve Holt still seemed to hesitate, the more powerful personality of O'Connor revealed itself.

"If you're afraid I'll go through with it myself," he snarled, "and the man that tackles the job gets the brass, don't forget!"

It seemed as though that last argument clinched matters, for Steve Holt drew a quick breath.

"I'd be content if I only got my wages out of him," he muttered. "He talked about some woman, his wife, in England, but he ain't the only one. I've got an old mother back there, and I ain't been none too good a son. But I did mean to send her something this year, and I would have done, too, if Haversley hadn't gambled and cheated the money out of me."

Dan saw that he had gained his point, and his black eyes lifted into a smile.

"You come in with me, Steve, and that old mother of yours will have more money than ever she dreamed of. Besides, it ain't as though we'll be killing a decent man. Bo Haversley deserves to die. He's murdered dozens of black fellows in his time, and, in any case, we won't have anything to do with the killing ourselves."

The first mate rose to his feet and glanced aft to where the tall, burly figure of Bob Haversley stood at the wheel. When running in towards the islands, Bo always took the wheel himself, for he trusted no man with the ketch on such occasions.

Gradually the dusk came, and presently the Ambra rounded a sandy spit of the land, and, working its way down into the blue waters of the lagoon, it dropped anchor there, about half a mile from the white beach, on which the waves were breaking with steady, rhythmic cadence. Bob Haversley was a sailor to his fingertips, and as soon as the anchor was lowered he barked out his orders, saw that the sail was furled and everything was left trim and snug.

And that was not the only thing that Bo did, for round the taffrail he ran a copper wire, and to that wire were attached the terminals of a very powerful set of electric batteries. That copper wire was Bo Haversley's bodyguard, safer than any nigger, safer than any gun or rifle, for the first pair of dusky hands that alighted on it would get a shock that would send them sprawling back into the sea again.

Dan O'Connor watched the bulky figure of the skipper as he went round testing the length of copper wire, and a grim smile crossed the lips of the mate. About half an hour later Haversley went down to his cabin,

and Dan O'Connor started to prepare his well-worked-out plan, which began with a long swim to the shore to fix things up with Ma Poago. He did not have to make much preparation, for his workaday kit consisted of a pair of ragged dungarees and a belt. It was only at night-time that Dan drew a well-worn sweater over his tanned torso.

The ketch lay low in the water, and it was easy enough for Dan to reach the stern and drop from there into the sea. The five native crew were already gathered in their quarters for'ard, and there was no one visible on deck. But from Bo Haversley's cabin there came the little yellow gleam of a ship's lantern. Bo did not provide any lighting for his crew, but he saw to it that his own cabin was well illuminated.

A grim smile crossed O'Connor's lips as he slid into the warm waves; then, after floating for a moment, he turned on his side and began to swim eastward.

Steve Holt had moved aft and was working on a heap of rope and new sail. He squatted just above the main hatch, and had a full view of the companion-way running down to the cabin. He had been listening intently, and he was, perhaps, the only one on the ketch who heard the slight splash that Dan O'Connor's body made as it had slipped overboard. But there was no movement from the cabin and Steve's fears died down.

O'Connor had got clear, and there was no possibility of Bo missing him, for it was a recognised thing that as soon as the ketch dropped anchor the white men were allowed to spend their time in peace. Bo would probably think that Dan O'Connor had turned in, and the presence of the second mate on deck would be sufficient evidence that watch was being kept.

Another hour dragged past, then Steve heard the pad, pad of naked feet on the little companion-way leading down to the saloon, and he saw the figure of Bo appear, naked except for a bathing slip, carrying his clothes and belt over his arm. The skipper crossed the deck, placed the heap of clothes close to the rail, then, dipping carefully beneath the live wire, he took a header into the sea.

Another few minutes passed, then Steve, with a hand that trembled in spite of himself, reached out for the heap of clothes. He found the leather belt and drew the deadly little automatic from it, just as he and Dan had arranged. Everything seemed to be working out wonderfully well.

He was accustomed to the mechanism of the weapon, and presently he had pressed the catch and the fully-charged clip slipped into his fingers. He emptied the clip, then replaced it, holding the catch up, so that the click of it as it went home would not sound.

He placed the automatic back into the belt, then, thrusting his other hand out below the rail, Steve dropped the handful of cartridges into the sea. He was taking no chance, for he realised that if Bo should discover that

his revolver was unloaded, he would search every man on the ship, and woe betide anyone who was found with a single cartridge on him!

CHAPTER 2.

Treachery!

STEVE went back to his heap of sail and rope then, and another long interval passed. Then he heard the grampus-like sounds of the returning swimmer, and a moment later the shimmering shape of Bo Haversley came sliding up under the rail, the water dripping from his broad shoulders and arms. He caught sight of the figure of his second mate, and called to him.

"Why don't you go and have a swim, Holt?" he said. "It'll do you good."

He stooped and picked up his clothes, and Steve rose to his feet. That unexpected suggestion of the skipper just fitted in with the plans that he and O'Connor had made.

"I think I will, cap'n," he said. "There ain't nothing to be alarmed about here."

The massive figure of Haversley swung across the deck, and, still carrying the clothes over his arm, he went down into the lighted space below. Steve knew well enough what would happen there. The skipper would wrap himself in a rough sheet of towelling, and would stretch himself out in the bunk to sleep.

The bunk stood on the left of the door, and the skipper's head was close to the opening, and it was Bo Haversley's boast that not even a moth could flutter through that doorway without attracting his attention.

Steve Holt slipped across the deck, and keeping just outside the halo of light, he listened. He heard the burly man moving about in the cabin, then presently the bunk creaked as the huge figure stretched out on it. A match spluttered, and a few moments later there came up the companion-way the blue smoke of the skipper's favourite tobacco.

Everything was shaping just as they had planned. Bo Haversley would finish that smoke, then he would go to sleep. The dark shape of the mate went on along to the stern and vanished down a narrow gap which led to the lazaret where the electric batteries were stored. He unscrewed one of the wires from a terminal, thus breaking the circuit and rendering the live wire no longer of any use. The current was off!

Steve came out of the lazaret then, closing the hatch after him, and, as a man often will do when he has completed part of a nefarious plan, something like a panic seized him. He crawled to the rail, and the icy fear in his heart held him until he had slipped overboard and was in the sea.

He drifted away noiselessly from the ketch, keeping his eyes on it, however. But there was no sign of alarm or movement in the black hull, and his courage returned to him.

Steve Holt began to swim towards the line of thin, feathery palms that marked the beach. It was not a long swim for a man of his type, and he gained the shore without much trouble.

He turned and moved eastward, heading for the left horn of the bay, and presently found himself in among the trees. He kept on steadily until he reached the end of the growth and was out on the long strip of sand? He took up his quarters under a tree, and stretched himself out on the warm ground to wait, his eyes fixed on the Ambra.

He had carried out his share of the contract, and the rest was in the hands of Dan O'Connor and Ma Poago. The second mate kept his ears on the alert, but no sound came to them. Yet he was convinced that quiet, noiseless life was moving to its grim purpose out there in the depths of the trees.

He was watching the other side of the bay and the opposite strip of land, and although it may only have been a trick of his imagination, he did fancy that after a long interval he saw a sleek black shape gliding out from behind the projecting strip. Then he saw it clearly, and knew it to be the war canoe of Ma Poago. They had only had about half a mile to cover to reach the ketch, and it seemed to Steve as though this silence meant that the plans had failed.

An hour dragged by, then another, and Steve, dry-lipped and terrified, rose to his feet. He could sit there no longer, and some unfortunate urge in him brought him out from the trees, and he began to walk along the sands. The bay made a wide sweep inland, then curved out again, and Steve Holt had covered the first half of that curve before a definite sound reached him—the flicker of paddles in the sea.

He located the sound at once, and flung himself flat behind some bushes bordering the sands; then, turning his head in the direction of the noise, he saw the great curved prow of a war canoe appear beyond the breaking surf. He could see the long row of figures on board, wielding the paddles. It was a real war canoe, capable of carrying twenty or thirty men, and it seemed to Steve as though it was packed with dusky shapes.

He knew well enough that he was in a dangerous position then, for Dan O'Connor's scheme had been simply to give information to Ma Poago, and leave the rest to that wily, crinkled-haired cannibal himself.

Steve was assured now that Ma Poago had been out to the ketch and had had his revenge. He knew that in that war canoe, wrapped in a piece of grass cloth, would be a certain valuable burden—a burden that Ma Poago would be holding between his stout knees and would soon go to join the long line of similar ornaments along the smoke-blackened roof of the chief's hut.

Steve Holt's luck stood him in good stead, for the war canoe drove on to the sands a good hundred yards away from where he was

lying. He saw the black shapes leap out into the surf and drag the canoe up. Then, when it was high and dry on the sands, another movement saw the shapes close together, and the canoe was lifted and poised on the sturdy shoulders.

They were going to carry it through the trees, and that movement was also significant. It meant that they had reasons to conceal that canoe; that some grim, devilish work had been carried out and they did not want to leave behind any traces of their movements.

Behind the canoe, looming faintly in the darkness, Steve had picked out a fat, waddling shape. He knew Ma Poago well enough to recognise him even in that dim light. Ma Poago was carrying something over his shoulder, and the watching second mate guessed what it was that swung to and fro in the grass-cloth sack!

Although the night was warm Steve Holt was shivering. Cold thrills were running down his back, and icy sweat stood out on his brow. He lay there until the last faint rustle from the trees had ceased, then he dragged himself to his feet, his knees shaking beneath him for a moment.

It had been arranged that he should meet O'Connor on the other side of the bay, and he turned now to retrace his steps. There was one other task that he had to perform, the grimmest of all. Ma Poago had taken all that he wanted to take as a proof that his revenge had been completed.

Dan O'Connor and Steve Holt were to go down to that cabin and make sure of their share of the plunder. They would have to take the notebook containing the chart from the headless corpse of Bo Haversley.

The second mate presently broke into a run, loping along the sands and finally reaching the tree from whence he had watched the first movements of the war canoe. He came to a halt and peered around him. He was beginning to feel alarmed by the non-appearance of O'Connor. His companion had had ample time to get round there, and yet there was no sign of him.

Was it possible that Ma Poago had decided to have two new skulls to add to the trophies that hung, smoke-dried and blackened, on his roof? The sheer horror of the idea made Holt start to his feet.

"By James, I wouldn't trust that man-eating black!" he broke out. "And if they got Dan, it—it's more than likely they'll try to get at me, too!"

From that moment fear, blind and unreasoning, gripped at Steve Holt's soul. Every movement and rustle in the trees now became a menace, the probable approach of some lurking enemy. At last, just before the dawn, his panic overpowered him, and he turned and set off to run madly, blindly, through the tall palms, on and on, into the heart of the jungle.

He was convinced now that Dan O'Connor had shared the fate of Bo Haversley, and that Ma Poago had hacked off the heads of the two victims, heads that would be smoke-

dried in the fires of the village, and would be placed along with the other grim trophies above the chief's hut. It seemed to Steve that Bo Haversley had paid the penalty of his crimes, but Dan O'Connor had also paid for his treachery.

The dawn was increasing now, and presently the sun came up like a ball of silver fire eastward, lighting up the faint mist-covered palms and scattering the shadows as it rose higher and higher. Steve had found a slender palm, and with quick, sailor agility began to climb it. He went up it in native fashion, using his belt and walking with his bare feet flat against the stem.

He reached the feathery growth and drew himself into it. Thanks to the slope in the ground, he was now able to see the bay, and as he stared at it for some time it seemed to him as though his eyes were deceiving him—for there was no trace of the ketch, Ambra! He could see both horns of the bay, and could see the lines of white surf breaking from the sands. He rubbed his eyes, still unconvinced, but when he looked again the bare oval of the bay seemed to mock him.

The Ambra had gone—had slipped anchor, and had raised its sails and stolen away like a white ghost in the darkness!

"Gone!" Steve Holt said in a croaking voice.

Even then he did not realise what it meant, but his eyes began to search the horizon of the seas beyond the bay. At last, westward, he caught sight of a speck, a white sail trimmed to the steady breeze that was blowing. He had only to glance at it once to recognise it. It was the Ambra breasting its way from the islands, heading west!

For a long moment Steve Holt's eyes rested on the little speck. It grew fainter and fainter, and it was only then that the real explanation came to him like a thunder-clap. Not one of the five native boys could have taken charge of the ketch. Bo Haversley had seen to it that they never took a turn at the wheel, for it was no part of his schemes to allow a native to become capable of sailing that vessel and taking it from him.

Brief though Steve Holt's vision had been of the retreating ketch, his sailor training told him that it was being sailed to its full capacity, running close-hauled and keeping a steady course. No native could have handled that ketch as it was being handled, and so Steve Holt came to the truth at last.

"It's—it's Dan!" he told himself, drawing a deep breath. "He—he's tricked me, by James! He's fooled me!"

A gust of wrath came to him then, and he almost fell from his precarious perch. He cowered down in the thick fronds of the palm-tree and pressed his hands over his aching eyes. So this was the real meaning of Dan O'Connor's schemes. Not only had he got rid of the skipper, but he had also got rid of Steve, the only other white man who could have given evidence against him.

Broken words came rushing through the set lips of the second mate. His naked chest rose and fell in a tumult of rage, his bearded features were distorted and savage. So that was why Dan O'Connor had urged him to leave the ketch as soon as he had played the trick with the revolver and disconnected the electric batteries? He could now see the whole grim meaning of it.

"He's tricked me!" Steve Holt muttered. "He fixed it with Poago, then went back and got the chart off Haversley's body. He'll find the treasure and have it all for himself, and he's left me here—to die!"

For Steve Holt had no doubts about his fate. The mere sight of a white man, unarmed, wandering in their native forests, would be quite enough for any of the blacks to regard him as their legitimate prey. The end of it would be a broad-bladed spear in his back, and the ghastly memory of stories he had heard of the cannibal feasts made his blood run cold.

CHAPTER 3.

The Missing Skull!

IN one of the quiet streets off Westminster there stands an unpretentious block of buildings which bear no outward or visible sign of what they are used for or what they contain. It is the Dominions Institute, a place where statesmen from our colonies can find leisure and can arrange appointments with others of their craft.

It is not by any means a club, although one large room is frequently used by the members for dining. No one sleeps in the premises beyond a couple of caretakers; and the main body of the building, which is a glass-roofed space, contains what is, perhaps, the most representative collection of the British Empire's products and industries.

Each dominion and colony has a separate space for itself, and apart from the ordinary trade displays, the various colonies have seen to it that there are examples of the native lives and arts on view.

One morning in late December a curious observer might have noted that there were two policemen standing in the broad porch of the Dominions Institute. Inside the hall groups of men were gathered together talking earnestly, and now and again one of them would turn and look out of the open doorway with an air of expectancy.

Then a keen-eyed man and a slim youngster climbed the steps, reached the hall, and as soon as they did so the portly figure of Sir Ronald Dale, the president of the institute, came forward with hand outstretched.

"Very good of you to come so quickly, Lee," the colonial baronet said. "Let me introduce you to the committee."

He slipped his hand under Nelson Lee's arm and took him across to the group of gentlemen. Nelson Lee was introduced to them all in turn.

"Inspector Boar and a police-sergeant from Scotland Yard are in the main hall now, Lee," Sir Ronald went on. "I told them that I had decided to get your opinion on the matter, and they were quite pleased to hear it. If you like, I'll take you along there now."

"Yes, that would be as well, Sir Ronald," Lee returned, and he and Nipper followed the baronet down a narrow passage, through a pair of swing doors and into the dimly lighted main hall.

As soon as they entered the doorway Lee came to a halt. His eyes had caught sight of an immense patch on the polished flooring, an irregular dull stain, which Sir Ronald looked at and nodded.

"Yes," he said, "that's where they found poor Collins. Of course, the police took him away this morning as soon as they found him."

"And who, exactly, was Collins?" Nelson Lee asked.

"He was one of our night porters," the president returned. "I might as well tell you now that there were always two on duty at night, one in the basement and one up here. They relieved each other every so often, and it was Collin's tour of duty between two and six o'clock. The other man, Mitchell, had been relieved at two o'clock, and it was only when he came up here at six to find why Collins didn't come down to the basement again that he discovered his dead body in the main hall. I believe that the doctor is of the opinion that Collins had been dead some hours, three or four probably."

A footfall sounded from the other side of the main hall, and round the corner of one of the show cases came a burly figure, followed by a short, thick-set man. The leading man caught sight of Nelson Lee and gave him a friendly wave of the hand.

"Come along, Lee," Inspector Boar said. "We have been waiting for you, and I think we've found out something that may be of interest to you."

They met the inspector and he shook hands, first with Lee, then with Nipper. Sir Ronald Dale stepped aside.

"I'll leave you gentlemen now," he said with a quiet smile. "I know that on a job of this sort you don't like to be disturbed, so I'll just see to it that no one comes in until you have completed your search for clues."

He went off, and they heard him turn the key in the door, locking them in.

"What do you make of it, Boar," asked Nelson Lee.

"Well, as far as I can see, the murderer got in from the roof," Inspector Boar returned. "We have just discovered traces of how he managed it. If you'll come along now I'll show you."

He led the way down to the far corner of the hall and pointed towards the glass roof. At that particular spot there was a large section of the window that could be raised or

lowered by long cords which were fastened on to a catch in the wall, level with a man's head. The window above, governed by the cords, was up, and through it Lee caught a glimpse of the sky.

"You say that the man got in this way, inspector?" Lee said. "But I don't see how he managed that."

"He used a rope," said the Scotland Yard man. "If you glance at the edge of the open window there you'll see the marks that the rope made on the framework, and I think you'll also be able to see that there are one or two dirty imprints on the wall, probably made by the fellow's boots as he came shinning down the rope. Of course, he was bound to swing a little, and I think you'll find my theory will fit in."

He indicated the marks that he had mentioned. One of them was about eight feet above the ground, while the other, plainly revealed against the panelling of the wall, was within five or six feet from the open window. From roof to floor the height was well over thirty feet, and there was little doubt that someone had entered in the way Inspector Boar suggested, and had swung to and fro as he climbed down.

"Yes, I think you are probably right," Nelson Lee agreed.

"Not much doubt about it," Boar went on. "For it just happens that there is only one way of getting into this place apart from the window, and that's the main door, and when Mitchell came along this morning to find Collins, the door was locked."

"Locked!" Lee repeated. "But why should it have been locked if Collins was inside?"

"Oh, that's all right," Inspector Boar explained. "It was a custom of the night porters always to lock the door behind them when they entered or left the room." The inspector rubbed his chin for a moment. "In fact, I am rather inclined to think that the man or men who were responsible for this crime must have known something about the way the night porters worked—all their hours of duty, and their methods of patrolling the place."

The inspector was silent for a moment then, and Nelson Lee cast another glance around the wide hall. In the dull light of the morning the place looked gloomy indeed.

"Has anything been stolen?" asked Nelson Lee.

Inspector Boar shrugged his shoulders.

"That's what Sergeant Birch, here, and myself, have been trying to discover," he said. "We've got a complete list of the exhibits, and we have been going through them, but so far as we can make out there isn't anything missing."

Birch was holding a pile of typed sheets in his hand, and already several of them had been turned over, indicating that the work of checking had almost been completed.

"Some of the stuff is well worth having, too, Mr. Lee," Birch put in. "I thought myself the crooks would have made straight

for the Indian section. But I've gone all through it, and from what I can make out nothing has been taken."

They passed across the hall and halted on the left side where the glowing exhibits were arranged. It was easily the most valuable collection in the hall, for there were many examples of goldsmith's work, and also one or two specimens of filigree. Inspector Boar pointed to one beautifully worked chalice cup. Around the stem of the cup were one or two very fine jewels. It stood in a glass-domed case, and was a very conspicuous object against the black background of velvet.

"Now why shouldn't a man who was out to steal collar that piece?" said Birch.

Nelson Lee shrugged his shoulders.

"He may have been stopped by Collins before he had a chance to take anything," he pointed out. "After knocking the night-watchman down it is probable that he was frightened and bolted without taking a thing."

"That's what I am rather inclined to think," Inspector Boar put in. "You see, the fellow couldn't have had more than half an hour, and he may probably have been watching Mitchell from that glass roof. Of course, you will understand that during the night there are lights burning here in the main hall, and although most of the panes of glass are frosted, some of them, as you can see, are not. A man could easily have knelt in the gutter up there and have seen anyone moving about below. My opinion is that the fellow got up there with his rope, watching until Mitchell left the main hall for his final walk round the other parts of the building, then set to work and lowered himself into the hall here."

Nelson Lee turned and looked back to where the window was open in the roof.

"I wonder if Mitchell will remember whether he left the window open or shut?" he suggested.

"We'll inquire about that," the inspector said. "Of course, it is an important point, because if the window was left closed I don't see how the fellow could have got in, as the window is controlled solely from the inside."

Nipper was moving down beside another case of exhibits, and he seated himself in a casual way on the green baize platform on which the items were arranged. On sitting down the youngster put his hands behind him, and one of his palms touched something moist. It was a piece of mud, real black, oozy mud, and as he raised his hand a dank, unmistakable odour came to his nostrils.

"I say, guv'nor, what about this?"

Nipper rose to his feet and came forward holding out his hand on which the mud had smeared itself. The edges of the patch of mud had a little streak of green on them, and Nipper held up his grimed palm to Lee's nostrils.



Concealed behind the bushes bordering the jungle, Steve Holt anxiously watched the head-hunters' war canoe, containing twenty or thirty men, approach the island !

"If that isn't stagnant gutter mud I'll eat my hat," the young detective said.

There was no mistake about it. The mud which was on Nipper's palm was of that kind which collects slowly in some leaden gutter, and usually has a green slime on it.

"That came from the roof," said Inspector Boar quickly. "Where did you find it?"

Nipper turned and pointed to the stand.

"I put my hand on it," he said.

They all paced back to the green-baized stand and examined the spot that Nipper indicated. They saw that the mud had been left by one side of a heel, the half arc being plainly visible. Someone had evidently stepped on that green baize covered platform and had left traces of that action behind him.

Just above the mark was a table, and a printed card showed what the exhibit was:

**"NATIVE CURIOS AND TRADE
PRODUCE.
FROM PAPUA AND THE ISLANDS."**

Behind the table was a great length of brown grass-cloth, and on it were attached various native weapons and implements. There were also carved pipes, and here and there some of the grotesque heads and idols found among the islands.

But the most ghastly exhibit of all was several blackened, almost unrecognisable things hanging from the top of the sheet. They were examples of the head-hunter's trophies,—smoke-dried skulls!

Nipper had moved round to the other side of the table now, and he turned and beckoned to Nelson Lee.

"More mud, guv'nor," he said. "The fellow must have climbed on to this table."

It was only a faint trace of mud, and had almost dried on the baize, but the spot felt damp to the touch, and by rubbing it Nipper managed to get away one or two grimy fragments.

Nelson Lee stepped past him, swung his athletic body round and placed his foot exactly in the print made by the unknown marauder; then he stood upon the table, and they saw now that by so doing he had placed himself immediately below the line of skulls. It was only then that the inspector noticed that there was a gap in the line. Five skulls were together, then there was an empty hook, and beyond it another skull.

"Reach up, Lee, where that empty hook is," Boar said.

Nelson Lee did so, and his hand came dead into the vacant space.

"Look here," said the inspector from Scotland Yard, "I'm going to have a word with the secretary. I want to find out the meaning of this."

He turned and hurried away across the main hall, and they heard him knock on the door, and the key was turned in the lock. It was the secretary himself who appeared in the doorway. Inspector Boar led Mr. Hard well across the hall to where the native exhibit was placed. He pointed to the row of

skulls, and after a glance at them the secretary swung round sharply.

"Where is the other one?" he asked. "There were seven altogether."

A silence fell on the group, then Nelson Lee dropped lightly from the table and came round to the front of it.

"If there were seven there last night, Mr. Hardwell," he said, "there are only six now, and it would seem to me that we have found out why Collins' mysterious assailant broke into this place."

CHAPTER 4.

A Curious Crime!

THE secretary looked up at Nelson Lee for a moment, then shook his head.

"You're not going to try to tell me that a man committed murder for the sake of stealing a thing like that, Mr. Lee?" he said.

"I wouldn't like to put it in that way, Mr. Hardwell," Nelson Lee returned quietly. "But the fact remains that most of the stuff has already been checked and nothing has been found missing, except this single skull. But we will soon prove it by going on with the checking."

They did so, but the skull was the only thing in the building that was missing.

"I am rather inclined to think," said Nelson Lee eventually, "that Collins' death was an accident, as far as the plans of the thief were concerned. He came here with the one object in his mind, and had achieved that object, when your unfortunate night-watchman came in the main hall and disturbed him."

Nelson Lee had halted now in the doorway, and he indicated the island exhibit.

"You see what I mean," he said. "Between that exhibit and the door here there is a case, and the probabilities are that the thief was hiding behind that case when Collins entered the doorway. I understand that this door is always locked when the watchman enters or leaves this place during the night, and I take it that when Collins turned round to lock the door after he had entered, it was the murderer's chance. He knew that he would be able to get away without being discovered, and so when Collins turned his back the man lurking behind the case leaped out and struck him down. I believe he was killed by a blow from some blunt instrument?"

"Oh, yes; we found the thing lying beside him, and I forgot to tell you before, Lee. As a matter of fact, it was one of the native clubs that was used. The police took it away this morning."

"It seems to me like the act of a madman," said Boar musingly.

"It does sound like that," agreed Nelson Lee.

They left the main hall then, and led by the secretary, found themselves up in the first floor rooms. Presently they were led

down a corridor, and on opening a narrow window were confronted by the slanting glass roof. Nelson Lee and Inspector Boar slipped out on to the roof, and, clambering along the gutter, worked their way down it until they reached the open window. Lee was moving ahead, and his keen eyes picked out the visible signs that someone had been there before them.

Someone had attached a rope to one of the iron pipes that held the gutter in place, and the other end of the rope had been lowered down over the woodwork into the main halls.

"I wonder how he managed to get away," Lee said, as he rose to his feet again.

They were close to the end of the glass roof now, and Lee caught sight of a few more footprints running along the gutter. They were heading away from the window, and he followed them, finally reaching the edge of the roof, where he saw that the end of a blank wall stood, and below it a narrow yard.

Boar had followed, and he pointed to the yard.

"That's the back of the institute," he said. "I believe most of the tradesmen use this way of getting to the club. In all probability the fellow managed to work his way on to the wall, and got down by using that drain-pipe."

There was a thick drain-pipe running up the wall, and it would have been quite easy for an agile man to have walked along the roof and reached the ground by way of the pipe.

After reaching the ground the murderer had another wall to negotiate before reaching the quiet side street behind the institute, but that last barrier was not a very formidable one, and Nelson Lee agreed with the man from Scotland Yard.

"Yes, you're quite right, Boar; that's probably the way the fellow got in and out. The only thing I want to know now is about the window. We had better get down again and see Mitchell."

They made their way back along the roof and re-entered the building again. On going down to the ground floor they found Mitchell in the hall, and Inspector Boar put the question. The porter thought for a moment, then looked up.

"Coming to think of it, sir, I believe the window was open, but it must have been Collins who left it open. He was on duty in the first part of the evening. I know I didn't open it myself, but I have just got a recollection of seeing it open slightly. They are usually kept closed on account of damp and fog and mist getting in. But Collins was senior, and he was in charge of the ventilating arrangements."

They dismissed Mitchell then, and a few moments later Sir Ronald Dale and two of the committee came forward.

"Look here, Lee," the baronet said, "Mr. Hardwell has told us this extraordinary thing about the skull. But, candidly, none of us

can think that it was to steal this horrible thing that this unknown murderer broke into the institute."

One of the committee men leaned forward.

"The truth of the matter is, Mr. Lee, those exhibits were only put there about three weeks ago. They were part of a case of stuff sent to us by Mr. Leyland Aimes, the new governor-general of the islands. I believe that the skulls and the various other trophies which he sent were the result of a little punitive expedition which he recently brought to a successful close against some unruly chief. We have all the documents about the case in the office, and I'm sure Sir Ronald would be pleased to show them to you if you are interested."

Nelson Lee bowed.

"I am deeply interested," he said, "and would like to see them very much."

They moved off together, but the inspector from Scotland Yard was too busy looking for more clues to worry about a missing smoke-dried skull. He made no attempt to follow Nelson Lee.

Lee was led into a well-furnished office, and after a search the documents which had accompanied the grim relics were placed in his hands. It was an official statement by the governor, and each particular relic had its history attached.

Under the item "Skulls," the information ran:

"These were part of trophies taken from a village on the island of Tamwaio. I found it necessary to punish the chief, Ma Poago, because rumours had reached me that he had been responsible for the murder of a white trader, a man named Haversley, who had disappeared with two white mates and a crew of natives, together with his vessel, the Ambra.

"This particular chief, Ma Poago, had fled to the jungle when I landed my men, but to punish him I burned his village and saw to it that he had none of his grizzly trophies left. Those which I sent to the institute represent a very fair sample of the gruesome methods by which the natives here keep a record of their forays and fights. It is more than probable that each of these skulls represents a dead enemy of Ma Poago's. You will notice that among them are three which obviously show the cranium formations of a white man's skull, but, of course, in their present condition it is quite impossible to identify them."

"We received this exhibit about a month ago," Sir Ronald went on, "and, to tell you the truth, the committee were rather doubtful about putting the things on view, especially the skulls. They are not very pleasant things to hang up for public exhibition. But we decided at last that we should do so, for it is just as well that the British people should realise the extraordinary ways and lives that some people of the Empire live."

"Very interesting, Sir Ronald," said Nelson Lee, "and I think I would like to have a closer inspection of the rest of those skulls now."

The baronet stared at him for a moment, and the detective smiled.

"To tell you the truth," he said, "I want to find out just why the unknown man selected that particular skull. It may only have been accident, of course, but then, again, the exactness with which he selected the spot, and the fact that there are no other marks on the table seem to suggest that he went straight to the very skull he wanted."

Sir Ronald turned to the secretary and nodded.

"You will help Mr. Lee in this, I know, Hardwell," he said. "I don't know what on earth he's driving at, but I do know Lee, and he never does anything that hasn't got a reason behind it."

Some five minutes later, therefore, Nelson Lee, armed with a collapsible ladder, found himself in the main hall again, and after the table was removed, he adjusted the ladder and climbed it, commencing to examine the skulls.

There is no doubt about the cranial bones of a Polynesian, and by the time Nelson Lee had completed his rather ghastly task, he was convinced of one thing—it was one of the three white men's skulls that was missing.

They went back into the hall then, and although the group of committee men gathered round the detective with obvious expectancy, he had nothing to communicate. A few moments later Nelson Lee and Nipper left the institute, and at Boar's suggestion they went round to the police-station to examine the body of the murdered man. A single glance was sufficient to indicate to Lee how the man had met his death. He had been clubbed from behind.

On a table close by lay the articles which had been found in Collins' possession—the usual assortment of things, among which were two halves of a local music-hall tickets, showing that Collins had been with someone to the afternoon performance the day before.

"Where did he live?" Lee asked, turning to Boar.

"Palvery Buildings, Number Twenty-two," the inspector returned. "It's a block of tenements quite close to the institute. In fact, you can get into the dwellings by a passage in the side street behind the institute."

Nelson Lee and Nipper went off then, after saying good-bye to Boar, and on the way back to the Grays Inn Road the youngster saw that Lee was very deep in thought, and he did not question him at all. But at lunch-time Lee leaned across to his young assistant.

"I think I'll go down to Palvery Buildings," he said. "I want to find out as much as I can about Collins. In the meantime, the best thing you can do is to get into some

sort of disguise, and just hang around outside the institute. I am convinced in my own mind that this is no ordinary crime carried out by an ordinary criminal, and there is a human side to it, Nipper, which makes me rather believe that the fellow who did the deed will probably return to find out how things are going."

Nelson Lee paused for a moment and looked at his companion.

"He didn't leave very many traces behind him, but those he did leave suggest that he was either mad or else he was forced by some grim reason or other to take that tremendous risk of breaking in there for the sake of carrying off that grisly relic from the island."

"That's what beats me, guv'nor," Nipper said. "Why on earth should anyone risk imprisonment, and probably the gallows, for the sake of a smoke-dried skull?"

"That's what we have to find out," retorted Nelson Lee grimly. "The whole case rests upon the answer to that question."

CHAPTER 5.

Lee Makes Inquiries!

PALVERY BUILDINGS are a huge block of bricks and mortar set in three sides of a square, the centre of which is taken up by a courtyard in which the children of the tenants play the usual boisterous games. The buildings themselves are four storeys high, and for the greater part the tenants occupying them are of the respectable working class.

About three o'clock in the afternoon Nelson Lee turned in through the main entrance of the buildings and went across to the flat occupied by the superintendent in charge of the block. He proved to be an ex-soldier, a well-built, grey-haired man bordering on the sixties. Nelson Lee introduced himself, then mentioned his mission.

"Oh, yes, sir; I've heard all about poor old Collins," the superintendent, whose name was Matson, said with feeling. "It's a darned shame, too, because he was one of the best here. I'll take you to his place, sir."

"There are only two rooms and a bathroom and kitchen in this flat," Matson explained when they arrived there. "You see, Collins was a bachelor and lived alone. He always kept his place pretty shipshape from what I could see."

Matson closed the door behind him then, and he and Nelson Lee crossed the little hall and entered the first room. Lee went over to the window, and the first thing that caught his eye was the glass roof of the Dominions Institute below.

"Pretty queer to think that poor old Collins should be murdered down there," he said. "If we could see through the roof we'd be able to pick out the very spot where he was knocked down."

Nelson Lee turned to his companion.

"I suppose Collins took this flat so that he could be near his work?" he suggested.

"Yes, sir," said Matson; "I always reckoned so. The fact of the matter is that Collins was a very conscientious man at his work. He had a big opinion of the stuff he was in charge of down there, and he used to take great care of it, too. I reckon he knew more about those exhibits than anyone else in the institute."

"And you say he was quite friendless?"

"Oh, yes, sir! He didn't know anybody in London."

Nelson Lee had turned now and was glancing round the little room. He moved towards the fireplace, and, stooping down, picked up the stump of a cigar.

"He smoked cigars, did he?" Lee said.

"Not that I know of, sir," Matson returned. "Now and again he might have a cigarette, but I never saw him smoking cigars. Shouldn't have thought he could have afforded 'em."

Nelson Lee pointed to the fireplace. There were no less than three cigar stumps there, and there were traces of ash all round the chair drawn up close to the fireplace. It was a gas fire, and there was no means of telling how long it was since it had been alight.

"Strange," mused Nelson Lee. "A friendless man, smoking cigars to that extent. And he went to the music-hall with someone, too, yesterday afternoon. I suppose he would get home from here about six o'clock?"

"Went to a music-hall, did he, sir?" Matson put in, with a slight raising of his brows. "Well, that wasn't usual for Collins."

He leaned forward.

"Of course, I don't want to say anything about a man what's dead," Matson went on, "only there was one thing I had against Collins. He was very close-fisted. It wasn't that he was exactly mean, but he was keen on saving money. Sir Ronald Dale the president of the institute, had invested quite a tidy sum for Collins, because Collins wanted to go back to Newfoundland and buy a farm that had once belonged to his people out there. It was his ambition to settle down in his old home, and as he was getting on in life, I suppose he thought it worth while to look at every penny before he spent it."

"Well, I do know that Collins went to a music-hall yesterday afternoon," Lee put in. "And he also went in the best seats, as far as I can make out."

"Then he must have been extra flush, sir," Matson returned.

"He didn't go alone, either," said Lee. "There were two halves of tickets found on him."

Close to the chair that was placed beside the hearth was a crumpled piece of paper. Lee picked it up and smoothed it out, then turned to the superintendent.

"Here's the programme of the show," he said, "with yesterday's date on it. Not much doubt about him having been there."

On the other side of the fireplace stood a small sideboard, and on it was a black bottle, which Lee lifted and held to the light from the window, then smelled it. The bottle was empty, but it had contained rum, and on the sideboard stood a dirty glass, flanked with a jug in which there was still some water.

"I saw that when I came in, sir," Matson said, "and it rather surprised me, because all the time I've known Collins he's been teetotal."

Nelson Lee nodded his head.

"Well, you see, we have proved beyond any doubt that there was someone else in here last night, and the fact that the place was left so untidy hints that it could not have been Collins, for you say he was a tidy sort of man."

"He was, sir. His place was always like a new pin."

"This came from Australia—Melbourne," he said. "Probably part of a sailor's kit. It's a very old one and has seen a lot of knocking about."

He held the garment up for the superintendent to see, and his companion shook his head.

"Collins never wore that thing," he said. "Anyhow, it would be too small for him. Collins was a fairly tall man, and I don't reckon that would have reached below his knees."

The only other item of information that Lee gleaned from the flat was the fact that two towels had been used in the bath-room, and were hanging on the rail, evidently having been recently used.

"Of course, that's not much to go on," Lee said, "but if Collins was an economical man he certainly wouldn't dirty two towels at the same time. And by putting it along

YOU MUST NOT MISS READING—

"THE HOUSE OF HORROR!"

**Starring Nelson Lee, Nipper and Wolf, the Alsatian, in a dramatic story
of sinister mystery and thrilling adventure!**

—IN NEXT WEDNESDAY'S ISSUE

Nelson Lee moved round the room, stopping here and there to glance at the various pieces of furniture; then he stopped for a long moment at the door, examining the knob and the panelling before turning again to the superintendent.

"Where is the other room?" he asked.

Matson passed through the doorway and opened another door lower down the passage, and Nelson Lee found himself in a neat little bed-room. It was rather larger than the sitting-room, and as soon as the detective entered he noticed that apart from the single bed that stood behind the door there was another camp bed in the opposite corner, with a couple of blankets and a sheet and pillow bundled untidily on top of it.

"That doesn't look as if Collins had been living alone," Lee said, pointing to the camp bed.

There was a small chest of drawers and a cupboard beside the bed. Lee searched through the chest of drawers and found nothing that would give him any hint as to the second inmate of the room. But in the cupboard, hanging on a nail, he found a battered, ragged oilskin coat. He drew it out and came over to the window to examine it.

Just under the collar was a faded label, and after studying it with his magnifying glass for a long moment, Lee was able to make out a few letters: "M-lb-rnc."

with the other discoveries, I am inclined to think that Collins had somebody staying here, probably a sailor, or, at any rate, a man who has been abroad for some time. The cheroots are a very acquired taste, and only some man who has spent several years in the Far East could get to like them."

They left the flat and the superintendent paced down the passage for a few yards, then knocked on a door, and a woman answered his summons.

"Good-afternoon, Mrs. Tomlins," Matson said. "Sorry to trouble you, but this is a gentleman from Scotland Yard, and he's trying to find out all he can about poor Mr. Collins."

Nelson Lee did not correct Matson about Scotland Yard, for the innocent mistake might make his visit all the more profitable. The woman drew back, allowing them to step into the comfortably furnished room; then Lee began to question her.

"Well, sir, to tell you the truth, Mr. Collins has had somebody staying there," she said. "I don't know when the other man came, but he couldn't have been there very long, not more than four or five days. We have heard them talking together in the afternoons, and when Mr. Collins has been out on duty I've heard somebody moving about in the flat there."

She put her head out of the door and called "Ethel!" and presently a slim child came into the room.

"Tell the gentleman about the man who was in next door, Ethel," the woman said.

The child was rather shy at first, but Nelson Lee had a way with children, and eventually he got the girl to tell her story. It appeared that on the previous morning the man had knocked on their door and had asked Ethel if she would run a message for him. He had given her enough money to book two seats at the music hall for the afternoon's performance, and Ethel had gone off, completed the errand, and the man had given her a shilling.

"What was he like?" asked Nelson Lee.

Ethel's piping voice gave the description.

"He wasn't as tall as you, sir, nor Mr. Matson," she said, "but he was very brown, and he had a beard. He was in his shirt-sleeves, and I saw that there were anchors and things tattooed on his arms. He was smoking a big cigar, and he—he seemed a very nice man."

There was nothing else to be learned there, so thanking everybody Nelson Lee and Matson went off down the stairs and after another few minutes conversation, Lee left the buildings and emerged through the narrow gateway close to the entrance of the section in which Collins' flat had been situated. Nelson Lee found he had only to cross a narrow side street to gain the high wall and door that divided the small paved space behind the institute from the street.

Something made the detective put out his hand and turn the knob of the gate. It gave at his touch and he stepped inside the little paved space. He saw now that in the far end of the wall was a doorway, evidently leading to the back of the institute, and he crossed to the door and knocked. There was a slight interval, then the door opened and a pageboy appeared, staring at Nelson Lee.

"How—how did you get in here, mister?" the youngster stammered.

The detective smiled.

"Through that door, sonny," he said.

The boy shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, that door is supposed to be kept locked," he said, "and I don't know when it was opened. We only unlock it when someone comes round to the front and tells us they want to deliver something here."

The boy's voice carried into the chamber behind him, and presently Lee saw the figure of Mitchell, the other night watchman, come down the passage and stop beside the boy. Nelson Lee asked him where the key of the door in the wall was, and why the door came to be unlocked.

"I wouldn't be at all surprised if Collins had the key, sir," he said. "You see, we were always supposed to come in and out of the institute by the main entrance. But that door is handy for Collins, and maybe he came in that way last night; probably he got the key earlier in the afternoon. I dare say he meant to lock the door after him and put

the key back in its place, but he must have forgotten it.

Mitchell came out into the yard, and Nelson Lee decided that this man would probably know more about Collins than anyone else. And so, at his suggestion, Mitchell, who was not on duty during the day, crossed the courtyard, and went out with Lee through the back door.

They turned down the side street and went up beside the institute, crossing the wider thoroughfare at the other end. A slim figure leaning against a lamp-post just in front of the porch of the Dominions Institute caught Lee's eye and he smiled to himself. Nipper had not noticed Lee and Mitchell, and the detective did not go near the youngster, but kept on down the street, and eventually turned into the thoroughfare where the buses ran.

As they paced along Lee questioned the night watchman.

"To tell you the truth, Mitchell," he said, "I am trying to trace a sailor who made friends with Collins recently. You don't happen to know who he was, do you?"

Mitchell was silent for a moment.

"No, sir, I can't say as I do. But I remember that about a fortnight ago there was a sailor in the institute having a look at the exhibits. He came in three or four days running and spent a lot of time there, for Collins and I didn't used to go on duty till eight o'clock, and the place was closed to visitors when we arrived. But that chap was there to my knowledge on three different nights."

"What was he like?" Lee asked.

"He was perhaps a few inches taller than you, sir," said Mitchell. "A hefty sort of fellow he looked. Black beard, and from what I could see of him he was the kind of chap who would give a good account of himself if it came to a scrap."

"You are quite sure he was taller than I?" Nelson Lee put in, for the detective remembered the child's description differed considerably from this one that Mitchell was giving.

"Oh, yes, sir, quite sure about that. He used to wear a blue reefer jacket with brass buttons on it. There was no doubt what he had been."

"How did he get to the institute?"

"Well, sir, anybody who wants to see round there must know a member and get a visitor's ticket, and to do that you've got to have some sort of connection with the colonies. As a rule, it's the agent-generals who give the tickets out, and all we have to do is to make sure that the visitors have got tickets."

Mitchell stopped for a moment and looked at Nelson Lee.

"Of course, I wasn't on duty when that chap came in," he pointed out. "But I remember him because he was generally the last to go."

Then a sudden memory came to him, for he halted sharp and turned to the detective.

"Jinks I forgot," he exclaimed. "Coming to think of it, that chap, sir, was—he was very interested in them—them skulls."

Mitchell's eyes were wide.

"I heard this morning that one of them skulls was missing, sir," he went on. "Mr. Hardwell says that the skull was the only thing that has gone from the place."

"Yes, that's quite right," Lee returned. "And if this chap was so interested in the skulls we shall have to find him somehow."

"He pestered the day attendants to get them down off the hooks for him to handle, sir, but that wasn't allowed. But he must have got in by ticket, so it's quite possible you could trace him that way."

"I've thought of that," said Lee. "I'll call on the agent-general right away."

The detective did so, leaving Mitchell to find his own way home. At the offices of the Agent-General for Papua several interesting facts came to light. Tickets for the Dominions Institute were not issued from there so frequently that there was any difficulty in tracing that one. It had been issued to a certain Henry Connell, who had landed at Tilbury from the liner *Oratora*, about a month previously.

A few more questions elicited the fact that Nelson Lee had immediately suspected, that the smoked skulls, and the Tamwaio trophies had arrived in England per s.s. *Oratora*, so that Henry Connell had travelled with them. In all probability Connell was an assumed name, but that would do for the present.

CHAPTER 6.

An Arrest!

LEE'S next visit was to the music hall, which was close to Victoria Station. The manager remembered Collins' visit very well, and described the sailor, his companion, much as the child had done at Palvery Buildings. Therefore, the detective argued, there was not one sailor involved in the mystery, but two, and it was not Collins' friend who had travelled with the curios from the East, or who had haunted the Dominions Institute to eye the skulls with such longing.

As he left the music hall he was about to cross the road when he saw Nipper seated in a bus that was just drawing to a stop. The youngster alighted and walked into the station yard with an air that made Nelson Lee believe that he was shadowing something; therefore, the detective shadowed Nipper to the booking-office. A frail, old lady was just purchasing a ticket, and when she had gone Nelson Lee touched Nipper on the arm.

"Hallo, young 'un," he said. "What brings you here?"

Nipper nodded his head towards the fragile woman who was now approaching one of the platforms to a waiting train.

"I followed her, guv'nor," Nipper explained. "You told me to keep an eye on the

institute, and I've been doing so. That old lady has been down round that place for over an hour. She never went into the porch, but just kept moving to and fro along the pavement, and—well, in my opinion, her face looked so scared and frightened that somehow or other I got it into my head that she had some sort of interest in this affair."

The youngster grinned.

"Anyhow, she's the only one who has been really hanging round there except a few loafers, and one or two newspaper men," he went on. "Just before she started off I saw her go up to one of the policemen and ask him a few questions. Then, when she'd gone off I went over to the policeman and told him who I was and I pumped him. He said the old lady had been asking him when the coroner's inquest was going to be held."

He looked up at Nelson Lee.

"It struck me that it was that news that she received that sent her off, for I believe now that she was probably hanging round there waiting to hear the verdict. Anyway, I shadowed her here, and she's taken a ticket for Tooting."

"Then we'll do the same," said Nelson Lee.

They bought their tickets and raced off to the platform just in time to board the train as it moved off. The train stopped at various stations and each time it came to a halt Nipper made it his duty to lean out of the carriage window and watch the passengers as they alighted.

Therefore, when the train pulled up at Balham and Nipper saw the fragile figure of the woman alighting there, he turned to his guv'nor and nodded.

"She's getting out here," he said.

They waited till the woman passed the carriage and both Nelson Lee and Nipper had an opportunity of studying the face. It was a work-worn one but refined. And in the faded eyes could be seen quite clearly a look of trouble and doubt. She was walking along with her head bowed, and when she descended the stairs Lee and his companion were close on her heels.

She turned up along the main thoroughfare and halted at a tram stop, where presently she boarded a tram, and was carried to Tooting Broadway. From there she turned down another thoroughfare to the right and then went on down a narrow lane, finally emerging on to a patch of open ground, on one side of which were a number of cottages.

To two well-trained individuals such as Nipper and Nelson Lee it was not difficult to keep in touch with the old lady, and their casual method of following her made it impossible for her to realise that she was being shadowed.

"Third cottage, guv'nor," Nipper whispered as he saw the thin figure turn through a low gateway and go on up the little path, to vanish inside the cottage.

Nelson Lee and Nipper reached the end of the line of cottages, glancing at the third one as they passed, then, when they had gained

the end of the street, they came to a halt. It was dusk now, and Nelson Lee decided on his course of action.

"There's no need to frighten the old lady, unnecessarily, Nipper," he said. "I think that the best thing you can do is to go along there and ask for someone or other. What I really want to know is if the old lady is living there alone."

Nipper went off up the darkening pavement, and was gone for about five or six minutes. Nelson Lee had crossed to the strip of waste land, and he found a deserted seat there and took up his position, lighting his pipe. He saw Nipper come across the space, and a few moments later the youngster dropped on to the seat beside the detective.

"There's a man in there along with the old lady, guv'nor," he said. "I didn't see him, but I could see his shadow on the floor behind her as she spoke to me. He was standing in the doorway of a lighted room. From the way he was craning his head forward, I could see he was listening."

"Did you see his shadow distinctly, Nipper?" Nelson Lee asked.

"Yes, fairly well, guv'nor."

"Did the man have a beard?" asked the detective.

"Yes, guv'nor. I could see the shadow distinctly. It was a bearded face."

Nelson Lee rose to his feet.

"All right," he said. "That satisfies me. We'll tackle that cottage now, young 'un. But I am just afraid that the fellow may try to escape, so we'll have to divide forces. I saw there was a little strip of back garden behind the cottages. I think the best thing would be for you to work your way round to the back and watch there in case the fellow should try to get away from that side, I'll go to the front and make inquiries there."

They parted then and Nelson Lee waited till he saw his assistant vanish down the narrow passage behind the row of cottages; then the detective walked quietly up the pavement and turned into the small front garden of the third cottage. It seemed to him that there

A Book-length Adventure Yarn for 4d.

The Flying SPY

For three years Guido von Sturm, youngest and greatest of all Germany's war aces, has flown and fought for his Fatherland above the shell-torn Western Front—fearless, deadly, unbeaten! Then Fate steps in! Brought down at last behind the British lines, Von Sturm learns a staggering truth, and when the fighting whirlwind flies again he is no longer Von Sturm, but—Guy Tempest, Englishman, bound on a desperate secret mission into the heart of Germany! Don't miss GEO. E. ROCHES-TER'S most enthralling Great War story; it's packed with thrills and sensation.



Ask for No. 345 of

BOYS' FRIEND Library

Now on Sale at all Newsagents

4d.

was rather a long pause from the moment he knocked until the door was opened. From the lighted doorway on the left was pouring a yellow flood of light, and in it stood the grey-haired woman. She had thrown a shawl over her thin shoulders, and there were spectacles over her nose. She looked at Nelson Lee, and the panic and fear in that look were unmistakable.

"What---what can I do for you, sir?" she quavered.

Nelson Lee knew all too well that there were many good women in this world who make it their duty to shield and protect the rascal and the rogue. This woman's actions might be perfectly innocent, but at least they had appeared suspicious, and as it was a murderer that he was trying to trace, Nelson Lee could not allow sentiment to stand in the way of his duty.

"I am a detective, madam," he said, "and I want to see---"

From the lighted doorway he heard the scrape of a foot, and the woman made a quick movement as though to close the door, but before she could manage it, Lee had slipped across the threshold. The old lady's arm shot out and caught him by the sleeve with trembling fingers.

"Oh, sir---please---please---" she cried.

Her feeble strength was not sufficient to hold Nelson Lee. A gentle tug saw his arm released, and he leaped into the lighted room. As he did so he caught sight of a bunched up shape just thrusting itself out through the opened lower half of the window. There was a table between Nelson Lee and the window, and the detective had to sprint round it to reach the spot. By the time he had done so, the figure had vanished, and the detective, taking a leap, went swinging through the opened sash and dropped into the garden beyond.

The suddenly change from light to darkness blinded him for a moment and he stood hesitating. Suddenly he heard a shout, followed by a crash. It came from the end of the back garden, and Nelson Lee, rushing forward saw two figures struggling against the fence. One of the figures had fallen across the fence, and the other was forcing it back and back, while the fence creaked beneath the pressure of the locked bodies.

"Stick it, Nipper!" yelled the detective.

Two strides saw Nelson Lee reach the side of the struggling figures, and dark though it was, he was able to distinguish between them. He reached out and caught at the collar of the bearded man, and one mighty pull of his arm saw the fellow dragged clean from his hold on Nipper.

With a snarling oath, the thick-set figure turned and lashed out at Lee, the knuckled fist landing full on the detective's cheek, but it did not break his hold. As the man closed, Nelson Lee made a quick deft movement, tripping the fellow up, and they went down on the soft earth beside the fence.

"Now, my friend," said the detective

through his set teeth. "We'll soon settle this!"

It was not a long struggle, but it was a fierce one while it lasted. The man seemed to be beside himself with fear, and he fought like a fury. It was only when Nipper came into the struggle and pinned the fellow's legs down that Lee could turn him over on his back and with a quick deft movement, adjusted the handcuffs over the thick brown wrists. There is a vast potency in the touch of the cold steel wristlets, and it had its effects on the gasping, sweating stranger. Then, in the light from the cottage windows they all saw that the old lady was standing there regarding them all with horror in her eyes.

"All right!" said the stranger hoarsely. "I'll go with you quietly. But I'd just like to ask you to let me get my mother back into the cottage. This---this'll upset her terribly, I know."

The sheer human misery in the voice struck both Nelson Lee and Nipper as being utterly sincere, and the result was that Nelson Lee and his young assistant allowed the bearded man to walk up the path with his mother hanging on his arm, his manacled wrists behind him. They reached the cottage and entered the open doorway, and Nelson Lee and Nipper followed. Then the youngster closed the door behind them.

They were in the kitchen and the old lady had now dropped into a chair, where, with her hands locked in her lap, she was rocking herself to and fro, the tears streaming down her wrinkled cheeks.

"Oh, Steve---Steve, what shall I do---what shall I do?" she wailed.

Nelson Lee had a chance now to see the man. The features above the brown beard were strong enough, and were tanned a deep mahogany. There were hints of a wild life of dissipation about the eyes and mouth, and yet now as they turned on Nelson Lee, it seemed to the detective that the eyes did not lack courage.

"I know what you've come here for," the man said unsteadily. "But I can tell you it's all a mistake."

He straightened his shoulders and waited, glancing at the detective.

"You are the man who was staying at Collins' flat the last few days," Lee said slowly. "You know that Collins has been murdered, found dead this morning?"

"Yes, sir; I---I know that. I was the first to---to find him!"

A black vein appeared on the temple of the sailor for a moment, then he dropped back a pace and leaned against the wall.

"I ain't armed, mister," he said. "You can search me if you like. If you'll let me stay here I'll tell you everything."

The woman looked up for a moment.

"No, Steve," she faltered. "Why should you? They'll only use what you say as evidence against you."

The brown-bearded man was looking straight into Lee's eyes. The quiet, clean-

cut, clever countenance of the detective was very grave as it regarded the prisoner.

"You say you found Collins dead?" he began.

The sailor nodded.

"Yes, sir. He was lying in front of the door in the main hall of the institute. I didn't see him until I got right inside the place."

"How did you get in?"

"By the back door, sir, and that's how I got out, too. You'll find the key in my pocket."

He nodded his head towards the right-hand side, and Nelson Lee, desiring then and there to test the story, slipped his hand into the pocket and discovered the heavy key which at a glance told him was probably the one that fitted the huge back door of the Dominions Institute. This spoke volumes for the prisoner, because the murderer had undoubtedly arrived and escaped via the glass roof.

"You'll find I'm speaking the truth, sir," the bearded man went on, "so help me! I only went there to warn Collins, for I had seen someone—someone that I had been waiting for, someone I knew was going to break in there. But the skunk was too quick for me. He beat me this morning just the same as he beat me months ago."

A grim laugh came from his lips.

"He left me in a tight corner before, Heaven knows; but, by James, he's left me in a worse one this time!"

His voice trailed off into grim silence. Nelson Lee turned to Nipper, and, producing the keys of the handcuffs, nodded to his assistant.

"I am going to trust you for the time being," the detective said to his prisoner. "I'll remove the handcuffs, and I advise you, if you have a story to tell you had better tell it now."

A few deft twists of the keys saw the steel wristlets removed, and the sailor brought his hands round in front of him and rubbed them for a moment. He seemed dazed and not quite able to realise his new position. But the mother's eyes were quicker than his, and she leaned forward suddenly and put her hand on her son's arm.

"It's all right, Steve," she said. "I don't think this gentleman means you any harm, after all. Tell him the truth, my dear; tell him all, and perhaps, instead of being an enemy, he'll prove to be our best friend."

CHAPTER 7.

Steve Holt's Story!

"AND what happened to you after you were stranded on the island?"

For a long half-hour Nelson Lee and Nipper had listened to the hoarse voice of Steve Holt as he told the amazing history of that grim episode among the islands. The bearded sailor had told

the whole of the story in a steady, toneless manner. His eyes were fixed on the opposite wall, and it was obvious that he was living again those terrible moments that had followed that dramatic scene.

Steve Holt turned his head and looked at Nelson Lee. He had come to a pause after he had told of the tragedy, half expecting Lee to say something, and the quiet question which the detective put to him seemed to amaze him.

"Well, sir, I thought that you—you wouldn't care to listen to any more after hearing what had happened," Steve said grimly.

Nelson Lee had been watching the man as he spoke, and the quick brain of the detective had made him appreciate the manner of man Steve Holt was.

There was no need for the sailor to emphasise the fact that he had been practically a tool in the hands of the stronger, more cunning rogue, Dan O'Connor. The tanned face was manly enough, but there was a certain weakness about the chin and lips that plainly indicated the lack of character from which the sailor suffered.

"I don't see that it is necessary to make any comment on that, Steve Holt," said Nelson Lee. "I know the life on the islands, and things happen out there that would never be countenanced in civilised parts. You fellows moving about the islands practically carry your lives in your hands, and you come to regard many questions from quite a different point of view to what we do over here. But get on with your story."

The bearded man cleared his throat.

"I think I must have been about a fortnight on that island, sir," he said. "But I kept away to the east side of it, and never got anywhere near Ma Poago's village. The east side is the worst part of the island, because it is rather swampy there, and I reckon I must have got a touch of malaria. Anyhow, I don't remember much about what happened after that, and it was only when I came to my senses again and found myself aboard the schooner, Wagala Belle, that I heard what had happened to me. They had put in at Tamwaio for water, and had found me raving mad on the shore. They didn't know who I was, and I didn't tell 'em. I was just about naked, and hadn't any papers on me at all, and in my ravings I hadn't given my real name away."

He stopped and turned to Nelson Lee for a moment.

"You see, sir," he went on, "I didn't know just how things had gone against me, and I was wise enough to keep my mouth shut. I gave them a fictitious name, and they didn't ask any questions. They were running down to Perth, and I was landed there when they arrived. It was only then that I found out that about eight weeks had passed from the time I had landed on the island of Tamwaio. I was broke to the wide, of course, but I managed to get a job in a saloon at Perth as washer-up. I was there for about

two or three weeks, then I heard rumours about what had happened at Tamwaio. It was in the newspapers, and I read the whole story—how the governor-general had taken a couple of launches and some of his police boys and had raided the island in order to punish Ma Poago for the murder of three white men."

He smiled grimly.

"I saw at once that they had heard all about the tragedy, but the governor and his men were of the opinion that both Dan O'Connor and myself, as well as Bo Haversley, had been murdered; and, of course, they did not get a chance to find out the truth, because as soon as they landed on the island Ma Poago and his tribe promptly fled from the village."

He folded his arms across his brawny chest and drew a deep breath.

"I'd made up my mind to stick to the name I had given, sir," he said. "If the people thought I was dead I figured it out that it was better for them to remain in that belief, and I would have stuck to that right through, but one day another trading schooner came in, and I saw a black fellow that I thought I recognised.

"You've got to stay on an island for some time before you can tell one black face from another out there, but I had been long enough mixed up with 'em to study them out. I followed this fellow, had a good look at him, and I knew I was correct. It was Mata, the nigger who used to be Bo Haversley's servant on the ketch. And I took a chance, sir. That evening I went and found Mata. He didn't recognise me at first, but when I spoke to him he knew me, and the way he greeted me told me that he didn't know what part I had taken in the scheme. They all thought I was dead, and he told me what had happened.

"After Ma Poago had attacked Bo Haversley and had left his body in the cabin, Dan O'Connor had gone aboard and called the black fellows of the crew to him. He told them that he was master of the ketch then, and spun them some story about having persuaded Ma Poago to spare his life. But he told them that I had been killed as well as Bo Haversley, and as the attack had been carried out quite unexpectedly and the black fellows had been battened down forward as soon as the natives had gone on board, none of the fellows knew the truth. At any rate, under Dan's directions the Ambra was got under way at once, and they left Tamwaio."

A glimmer came into the deep-set eyes of Steve Holt.

"Mata told me that Dan O'Connor spent some time in Bo's cabin before he ordered the crew to lash the body up in a sack and drop it overboard. Mata told me that the cabin was turned inside out and O'Connor spent the best part of a day searching in every nook and corner, but at last he went off into a fit of rage, and although Mata did not know what that meant, I did."

Steve looked at Nelson Lee.

"Dan O'Connor couldn't find that chart, sir," he said, "and he hasn't found it yet!"

"You mean that it wasn't in Bo Haversley's possession?"

The eyes of the sailor glinted.

"Yes, it was, sir. Mata also knew about the chart, although he didn't know where to find it, nor where to find the place where Bo had left his money."

Steve Holt stretched out one hand.

"The chart had gone, sir, although that skunk O'Connor knew that it had been in Bo's possession when he was attacked. Mata told me that O'Connor spent the next two or three weeks going from island to island and trying to get Mata to recognise the particular place he sought, but Mata couldn't do it, and he swore to me that O'Connor had never found the right one where Bo had left his money.

"Anyhow," Steve went on, "at the end of about four weeks' cruising O'Connor steered the Ambra back for one of the larger islands, and when about a mile away from the shore he sank it in deep water, while the crew got ashore in one of the boats and he went in a small skiff."

He paused for a moment, then went on:

"Mata managed to work his way to headquarters at last, and he heard rumours there about what was happening. He swore to me that it was O'Connor that set the yarn going about Ma Poago and made the governor go off on the punishment expedition. Mata had been one of the crew of the governor's launch, and he had witnessed the whole attack. They burned the village, but that was an easy enough job, for it was only made of grasses and palm poles, and Mata says that the governor himself collected the curios which, as you know, sir, are now at the Dominions Institute. Mata went back with the governor's party to headquarters, and he saw Dan O'Connor there, passing himself off as a new hand, a man who wanted to set up a plantation, and as he was not very well known on the islands, his bluff worked."

The bearded sailor nodded to Nelson Lee.

"Mata could not quite make out what O'Connor was at, sir," he continued. "All he knew was that O'Connor was mighty anxious to find out what the governor had done with the village. He hung about the place while the curios were being packed into cases, and when the Government schooner came along and the cases were put on board it to be taken to the mainland, O'Connor booked a passage on board the same boat.

"After the schooner had sailed Mata got a job with a trader and worked his way down the island, stopping at Tamwaio. Ma Poago had gone back to his village and was rebuilding it, and although Mata kept out of Ma Poago's way, he overheard a talk between Ma Poago and the skipper of the schooner. Ma Poago told the skipper all about the murder of Bo Haversley. It's a

way the natives have, sir. They are very candid about their bloodthirsty deeds."

There was a moment's silence in the kitchen, then Steve Holt straightened himself and came across to the table.

"Ma Poago said that just before he closed with Bo Haversley the skipper had a piece of paper in his hand, and he raised his hand to his lips. A moment later the broad spear of one of Ma Poago's men was sent home and Bo Haversley fell dead."

Steve shot a glance at his mother.

"I won't go into further details of that, sir," he said. "But—well, you can guess what happens when a head-hunter wants his trophy."

He paused again, and the silence was only broken a few moments later by a hoarse laugh from Steve Holt's lips.

"You see what happened, sir. That piece of paper was the chart, and Bo Haversley died with that chart in his mouth. Bo Haversley knew that chart was his most valuable possession. It was about five or six inches square, and would fold up into a very small space."

Nelson Lee leaned forward.

"You mean, then, that Ma Poago's trophy, that grisly relic, probably contains the secret chart?"

"I'm sure of it, sir," Steve put in. "I couldn't understand why Dan O'Connor was hanging round the governor's quarters, and why he had come down to the mainland with that schooner. But Mata's yarn gave me an idea, and as soon as I left the nigger I went and made inquiries and found that there was another coaster going round to Melbourne on the following morning."

"I had saved a bit of money, just enough to pay for my passage to Melbourne, and I went aboard the coaster. I reached Melbourne one day after the Oratora had sailed. I met a man on the docks who had been working on the vessel stowing the cargo away, and he told me that those cases sent by the new governor-general of the islands to the Dominions Institute had been part of the cargo, and also told me that Dan O'Connor was on board. I was sure then what Dan was after, and knew that he was following that chart across half the world. I figured it out that he had heard about what Bo had done when Ma Poago had attacked him, and he had come to the same conclusion as I had."

"Dan O'Connor had found out that the skulls which the governor had brought away from Ma Poago's hut where the latest editions to the grisly string of skulls he had there, and Dan reckoned that amongst them was bound to be Bo Haversley's skull. Ma Poago did not know anything about the chart. Mata had not told him, and it's there yet, sir, there in that skull, sir, hidden away safe enough, for the smoke wouldn't reach it, and I tell you, sir, it'll be there now. And when I felt sure of all that I shipped aboard a faster vessel as deck hand, and arrived in London two days ahead of the

Oratora, and I went to the institute and was lucky enough to run across an old pal of mine in Collins. I'd met him before out in Newfoundland, and I stayed with him for a time to be near the institute. I guessed that O'Connor would turn up, and sure enough, he did."

Nelson Lee looked at Steve Holt.

"Dan O'Connor is rather a tall man, and was wearing a blue reefer coat with brass buttons?"

The sailor smiled.

"Then you know him, sir?"

"No, I don't, only I know you are telling the truth, because I have already discovered something concerning O'Connor."

A quiet breath of relief came from the listening woman, and she turned to the detective.

"My son is telling the truth, sir," she said. "You will find out that he is not really so bad as he appears to be."

CHAPTER 8.

Off to Tamwaio!

STEVE HOLT drew himself up and took a deep breath.

"Well, sir, I knew that Dan O'Connor had been haunting the institute," he said. "But he hadn't showed up for a week or so. Collins never knew anything about me, but I asked him a lot of questions about O'Connor, and knew that he was there pretty well for the whole of the afternoons, for Collins used to see him when he went on duty in the evening. O'Connor used to spend hours at a time looking up at them skulls, sir, trying to make sure which one was Bo's, sir."

"I felt sure that O'Connor would make another move soon, and that was why I began to spend the nights at Collins' flat. He was a good sort, was that old chap. He thought I was down on my luck, and he made up a bed for me in his bed-room and let me stay there."

"I know all about that," Lee put in, "but I also know that you spent a great deal of your time last night in the little sitting-room of the flat smoking the cigars of which you are so fond."

"Yes, sir, that's right. I'll tell you just what happened."

He turned and looked at Nelson Lee.

"After Collins went on duty I used to spend a lot of time at the window in the sitting-room. I could see the roof of the institute from there, and I reckoned that it would be at night-time that O'Connor would go there if he was going to try to steal that skull. I spent night after night watching that glass roof, sir, because every hour it used to be lit up, and I knew that Collins or Mitchell was on duty."

"But there were certain times when Collins or the other man used to leave the main

hall and go round the building, and during those times they put the lights out."

There was now no need for Nelson Lee to question the man, for he had had ample proof that Steve Holt was telling the truth.

"It was getting on for two o'clock in the morning, sir, when I first caught sight of someone moving along the glass roof," Steve went on. "It was pretty dark, but I could see him all right, for the lights in the main hall were on, and although he was leaning forward in the gutter, I caught a glimpse of his head as he moved along. He was working his way right up to the far corner, and I saw his head and shoulders appear against the glass there; then the lights in the hall went out, and I knew what that meant. It was just the time when the fellow who worked with Collins went down to the basement to be relieved."

Steve looked at Nelson Lee.

"I know Dan O'Connor, sir," he said, "and I knew he wouldn't take any chances. I reckoned he knew as much about the movements of those two night-watchmen as I did, and I guessed that it would be the half-hour interval that was going to take place then that would be made use of by O'Connor. I made up my mind then that I'd catch him red-handed, and after waiting for a few moments I left the flat. Collins had had a key of the back door with him on the previous morning. He had meant to put it back when he returned to duty, but he had forgotten it, and I knew that that would be the best way for me to get into the institute without being seen. What I intended to do was to get hold of Collins while he was on his rounds, then we would both go to the main hall and collar O'Connor at work."

He stopped and drew a deep breath.

"But I reckon I had made a mistake in the time, sir," he went on. "I got in through the back door and went on across the space and through the other door, crossed the room and down the passage. I stopped there and listened, because I thought I would be able to hear Collins moving about in the other rooms. I don't know how long I waited there—might have been ten or twenty minutes—but I could not hear a sound, and I reckoned that Collins had probably gone to the main hall. You see, sir, I thought that O'Connor would be able to take away the skull and get clear off without Collins knowing anything about it if I waited any longer, so it struck me then that the best thing I could do would be to go along and just make sure that the skull hadn't been removed."

"I went up the wide passage and found the door leading to the main hall. I tried it and it was unlocked. It is one of those patent locks, and locks itself when you push the door into place, and it can't be opened again unless you've got a key, either from the inside or outside. But when I tried it the lock was held back by the catch, and I walked into the room. It was in darkness and I didn't know where the switches were. I just took

about three paces into that hall, sir, and—I fell over the dead body!"

He looked wild-eyed at the detective.

"But I didn't stop to think about it, sir. All I did was to cross the main hall and I struck one match holding it up so that I could see the line of skulls. There was one missing and that satisfied me, sir."

"What did you do then?"

"I—I just bolted, sir. I was scared to death, and that's the truth. I went right out, and before I closed the door I lifted the catch so that it would lock. Then I went down the passage and out through the back door. As I got out of the door I saw a policeman turning the end of the street, and I didn't have time to stop and lock it. I just took to my heels and ran, sir."

Nelson Lee was convinced that the man had told the truth.

"There is only one thing I want to get at," he said. "This man, Bo Haversley, intended his fortune to go to someone in England, didn't he?"

"Yes, sir. He did mention that to us. I reckoned it was his wife, probably, someone he had deserted years ago," he said.

"Have you any idea where she may be found?"

Steve thought for a moment.

"Well, sir, I remember he used to mention a name now and again. I think it was Stamilsea, he said it was the place where he was born, somewhere on the East Coast, I believe."

He looked at Nelson Lee.

"He told us that if anything ever happened to him this woman would hear about it, for he had arranged that a letter should be sent to her from Sydney, where he had a friend. Dan O'Connor knew that as well as I did."

"And you never thought it worth while to go down to Stamilsea?" Nelson Lee put in. Steve shook his head.

"No, sir. I was afraid to leave London. I was never sure of what O'Connor would get up to, and—well, sir, you can put it down to revenge, if you like, but all my thoughts were concentrated on him. He had played me a dirty trick, and maybe I deserved it; but I wasn't going to let him get away with his scheme if I could prevent it. I never left London, sir, since I got here."

"And yet I think O'Connor must have done so, or else he must have lain low," Nelson Lee said, "because I know that his visitor-ticket to the institute expired ten days before the robbery and murder took place. Anyhow, the point that occurs to me is: why did O'Connor waste that time before making his move to get hold of the skull?"

"I don't know, sir," Steve returned, with a shake of his head. "O'Connor was a cleverer man than me. He had more brains than I ever had. Maybe he had another plan up his sleeve that he was trying to work."

"I think he must have had," said Lee, "and, unless I am very much mistaken, his plans had something to do with Stamilsea."

A quick light came into Steve's eyes.

"I get you, sir—I get you!" he exclaimed. "You think that perhaps there was another chart and it was left behind by Bo Haversley to be sent with the letter to his wife."

"That's what I had thought," Lee returned, "and probably O'Connor thought the same. But the fact that he came back here to London afterwards, and found it necessary to take the big risk of stealing the skull, rather suggests that his visit to Stamilsea was not so satisfactory as he had hoped."

He nodded to Nipper and the youngster rose to his feet.

"I am going to leave you here, Holt," said Nelson Lee. "As I have already told you, I believe your story and therefore I am going to trust you. But if you will take my advice you will remain quietly indoors. Wait here until you receive some further word from me, for as I have managed to trace you, the police may also do the same, and unfortunately, if you are tackled by officials, you will find that they are not quite so ready to accept a man's bare word as I am. In the meantime, my assistant and I will go down to Stamilsea and see what there is to be discovered there."

But it was not until the following morning that Nelson Lee and Nipper left London for Stamilsea. They arrived at the small seaport and made their inquiries. It was easy enough, by going through the local directory, to learn that there was actually a Mrs. Haversley living in the town—a woman whose husband had gone to sea years previously and had never returned, although she heard from him occasionally when he had the decency to send her lump sums of money. These letters usually came from Sydney, Australia.

All the woman's neighbours knew about those letters. Nelson Lee did not see Mrs. Haversley herself, for the simple reason that he was about forty eight hours too late. Mrs. Haversley, so he understood, had been visited several times lately by a seafaring man who gave his name as Captain Bell. What he had to communicate to Mrs. Haversley, no one could say, but on the morning after the murder of Collins, Mrs. Haversley had drawn all her savings out of the bank and had shut up her cottage, packed her clothes, and gone off with Captain Bell, without a word of explanation to anyone.

Upon hearing this news Nelson Lee hesitated no longer.

"This means a trip to the Pacific for us, Nipper," he said. "And as Steve Holt knows his way about out there, he had better come with us. I reckon that Dan O'Connor has pitched some false tale to Mrs. Haversley in order to persuade her to finance his venture. He is now, I expect, on his way back to Tamwaio, and probably, Mrs. Haversley is with him and still hoping to find her husband alive, for Dan O'Connor is hardly likely to have told her that he was responsible for Bo Haversley's death. The point is, we must follow on his trail as fast as we can."

CHAPTER 9.

Washed Overboard!

NELSON LEE, with Nipper and Steve Holt, headed for the Pacific with all speed they could, making first for New York, then across to San Francisco, and on to Honolulu. But before he left England, Nelson Lee got into communication with pretty well every dock and harbour authority in the country, and had sent a



Nelson Lee saw two figures struggling desperately against the locked bodies. "Stick it Nipper!"

description of Dan O'Connor and also of the unfortunate Mrs. Haversley all round.

Just before the party sailed, the detective received a report from Glasgow, stating that a man named O'Connor had been taken on as fourth mate on a cargo boat that was running to Australia. It was one of the Federal Line, and was built more for cargo than speed. The report stated that there was no trace of Mrs. Haversley and under the circumstances, Nelson Lee decided that it would not be worth while taking any further steps in England.

Dan O'Connor was a wily rogue, and it was more than likely that he had arranged for himself to travel on one line while Mrs. Haversley went by another; then they would join forces again on the other side of the globe. In any case, Dan had already sailed

before the report reached Nelson Lee, and although he might have sent a wireless message and had him arrested at sea, there was nothing to be gained by such a course.

The point was that with the exception of Steve Holt's story, there was no direct evidence against O'Connor, and when it comes to making a statement in a witness box, one man's word is just as good as another's. In addition to that, Steve Holt's part in the first act of the grim drama was not altogether



the garden fence which creaked beneath the pressure yelled the detective, rushing forward.

free from blame, and a skillful council for the defence could make him appear as black a rogue as the other man. For these reasons, Nelson Lee wanted Steve Holt where he could keep an eye on him, for he was afraid that the police would find out one or two things jump to false conclusions, arrest Steve, and so wreck his own chances of solving the whole mystery.

They arrived at Honolulu and took up quarters in the new hotel there, and Nelson Lee and Steve Holt went off to try to find a boat of some sort that would take them round the islands. At the end of about two days they found what they wanted. It was a small sloop, with auxiliary engines, of about forty ton, and was a very seaworthy boat. The skipper and owner of it was quite ready to accept the charter and he arranged the crew.

The following week was rather busy and full of bustle, buying food and kit, and everything needed for a long cruise through the islands to the south. But eventually, everything was settled and the party set out. At that time of the year the wind serves for the whole way down to the islands, and the sloop had a good turn of speed, so that within ten days they were amongst the coral reefs of the islands.

The sun was gloriously hot, and they gradually shed their clothes until Nipper was content to knock about in a pair of very light trousers and a white sun hat. Everybody on board enjoyed the fine weather with the exception of Steve, and he seemed as though his return to those waters had affected him. He would sit huddled up in the bows, his chin resting on his hands, staring into space, and no one could cheer him up for any length of time.

The sloop touched at one large island where there was a fair-sized town and several white traders and planters. They made the newcomers very welcome, and in fact, they gave something like a spread at one of the larger houses for the entertainment of the visitors.

When the meal was over and the party were all gathered together under the wide veranda, Nelson Lee began to turn the conversation round until he had brought it into the right channel. He mentioned the name of Bo Haversley, and one of the planters, who had known the dead skipper rather well, took up the thread of the talk. He had a deal to say about Bo, and most of it was not very complimentary.

Steve Holt was of the party, but he had scarcely opened his lips all the time, and now that someone was telling the real truth concerning Bo Haversley's character, he kept glancing at Nelson Lee to make sure that he missed nothing. There was no doubt, however, in Nelson Lee's mind that Bo Haversley had been something like a tyrant and a brute, riding roughshod over everybody and carrying his life in his hands all the time.

"But he came up against it in the end, Mr. Lee," the planter said. "For his biggest enemy was Ma Poago, and that wily old chief swore to have his head and by thunder, he got it!"

Another man in the party leaned forward.

"Yes, that's all right, Mac," he said, "but don't forget that Ma Poago paid for it. I was one of the party that went down to Tamwaio along with the Governor, and we didn't leave as much as a palm leaf of that village."

The planter addressed as Mac turned and smiled at the speaker.

"You're a new hand here, my friend," he said, "otherwise you would realise as well as most of us do that burning a native village is no punishment at all. Why, they can build the place up again in a couple of days, and Ma Poago, when your lot landed on the island, was just as cunning as he could be. All he did was to skip up to the jungle and

stay there until you'd gone. You might have burned his village, but that's nothing."

"Oh, we did more than that," Ferguson returned. "We collected all the arms and spears we could find, and also took away some of that old scoundrel's trophies in the way of heads and things that we found hanging on the hut poles."

Mac rose to his feet.

"Just a minute, friends, and I'll call someone who will give you a very interesting bit of information on that subject."

He vanished round a corner of the veranda and presently returned leading a very old native. He marched him up to the visitors, and the old fellow halted, grinning and bowing.

"Look here, Batama," said Mac, addressing the old native. "You know white fellow he go along make mess of Ma Poago's place? They make heap big mess and burn village. But you been to Tamwaio since then and you tell white fellow what Ma Poago told you."

The wrinkled face of the native beamed into a smile and he broke out into the curious island English. It is difficult and hardly necessary to set down word for word what Batama said in his pidgin English, which is not easy to understand unless one has lived in the islands for some time.

The gist of it was that Ma Poago had played a trick on the Governor. He had seen the Governor's party approaching the island and had known what was going to happen, and in the brief interval Ma Poago had been able to get away with most of the relics he really valued.

"What about the heads, Batama?" Mac asked, pointedly.

The old native chuckled.

"Ma Poago no lose any of his heads," he said. "Heads that white fellow found were heads belonging to other black fellows in Ma Poago's tribe. Ma Poago take all him heads with him."

A laugh went round the party and Mac turned triumphantly to Ferguson.

"There you are, old chap," he broke out. "There's the truth about your expedition. I read what the governor said about his punishment on Ma Poago and I believed it at the time, but I know Batama wouldn't lie to me."

Nelson Lee leaned forward, greatly interested.

"Then you mean to say that the skulls which Mr. Leyland Aimes sent to England did not belong to Ma Poago at all?"

The planter nodded agreement.

"Ma Poago would far rather lose all his possessions, even his kingdom, than lose that collection of trophies. I can believe old Batama here, and it's my opinion that the skulls that the governor took away with him had never belonged to Ma Poago at all."

This was very useful information indeed, and Nelson Lee glanced across the heads of the men towards the dark corner where Steve was sitting. The bearded sailor was leaning

forward, drinking in every word of what passed, and as he caught the detective's eye he gave him a quick, appreciative nod.

The party did not break up until late, and as soon as it did so Nelson Lee, Nipper, Steve Holt, and the skipper of the sloop returned to the vessel and held a council of war. It was arranged that they should head for Tamwaio, and Steve worked it out that it would take about four days.

Before Nipper slipped into his berth that night he had another turn on deck, and although he noticed a rather darker cloud eastward he did not pay much attention to it. But next morning, when he awakened, he found that the vessel was under way and was already clear of the big island. He went on deck and a great change had come over the scene.

The little black cloud that he had noticed on the previous night had grown very large, and they were running under close-reefed sails, while everything was battened down, snug and ready for trouble. Steve came up to him with an oilskin over his arm and held it out.

"Better come below and have breakfast, Mr. Nipper," he said. "We're going to have a bit of a gale, and I can tell you that the gales that come our way in this quarter of the world are pretty tough while they last. You'll see something in a moment."

They went down into the saloon and had breakfast, but before it was through one of the crew put his head down the companion-way and called to the skipper, who left them. Nipper was just finishing the dregs of a cup of coffee when something seemed to hit the ship. It was as though a giant had swung a hammer up and brought it hard down on the bows, for their way was stopped and everything on the table was swept down to one side as the vessel heeled before the onslaught of the elements.

It was a pretty anxious moment, but the sloop righted herself; then there was a crash on deck that signalled the first downpour of rain. Through the open companion the rain was coming down just as though someone was throwing it out of a bucket. It fell in sheets, and Steve and Nipper, gasping for breath, fought their way up the ladder and managed to close the hatch when they emerged on deck.

Nelson Lee was already on deck, and although it was early morning there was only the faintest light, for the black clouds had descended right on top of the ship it seemed, and the sloop appeared to be moving through a grey halo. The rain was terrific. It soused down the deck in torrents and the scuppers were like two mountain brooks, rushing from bow to stern.

The storm lasted all that day, and when dusk came they were still running before it. Nipper went in search of Nelson Lee, and found him and Steve mounting guard over the small solitary skiff that the sloop possessed. It had been swung on the davits on to the stern, and Steve and the detective

were crouching below the boat to get a little shelter from the storm. Steve made room for Nipper, and the youngster heard him chuckle as he dropped by his side.

"Didn't I tell you that you'd see something, Mr. Nipper?" he said. "What d'you think of a Pacific storm now?"

"Don't like it a bit, Steve," Nipper replied. "You can turn it off as soon as you like."

It seemed as if the storm had improved Steve: he was not nearly so despondent now. Maybe the sailor instinct in him had relished the storm and the fight it had brought with it.

Nelson Lee turned to Nipper, and as he did so one of the vivid flashes of lightning streaked down again, revealing the black, wet bulk of the sloop before them. Those vivid flashes appeared at regular intervals, and while they lasted the grey rain clouds all around were lit up.

"Steve is afraid we'll run on to one of the reefs round some island, young 'un," Lee said. "And when that happens, of course, the native crew will make a rush for this boat. So at the skipper's suggestion we are here to look after it."

Nipper leaned back against the boat, and he must have dozed off. He was rather tired with slopping about on that wet deck all day. But he couldn't have been asleep for long before he was roughly awakened by being shot right under the boat and rolling over and over on the wet deck until a couple of powerful hands grabbed him.

He could hear the wind shrieking and the creaking of the spars, followed by hoarse shouts from the skipper. Then a tremendous wave crashed down on the sloop, and Steve and Nipper, holding on to each other, were swept away in the thick of the smother.

Nipper never knew how long he hung to his breath in the middle of that warm green billow, but he felt as if his lungs would burst before he found his head up above the surface and was able to gulp in the fresh air. Steve had never let go of the youngster. His hands were still on Nipper's shoulders, and as they came to the surface he yelled at the top of his voice:

"All right, Nipper! Hang on to me!"

"Don't bother!" shouted Nipper. "I can swim, Steve."

Another wave came crashing over them, and they were swept onward; then they heard the rustle of a breaker, and in another moment they were plunged into a welter of foam. This last flight finally saw them through the barrier, and they found themselves floating in smooth water. They were over the reef.

They swam close together then, and eventually their feet touched solid ground. A few moments later they staggered out on to a stretch of beach and gained a line of palm-trees. At first Nipper couldn't understand what was the matter with those palm-trees. They were leaning over at an angle of forty-five degrees; but at last it dawned

in upon him that it was the force of the wind that was swaying them in that direction.

It was growing dawn now, but they could not see very much, for now and again a swirl of sand would rise from the beach and blow through the palm-trees, while, of course, the racing clouds and sheets of rain falling helped to darken the sky. Steve and Nipper were quite content to sit at the foot of a big palm and hang on, waiting for the storm to pass.

"I wonder what's happened to the sloop, Steve?" Nipper said, putting his lips close to Steve's ear.

He turned and gave him a reassuring smile.

"It's all right, Mr. Nipper," he said. "Nothing much would happen to it. We were some way from the reef when that last wave carried you and I overboard, and the Kitty was a staunch little vessel. I shouldn't worry about Mr. Lee. He'll be all right."

CHAPTER 10.

In the Hands of Head-Hunters!

ANOTHER couple of hours passed before the storm finally settled down, and the morning sun showed in the distance eastward. Ten minutes after the wind dropped the sun came up in earnest, and Nipper could see the vapour from the trees and beach commence to rise in little coiled spirals as the heat of the sun grew stronger.

They rose to their feet at last and went down to the beach to stand out in the sun, for they had been wet through and were feeling chilly. Steve stared about for a moment, and a rather troubled look came over his face. Then, when the mists had entirely vanished, he turned to Nipper and nodded his head. He pointed to the right, where a long strip of land ran out into the sea. It was close to the coral reef, over which the waves were still breaking, for the sea, of course, was rough enough as yet, and would take some hours before it died down to its usual calm.

"Unless I'm very much mistaken, we have landed on Tamwaio," he said huskily. "That bit of land out there is where I saw Ma Poago's war canoe sail out. I could almost swear to it!"

Being so near to Ma Poago brought the whole of the grim business back into Steve's mind, for he became dejected and worried.

"I know Ma Poago of old," he said, looking at Nipper. "If he finds us here I don't think we'll have a ghost of a chance. Of course, he may have quietened down a bit since that raid on his village, but you can never get these head-hunters to change their ways."

He turned then and they began to retrace their steps back into the palm-trees.

"No good standing out there on the beach," Steve said. "Those blacks have eyes like hawks. They can see for miles. We

shall be safer in the jungle, although that's not too safe, either."

They started to trudge through the palms, then, and presently found themselves on higher ground. Reaching a cleared space, they were able to see part of the surrounding country. Away to the right Nipper saw a pillar of smoke rising lazily, and Steve assured him that it was the fires in Ma Poago's village. They had also a good view of the sea beyond the islands, and although they scanned it carefully, there was no trace of the Kitty.

"We'll have to lie low, Mr. Nipper," Steve said. "The Kitty may have been sent miles beyond these islands, but she'll start to work her way back as soon as the storm stopped, and if we just keep clear of the village and wait till she returns, we'll be able to join your gov'nor again."

The suggestion did not appeal greatly to Nipper, for it might be a day or two before Nelson Lee and the sloop came back, and he couldn't quite see the force of kicking his heels in that jungle during the interval. Steve went off, and returned presently with an armful of bread-fruit and a few bananas. The bananas were not really ripe, but that did not deter Nipper from making a good vegetarian meal, after which they decided to have a little rest, and made themselves as comfortable as possible under the palms. But eventually that palled on Nipper, who was anxious to be up and doing something, if not to help himself, then to help Nelson Lee.

"I don't think it's much use hanging around here, Steve," he said. "We are a long way from the village, and the gov'nor is pretty sure to make for there when he does come back. I think the best thing we can do would be to work our way as near to the village as possible."

"I don't altogether agree with you," returned Steve. "In fact, it's just about the worst thing you could do. You don't know these black fellows as I do."

He argued with Nipper for a bit, and finally, much against his will, he fell in with Nipper's suggestion, and presently they started off along the rising ground, heading in the direction of the smoke they had seen. Nipper had allowed Steve to believe that he was a fenderfoot in this game, but he had been at it before, and it struck him that Steve was over-cautious.

Steve Holt stopped every few paces and listened, and Nipper really began to get impatient with him. In fact, at last, instead of allowing him to lead, Nipper worked his way to the front, and despite Steve's protests, he stuck to that position and set a livelier pace through the trees.

Consequently Nipper had only himself to blame for what happened. He had walked down into a slight hollow, and was just climbing the opposite slope, through a rather heavy tangle of creepers, when he heard the dried twigs on the left snap sharply. As the sound reached his ears Steve's voice went

up in a warning shout, and Nipper shot round.

A spear flashed within a foot of him as he dodged it. He saw the black shape behind the tangled growth, and its arm was outstretched just as it had been swung to throw the spear. It was a broad-bladed affair, and Steve assured him afterwards that he thought it was all up with him. No doubt it was pure instinct that made Nipper dodge to one side, and the long weapon flashed over his shoulder, giving him a tap on the head with the butt.

A yell went up from the black fellow, and the next moment he had cleared the bush and was on top of Nipper, and they crashed down, the black on top. Nipper had seen the fellow shift a short stabbing spear from his left hand to his right, and it was for the right wrist that Nipper grabbed.

By sheer good luck he managed to close his fingers over it, and although the odds were all on the cannibal, he managed to twist his wrist round and force the weapon from his hand. They rolled down the sloping ground to the bottom of the hollow, locked in each other's arms, and Nipper was forcing himself hard against the black chest, so that the savage could not get hold of his throat. He could feel his breath on his cheek and the knotted muscles rising and falling beneath his black skin.

How that wild cat scrimmage came to an end Nipper never really knew. He had no means of telling whether it was the man with whom he was wrestling who gave him that final tap on the head. He reckoned someone else must have butted in and lent a hand, for he never remembered loosening his hold on his first assailant. But that tap on the head robbed him of his senses for a time, and the next he remembered was being carried across the ground in a most awkward and uncomfortable position.

It took him some time to discover just what that position was. He was tied to a pole by the wrists and ankles, and was being carried on the shoulders of a couple of blacks strung there for all the world like a dead pig. The swaying of the pole and the pull on his shoulder muscles was an ordeal that he didn't appreciate, and he was mighty glad, after what seemed an age, to find himself cast on the ground and saw that they had entered a lighted space.

A few moments later there was another thud and a groan, and he turned his head to discover that close to him lay the cramped, bound body of Steve Holt. He had been carried on another pole, and through the yellow glimmer of light—for by that time the sun had set—Nipper and Steve stared at each other for a moment.

"Are you—are you all right, Nipper?" Steve said.

"Can't say I'm all right, Steve," he returned. "But I'm not dead yet, if that's what you mean."

Steve groaned.

"Just what I expected," he said. "Some of Ma Poago's men have got hold of us, and it's a wonder to me that they didn't murder us back there in the hollow."

It struck Nipper that that ceremony would not be long delayed, for presently a broad-shouldered, naked shape stooped over him and cut the grass ropes that bound his arms and legs to the poles, and allowed him to roll over into a sitting position. The same operation was performed for Steve, and after they had sat still for a few moments the circle of blacks who were gathered round them separated, and through them came a great, fat, waddling shape.

Steve, who was sitting close to Nipper, managed to nudge him on the arm.

"Ma Poago!" he whispered. "Don't let on that we know him."

Ma Poago waddled up to where they were seated and came to a halt in front of the fire. He spoke in the native language, and although Nipper knew that Steve was quite familiar with the tongue, the sailor only shook his head.

"I no savvy black fella talk," he said. "What for you go for treat white fella this way? You get trouble by-and-by if you not let us go double quick."

Ma Poago was standing with his back to the fire, and Nipper couldn't see his face very clearly, but the whole aspect of the man was hideous to a degree, his small eyes staring down at them in a cold, calculating way. Ma Poago was trying to place them. It was not very often that two white men were stranded on his island, and following his recent experience, he had grown just a little cautious. Nipper saw at once that there would be no head-removing for that night, and began to breathe a little more freely.

Presently Ma Poago nodded to one of his men, and the grass bonds round Nipper's ankles were released. The same was done to Steve, and, turning round, the cannibal chief went off through the circle, while two or three of his huge followers closed in on the prisoners, and the butt of a spear planted in between Nipper's shoulders told him what he had to do.

Steve and Nipper followed the fat, ungainly shape of the chief. They were led through the native village, and finally into a space that was divided from the village by a high stockade. In the centre of the space was a hut, and in front of the hut blazed another fire.

Ma Poago had halted beside the fire, and he waited until they appeared, then he spoke to them in the pidgin English of the islands. He gave them to understand that they were his prisoners, and that if they attempted to escape they would be killed. But he hadn't made up his mind what to do with them, and until he had done so they were safe enough.

Nipper thought that he stared rather hard at Steve, but the brown-bearded sailor kept his countenance fairly well, and in answer to a flood of questions that Ma Poago put

to him, Steve managed to make out a very convincing sort of story to account for their presence.

Steve warned Ma Poago that their friends would be bound to come and look for them, and he also told the old chief that the sloop was well armed and there would be a heap of shooting if their friends did not find them. In this he had not exaggerated, because Nelson Lee had seen to it that he had a good supply of rifles, revolvers and ammunition aboard the Kitty. Apart from that, there was a little one-pounder gun in the bows of the Kitty, which, if it was old-fashioned, could do great damage against black fellows and palm huts.

But the Kitty was a long way off, and Ma Poago knew that Steve was probably bluffing him. The Kitty was a danger to Ma Poago, but not quite such a terrible danger as Steve tried to make out. However, the fat old cannibal chief seemed to listen attentively, and when Steve came to the end of his statement Ma Poago nodded his head and turned away.

"Black fella no kill white fella if white fella stop here," he said.

On one side of the stockade was a light structure, a sort of shed made of bamboo poles and palm leaves. Into this primitive affair Steve and Nipper were led, and presently some food was brought to them. Nipper was rather tired, and after he had made a meal he stretched out and went to sleep, and didn't awaken again until the

**LOOK OUT FOR THIS
COVER NEXT WEEK!**



morning, when he found a lusty fellow prodding him in the ribs with his spear and indicating a gourd of boiled grain which he had placed by his side.

The man seemed friendly enough in his way, and Steve and Nipper decided that under the circumstances the best thing they could do would be to keep quiet and let things take their course. Nipper was fairly certain that Nelson Lee would work his way back to Tamwaio, and as they were in Ma Poago's village, there was a big chance of being found by him.

"I think they're friendly enough, Steve," he said. "Anyhow, they're feeding us, and that's a point in their favour."

The big sailor looked at Nipper and grinned.

"It just shows how little you know about these people, Nipper," he said. "The first thing they do is to feed their prisoners, and you can guess what that's for. We fatten pigs at home, don't we?"

It had hardly dawned on Nipper like that, and he pushed the food away as if he had had enough. Steve noted the action and chuckled.

"Might as well make a decent meal," he suggested. "It makes no difference to these fellows whether you eat or not, because if they want to fatten you for the stew-pot, and you try starving, they'll ram it into you."

Nipper couldn't be sure whether Steve was joking with him or not, but at the time it seemed that the sailor's face was serious enough. However, he had had enough food for the time being, and eventually he got up and went for a walk round the stockade. No one interfered with him, but a couple of tall blacks standing just at the entrance to the stockade with their broad-bladed spears hinted to him that it would be just as well not to make any attempt to pass out.

He went back to the house in the centre of the stockade and examined it. It was one of the real native structures and had evidently been recently built. What particularly attracted him was that along the front of it, on the long poles, was hanging a very grisly collection of smoked skulls.

Steve had joined him by that time, and he shrugged his shoulders at the sight of those hideous trophies.

"This proves that old Batama's story was true, Nipper," he said. "Ma Poago must have shifted his skulls when the governor made his raid on the island, for here they are back in position."

They stood looking at the line, and it seemed to Nipper as though the thought that had entered his head was also entering Steve's, for he turned suddenly to the youngster.

"I wonder if Bo Haversley's head is amongst that lot?" he said.

They had no chance of finding out if such was the case, for although they were not molested, there were quite a number of lounging natives inside the compound who kept their eyes on them. Nipper had little desire for a closer inspection of those grue-

some things, and he was glad to turn away and get back to the little shelter.

They spent the greater part of the day lounging there, and at dusk the beating of a hollow drum began to sound through the village. They saw a stir and bustle taking place among the natives and presently Steve spoke to one tall fellow who walked past them, trailing his spear behind him. The fellow knew no pidgin-English, so although it was a risky thing to do Steve used the native tongue, and the man explained willingly enough.

There was going to be a ceremony at which Ma Poago was to consult the tribal gods to make sure that something he was planning would turn out triumphant for him.

"I can't make it out, quite," said Steve, later, when he translated the news for Nipper's benefit. "News travels amongst these islands in a mysterious way, and Ma Poago knows that there is a white man coming to Tamwaio to see him personally about Bo Haversley. What is more, Ma Poago is anxious to see this man, and is waiting for him, and when he arrives it appears that the whole tribe will leave Tamwaio for another island where far greater prosperity is waiting for them. Ma Poago is one of the cutest chiefs round here, I know, but he is not the sort to say things like that if he can't carry out all he says. Besides, who is he expecting?"

"That's an easy one," exclaimed Nipper. "He's waiting for Dan O'Connor to turn up—though just why is hard to say."

"But if O'Connor does turn up he'll recognise me," said Steve. "Perhaps Ma Poago is keeping us here to see if Dan does know us. And then, there'll be two more skulls on that line, I reckon. We've got to get out of this, Nipper!"

"I was thinking the same thing," replied Nipper grimly.

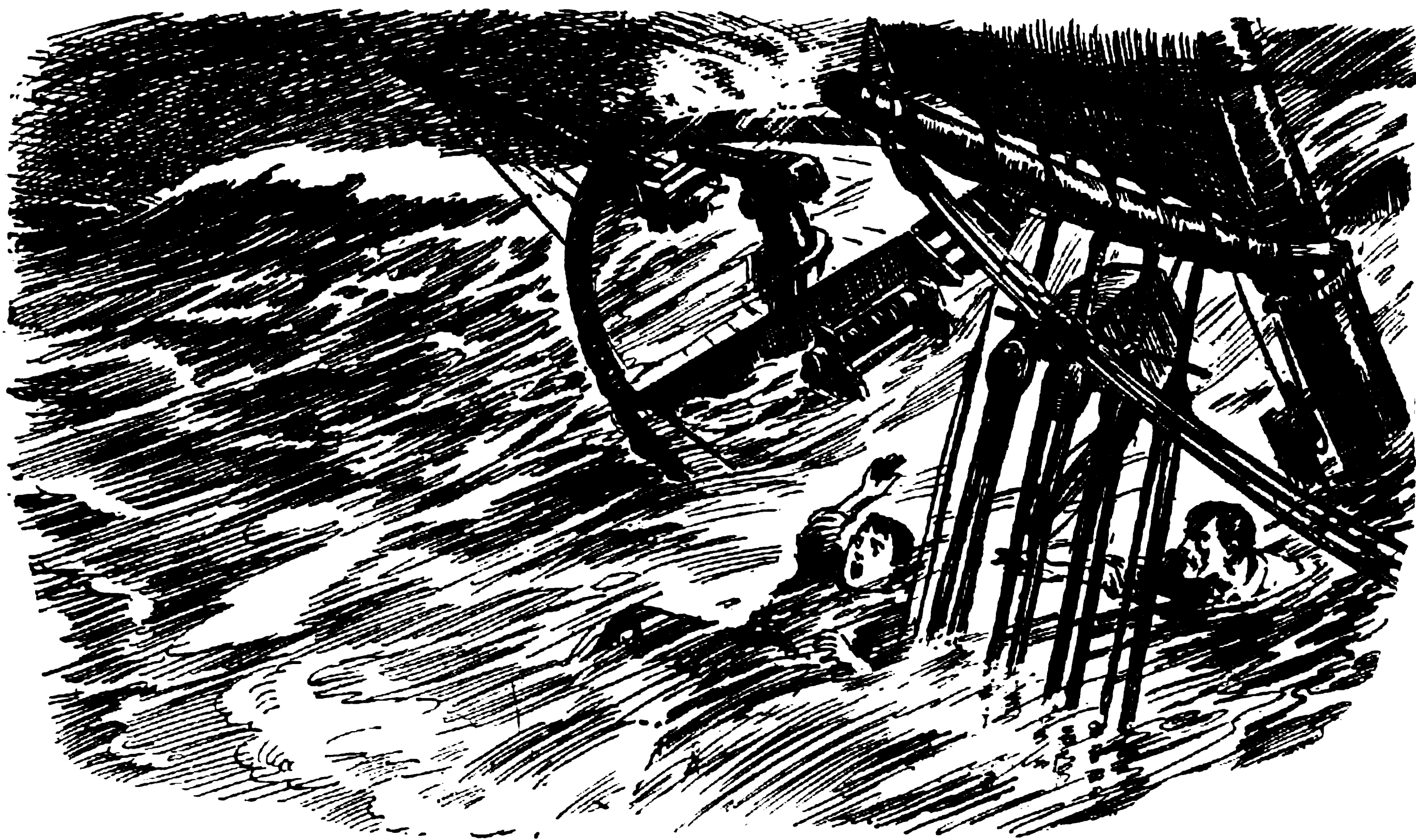
CHAPTER 11.

Escape!

DARKNESS comes very quickly in those parts, and Steve and Nipper, after making sure that the chief's family and his bodyguard had left the house and stockade for the ceremony, tackled the problem of getting away from it. The wide entrance was still being guarded by the two brawny black fellows, and it would have been very risky to have attempted to pass them.

They worked their way down behind the house and found themselves in what was obviously Ma Poago's fowl-run, for they disturbed a rooster and five or six old hens that went off clattering and clucking as they reached them. Behind the fowl-run arose the wall of the stockade and although it was a good nine feet high and a pretty solid structure, it did not represent a formidable barrier to Steve and Nipper.

They shinned up it and dropped quietly down outside. There was a straggling row



A tremendous wave crashed down on the sloop, and Steve and Nipper were swept off their feet and carried overboard by the thick smother of water !

of native huts in front of them and trusting to the darkness they began to work their way behind these and presently reached a cultivated stretch that ran down beside the palm trees.

At the end of the stretch they halted and looked back. They could see the whole of the village dimly behind them, and noted one or two small fires glowing in front of the various huts. But there was no sign of native life there, nor was there any sign of the ceremony, but Steve reckoned that would take place on the site of the old village the Governor had burnt down.

That appeared to be correct and they plunged into the jungle, anxious only to put as great a distance as possible between them and Ma Poago's village, and to leave as little trace of their going as possible. Steve acted as guide, for he knew the lie of the land, whereas Nipper lost all sense of direction in the darkness and the thick undergrowth.

They marched on and on, halting at sunrise for food, then on again during the day, making another halt about noon for more food, with the sun high overhead. And another half hour's trudging saw them in a direct line with a thin column of smoke that they saw rising up from the palm trees.

They reached a cleared space where a brook ran over a stretch of green turf, and Steve decided that the best thing they could do would be to follow the brook. They entered the clearing and crossed the narrow space, and began wading through the cold, clear stream. It led them down in long curves, in between dense masses of creepers, then along through tall palm trees.

They had just negotiated a rather dark length, when Nipper saw Steve come to a

halt. He had been moving on ahead and he simply raised his hand and made a gesture for silence. Then he waded to the left bank of the stream and knelt down. Nipper waited there, watching his movements, and presently he heard below the unmistakable sound of someone wading up stream. The swishing of the water and the splashing of feet was quite distinct.

"Here, Nipper—quick!"

Nipper went up to where Steve was kneeling, and he moved aside, allowing him to peer through the gap in the bushes. Twenty yards below was a tunnel-like hollow, through the undergrowth, and moving up it he could see the tall figure of a man in white ducks. His trousers were rolled up to his knees, and he was wading steadily up the brook. He was carrying a gun between his hands and there was a well-filled bandolier over his shoulders. His white topee was thrust back from his forehead, and Nipper had a glimpse of the dark, grim features and pointed beard. Behind the man came three or four natives, all of them armed and obviously on the alert.

"Who is he, Steve?" asked Nipper.

"Need hardly ask me that, Nipper," Steve returned. "It's Dan O'Connor, the skunk!"

Nipper could see Steve's anger surging in him as he crouched there, and it seemed that the brown-bearded sailor was quite prepared to attack his armed enemy there and then, despite the fact that Steve's only weapon was a short-hafted axe he had snatched up in the stockade. To Nipper, however, the odds seemed rather too long, and after watching the steady advance of the little party below for a few seconds he turned to his companion again.

"No good waiting here, Steve," he said. "They'll reach us in another few moments, and I'm afraid they carry too many guns for us."

It was obvious that Steve was very reluctant to go, but finally he agreed to move out of the brook and they crept up the bank and slid behind the thick, green creepers; then, lying flat there, they watched the passing of Dan O'Connor and his armed escort. There were five natives altogether, but the fifth man was carrying a pack on his back, and Steve explained what that meant.

"Dan O'Connor is going to make a present to Ma Poago," he said. "But if that skunk thinks he can either bully or wheedle Ma Poago into giving him the skull he's doomed to disappointment. I reckon Ma Poago, who knows he is coming, is all ready for him, and maybe he guesses what's up. I reckon there'll be a pretty rough-house over there, especially if Ma Poago knows who sent the governor to Tamwaio!"

"O'Connor is fairly well armed," Nipper put in, "and the men who are with him are also carrying guns. He may be able to do quite a lot of damage before they put him out."

Steve shrugged his shoulders and lapsed into gloomy silence as they started on their downward route again. Steve was leading, but he had not gone far before he halted again.

"Look, Nipper, what d'you make of this?"

The youngster went to his side and followed the direction of his outstretched hand. He saw that from where they stood they could see the sharp outlines of the brown cliffs that marked the end of the island on that side. Where Steve was pointing the cliff ran out sharply, and beyond it lay the sea.

Just below the cliffs was an object which Nipper presently made out to be a small skiff. There was a solitary figure seated in it, and he could see the oars moving to and fro as the skiff made its way along the bend of the cliff to vanish under it.

"I'm going to have a look into this, Nipper," Steve said. "I reckon that it must either be Mrs. Haversley or one of the natives that O'Connor left behind. But I don't see why they should venture out into the bay like that and risk being observed, unless they were forced to do it."

They set off again and reached the brook and began to follow it, finally coming to the edge of the forest where they found themselves halted at what had obviously been the site of a camp. The embers of the fire were still warm, and there were indications that a meal had been prepared there. But there was no sign of anyone, and presently, after a search, Nipper found the unmistakable prints of a woman's foot.

They had only been newly made, and led along the cliff to the left and down a series of shelving slopes to the narrow strip of beach running beside the brown bluff. The sea was smooth enough now and there was plenty of room for a man to walk around that strip

along the foot of the cliff. Steve and Nipper struck off along it following the edge of the sea and worked their way towards the spot where they had seen the skiff.

"Hallo! There it is, Nipper!"

Steve's hand fell on Nipper's shoulder and pulled him in against the dark cliff. Nipper saw the nose of the skiff just emerging round a bend to the right, and he saw that there were other occupants in it now. Two natives were rowing, and in the stern crouching down as if afraid, sat the figure of a woman.

The natives were pulling the skiff towards the beach, and as they came nearer, Nipper could hear their voices. Steve listened for a moment, then he turned to the youngster and nodded.

"They're threatening to murder her if she attempts to get away again," he said. "I think I can understand what has happened. She has probably discovered what sort of man O'Connor is, and as soon as he left this morning to go to Ma Poago's place she must have made an effort to get away in the boat. But those fellows are obviously in O'Connor's pay, and they probably swam out after the skiff and captured her again."

The natives were kneeling in the boat using the long oars paddle-fashion, and they urged it on at a great pace. Nipper saw that they would beach it not more than thirty or forty yards away from where he and Steve were crouching. The formation of the cliffs at that point gave them a safe hiding-place, and they knelt in the warm sand, watching the skiff and its occupants.

It ran ashore at last and the sturdy natives leaped out and dragged it well up the beach, then one of them turned and spoke to the woman in the stern, and she rose to her feet. It was the first time, of course, that Nipper had seen Eva Haversley, and by all accounts she had been easily fooled by Dan O'Connor back in England, but, despite the situation she was in, there was something very calm and steadfast in the brown eyes.

She rose to her feet and stepped out, and at another gruff word from the native, began to follow them up the beach. Nipper saw then that they were both armed, each having a cartridge and belt and a revolver at their waists. Steve touched him on the arm.

"I don't think their revolvers will be much use after their swim," he said in a low voice. "Those fellows don't seem to understand guns very well, and with those cartridge belts I should think they must have left their rifles behind somewhere." He looked at Nipper for a moment. "Do you think we might risk it?" he said.

"Yes."

Nipper saw Steve reach out and pick up the short-handled axe again, and not having any sort of weapon himself, he stooped and searched around the little hollow until he found a very serviceable stone. They were rather primitive weapons with which to attack armed men, of course, but they would have the element of surprise on their side and that is worth a deal when dealing with natives.

They crouched in the hollow and presently they heard the pad, pad of naked feet as they came up the warm sand. Finally, Nipper saw the long shadow of one of them appear in front of the jutting-out portion of the cliff.

"Now for it!"

CHAPTER 12.

The Treachery of O'Connor!

FIRST one man then the other appeared, stalking steadily forward. Nipper and Steve wasted no time. They were both crouching, waiting, and suddenly Steve let out a yell which was enough to awaken the dead. He leapt out and Nipper followed. The axe went whizzing from Steve's hand and landed full on the skull of the leading native. The thudding impact of the heavy steel on that woolly pate was followed by the fellow reeling away, and in another moment Steve was on him and clutching him by the throat.

Nipper didn't have quite such good luck with his stone. He flung it and it landed on the fellow's chest, but he was a powerful brute, and the next thing Nipper knew was that he had drawn the revolver from his belt, and as the youngster ran forward he levelled it and pressed the trigger. But it clicked twice, then before the fellow could try a third time Nipper was on him. In a stand-up fight, of course, the youngster would not have stood a chance against the brawny native, but his knowledge of ju-jitsu stood him in good stead. He grabbed the outstretched arm and with a skilful throw brought the man down.

He landed full-length on the broad of his back and he didn't make any effort to break his fall. That tumble must have jarred him from head to foot, and indeed, the proof of that lay in the fact that the revolver rolled from his nerveless fingers.

Nipper had hung on to him all the time and landed on top of him. The revolver was close to him, and he reached out for it, grabbing it by the butt, then he jammed the muzzle hard against the thick lips. That native might not have understood English, but he understood that action and cold fright leapt into his eyes as they stared up at Nipper, and he flattened out like a pancake, afraid to move.

The sounds of gasps and groans behind Nipper told him that Steve was still struggling with his man. Then the youngster heard a thud and a shower of sand came over him, and he looked round. Steve had just got his opponent down again and was kneeling on his chest now. Neither of them had noticed Mrs. Haversley until that moment, but her quick footfalls sounded, and Nipper saw the flash of a skirt as she went past him.

"Here, take this!"

It was her breathless voice that sounded, and Nipper saw the woman lean forward and pick up the axe, handing it to Steve. He gripped at it, then held his man with one

hand by the throat while he swung the axe aloft and made a threatening movement. The fight ended there and then for the black fellow is always ready enough to realise when he has had enough.

Steve turned to Nipper and flashed a grin at him.

"All right, Nipper," he said. "We've got 'em, now."

Nipper and Steve slid off their men, then stepping back, allowed them to rise. The dusky fellows drew themselves to their feet.

"Come here, you black fella!" Steve bawled to Nipper's captive. "You get along with this other black fella, and you no move till I tell you, or I blow you both to Kingdom Come! Savvy?"

It was very evident that he did savvy, and the quick way in which he jumped to orders was eloquent of the fact. Mrs. Haversley was standing two or three yards away from Steve and Nipper, and they must have appeared two very tattered and grimy fellows to her.

"Who are you?" the woman asked, and Steve nodded to Nipper to reply.

"You can call me, Nipper ma'am," said Nipper. "But that will convey little to you. Only, if you understand that this man and I are enemies of Dan O'Connor, you will perhaps realise that you can trust us."

"O'Connor?" she repeated.

"I did hear he was calling himself Captain Bell back at Stamilsea, Mrs. Haversley," Nipper said. "But we mean the man who left your camp this morning, who was landed here with you."

Nipper saw her eyes draw together.

"He told me his name was Bell," she admitted. "But I know that's a lie. I know he has lied to me on many things, and I have been a fool to trust him." She pointed to the two natives. "He left those two men to watch me," she went on. "I had found out the sort of man he is, and I didn't trust him any longer. I would never have come out here, nor would I have paid his expenses if I hadn't thought I was helping my husband."

"Do you mean to say, ma'am, that Dan O'Connor told you that Bo Haversley was still—still alive?" Steve asked.

"Yes; he swore it. But I feel convinced he was lying."

The brown-bearded sailor turned and shot a glance at Nipper, a glance of mute amazement.

"We should like to hear your story, Mrs. Haversley," said Nipper.

She looked at them both for a moment, then glanced over her shoulder at the cliffs.

"He may come back," she said. "He told me that he wouldn't be long. He has only gone to the other side of the island to visit a native chief—a friend of his—and—"

Steve Holt laughed.

"He will find Ma Poago is no friend of his, ma'am, when he gets across there, and I don't think you need trouble much about Dan O'Connor again. He's walking into a hornets' nest, ma'am, and if he gets out of it alive he'll be jolly lucky."

He nodded to the two black fellows, ordering them to set off along the beach; then Mrs. Haversley and Steve and Nipper stepped out behind them, and presently they were moving up the shelving ground and had gained the fringe of the forest, halting when they reached the site of the camp.

Steve's method of handling the black fellows was very efficient, for they set to work at once and built another fire, and presently they produced a few cooking utensils and a store of food that Dan O'Connor had left behind. While a meal was being prepared Eva Haversley told her story, and it made a deep impression on both Steve and Nipper.

The utter callousness of O'Connor's trick appalled them both, for it was he who had been directly responsible for Bo Haversley's betrayal, and yet he had gone to this woman practically with the blood of her husband on his hands, and had told her a tissue of lies which had inspired her to help the rascal to attain his own ends. It was not until they reached the islands that Mrs. Haversley had really begun to get a glimpse of the true character of O'Connor.

For the letter which she had received from her husband had revealed one secret, and that was that the island where he had concealed his money was in the group of which Tamwaio was a part. The letter also mentioned the chart, and stated that by using the chart and starting from Tamwaio as being the first indicated mark on the chart, the track could be followed even in a native canoe.

Dan O'Connor had wanted to get hold of this letter, since he could not lay his hands on the chart, but Mrs. Haversley had refused to place her private papers in his hands. He had then told her that the authorities were anxious to arrest Bo Haversley on a trumped-up charge, and that she ought to go to him, with money, and help him, and he offered to take her. He worked this story so cleverly that she was convinced at the time he was speaking the truth. She had drawn all her money out of the bank, and had financed Dan O'Connor, paying for his little expedition to Tamwaio.

But once clear of civilisation, he had again asked for the letter, and when she had refused him and had demanded to be taken to her husband, he had laughed at her and said she would never see Bo Haversley again in this world. What was worse, he had taken the letter by force, and had immediately set out to find Ma Poago.

Steve glanced at Nipper.

"You can see what Dan O'Connor is driving at now," he said. "He knows that the course on the chart begins at Tamwaio, and he has figured it out that even if he cannot get hold of the chart he might be able to get Ma Poago to help him to locate the island. Ma Poago has plenty of canoes, and I reckon Dan was simply going to make a steady search all round until he hit the right trail."

Nipper turned to Mrs. Haversley.

"Could O'Connor have recognised the island when he found it, do you think?"

She nodded.

"Yes. The letter gave full particulars of how the island could be recognised. It is a large one, but it is quite uninhabited. There are two peculiarly shaped hills that form the rough outlines of a lion's head and back. My husband left marks in a bay on the south side of the island which would help a searcher to find what he had left there."

"Then that was Dan's game," Steve put in with a quick breath. "No doubt he had given up hope of finding the chart and was working on this other thing. But he's cooked his own goose, for as soon as he goes to Ma Poago and mentions what he's after, the game will be up."

He turned and looked at Eva Haversley steadily.

"He told you a pack of lies, ma'am," the brown-bearded sailor went on. "Your husband is not alive, and was never in fear of the law. He died as he lived, a tough man. And—and I know more about that than anyone else, except—except Dan O'Connor and Ma Poago."

Nipper was half afraid that Steve would tell his part of the story, and gave him a warning sign. After all, there was no real need for the fellow to make a confession. Nipper's close association with Steve Holt had proved to him that the sailor was not really a bad sort of man at all, only weak and easily led, and it would only have distressed Mrs. Haversley unnecessarily to have heard of Steve's share in that grim business.

"We saw you in the skiff, Mrs. Haversley," Nipper said. "What was your idea?"

She turned to the youngster, and a faint smile crossed her troubled face.

"We were landed here by a small trading steamer. The skipper said he would call back here in a few days' time. While O'Connor was out of the way, I thought I could escape. I meant to row away in the skiff on the off chance of being picked up by a trading steamer. It was madness, of course—I can see that now—but I wanted to get away while I had the chance, but the natives saw me too soon and brought me back. I am glad now that they did."

Nipper thought earnestly for a moment or two.

"We might make use of the skiff," he said eventually. "We could hide better during the day and move about at night. The Kitty is bound to turn up here sooner or later, and that skiff will give us our chance of getting out to her."

The others agreed at once, and they set about loading the boat with provisions and water. The skiff proved to be a good seaworthy little craft, and it was supplied with a small mast and a lug sail. They did not take the two black fellows, but the natives did not seem at all upset over that. There was a capful of wind blowing when they set out, and Nipper steered a course that would take them clear of the island. He

had a plan of his own in his head, and once they were under way he mentioned it to Steve.

He had never forgotten that Nelson Lee was still to be reckoned with, and he guessed that the time that had elapsed from the moment they had been blown overboard until now would give the sloop an opportunity of working its way back to Tamwaio.

"I think we ought to try to sail round to the other side of the island, Steve," he said. "I don't think it safe to head for the trading steamer, because, after all, Dan O'Connor might get free, and he would be sure to try to reach the steamer, and then there would be trouble. But by working our way round to the other bay, we have got a chance of being picked up by the gov'nor aboard the Kitty. Once we do that we're safe."

They argued on this suggestion for a few moments, then Steve fell in with it, and through the gathering dusk the little skiff, urged on by its lug sail, went through the smooth seas around the island. Steve was at the tiller, and he kept a steady course as he worked his way along the coastline. Finally, somewhere in the early hours of the morning, we rounded a long bluff, and Nipper heard the distant rumble of the breakers. Steve leaned forward and spoke to him.

"That's the surf breaking in the bay below the village, Nipper," he said. "I reckon the best thing we can do now is to lower the sail and rig a sea anchor. We are about four miles out, and I don't think it would be safe to go inshore any closer."

Nipper agreed with him, and presently the little sail was lowered, then they rigged up a sea anchor by using the two oars and a float, and allowed the skiff to drift quietly on the surface, and thus waited for what might happen.

CHAPTER 13.

Ma Poago Leaves Tamwaio!

"LISTEN, Nipper!"

Steve's voice came to Nipper in a quiet whisper, and he sat up. He had not exactly been to sleep, but the lulling motion of the skiff had made him drowse a little. He saw that the brown-bearded sailor was standing beside the small mast and was peering in the direction of the island.

In the stern Mrs. Haversley had coiled herself up and was fast asleep. Nipper stepped to Steve's side and a silence fell on them, then, quite distinctly, they heard the muffled beat of a hollow drum. It was coming from the island, and as they looked in that direction Nipper thought he caught a faint flash of light against the dark background. The light appeared again and it was followed by others. It seemed as though there were dozens of fireflies dancing in the dusk; but presently they realised what it meant.

"Ma Poago said he would take his tribe

away to a better island," said Steve. "And now that Dan O'Connor has arrived he is keeping his word. There's something uncanny behind all this, Nipper."

He was right enough, for five or six minutes later a light appeared on the surface of the water, and yet another. They came crawling out from the bay one by one, and it did not take a great deal of imagination to realise that the war canoes were afloat, and that a man with a torch stood in the prows of each canoes. There were sixteen of the canoes altogether, and it is amazing how many natives can stow themselves aboard one canoe.

"There'll be well over fifty in each canoe," said Steve, "and that means that the whole darned tribe is moving."

Nipper began to feel anxious then, for although they were out there in the dark sea, and safe, there was always the possibility of the canoes steering in their direction, in which case their fate would be sealed. Ma Poago would certainly make short work of that little skiff and the three occupants.

By this time the whole of the canoes had been launched, and they watched the lights moving towards them until they had slipped through the gap in the reef and were heading out to sea. It made a picturesque sight, but Nipper was in no mood to enjoy it. The danger was far too real to him.

But the canoes swung southwards, and he heaved a sigh of relief, for it meant that they would still have a chance of escape.

Steve went up towards the sheet and began to haul on it, raising the little sail. The skiff began to move, and Nipper reached out for the anchor and managed to detach it.

"What's the idea, Steve?" he asked.

He had slipped back to the stern and was reaching out for the tiller. He saw that Steve moved carefully so that he would not disturb the huddled figure of Mrs. Haversley.

"There's only one thing to be done, Nipper," Steve said. "Every man, woman and child of Ma Poago's tribe has left Tamwaio, and the best thing we can do is to go back there and take charge. We won't starve to death, and if Mr. Lee makes for the island we'll be there to greet him."

Nipper saw that this plan was about the best one to follow under the circumstances, and offered no objections. They ran the skiff into the quiet bay, finally bringing her to rest on the strip of sand. It was not until the bows of the skiff grounded that Mrs. Haversley awoke with a start.

"All right, ma'am," Steve said. "You have been asleep, and we thought it best not to disturb you."

Steve always spoke kindly to Mrs. Haversley, as though he was trying to make amends for the part he had played in the grim drama that had marked the end of Bo Haversley. They helped her to land, and drew the skiff higher up the beach; then, guided by Steve, they began to move up to-

wards the trees, heading for the village. It was just breaking dawn when they reached the outskirts of the village, to find that the cunning Ma Poago had had all the fires well banked in order to fool anyone approaching, and to conceal the fact of his departure for as long as possible, the rising smoke giving the appearance that the village was still inhabited.

After finding food and making a meal, Steve and Nipper went on a tour of the village. The first thing that met their eyes was five dead natives—the men who had accompanied Dan O'Connor up the brook from the other side of the island.

"I was right, you see," Steve said soberly. "These fellows have been butchered suddenly, without any warning. I expect O'Connor marched them in here and Ma Poago pretended to be friendly with them until he gave the signal for a general attack. But where O'Connor is I don't know."

They went into the empty house of the chief and searched high and low, but there was no trace of Dan O'Connor. One significant fact was noticed by Steve—the line of smoke-dried skulls that had adorned the ridge pole of the hut had vanished. Ma Poago always took his household goods with him when he travelled.

Just beyond the cultivated land lay on a slight rise, and in a patch of corn Nipper thought he saw a movement. He drew

Steve behind a hut, then, peering round the wall, indicated the patch of mealie corn and watched it closely.

The movement was taking place in about the centre of it, and when they located the spot they could see the tall, feathery tops of the mealies tilt down one by one. There was not the slightest doubt about it, someone was creeping away through that patch of tall growth, and was creeping very stealthily and cautiously.

Into Steve's eyes there came a quick glint, and his hand fell on his revolver butt.

"We're going to find out who that is," he said, "and if it is the one man I hope it is there will be a reckoning!"

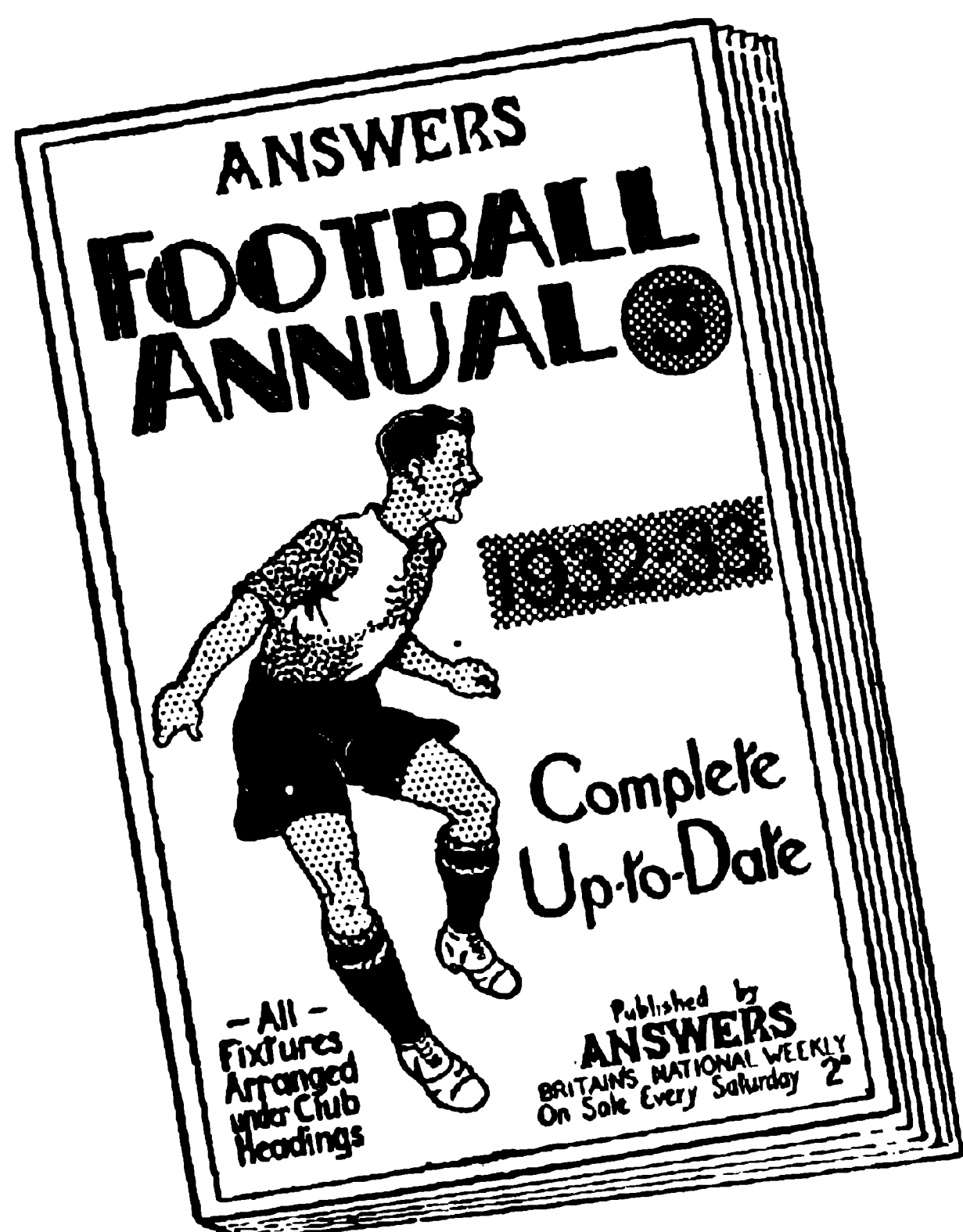
He indicated a fringe of palm-trees on the right of the patch.

"You work your way up there, Nipper," he said, "and I'll take the lower slope. We must see to it, whoever he is, that he doesn't escape."

He was quite right, because in their position they had to regard every man as an enemy. Nipper parted from him and worked his way round the patch until he had gained the tall palm-trees; then, moving from trunk to trunk, gradually bore down on the cultivated stretch.

Below the mealie patch was a stretch of undergrowth, and after a long wait Nipper caught sight of Steve. He had worked his way right down along the slope and was now gradually moving back towards Nipper.

GET YOUR COPY NOW!



Everything You Want To Know About The New Football Season.

Every boy who is keen on football will want ANSWERS FOOTBALL ANNUAL. It is packed with facts and figures which every football enthusiast will want to know, and gives all the English League fixtures arranged under Club Headings, Cup-tie dates, International Matches, and interesting details about new players. This handy book is so arranged that you can fill in the result of the League teams' matches throughout the season.

ANSWERS FOOTBALL ANNUAL

At all Newsagents and Bookstalls, 3d.

The mealies were well over seven feet high, and it was just like moving through a wild jungle of reed. But Nipper, as he set about stalking the unknown man, had taken his bearings very well, and did his best to make no sound. He couldn't have been more than ten minutes on that job, but it seemed to him like hours. He was still creeping cautiously on when he heard a shout in front of him, followed by a thudding sound, and he knew that Steve had closed with the man.

There was no need to take any further precautions, and Nipper leaped up and crashed his way through the thick growth. He barged into a cleared space to see Steve and another figure swaying together. He drew his revolver out then and darted towards them.

The man who was wrestling with Steve had the lower grip, and as Nipper came to within a yard of them he saw Steve's body suddenly leave the ground and swing round, then he sprawled over the shoulder of his adversary and went head-first down among the trampled corn.

Nipper raised his revolver, and just as he was about to level it the stranger swung round, and he found himself looking into the face of Nelson Lee!

"Guv'nor!" he cried, staring at him.

Nelson Lee just gave a grin and held out his hand to Steve. And the sailor, whose wits had been almost knocked out of him, peered for a moment, then grabbed at the hand and staggered to his feet.

"Blow me if it isn't Mr. Lee!" he said.

"That's right, Steve," said Lee. "I didn't have time to let you know who I was when you rushed on me just now. Besides, I wasn't quite sure who you were. Where the dickens have you come from, and how did you manage to get here?"

"But, guv'nor," Nipper broke in. "I don't understand this. Where is the Kitty?"

Nelson Lee pointed up the slope.

"She's lying on the other side of the island," he said. "We got here this morning and we found a couple of blacks who told us something about you. I couldn't quite make out all they meant, so I came over here to investigate for myself."

Nipper was so absolutely delighted to see Nelson Lee again that he was a trifle incoherent. It was Steve Holt, therefore, who really took up the task of telling the detective just what had happened to them both.

By that time they had turned and were trudging back to the village, where they found Mrs. Haversley waiting for them outside the hut, and the formal introductions were made.

"There's only one thing we can do now," said Nelson Lee; "that is to get back to the Kitty and follow the tribe. It seems that Ma Poago is the man we've got to tackle, and by following him we shall find the man we want at the end of the trail."

And so Steve, and Nelson Lee, Mrs. Haversley and Nipper began to walk across

the island. There was no enemies left on that island for them to worry about, and they made good progress, finding the Kitty at anchor some little distance from the shore. It was a real relief to Nipper and Steve to get aboard again, but there was little time for sentiment just then.

The anchor was weighed and the Kitty started off to try to pick up the trail of the war canoes. They sailed round the island, then swung round to the south. Every sail was set and drawing, and the auxiliary motors were throbbing, so that the sloop fairly raced through the water.

Nipper had learned from Nelson Lee that the ship had been blown some considerable distance out of her course during the storm, and it had been hard work for them to make their way back to the island. They had not discovered the absence of Nipper and Steve for some time, and the skipper had given them up for lost. Nelson Lee looked at Nipper and shook his head.

"I told the skipper that you hadn't been born to be drowned, young 'un," he said drily, "and, you see, I was right."

It was a long and stern chase, and Nelson Lee was busy overhauling the one-pounder in the bows and every man was looking to his weapons, for it seemed fairly evident that there might be a fight at the end of that salt water trail.

Late in the afternoon there was a shout from one of the natives who had been up in the rigging keeping a look-out. The skipper hurried across the deck and levelled his glasses, as Nelson Lee came running aft.

"Quite right, Mr. Lee," he said, at length. "The war canoes are right ahead."

The Kitty was overtaking them very fast, and at the end of half an hour they were not more than a mile away. But the canoes were strung out in an irregular line, and two of the largest were well ahead of the others. They could see the paddles of the rowers as they rose and fell and caught a glint of the sun on them. They were working like demons and were urging their light craft through the seas at a tremendous pace.

Ahead of them, on the port side, was an island, a long, low-lying spit of land, and it was towards this point that the scattered flotilla of canoes was heading. Nelson Lee bent over the gun for a moment, then he lifted the belt with the pin release and fixed it in the mechanism. He halted for a moment, then turned to Nipper and shook his head.

"I can't do it, Nipper," he said. "We could pick off those things one by one, but it would be folly. There are women and children in those canoes, poor things, and I don't see why they should suffer for the sins of their chief."

He turned and went down the deck to speak to the skipper for a moment, and Nipper saw that worthy shake his head, then shrug his shoulders.

A few moments later the Kitty had passed the first canoe, a long, slender craft packed

almost gunwale deep with cowering, frightened blacks. The wake of the Kitty very nearly swamped the canoe, and it was not until the sloop had passed on that the terrified occupants of the canoe plucked up courage again and began to use their paddles once more.

Nelson Lee, aboard the Kitty, was now really in the thick of the canoes, and passed another, and yet another. Nipper could see that the black crew of the Kitty was simply itching to fire, but the skipper had warned them that no one was to make use of a weapon unless attacked. They were Nelson Lee's instructions and were followed out to the letter.

But by this time the leading canoes were getting close to the low-lying spit of land, and as Nelson Lee watched them he saw one with a great carved prow moving farther and farther away from the others until at last it was a good three or four hundred yards ahead.

Steve Holt saw it, too, and understood at once what it meant.

"Ma Poago is in that one!" he cried. "And you see what the wily rogue has done? There are no women and children on his boat—all husky, powerful men, and that's why he's leaving all the rest behind."

CHAPTER 14.

The Fight in the Depths!

NELSON LEE studied that canoe through the glasses, and his face was grim and stern.

"There's a man trussed up in there with Ma Poago," he said, handing the glasses to Steve. "Maybe you can recognise him."

Steve Holt took one look, and the colour drained from his face.

"It's Dan O'Connor—bound and gagged," he said. "Ma Poago, I figure it out, now knows about that chart. Maybe he's got it. He means to have Bo Haversley's money, and he's forcing Dan O'Connor to read the chart and pilot him all the way!"

That sounded more than feasible. It rang true. But while Nelson Lee argued the matter, the Kitty yawed suddenly, and he found himself being thrust half-way across the deck. A moment later there was a dull, scraping sound, then the sloop shuddered from bow to stern and came to a halt. They had scraped the top of a coral reef, and only by a miracle had avoided being wrecked, and now the vessel swung to the wind.

Nipper saw Nelson Lee going pelting up the deck and followed him to the bows. Not five yards away, moving like a great, many-legged caterpillar over the smooth surface of the water was the war canoe of Ma Poago.

It was only about thirty yards from the shore and it looked as though the wily old chief would get clean away. But Nelson Lee had reached the gun and he gripped at the control and swung it round.

Pom!

A one-pounder has a curious report. It sounds as though someone had thrown a

heavy missile at a tin door. The shock of the gun sent a shiver through the Kitty, and Nipper had to grab at the mast to steady himself.

He was watching the canoe and he saw the shell hit the water not five yards in front of the carved prow. A howl of fear and rage went up from the packed craft, and it swerved. Nipper saw the broad-shouldered, naked shapes of the men with the paddles straighten suddenly, and by common instinct, they swayed away to the left as they turned to stare fearfully at the Kitty.

It was fatal. A narrow beamed craft like a canoe is not able to stand much of that kind of thing, and the result was that the slender canoe, tilted by her crew, half-swamped by the swirl of the shell, turned turtle, casting its human contents into the water. The detective saw the flat, gleaming bottom of the canoe appear for a moment then it vanished and all over the surface of the foaming water appeared a host of black dots.

Every islander can swim, and the black dots began to move steadily forward, heading for the shore. A shout came up to Nelson Lee from aft, and Steve came barging up the deck.

"All right, Mr. Lee," he cried. "I've lowered the boat. We'll collar that fat skunk yet!"

It was smart work on Steve's part, and Nipper and Nelson Lee sprang down into the waiting boat, where three of the Kitty's native crew waited, armed to the teeth. In another moment the little skiff was pushed off from the sloop and the black fellows began to row towards the beach. A minute later they were in the centre of the swimmers.

They kept their revolvers ready, but there was no sign of attack, and they passed through that swarm without meeting any opposition. Steve Holt was crouching in the bows and presently he flung up his hand.

"Port!" he called, and Nelson Lee, who had taken the tiller, swung the boat in that direction.

He leaned forward and followed the direction of Steve's gaze. Ahead of them, not ten yards away, was the fat figure of Ma Poago. He had turned on his side and was swimming like a duck, thrusting himself through the water at a great pace with an overhand movement.

But no man can swim against a boat, and urged on by Steve, their black crew put their backs into it, and the ship's boat began to bear down on Ma Poago until, at last, they were within a couple of yards of him. The cannibal chief glanced back over his shoulder, saw the menace, and his fat body curved into a dive. He went down like a porpoise. But his trick availed him nothing, for Steve suddenly straightened, and marking the spot where Ma Poago had vanished, the brown-bearded sailor leaped overboard—down into the water, feet first.

The little skiff passed over the spot where he had vanished, then came to a halt, and

Nipper leaned over the stern, peering down into the clear water.

Among the coral islands of the Pacific one can see twenty or thirty feet down, and presently Nipper was able to make out the figures of Ma Poago and Steve Holt. They were down there in the depths like two great sea monsters, battling furiously together.

Suddenly he lost sight of them, then a moment later he saw that the two bodies had fallen into a deeper gap amongst the rocks below. A number of silver bubbles came to the surface, and Nipper started to his feet, tossing his white sun hat from him.

"I'm going in after him!" he cried. "He'll lose his life——"

"Wait, Nipper!" shouted Nelson Lee.

There was a pause. Something was rising in the water, and Steve returned to the surface, gasping and spluttering, and as he did so the sea around him was clouded with a dull red stain that sent a thrill of apprehension through Nipper.

In the struggle Steve's shirt had been torn, and he swam towards the boat slowly, laboriously, holding his left hand up out of the water. It was with a visible effort that he reached the boat, and Nipper made a grab at his shoulders and held him up.

"Mr. Lee! Quick! Quick!"

Steve's voice sounded hollow and thin, and Nelson Lee leaned forward. The brown-bearded sailor thrust his left hand out towards the detective, and as the grim figures released their hold Nipper saw that it was a crumpled piece of paper that had been held so tightly in the powerful fingers.

"The—chart—Mr. Lee," said Steve slowly, painfully. "I—I got it. Ma Poago had—had put it—in his mouth—just as Bo did. But I—got it, and I—want you to—to tell the lady—I did it—for her sake—to make amends——"

Nipper felt his weight suddenly drag on him, and he tried to hold him. But his head fell back and there came across the bearded face that unmistakable grey pallor.

Nipper was obliged to let go. his hold, and Steve sank down into the clear sea, to vanish into the dark crevice when Ma Poago's body had also gone.

Nipper turned and looked at Nelson Lee, at the same time straightening up.

"I must try to get him, guv'nor," he said hoarsely. "He—he——"

Nelson Lee grabbed him by the shoulder just in time and thrust him back on a thwart.

"Not a bit of use, young 'un," he said gravely. "Steve is dead. Ma Poago's knife got him. And, after all, perhaps it's better that he should stay just where he is, at peace among the islands, where he has spent so many years."

All this time the other war canoes had been drawing nearer, and they saw one or two of them make as though to attack them. It dawned on Nipper that Nelson Lee was quite right, and apart from the fact that Steve was dead, there was also a chance of

the skiff's company being killed by the infuriated natives, who had now begun to realise what that grim tragedy meant.

Steve had killed their chief, and the islanders were more than likely to try to be revenged on them for that act.

Nelson Lee called to the native rowers, and they started to pull for all they were worth, heading along the stretch of beach to the right, and commencing to head out towards the Kitty.

Even then it seemed to Nipper that they would be attacked, but just as one big war canoe came within spear-throwing distance of the skiff, the one-pounder gun from the Kitty spoke, and the shell went whizzing over the woolly heads of the blacks in the canoes, making them duck down suddenly.

The result was that Nelson Lee was able to steer the skiff through that flotilla of scowling, silent blacks and reach the Kitty in safety. It had been the skipper who had fired that shot, and his relief was obvious as they climbed on deck.

"Look here, Mr. Lee," he said, "I'm going to get out of this! I saw what happened, and if those fellows really get their blood up they'll attack us, even if they lose every canoe they've got. Ma Poago was a very popular chief with them, and it's only because his death has stunned them, so to speak, that they're taking it so quietly."

Nelson Lee agreed, and a few moments later the Kitty had veered round and was moving away from the island. A little later it disappeared over the horizon, the yelling natives left far in the rear.

FOUR days after the Kitty escaped from the infuriated tribesmen, Nelson Lee found the big island marked on Bo Haversley's chart, and after a search they located the place where he had hidden his rather ill-gotten gains.

He had made use of a heavy steel box, and most of his treasure was in gold coins, although there were a good many pearls and a few jewels of considerable value.

In the box Bo had left another letter addressed to his wife, and they handed the whole affair over to Mrs. Haversley in the cabin of the Kitty.

Nelson Lee never knew, nor asked, what was in that letter, but half an hour later, when he entered the saloon, he found Mrs. Haversley in tears. Perhaps, after all, Bo Haversley, at the end, had made that quiet, patient woman believe that, despite his wild, reckless ways, he had loved her.

There was nothing else for them to do in that part of the world, and so the ship was headed for the distant island of Honolulu, and Bo Haversley's treasure island faded away in the distance.

THE END.

(Next week's Detective-Thriller is great. It is entitled "The House of Horrors!" and is packed with amazing and weird adventures. You'll enjoy it!)

ARCHIE'S AWAKENING!

★ The new Head of St. Frank's, with his amazing ideas for waking up the school, is proving himself no end popular. But he is still somewhat of an enigma to a few, for the object of his midnight jaunts remains a mystery. ★ Returning from one of these, Mr. Kingswood meets an old boxing acquaintance who is in trouble, and he takes him to St. Frank's, but not without being seen by the spying Mr. Pycraft!

The Conspiracy!

"THAT'S better!" said the Head gently. Having admitted himself into his own House, he had piloted his companion to the study. Kid Williams was lying back in an easy chair. There were some visible bruises on his face—the result of Mr. Kingswood's blows. His eyes, only half-open looked sleepy and stupid. This was unusual—for Williams was the cheeriest and happiest of mortals, with twinkling, humorous eyes.

"Upon my word, you seem to be in a pretty bad way," said the Head, troubled. "I rather think a dose of cold water will do you good."

He soon obtained some, and without compunction he drenched the Kid's face with it. The man sat forward, gulping and gasping.

"Here, what the——. Steady, mate!" he gurgled. "That's enough! Why, skin me for a banana! Blowed if it ain't you, sir! Fighting Jim himself!"

"I'm glad you recognise me at last!" said the Head.

"Mr. Kingswood!" muttered the other, dazedly. "I don't seem to remember! Where are we, sir? What's happened?"

"Before I answer any of your questions, you've got to answer a few of mine," said Mr. Kingswood, sitting down. "Here, Kid, take this!"

He had poured out a stiff dose of brandy, and the boxer eyed the glass with a dull, dubious stare.

"Not me!" he muttered. "I don't drink that stuff!"

"Don't be a fool; it's medicine!" said the Head. "It'll put new life into you! You ought to know, Kid, that I'm the last man in the world to force drink upon a teetotaller."

"Sorry, sir. You know best, I suppose."

Kid Williams took the glass in an unsteady hand, and with one gulp he swallowed the fiery liquor. It certainly had a good effect, for within three or four minutes the man was somewhat recovered. Something of the old sparkle had come back into his eyes, and he was looking about him in fresh wonder and bewilderment.

"It's all right—you needn't stare so much," said the Head. "This is St. Frank's College, and you are in my study!"

"That's right, sir—I remember now," said the Kid, nodding. "I was reading about it in the papers. You're the headmaster, ain't you? Good luck to you, sir! I allus said that you'd be something big."

"We needn't go into that," said Mr. Kingswood. "I want to know, Kid, why you were wandering about an unfamiliar high road in an apparently drunken condition——"

"Me drunk?" ejaculated Mr. Williams. "Here, I say, guv'nor! Draw it mild! You know me better than that!"

"I do—and that's why I'm asking for an explanation," said the Head. "You also demanded money from me!"

"Strike me black and blue!" said Mr. Williams, aghast. "I did that, sir? Demanded money? Why, you know I wouldn't—— Wait a minute, though, sir! It's coming back now, sir! Why, yes, of course! That there crook, Jelson!"

"Yes?" said the Head, invitingly. "That crook, Jelson? Go on!"

"I'll tell you as much as I know, sir, before it gets hazy," said the other, his voice becoming earnest. "I had a fight in Bannington. Must have been this evening, I suppose—although it seems weeks ago. Not a bad match, either. Funny thing you didn't hear of it."

"At St. Frank's I have my hands pretty full," explained Mr. Kingswood drily.

"Well, sir, I was matched against Young Simms," said the Kid. "Pretty hot, too. But I won easily on points, after going the full ten rounds. Wasn't a bad purse, either, for a small match—five hundred pounds for me. And what made it more attractive was the fact that I got paid on the nail."

"What happened after the match?"

"Well, sir, after I got dressed this fellow Jelson came round," said Mr. Williams, frowning. "Said he was a big promoter. Smart sort of fellow, and there were two others with him. They invited me to go round to the Wheatsheaf Hotel with them, so that I could fix up another match. They were talking in thousands, and I dare say I was a bit carried away, as you might say."

"Did these men discuss the match with you?"

"We didn't get down to it, not really," said the Kid, in a shamefaced way. "This

—Archie, the Slacker, Agrees to Enter for the Boxing Championship!

The new Head continues
the process of Waking Up
St. Frank's!



fellow Jelson took me up to his private room, and when I said I didn't drink, they gave me a ginger-ale. Well, I drank it, and it was after that that I began to feel fuzzy in the head and then I didn't seem to remember anything more at all. But that money of mine has gone, and I'd be a fool if I didn't guess what it means. Those fellows were just plain crooks, and I was a mug!"

"I am very much afraid, Kid, that your nature is too trusting," said Mr. Kingswood, shaking his head. "I warned you about that once before, didn't I?"

"Yes, sir," muttered the boxer meekly.

"That ginger-ale, of course, was drugged," continued the headmaster. "Those rascals robbed you, then took you out and left you on the main road. By this time, no doubt, they're

in London—and it would be useless to look for them. Now, I suppose, you're broke?"

"Pretty nearly, guv'nor," said Williams, dolefully.

"Why didn't your manager attend to that business?"

"Why, he had a wire, calling him to London, just at the end of the match, sir."

"That wire was a fake, without question," said Mr. Kingswood. "Well, Kid, I'm glad to know that my first suspicions were wrong. I must confess, at first, that I thought you were intoxicated, and that you were indulging in highway robbery."

"'Ere, 'old 'ard, guv'nor!" protested the other. "That's not like me!"

"In your dazed condition you mistook me for Mr. Jelson, I take it?"

"I can't tell you, sir—I don't remember anything about it now," said the boxer, shaking his head helplessly. "It's all like a dream."

"Well, that must be the explanation," said the Head. "Partially recovering, you met me in the road, and in your dazed state you thought that I was Jelson. Anyhow, you lurched up to me and demanded money. You must have realised, just as you were 'going off,' that Jelson and his companions were robbing you. Well, you'd better stay here for to-night and get some sound sleep."

"You always were a real sportsman, sir!" said Kid Williams gratefully. "It's a darn good thing for me it was you I met, and not anybody else. They wouldn't have understood, would they? I'm grateful, sir. I'm sure I don't know how I'm going to thank you. But it ain't right that a rough chap like me should stay here, in this fine house——"

"By Jove!" ejaculated Mr. Kingswood suddenly.

"Beg pardon, sir?"

"It strikes me, Kid, that our meeting was more than a lucky coincidence," continued the Head, his eyes twinkling. "I rather think I can use you at St. Frank's."

"Use me, sir—at a school like this?" said the boxer, in amazement. "But what can I do?"

"Tell me, Kid—how are you fixed just now?"

"Well, there's nothing arranged that I know of, sir."

"You are free for some weeks?"

"Yes, sir."

"Splendid!" said Mr. Kingswood, rising to his feet, and pacing up and down in his enthusiasm. "Now listen to me, Williams; I'm going to let you into a conspiracy of mine."

"Struth!" said Mr. Williams, opening his eyes.

The Head chuckled.

"Oh, it's quite innocent," he said drily. "I wouldn't dream of suggesting it to you, Kid, otherwise. I know what a particular fellow you are."

"What's the game, Mr. Jim?" asked Williams eagerly. "You needn't tell me that it's straight—you wouldn't be in it, if it wasn't. It'll be like old times again to work for you, sir! You ain't thinking of going in for another big match, are you?"

"No, Kid," replied the headmaster, smiling. "You are a boxer first and last—but I rather think that you would be quite a success as a trainer, eh?"

"It all depends who I've got to train, sir?" replied the Kid cautiously.

"A schoolboy—one of the pupils here!"

"Lead me to him, guv'nor!" grinned Mr. Williams. "If he's got any boxing ability in him, you can trust me to bring it out."

"He is the young brother of Captain Bertram Glenthorne, D.S.O.—the man who won the big match at the National Sporting Club, a day or two ago."

"No!" gasped the Kid. "Captain Glenthorne's brother? Why, Captain Glenthorne is a man as I'd compare with you, sir! This youngster doesn't need a trainer, surely? If he's Captain Glenthorne's brother——"

"Wait until you see him," chuckled the headmaster. "He can do with your help, Kid—but we shall have to work very warily. In fact, it might even be necessary to adopt a little deception. But we'll get that boy in training, or I'll give up schoolmastering and join the Navy."

Archie Glenthorne, sleeping peacefully in the Ancient House, little knew what awaited him on the morrow!

A Visitor for Archie!

"COMING out, Archie?"

Alfred Brent, of the Remove, who shared Study E with Archie Glenthorne, asked that question directly after dinner. It was a patchy sort of day, with occasional bursts of sunshine and periods of dullness.

"Absolutely!" said Archie, glancing out of doors. "What-ho! I mean to say, a certain amount of basking is indicated, what?"

It happened to be very sunny at the moment, and Archie, with visions of lolling in a deck-chair, was in an agreeable mood. It was a half-holiday, too, and that made the day all the better.

"You ought to come and see the match," said Brent. "Remove versus Fourth, you know, and we're going to put it across Boots and his men like the dickens. Revenge for that freak match, last week, when they licked us."

"Oh, rather!" agreed Archie. "That was a pretty foul business, one way and another. You can rely upon me to be well and truly on the spot, with a choice assortment of cheers."

"Here's Archie trying to be funny!" said Handforth, appearing in flannels, with a cricket bat tucked under his arm. "Did you hear that, Churchy? Archie says he's going to watch the match."

"He'll watch it for about five minutes, and then he'll go to sleep," said Church, nodding. "It's a wonder he can summon up enough energy to walk to Little Side!"

"That's the worst of the summer term," put in McClure. "It makes people feel lazy—and as Archie is always full of that feeling, he's worse than ever. He went to sleep in class this morning."

"Well, dash it, you've got to admit, old thing, that the class-room is most poisonously stuffy," said Archie. "Well, good luck, and all that sort of rot. See you later, old things."

He wandered off to his study, and Handforth & Co., with a number of other Removites, made their way to Little Side to engage in battle with the Fourth Form.

"Haven't seen anything of the Head to-day," murmured Handforth significantly, as he found himself alone with Church and McClure for a moment.

"What about it?" asked Church.

"Well, you remember last night, don't you?" asked the burly leader of Study D. "Don't forget what happened in that old cottage behind Bellton Wood! The Head went there on some mysterious errand——"

"And you took us there on a fool's errand!" nodded McClure. "We're not likely to forget it, you ass! And what do you mean—you

haven't seen the Head? I saw him ten minutes ago, as bright and cheery as usual."

"By George! Why didn't I see him, then?"

"Because you're a smart detective—and you must have been looking the other way!" replied Mac sarcastically. "And do you know, Handy, he didn't look at all guilty. Why shouldn't he go out for night rambles if he wants to?"

"That's not the point," replied Handforth gruffly. "What about that metal dispatch box? What about the note he left in it—saying that he wanted to get hold of 'the stuff'? You can't fool me! The Head is mixed up with a gang of crooks——"

"Dry up—somebody will hear!" urged Church hastily.

There was no real danger of it, but he and McClure wanted to get Handforth's mind back to cricket. Fortunately, Reggie Pitt and some other stalwarts of the West House joined them, and Handforth had no further opportunity of discussing Fighting Jim Kingswood and his mysterious nocturnal movements.

Meanwhile, Archie Glenthorne, in Study E, was gathering a few things together in readiness to venture forth.

"You rang, sir?"

Archie turned round, and found Phipps standing just within the closed door.

"Good gad! You come in like a dashed ghost, Phipps!" said Archie. "I mean to say, you're not here one second, and you are here the next second, if you can gather the trend. How the deuce do you manage to do it? I didn't hear the door open!"

"Yet I knocked, sir," said Phipps, in his imperturbable way.

"Everything you do, Phipps, old lad, is quiet," said Archie. "Even when you knock at a door, you do it so quietly that a chappie can't hear. Well, never mind. Forget it. The young master is going out into the summer sunshine to bask. Kindly rally round with various cushions and all the usual impedimenta."

Phipps firmly shook his head.

"I think not, sir," he said.

"Eh? You think what? I mean, you think not?" said Archie, jamming his monocle in his eye, and surveying Phipps with some disapproval. "And why do you think not, dash you?"

"I venture to suggest, sir, that you will not do much basking, even if you do go out."

"But that's all flapdoodle, old tulip," said Archie. "The good old sun is doing its stuff with a certain amount of concentrated energy."

"I beg your pardon, Master Archibald," said Phipps, glancing at the window.

Archie glanced, too, and he started.

"Good gad!" he said, with concern.

He went to the window and found the sky heavily clouded. The prospects, in fact, looked distinctly grey and drab.

"Well, I must say that this is a frightful shock to the good old system," he remarked with a sigh. "Sundry masses of murky vapour appear to have obscured King Sol. So there's nothing doing, Phipps, what?"

"I think you had better remain here, sir," said Phipps firmly.

"Oh no, dash it—not here," protested Archie. "I'll wander into the Common-room——"

"It is much more comfortable here, sir."

And Phipps made some cushions ready, and Archie, taking a liking to them, succumbed.

"You know best, Phipps," he said languidly. "Of course, I'm a frightful ass to ever think otherwise. You always know best, laddie! Trust Phipps and you can't go wrong, what? What do you think of the idea of forty well assorted winks?"

"I cannot truthfully say that you need to sleep, sir," replied Phipps virtuously. "I am sure that you would feel a great deal better, both mentally and physically, if you devoted more of your time to exercising and——"

"Cease fire!" interrupted Archie with a shudder. "The very thought liquefies the old marrows, and my spine becomes like a chunk of table jelly. Be good enough, Phipps, to leave that subject absolutely alone. And when I say absolutely, I mean one hundred per cent."

"I will remember, sir," said Phipps, without turning a hair.

He retired in his usual silent way, and Archie, feeling that he had scored a distinct victory, settled himself on the lounge to do absolutely nothing for the next hour.

Within ten minutes the sun was out again, but Archie did not notice. This time it really seemed that the clouds had been chased away for good, for the afternoon broke out hot and really summery.

The Junior cricket match was in full swing when Kid Williams, the boxer, entered the empty Triangle. Mr. Williams was looking very smart to-day. He was hardly recognisable as the same man who had been brought home the previous night by Mr. Kingswood.

For the Kid had completely recovered; he was his own cheery, genial, self. His suit was well cut, if slightly on the loud side. He advanced across the Triangle in an uncertain manner, as though he did not quite know how to proceed.

Then Phipps came to the Ancient House doorway, to cast his eye up to the blue sky. It must be admitted that when Phipps took a look at Mr. Williams he wilted. Phipps had a remarkably fine taste in clothing; it was one of his missions in life to restrain his young master, who had a passion for "loud" suitings.

"Ahem!" coughed Phipps, when he had sufficiently recovered from the shock.

Mr. Williams took one look at him, and inwardly grinned.

"Afternoon!" he said cheerily, as he advanced. "Any of the young gents about?"

"I am afraid there is only one of the young gentlemen available at the moment," replied Phipps carefully. "He is indoors, and I do not think it would be advisable to disturb him."

"And what makes you think that, old Frozen Face?" asked the Kid. "You ain't one of the masters, by any chance?"

"No; I am valet to Master Glenthorne, of the Remove," replied Phipps stiffly.

"Good enough for me!" said the Kid, extending his hand. "Put it there, pal! I am Kid Williams, professional boxer. I've heard there's some boxing going on here, and I thought

I'd look in. I might be of some use as a trainer."

"I doubt if you can be of any use to Master Glenthorne," said Phipps gravely.

"Well, let's have a look at him, and I'll soon tell you."

And Mr. Williams, seeing that he was quite alone with Phipps, winked largely. Phipps did not exactly wink back, but the expression on his face was eloquent enough. Together, they walked into the Remove passage, and paused outside the door of Study E.

"I really don't think you'd better go in," said Phipps, in an unusually loud voice.

"What's the matter with the young gent—ill or something?" asked the Kid.

"My young master is sleeping——"

"Then he didn't ought to be sleeping," interrupted Mr. Williams noisily. "Strikes me black and blue! A healthy young gent sleeping at this hour of the day! Here, open that door!"

And Archie Glenthorne, within, listened to this altercation with rapidly-growing consternation.

Archie Agrees!

"**O**DDS disturbances and commotion!" bleated Archie, lifting his head about half an inch from the feather cushion.

"This sort of thing was most unusual. Phipps, of all lads, was actually raising his voice, and squalling with some frightful bounder out there, in the passage.

"I'm sure Master Archie will be very angry if you disturb him," came Phipps' voice.

"Good!" murmured Archie approvingly.

"You make me tired!" came another voice.

"Either you let me get past, or I'll sock you on the jaw!"

"Not so good!" commented Archie, in alarm.

"Really, I cannot allow you to talk to me like that!" came Phipps' angry protest.

"Look here, mate, what's all the fuss about?" came the other voice. "Who's this young gent, anyway? A lord or a prince, or somebody? I'm going to see him if I have to bust the door down!"

"Not good at all!" murmured Archie dismally.

Crash!

To his startled surprise, the door suddenly burst open and he caught sight of Phipps standing in the doorway, looking not unlike Horatius holding the bridge. Beyond loomed a large, powerfully built man in a suit which took Archie's fancy at once, and which did much to calm his ruffled spirit.

"I say, Phipps!" he said feebly. "Dash it! I mean, what's all this volcanic stuff? I don't mind a spot of bother now and again, but this isn't a spot. It's an absolute slab!"

"So that's the young 'un, is it?" roared Mr. Williams. "Good enough! I'm going inside!"

"You're not going inside!" shouted Phipps warmly.

"Oh! And who's going to stop me?"

With that the Kid lunged out heavily, and it really seemed to Archie Glenthorne that the unfortunate Phipps took a terrific punch on

the point of the jaw. Phipps reeled drunkenly, staggered, and crashed full length.

"Now, then!" said Mr. Williams calmly.

He strode in, and for one dread moment both he and Phipps believed that the whole show had failed. True, there had been no rehearsal, but the pair had gone through the performance—exactly as Mr. Kingswood had suggested—with admirable skill. The Head had prophesied that Archie, seeing Phipps felled, would dash to the rescue.

"Oh!" groaned Phipps realistically.

Archie would have acted earlier, but he was so startled that his limbs were more or less paralysed. Now, hearing that anguished sound, he leapt off the lounge like a two-year-old, and with one tremendous leap he was in action.

"You absolute fright!" he shouted furiously. "What do you mean, dash you, by swiping Phipps?"

Crash! Biff! Thud!

Mr. Williams, who had been half expecting a feeble attack, backed away in alarm, at the ferocity of Archie's onslaught. For a youngster who was renowned for loafing, Archie did extraordinarily well. He was far more like a young tiger than a helpless slacker.

His right, as hard as granite, caught Mr. Williams on the chin, and made Mr. Williams rock. His left drove with terrific force into Mr. Williams' chest, and the professional boxer backed farther.

"Here, I say, what the thunder——"

"Kindly allow me to tell you"—crash!—"that you can't knock Phipps about,"—thud!—"in the young master's presence,"—biff!—"without the young master leaping to the rescue!" yelled Archie valiantly.

Even Phipps, as he picked himself up, was astonished. He knew what Archie was capable of, but this display was most gratifying. Kid Williams required every trick of his art to avoid the young whirlwind's lightning blows.

"Struth!" he gasped, with genuine admiration. "The kid's a born wonder!"

"Master Archibald—Master Archibald!" urged Phipps, pulling at the excited Archie. "Really, sir! This is—this is most unseemly! And you cannot expect to fight this man!"

"Don't be absolutely potty, dash you, Phipps!" panted Archie. "I've hurt him already."

"But he's Kid Williams, sir."

"I don't care if he's Carnera."

"He's a professional boxer, sir—a championship winner!"

"Good gad! Then there'll be some credit in making him bite the good old dust, what?" said Archie enthusiastically. "Now, Mr. William Kid, or whatever your frightful name is, kindly allow me to introduce you to the aforementioned dust."

Crash! Thud! Biff!

Archie proceeded with unabated vigour and enthusiasm.

It was not until Phipps forcibly dragged him back, and popped him down upon the lounge, that the scrap was over. Mr. Williams did not hesitate for a split second. He seemed to be in no way annoyed because Archie had attacked him. Quite the contrary.

(Continued on foot of next page.)

Here We Are Again—Gather Round!

MY DEAR CHUMS,
—I have not much space at my disposal this week for my little chit-chat, so I must confine myself to telling you of what there is on the programme for next Wednesday. And let me tell you right away—there is something extra-special in store for you in the way of detective-thrillers.

As you will probably have seen by now, the title of this great story is "THE HOUSE OF HORROR!" and it is a thriller throughout.

An Oriental doctor seeks the protection of Scotland Yard, and when two policemen call at his sinister-looking house, they find it locked up with not a light showing. Yet suddenly they hear weird and uncanny cries and howls emanating from the place. What mystery does the walls conceal?

Nelson Lee takes up the case, and he and Nipper experience many nerve-tingling adventures before the mystery is cleared up. This grand yarn, chums, will stand out in your memory as one of the best you have ever read.

The next instalment of E. S. Brooks' splendid serial, "WAKING UP ST. FRANK'S!" is also a winner all the way. My advice then, to you all is—if you want to be certain of getting next week's bumper number, trot round to your newsagent and order your copy to-day.

The following readers are anxious to make

PEN PALS.

G. Drummond Birks, 1469, Drummond Street, Montreal Province, Quebec, Canada, wants to hear from stamp collectors in the Empire, especially from Africa and Malta.

Millie Swinborne and Violet Betts, 36, Stepney Causeway, Stepney, London, E.1, want to hear



Letters to the Editor
should be addressed
to NELSON LEE LIBRARY, Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

from girl readers who will join the Good Companions' Society. Concerts are got up for charitable purposes.

Frederick Rice, 126, Aston Brook Street, Aston, Birmingham, wants to hear from stamp collectors.

Lloyd Fallon, 16, Blackburn Street, Adelaide, South Australia, wants to hear from stamp collectors.

Richard P. Rowe, 79, Drummond Road, Skegness, Lincs., wants correspondents; interested in stamps. Readers in Japan specially asked.

READERS' PRIZE JOKES!

Manager: "You are the boy who has come to fill the vacancy?"

Boy: "Yes, sir."

Manager: "Are you honest, straightforward, and trustworthy?"

Boy: "Yes, sir."

Manager: "What would you do if one morning you came into my office and found £25,000 in bank-notes?"

Boy: "Nothing, I would live on the income!"

(L. G. Tyrell, 93, Woodheyas Road, Neasden, N.W.10. *A Pocket Wallet.*)

"Now," said the hypnotist, "I shall make this man forget everything."

"Hold on!" shouted a voice from the audience. "He owes me a fiver!"

(K. H. Hoskins, 35, Laurie Avenue, Forest Fields, Nottingham. *A Pocket Wallet.*)

"Wonderful, sir!" he panted, leaping up to Archie, and feeling his muscles.

"Look here, you absolute fright——"

"I'm a professional, sir, and I know what I'm talking about," went on Mr. Williams breathlessly. "You're a born champion."

"I say, you know——"

"A world beater, sir," continued the Kid rapturously. "Never saw a lad of your size with such a magnificent physique. And the way you can use those fists of yours! Why, it's a pleasure to be knocked cold."

"Good gad!"

"As for your footwork, it's just like a dream," continued Mr. Williams, closing his eyes with joy. "You've only got to put yourself to it, young gentleman, and you'll beat any lad of your own weight in the world. But then, of course, you're Captain Glenthorne's brother, ain't you, sir? That explains it. What's bred in the bone, you know."

Archie looked at him with widely opening

eyes. And it suddenly occurred to Archie that he rather liked this man. He liked his enthusiasm, his cheerful grin, his twinkling eyes.

"Williams is right, sir," said Phipps. "And Williams knows what he's talking about. It was he who helped to train Mr. Kingswood himself."

"Odds, surprises and shocks! I mean to say, not really!" murmured Archie. "And you really think, Mr. Kid, that I'm a useful sort of chappie?"

"Useful!" echoed Kid Williams. "Why, bless you, sir, you fair take my breath away. There's a big contest coming on in this school, isn't there?"

"Oh, absolutely! Some new wheeze of the Head Master's," said Archie. "The Kingswood Belt, or something. Personally, I'm not very keen on belts. Give me the good old braces——"

(Continued overleaf.)

"Believe me, young gent, that belt's yours if you want it," said the Kid earnestly. "Why, with a bit of training you can lick anybody."

"You're not absolutely telling me that you think I can lick Lawrence?"

"You could lick a couple of Lawrences," said Mr. Williams, with fine confidence. "I've heard of this youngster Lawrence—he's good, certainly. But you're more than good, sir."

And Mr. Williams, who had come here with the intention of spoofing Archie, was not spoofing at all. His expert eye had detected at once that Archie possessed the right material. Mr. Kingswood had spotted that, too.

And then and there Archie fell.

He was so flattered by all this praise that he was more or less swept off his feet. There was one very good point about Archie, when he did a thing he did it thoroughly.

"Do it, sir," urged Williams. "Engage me as your trainer, and I'll lick you into shape in no time."

"You'll lick me— Oh, yes. Absolutely," said Archie, nodding. "I get you, old whirlwind. Of course, it'll need a frightful amount of energy—"

"And you've got it, sir—with plenty to spare," said the Kid. "Energy? Why, you're just a living dynamo!"

"Goo gad!"

"Say the word, sir," continued Mr. Williams, "and I'll take on the job as your trainer. What's more, I'll get you into such shape that you can win that Belt and secure the honour for your own Form."

"I say, that's rather a priceless idea," said Archie, his eyes shining. "The good old Remove is rather expecting to sideslip over this dashed Kingswood Belt. Phipps, old lad, what do you say?"

"I think Williams is right, sir," said Phipps. "You've got it in you—I've always said so. When you make up your mind, Master Archie, you can do anything. Never forget, sir, that you're a Glenthorne."

Archie leapt to his feet and clasped Kid Williams' hand.

"Absolutely!" he said, beaming. "It's a go, laddie! Here's my dashed flipper on the bargain. Train me and I'll lick Lawrence and secure the Kingswood Belt for the jolly old Remove!"

(Who said the Age of Miracles was past? Archie thinking of becoming a boxer and winning honours for his form? There's some fun in the offing—so don't miss next weeks chapters of this great school story.)

ON SALE SEPTEMBER 1st.

**Greyfriars
HOLIDAY ANNUAL**

Price **6/-** and

**Popular Book of
BOYS' STORIES, Price 2/6**

Two GREAT BOOKS—Don't miss them!

GROSE'S, Ludgate Circus, LONDON.



FOOTBALL JERSEYS

All Colours and Designs.

12/9 per doz.

SEND FOR ILLUSTRATED LIST
POST FREE.



GEO. GROSE & CO., 8, New Bridge St., London, E.C.4

BE STRONG I promise you Robust Health, Doubled Strength, Stamina, and Energy in 30 days or money back! My amazing 4-in-1 Course adds 10-25 lbs. to your muscular development (with 2 ins. on Chest and 1 in. on Arms). Brings Iron Will, Self-control, Virile Manhood. Complete Course, 5/-. Details free, privately.—**STEBBING INSTITUTE (A), 28, Dean Road, LONDON, N.W.2.**

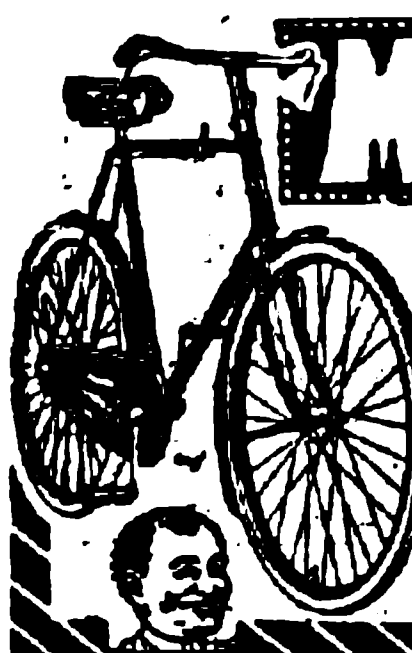
MAN-SIZE My Two Illustrated Books show a simple, quick way to be TALLER and STRONGER. Write TO-DAY for FREE copies and BE MAN-SIZE. **CARNE Institute, Rhiwbina, Cardiff, S. W.**

BLUSHING, Shyness, "Nerves," Self-consciousness, Worry Habit, Unreasonable Fears, etc. cured or money back! Complete Course 5/-. Details.—**L. A. Stebbing, 28, Dean Road, London, N.W.2**

BE TALLER! Increased my own height to 6ft. 3ins. Treatment **£2.2s.**—Details 2d. stamp.—**A. B. M. ROSS, Height Specialist, SCARBOROUGH, ENGLAND.**

STOP STAMMERING! Cure yourself as I did. Particulars Free.—**FRANK B. HUGHES, 26, Hart St., LONDON, W.C.1.**

MY GREAT OFFER



Write for my free Bargain Lists of the best ALL BRITISH cycles. 14 DAYS' APPROVAL. CARRIAGE PAID. Cash price **£3 10s.** or terms. All accessories FREE. Value 21/-.

O'Brien THE WORLD'S LARGEST CYCLE DEALER, 17, COVENTRY

BE TALL. Your Height increased in 14 days, or Money Back. Complete Course, 5/-. Booklet free privately.—**STEBBING SYSTEM, 28, Dean Road, LONDON, N.W.2.**

AGENTS WANTED to sell PRIVATE CHRISTMAS CARDS. Magnificent collection of beautiful Cards. Sample Book free. Highest commission. Valuable prizes. Apply: **Denton Ltd., Dept. D, 29, Acerrington.**

BLUSHING, SHYNESS.—For FREE particulars simple home cure write **Mr. HUGHES, 26, Hart St., LONDON, W.C.1.**

300 STAMPS for 6d. (Abroad 1/-), including: Airpost, Barbados, Old India, Nigeria, New South Wales, Gold Coast, etc.—**W. A. WHITE, Engine Lane, LYE, Stourbridge.**

Be sure to mention **The NELSON LEE LIBRARY** when communicating with advertisers.

Printed and published every Wednesday by the Proprietors, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Advertisement Offices: The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, E.C.4. Registered for transmission by Canadian magazine post. Subscription Rates: Inland and Abroad, 11/- per annum; 5/6 for six months. Sole Agents for Australia and New Zealand: Messrs. Gordon & Gotch, Ltd.; and for South Africa: Central News Agency, Ltd.