

THE NELSON LEE

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ST. FRANK'S IN NEW ZEALAND!

A stirring long complete schoolboy adventure yarn featuring the cheery chums of St. Frank's.

New Series No. 150.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

March 16th, 1929



The earth seemed to crumple beneath Handforth's feet. He tried to pull himself back, but it was too late. With a startled yell he plunged into the steaming, sticky mud pool.

Good-bye to Australia !

Exciting Schoolboy Adventure !



By
EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

(Author of the St. Frank's stories now
appearing every Tuesday in "The Popular.")

Good old blundering Edward Oswald Handforth among the gushing geysers and bubbling mud pools! Can't you imagine him getting into trouble? He does, anyway; but in spite of that he has the time of his life in New Zealand. So do all the other St. Frank's boys; and you will, too, when you start reading this stunning yarn.—ED.

CHAPTER 1

Alec Duncan's Telegram!

"WHERE'S the Post Office?" asked Alec Duncan, of the St. Frank's Remove.
"Somewhere about here, I expect," said Harry Gresham. "What do you want it for, anyway?"

"I want to send a wire," replied Duncan.

There were several St. Frank's Remove fellows in the group, including Nipper and Handforth and Travers and a few others. They were strolling leisurely down Argyle Street, in Hobart, Tasmania.

"Here's Liverpool Street," said Harry Gresham. "Perhaps the Post Office is somewhere here. The town hall's not far off, I know, so we must be on the track."

Hobart was fairly swarming with St. Frank's fellows—seniors and juniors. On this particular evening the majority of the fellows were taking a last look at the famous old city—for on the morrow, soon after dawn, the School Ship would steal out of the Derwent, and steam off across the Pacific.

Half the school had come on this wonderful voyage—all the occupants of the Ancient House and the Modern House—and the fellows themselves voted the School Ship to be an enormous success. They had had a wonderful time in Australia, and it was only a few days since, indeed, that they had departed from Melbourne. There had been a very keen school test match at Melbourne, running simultaneously with the last of the great Test matches between England and Australia, and it was rather fitting, perhaps, that the schoolboy game should have been a tie, each side scoring precisely the same number of runs.

Having left Melbourne, the good ship St. Francis had steamed across the Bass Strait,

then she had slipped through the Banks Strait, past the Furneaux Group, and so on to the southern part of Tasmania—and to Hobart, the capital.

Much to the disappointment of the school, this visit to Tasmania was only a brief one, and did not allow of any journeys into the interior. The School Ship had only arrived in Hobart that morning, and she was to depart on the following morning.

So everybody was making the most of their afternoon and evening of liberty.

As a matter of fact, Nelson Lee, who was the temporary Head, was getting rather anxious about the school's work. During the spell in Australia, lessons had been gravely neglected, and seniors and juniors alike were rusty on all subjects.

If this sort of thing went on, the school governors would declare that the trip had been a failure—for it was understood that the work of the term should be carried on just as though the boys were at St. Frank's itself.

There was a good opportunity for work now, while the School Ship was steaming across the Pacific. Nelson Lee had announced that the voyage home would be as speedy as possible—via the Panama Canal, and then across the Atlantic, and so home.

"Just a minute, you fellows!" sang out Harry Gresham. "Don't be in such a hurry. Duncan wants to send a wire."

Nipper and Handforth and the others turned, and they all collected in a corner of the pavement, where they would not obstruct the pedestrian traffic too much.

"A wire?" said Handforth. "Who to?"

"Well, well!" murmured Vivian Travers. "The dear fellow is adding inquisitiveness to his many failings."

"Eh?" said the leader of Study D, with a start. "My hat! Sorry, Duncan! I didn't mean to be inquisitive—"

"It's all right, you ass!" said Alec Duncan, grinning. "There's nothing private about this wire. I'm sending it to my people."

"But what on earth for?" asked Handforth, in wonder. "We shan't be home for weeks yet—"

"I hope to see my people within a few days," smiled Duncan. "Have you forgotten that I'm a New Zealander?"

"By George! So you are!"

"And the School Ship is going to call at Auckland," went on Duncan, his eyes shining. "Mr. Lee told me that yesterday—and you can bet I was dotty with excitement. I didn't know that we were going anywhere near New Zealand on this trip, although I had had a sneaking hope that we should touch one of the ports."

"But New Zealand is a big place," said Nipper. "We may not go anywhere near the district where your people live, Duncan."

"That's just the point," said Duncan confidently. "I thought perhaps that we should touch at Wellington or Christchurch—and that wouldn't have been any good. But we're going to stay in Auckland for a bit—and my family lives in a place called

Rotorua, and that's only about a hundred and seventy miles from Auckland, by rail."

"You won't get a chance of going to Rotania, or whatever you call it," said Handforth, shaking his head. "We've seen so much of Australia that I thought we should naturally stay in New Zealand for a bit, but I've heard that we shall only call there for fresh fuel, or something. It's a lot of rot! Why can't we do the thing thoroughly?"

Nipper grinned.

"I'm afraid, old man, that we've been sadly neglecting our lessons of late," he said. "That's the main trouble. If we start touring all over New Zealand, we shall forget that school work ever existed."

"Well, I'm surprised at Mr. Lee!" said Handforth sternly. "He ought to know better!"

"Why blame Mr. Lee?" put in Church. "The story is going the rounds that the governors have sent long telegrams, and that we're only going to pay a brief call at New Zealand because the poor old gentlemen have got the wind up about our education. They've heard what's been happening in Australia, you see, and they've brought the chopper down."

"Yes, that's about the truth of it, I believe," said Nipper thoughtfully. "It's a pity—because now that we're on the spot, we ought to see a bit of New Zealand. We might not get the chance again."

Alec Duncan nodded.

"That's just why I'm keen on sending this wire," he explained. "If the ship stays at Auckland for about twenty-four hours, I shall easily have a chance of getting down to Rotorua by train. My people don't know anything about my coming—in fact, I wrote to them from Melbourne and said that there wasn't much chance of the School Ship going anywhere near Auckland. So I want to send this wire and let them know."

"It's a good idea, of course," said Nipper. "We'll find the post office. Perhaps your people will be able to come to Auckland, as they're so comparatively near—and that'll make certain of it."

"I was thinking the same thing," nodded Duncan.

Handforth suddenly chuckled.

"Look here, Duncan—blow that wire!" he said. "Don't send it at all!"

"Don't send it? Why not?"

"Give your people a surprise!" said Handforth, grinning. "They don't know you're coming—and you can just imagine their faces when you walk in, bright and smiling! You're bound to get permission to pop down to your home town, and you'll give your mater and pater the surprise of their lives! Why spoil it by sending them a telegram in advance?"

Duncan looked thoughtful, and his eyes twinkled.

"But in case I can't go, they'll probably come to Auckland," he said.

"Rats! By not sending the wire, you'll make certain of getting permission to go," said Handforth slyly. "Mr. Lee couldn't

possibly refuse you—and it'll be tons better for you to see the old home. You take my tip, my son, and give your people a surprise visit!"

Alec Duncan grinned, and slapped his thigh.

"By Jove! I will!" he declared enthusiastically.



CHAPTER 2

The Beginning of an Idea!

SOME of the other fellows were not quite so sure that Handforth's advice was good; but they did not interfere. If Duncan preferred to take the risk, it was his own concern. And, after all, there was not much risk about it, for Nelson Lee could hardly be heartless enough to forbid the New Zealand boy paying a quick trip to his home.

"It's a pity all you fellows can't see Rotorua," said Duncan, regretfully. "It's a marvellous place."

"Of course, it would be—seeing that it's your native town!" grinned Gresham.

"It's not my native town, really," replied Duncan calmly. "My father owned big farm lands a lot farther south, but as the mater's health was pretty bad, he sold them and went to Rotorua, settling down there. It's a great health resort, you know. It's a kind of spa."

"A which?"

"Lots of geysers and things," said Duncan.

"By George! I've heard about those geysers in New Zealand!" said Handforth. "A sort of volcanic region, isn't it?"

"My people don't actually live in the town of Rotorua, but some miles out," said Duncan dreamily. "My hat! The country round about is marvellous—too marvellous for words, you chaps! You've got to see it to believe it."

"I suppose your pater has retired?" asked Gresham.

"Well, not exactly retired," said Duncan.

"He invested all his money in a sort of hotel. It's not an ordinary hotel, of course, but a wonderful kind of residential mansion, standing on the shore of a glorious lake."

Handforth grinned.

"This home of yours seems to be pretty glorious and marvellous and wonderful," he said. "Of course, we're taking all this with a pinch of salt, Duncan, my lad! You're a New Zealander, and you naturally pile it on a bit thick."

Duncan snorted with indignation.

"All the words in the English language couldn't describe the beauties of the Rotorua district," he retorted. "Why, you ignorant ass, it's the centre of one of the most amazing places in the whole world! Anybody with a scrap of geographical knowledge knows that!"

"I don't know it!" said Handforth coldly.

"Then you haven't got a scrap of geographical knowledge!"

"Ha, ha ha!"

"You silly ass——"

"Honest Injun, it's truly wonderful," insisted Duncan earnestly. "The most astounding geysers you ever saw in your life. Spouting boiling hot water—liquid mud—gushing waterfalls—and—and everything. And glorious scenery, too—I can't even attempt to describe it."

"He's right, you chaps," said Nipper, nodding. "Rotorua is in the centre of the thermal district, and they say that the lakes and streams there—and the fern glades and the gorges—are some of the most glorious sights in the world. I don't think Duncan is just boasting because it happens to be his home."

Vivian Travers sighed.

"For the love of Samson! Why talk about it?" he asked. "If we're not going to see this place, why make our mouths water in vain? There's work for us, dear old fellows—hard work. No more inland trips for us."

"Yes, but from an educational point of view——" began Nipper.

He stopped, and a queer gleam came into his eyes.

"Thought of something?" asked Duncan.

"Yes, by Jove!" said Nipper. "I have thought of something. An idea, you chaps, or the beginning of one, anyhow!"

"Out with it!" said Handforth briskly.

"Not yet," said Nipper. "Let me have time to think it over—to shape it thoroughly."

And, although his companions pressed him to explain, he refused to do so. There remained that gleam in his eyes, however, and it was presently added to by a look of calm confidence.

Everybody made the most of their time in Hobart, and unquestionably the fellows were charmed with this lovely city.

The harbour itself had enchanted the St. Frank's fellows, as they had entered it. It provided a fine setting for the city situated at the foot of Mount Wellington.

The climate seemed to be very much like that of the South of England—a fine, healthy climate, and the scenery was as beautiful as any that the fellows had seen in Australia.

Hobart itself is a fine city, and the school was only too sorry that it could not remain longer, so that all the beauty spots could be visited.

Later in the evening the fellows drifted back to the School Ship, and when everybody was on board calling-over was held, for it would never do if some of the fellows were missing. But orders had been strictly obeyed, and nobody had been left behind.

"Tasmania's a ripping place, by the look of it," said Boots, of the Fourth. "We've been round the town and out into the country, beyond. When I leave school I've a good mind to come out to Tasmania and settle down."

"Better go to Australia proper, chum," said "Boomerang" Bangs, the New South Wales junior. "Tasmania's all right, but New South Wales is where you want to settle. The country up there is bonzer, and that's dinkum oil!"

"Too right it is!" grinned Boots.

"Never mind New South Wales," put in Bob Christine. "I was speaking to somebody ashore about a place called Port Arthur. They say it's wonderful, and we shan't even go there."

"We might spot it from the ship, as we go out," said Nipper. "We go round Cape Raoul, and Port Arthur isn't far from there. We might get a sight of it, anyhow. It's a kind of tourist resort, I think."

"There's a place there called the Isle of the Dead!" said Bob Christine.

"That sounds cheerful!"

"And there are beaches galore, and it's a spot where there used to be lots of prisons and places—now all in ruins," went on Bob. "There's a great fissure in the rocks called the Devil's Kitchen, and I've heard that there are great caves, too."

"One of these days, when we're not bound by school rules, we'll come back and look at these places," chuckled Nipper. "My dear chaps, there are hundreds and hundreds of places we could be interested in, and it would take us half a lifetime to see them all. It's no good being wild because we can't go to Port Arthur, or some such place. Personally, I think we're doing jolly well, and there's nothing to grumble at."

"Hear, hear!"

"Nipper's right," said Boots, nodding. "This trip has been too glorious for words, and, after all, we've seen Hobart, and Hobart is the capital of Tasmania."

And this was the general view. As Nipper had said, there was no sense in hankering after visiting this place or that place. The school went where the ship took it, and the school was glad to go.

That night, just before bed-time, the fellows took their last look at Hobart—at the twinkling lights of the city. For before they were awake the ship would be on her way—out towards the Pacific, *en route* for the next port of call, which would be Auckland, New Zealand.



CHAPTER 3

Nipper's Great Wheeze!

"G-O-O-D-B-Y-E, Tasmania!" said Handforth, waving his hand.

He and Church and McClure were on deck. It was early morning now, and the chums of Study D had been three of the first out after the sounding of the rising bell.

Hobart had vanished, and the School Ship was ploughing her way steadily through the

sea. Glimpses of coastline could be seen, but before long the vessel would be out in the open sea—in the Pacific.

It was a distance of something like fifteen hundred miles to Auckland, and the voyage would occupy at least three days—or, if all went well, Auckland might be reached on the afternoon of the third day.

The St. Francis was a very fast ship.

"When you come to think of it, it's good to be back on board and at sea again," said Handforth contentedly. "No rush and tear, no dashing about catching trains, and all that."

"And before long we shall be back in England," said Church dreamily. "That's a ripping thought, you know."

"Rather!" said McClure.

"Getting tired of this trip?" asked their leader, staring.

"Not tired of it, but it'll be rather fine to get back to St. Frank's," said Church. "Back in the old study, in the Ancient House. We ought to be in time to see the tail end of the footer season. I wonder how Reggie Pitt and Armstrong and all the rest of the chaps are getting on?"

"Oh, jogging along in the same old way, I suppose," said Handforth. "Popping into the tuck-shop and going down to Bellton now and again. By George! You've made me homesick now, you silly asses!"

"Well, you needn't worry—we're home-ward bound, aren't we?" said Mac. "Within a few weeks we shall get into Caistowe Harbour, and then—"

"Don't!" said Handforth, closing his eyes. "Let's hope the weeks will pass quickly!"

To tell the truth, quite a large number of fellows was longing to see good old Sussex again. The School Ship was a great success, but, at the same time, there was "no place like home."

The ordinary school routine was maintained on board the St. Francis; breakfast was at exactly the same hour as at St. Frank's; prayers and lessons followed in all their normal sequence.

But this morning, immediately after prayers, there was a little diversion which the school had not looked for. Just before the order came for dismissal, Nipper stood forward in his place, his hand upraised.

"Well?" asked Mr. Norton, the Remove master. "What do you want, Hamilton?"

"I'd like to speak to Mr. Lee, sir," said Nipper.

Nelson Lee, on the platform, looked over the ranks of the Remove.

"Go ahead, young 'un," he said cheerily. "What is it you want to say? Something that concerns the whole school?"

"Yes, sir."

"Indeed! This is very interesting," smiled the School Ship's Head. "Out with it, then."

"I understand, sir, that the ship is calling at Auckland?"

"That is perfectly true."

"How long do you think we shall stay in Auckland, sir?"

"Not long—perhaps a day."

"I'm going to suggest, sir, that the ship should stay two days—or perhaps three," said Nipper coolly. "And I'm saying this for the benefit of the school, sir—for the benefit of the school's education."

Everybody listened in wonder, and some of the fellows had an idea that Nipper was deliberately "ragging his respected 'governor." If so, he was liable to get it pretty hot.

"Oh!" said Nelson Lee smoothly. "So it is your opinion, young man, that the School Ship should remain in Auckland for at least three days?"

"Yes, sir," said Nipper. "It seems a pity that we should all be so near to the Rotorua district, and completely miss it. From a purely educational point of view, the school ought to go to the Rotorua district."

Nelson Lee looked thoughtful.

"Very possibly you are right," he admitted. "I have already discussed the matter with Mr. Stockdale, but it so happens that the school governors are impatient—"

"Rotorua is one of the wonder places of the whole world, sir," said Nipper eagerly. "Everybody has heard of the marvellous geysers of New Zealand, and the very best of them—the most amazing of the natural wonders of New Zealand—are in the Rotorua district. And Rotorua is only about a hundred and seventy miles by rail from Auckland. Doesn't it seem a shame, sir, that the ship should go to Auckland, and depart without the school seeing these marvels?"

"My dear boy—"

"We all know, sir, that we came on this trip for the benefit of our education," continued Nipper quickly. "I hope you won't think this is a nerve on my part, sir—I don't mean it to be that—but, educationally, a trip to the geysers would be simply topping, and everybody in the school would benefit."

"Hear, hear!"

"Good for you, kid!"

"Hurrah!"

The school was already beginning to get excited. Nipper had put it very clearly, and very concisely; and he had played a master-stroke by suggesting this little trip in Big Hall, with everybody present. For, naturally, the school rose to the idea, and supported it with a wholehearted enthusiasm that was good to see.

A visit to Auckland would be fine—but a trip by rail down to this region of boiling hot geysers would be finer still. And, as Nipper had so shrewdly pointed out, it would be a shame for St. Frank's to be so near, and yet so far.

"Hands up everybody who supports me in this suggestion!" shouted Nipper, looking round.

Every hand flew up.

"Hurrah!"

"Let's go and see the geysers, sir!"

"Hear, hear!"

Seniors as well as juniors were getting excited, and the Form-masters were finding it impossible to control their boys.

"Silence!" commanded Nelson Lee, holding up his hand.

The shouts died down, and rippled away into a mere murmur.

"It seems that everybody is of the same opinion," went on Nelson Lee dryly. "It was very astute of you, Hamilton, to broach the subject in this novel manner. You were expecting general support, were you not?"

"Yes, sir," said Nipper. "I hope you won't think it impertinence—"

"Not at all," smiled Nelson Lee. "I congratulate you upon your cleverness. I understand, then, that the entire school is anxious that the ship should stay at Auckland for two or three days, and that a visit to the Rotorua district should be made?"

"Yes, sir!" roared the school.

"Very well!" said Nelson Lee. "Since it is a sort of general demand, I will agree—"

"Hurrah!"

"Bravo, sir!"

"I will agree to the suggestion on certain conditions," added Nelson Lee calmly. "Not all of you can go on this trip, but those who earn the right shall be permitted the privilege."

And the school simmered down, wondering what was coming next.



CHAPTER 4

Nelson Lee's Decision!

NOW that Hamilton has raised this most interesting question, I will take the opportunity to speak to you on an all-important subject," said Nelson Lee conversationally. "I want to remind you that you have all been confoundedly lazy."

The school grinned. It was Lee's habit to address the fellows in this way—and they, for their part, appreciated it. They liked his friendly, easy manner.

"Yes, lazy!" repeated the ship's Head. "I'm not saying that you have been deliberately slack, but circumstances have been such that school work has been atrociously neglected."

"Hear, hear!" murmured one or two of the Form-masters.

"As you all know, it was one of the objects of this trip that the ordinary routine should be continued exactly the same as at St. Frank's," said Nelson Lee. "Unfortunately, the letter of that arrangement has not been carried out. What with the 'Test' matches, and trips here, and trips there, school work of late has been very much of a farce. Nearly all of you are so backward in all general subjects that I can hardly bear

to think about it. And it won't do. Most definitely, it won't do."

The school was silent, knowing full well that Lee was speaking the truth.

"And now it is proposed that you should spend another two or three days on holiday," proceeded Lee. "Hamilton has very cleverly suggested that the trip will be of educational value. I do not deny that, but it won't get you much further in your ordinary subjects, will it? There is a long voyage ahead of us, and a good deal of it will be uninterrupted steaming, when the general routine can go on unchecked, with lessons receiving the full attention they deserve."

"We can make up for lost time, sir," called somebody.

"I hope you mean that," replied Lee. "It was the suggestion of the school governors—not mine—that we should only make a brief call at New Zealand. But I am the headmaster here, and if I decide that a longer stay shall be made, I am quite at liberty to do so. When you all get back to St. Frank's, I want you to be thoroughly proficient in all subjects—up to your general standard. And you have a lot of leeway to make up."

"A very great deal, sir—a very great deal!" murmured Mr. Pyecraft, of the Fourth.

"Here is my decision regarding the proposed visit to the Rotorua district of New Zealand," said Nelson Lee. "Go ahead with your lessons, and work. Work hard! You have three clear days ahead of you before we reach Auckland—to-day, and Wednesday and Thursday. Wednesday is normally a half-holiday, but this week it will be a full school day. We must make up the lost ground."

The school was still silent.

"I shall ask your Form-masters to report to me on Thursday evening," said Lee, with a twinkle in his eyes. "and all boys who have gained a reasonable number of marks, in all general subjects, will be permitted to go on this Rotorua trip."

"Oh!" ejaculated the school, in one long-drawn out exclamation.

"So it will depend entirely upon yourselves," said Nelson Lee sweetly. "Those of you who are industrious, and who devote full attention to lessons, will go. You will have earned the right to go. But all those with low marks must remain behind, and continue with lessons."

"How many marks must we get, sir?" asked Handforth blankly.

"I will leave that to your Form-masters," replied Nelson Lee. "I have said a reasonable number of marks, and these gentlemen will be able to settle that point for themselves. Now, go ahead. Work your hardest—earn your right to go on this trip to Rotorua. That's all; you can dismiss now."

And the school dismissed, bubbling with excitement, rather bewildered by Nelson Lee's ultimatum.

"The cunning beggar!" said Travers, when he got out on deck with a crowd of other

fellows. "Well, well! I always knew that Mr. Lee was as wide as they make 'em, but he has surpassed himself."

"It's not fair!" protested Hubbard excitedly. "Lots of us will be left behind!"

"You, for example, dear old fellow," said Travers, nodding. "You're pretty much of a slacker in class, aren't you?"

Hubbard had nothing to say, for he was, indeed, generally hovering near the bottom of the class. He and Teddy Long were a pair, and such fellows as Gore-Pearce, and Gulliver and Bell made a point of doing as little work as possible.

It was just the same in the other Forms; the slackers were alarmed and indignant. But the majority of the fellows, realising the brilliance of Nelson Lee's decision, were thoroughly satisfied with it.

"After all, it's up to us," said Nipper complacently. "The gov'nor has decided wisely. If we don't work hard we don't go. By Jove! There's going to be plenty of hard work done in the class-rooms to-day!"

And he was right.

As soon as the bell rang for lessons the Removites fairly flew into the class-room, and so did the other Forms. Never in all their experience had the Form-masters known such attention—such concentrated energy.

Talking in class was strictly taboo; inattention to lessons was a thing of the past. From the Sixth Form down to the fags the fellows fairly slaved at their work.

The school had an incentive, and Nelson Lee chuckled heartily when various reports came to him at the end of the day. Many of the fellows wanted to do extra work—to continue their lessons in the evening. But this was not allowed. So long as the school worked hard during the prescribed hours, all was well.

Prep. that evening was done as it had never been done before. There was no skimping of the work—no slipshod carelessness. Down in the cabins, while the School Ship ploughed on her way, the juniors pored over their books. The usual larking about was conspicuous by its absence. Prep. was not pushed aside, to be hurried through in the minimum amount of time before supper. It was done properly.

It was just the same throughout the next day. And the day following. Indeed, in this brief period the school made a tremendous effort to make up for lost time, and succeeded in a manner that amazed the Form-masters.

Curiously enough, the fellows themselves were thoroughly enjoying it. Working like this, after long periods of slackness, was refreshing. They had a zest for their lessons, and they found untold interest in the hard work, too.

On the evening of the third day, when Auckland was near at hand, there were many anxious seniors and juniors. Nobody wanted to be left out of that alluring trip to the famous geyser country of New Zealand



The juniors gazed admiringly at the magnificent building standing on the edge of the lake, set in the midst of green lawns and vividly-coloured flower beds. "Some millionaire's home, I suppose," commented one of the juniors. "No, it's my home!" put in Alec Duncan proudly.

The ship had already rounded the North Cape, and was even now in the Hauraki Gulf and approaching the Waitemata Channel which led straight into the harbour.

But scarcely anybody had wasted time on looking at the coast-line scenery. Work had been the order of the day—and of the hour.

And now, very soon, the verdict would be known!



CHAPTER 5

Auckland, New Zealand!

IT was dark when at last the School Ship crept into the great Waitemata Harbour. From the decks the St. Frank's fellows could see the twinkling, brilliant lights of Auckland—the Queen City of the North, as it was called.

Nobody was to be allowed ashore this evening, of course, particularly as the hour was getting rather late, and nobody knew yet how many were to be fortunate enough to be included in the big shore party.

Clang-clang!

"There goes the bell for Big Hall!" ejaculated Handforth excitedly. "Come on, you

chaps! Mr. Lee is going to jaw to the school."

"Hurrah!"

"No need for us to be windy, Handy," said Church. "We're safe enough. We've worked like galley-slaves since Tuesday."

"All the same, we can't be too sure," said Handforth. "My arithmetic's a bit rocky. I'm afraid, and perhaps old Norton has given me bad marks. By George! If I'm not allowed to go on that trip—"

"Cheese it!" grinned McClure. "We're as safe as houses."

"How about you, Archie, my son?" asked Nipper, as he clapped Archie Glenthorne on the back. "Are you worrying?"

"Absolutely not!" replied Archie. "Good gad, no!"

"You think you've been working hard enough, then?"

"In order to be in the fashion, dear old kangaroo, I've been working myself to the good old bone," said Archie. "I mean, I have positively wilted at times. The good old brain has buzzed protestingly, but I have kept on with the good work."

"You're keen on seeing the geysers, aren't you?"

"Odds waterspouts and mudbaths! Absolutely not!" said Archie. "Geysers, what! It seems to me, laddie, that this trip is going to be frightfully strenuous, and after

all this hard work I'd rather remain on board and take a dose of relaxation."

"Rats! You can't fool me, Archie!" grinned Nipper. "If you hadn't wanted to go you wouldn't have worked so hard."

They all went crowding into Big Hall, and presently, when everybody was there, Nelson Lee appeared on the platform.

"Well, we're in Auckland," said the ship's head pleasantly; "and I must say that you've been working very splendidly. The reports from your various Form-masters have pleased me so much that there is only one course for me to adopt."

The school hung on his words.

"There is not a boy in any Form who has not obtained a reasonable number of marks," said Lee, his eyes twinkling. "You have worked so wholeheartedly and with such industry that I'm going to allow everybody to make this trip to the Rotorua district."

"Hurrah!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Bravo, sir!"

"Three cheers for Mr. Lee!"

"Hurrah!"

There was a regular tumult, and Nelson Lee chuckled heartily.

"Arrangements will be made for you all to have a look at Auckland to-morrow," said Lee. "Permission will be granted for any boys to go ashore—just as you please. The railway journey to Rotorua will be made to-morrow afternoon, and as it will be impossible for you to return to Auckland on the same day, special arrangements will be made for your accommodation in Rotorua overnight—"

"Hurrah!"

"Indeed, in order that you may thoroughly add to your education, you will be enabled to stay in the district until Sunday morning," smiled Lee. "You will then return, board the ship again, and we shall probably leave Auckland on Monday morning."

This was good news indeed, and the school dismissed in a condition of wild excitement.

But Nelson Lee's object had been achieved. During the voyage from Hobart an extraordinary amount of work had been accomplished, and it would now do the school good to have a day or two of relaxation. Hard work would follow again when the voyage was resumed.

That night, therefore, the fellows slept soundly—knowing that a great treat was in store for them on the morrow. Alec Duncan was particularly overjoyed. He would be able to pay that surprise visit to his people, and, indeed, he invited a few special Removites to accompany him, as he wanted to introduce them to his family. Nipper and Handforth & Co., and Tregellis-West and Gresham were included amongst these "specials," and they, for their part, were only too glad to accept Duncan's invitation.

On the following morning crowds of fellows went ashore, to be charmed by the delights of the City of Auckland.

It was a splendid city—a spot where bathing, boating, golf, tennis and fishing were possible throughout the year. The harbour was magnificent, and from the School Ship the fellows had been charmed by the glimpses of the red roofs and the fine buildings of Auckland nestling amid the trees ashore. The scene, with the natural beauties of the splendid bays and islands, was one which the fellows would long remember.

The city itself was up-to-date and modern in every respect, with electric tramcars, magnificent shops and stores, and in the suburbs all the houses were thickly interspersed with gardens. There were lawns everywhere, and trees and ferns in abundance.

"It's a marvellous place!" declared Fullwood enthusiastically.

"You can't beat New Zealand!" declared Duncan proudly.

"No fear!" said Handforth. "Why Australia is—"

"Shush!" warned Church. "Comparisons are odious, Handy, old man."

"Eh?"

"Australia's a wonderful country, and so is New Zealand," said Church diplomatically. "We've seen both, so we ought to know!"

Nipper chuckled

"We've hardly seen anything of New Zealand yet," he remarked. "But, according to all that Duncan has told us, we're in for a rare treat when we visit the Rotorua district."

"A treat such as you've never had before!" declared Alec Duncan. "You probably think I'm gassing, but just you wait until you see!"

"Well, Auckland's jolly good, anyhow, for a start!" said Handforth. "How about going into one of these shops, and getting some ice-creams, or some cooling drinks?"

There were plenty of fellows who accepted the invitation. They were making the most of their time. This visit to New Zealand was, after all, only a brief one, and everybody wanted to crowd as much into the swiftly-passing hours as possible.



CHAPTER 6

Rotorua the Wonderful!

LUNCH-TIME found everybody back on board the School Ship, and there was much excitement and

animation because the trip down to Rotorua was to be made that afternoon.

Parties were being formed. The fags, for example, were to be in charge of one or two of the Form-masters. The seniors, for

the most part, would be allowed to make their own parties up, and many of the Removites and Fourth-Formers were lucky enough to be in charge of Lord Dorrimore.

This suited the fellows down to the ground, for "Dorrie" was free-and-easy and genial. He was almost like one of themselves. The sporting peer had virtually effaced himself during the past two or three days, for he had known that the school had been working hard, and he had not desired to interfere.

Everybody had been rather surprised at Lord Dorrimore's presence on board; the school had expected him to remain in Australia. But a fancy took him to accompany the schoolboys on their voyage, and Dorrie, after all, was a man who could indulge any of his fancies. He was a millionaire, a roamer, and one corner of the world was as good to him as another.

Luncheon was served very early, for the train for the Rotorua district left Auckland soon after noon. It was practically an eight hours' journey, and the schoolboy party would not arrive at their destination, even as it was, until late in the evening.

"But it can't take us eight hours!" protested Handforth, when he heard. "Why, the distance is under two hundred miles! How fast do these New Zealand trains go, for goodness' sake?"

"Something like twenty miles an hour, average, it seems," said Church. "I've heard that Rotorua is only about a hundred and seventy miles away."

"Then it's all rot!" said Handforth. "A trip like that can't take eight hours!"

"You've forgotten that the country may be a bit difficult," put in McClure. "I dare say the railway train goes on lots of detours, and there may be mountainous country, too. The longer the journey takes, the better; I'm as keen as mustard on the trip. I'll bet we'll see some wonderful scenery."

"You will!" said Alec Duncan breathlessly. "Your first real sight of New Zealand. And I shall be on my way home, too!" he said happily. "By jingo! I'm so excited that I can't keep still!"

And Duncan, fairly bubbling over, bustled off to talk to another group of juniors.

"Good old Duncan!" grinned Handforth. "No wonder he's happy! He hasn't seen his people for months, and they don't even know he's coming. By George! What a surprise—and what a treat for Duncan!"

Lord Dorrimore came on the scene soon afterwards, full of smiles and abundant with energy.

"Now then, you youngsters, buck up and get yourselves ready," he said genially. "We've orders to get off to the station within ten minutes, so there's no time to waste. How many of you are there in my party, anyhow?"

"Oh, not many," said Nipper. "Only about two dozen!"

"Good glory! What a handful!" said his lordship.

It wasn't long before the various parties took their departure from the School Ship,

and the journey to the station proved very brief, since the station was practically on the dockside. The train was an excellent one, and it looked as though it would be well filled by the time all the schoolboys were on board. It not only looked like being so, but it was. Many of the fellows believed that some extra carriages had been added.

The journey was filled with interest from the first moment to the last. Down through Franklyn and Waikato, and so on to the important town of Hamilton—the centre of a big grazing and dairying district.

They were on a different line now, not that any of the boys cared. The scenery was claiming all their attention, and by the time they finally arrived at Rotorua, quite late in the evening, they felt that they had had a rare treat.

It was dark now, and they had no opportunities of seeing anything of the famous thermal district, although they were now in the very heart of it; and there was no prospect of them going on a sight-seeing tour before the morning.

"It's too late for anything of that nature," declared Nelson Lee, when some of the juniors pressed him with questions. "Special arrangements have been made for your accommodation, and you'll all be taken to your various hotels. To-morrow you may roam about to your hearts' content. You'll have the whole day here, and the school returns to Auckland on Sunday morning."

There was a good deal of satisfaction over this arrangement. It satisfied everybody, for the prospect of a full day here was most alluring. Alec Duncan was particularly pleased about it, although he had no great desire to spend his time in looking at geysers and hot-springs. He had his own ideas as to how the day should be spent.

"Aren't you going to see your people to-night, Duncan?" asked Nipper, as he came across the New Zealand junior a few minutes later.

Duncan pulled a long face.

"Afraid I can't," he replied. "I've seen Mr. Lee about it, but he says I've got to go to the hotel with the rest of you chaps."

"But what on earth for? Why can't you spend the night at your own home?"

"Well, you see, the Duncan Hotel—that's my father's place—is a few miles out, on the shore of one of the smaller lakes," replied Alec gloomily. "It's not easily get-at-able, and Mr. Lee doesn't want me to go out there alone after dark, although I know the way by heart."

"Well, I dare say he's right," said Nipper consolingly. "And as your people aren't expecting you, it doesn't really matter."

Duncan frowned.

"I can't quite understand it, you know," he said slowly.

"Can't quite understand what?"

"About my people," replied Duncan. "I wrote and said that the ship would be at Auckland, and I was half-expecting that I should get a letter there, or, at least, a telegram. Yet I haven't heard a word."

"It's rummy!" admitted Nipper. "Perhaps your letter was late, or something?"

"It's not only that," said Duncan, with a worried look. "I wrote lots of times from Australia—Adelaide and Sydney and Melbourne, and postcards from all the smaller towns we passed through. Yet I haven't heard a word. And the School Ship was in Melbourne for over a week."

"I dare say you'll find out the reason for it when you get home to-morrow," said Nipper cheerily. "I can quite understand why you're so keen on getting there to-night. So near and yet so far—eh?"

"Yes, blow it!" said Duncan disconsolately.

But in the general bustle and commotion he was not allowed to dwell too much upon his disappointment. All the juniors in Lord Dorrimore's party were accommodated at the same hotel, and these fellows were not in the least interested regarding the rest of the school. The chances were that they would only occasionally glimpse the seniors or the fags between now and train-time on Sunday.

Rotorua was rather a straggling township, lying on the south-western shore of Lake Rotorua itself. There were high hills in the immediate neighbourhood, and all the boys could feel, somehow, that this particular part of the world was abnormal. Perhaps it was something in the air—perhaps it was only their imagination.

They all slept soundly that night, and the next morning they were up early, to find the day brilliant with glorious sunshine. After a hearty breakfast the Removites and Fourth-Formers, with Dorrie at their head, went off on a visit to the interesting spots.

"All you kids had better keep in a bunch," advised his lordship, after he had given them a dubious look. "I'm supposed to be responsible for you, and goodness knows what'll happen to me if half of you get lost."

"We'll stick together, sir," said Nipper. "We've had a pow-wow about it, and we reckon it'll be better to keep in one gang."

"What about me?" asked Duncan. "I'm keen on getting to my parents' place—"

"That's all fixed," interrupted Dorrie promptly. "We start the day, my son, by making a bee-line for the Duncan Hotel. You're the guide, bein' a local inhabitant, as it were. Why shouldn't we take advantage of your knowledge? So if you don't show us some startlin' geysers and things on the way, we shall be after your blood."

"Thanks awfully, sir," said Duncan eagerly. "It's good of you to go straight to my home, and I can promise you that you'll see plenty of surprising things on the way."

He was overjoyed, having half-expected that he would be left to his own devices. It would be heaps better to get to the Duncan Hotel with the crowd—for Alec was proud of his father's fine property, and he had been half-afraid that his Form-fellows would not even see it. But by going there first of all, they would make sure of it.

It was decided that they should go on foot, rambling easily. They could see much more of the countryside in this way, even though the going was slower. However, there was no hurry.

They passed through the Maori village of Ohinemutu—which was, indeed, a part of Rotorua itself—a sort of native quarter. It was an interesting collection of native dwellings, and here the sightseers found out how useful the hot springs could be. In many cases the Maori women were busily cooking meals in the boiling springs outside the very back doors of their houses.

The meat, or fish, was simply enclosed in a net, lowered into a pool, and left there until it was cooked.

"I'll bet they don't pay much for coal or firewood in this region," grinned Harry Gresham.

"Practically nothing at all," replied Duncan, who was with him. "The Maoris were here long before the Whites—mainly because of the pleasant climate, and the convenience of having constant hot water for cooking."

"It's not dangerous, then?" asked Gresham.

"It doesn't look dangerous, does it?" chuckled Duncan.

They passed on out of the native settlement, and came upon wonders in abundance.

CHAPTER 7

Handforth Asks for Trouble!



"LOOK!" said Handforth excitedly.

The juniors had been passing through a fairyland of fern glades and gorges, rambling over little hills and down into scenic valleys, and now, suddenly, they came out from beyond a belt of trees and saw a crude mass of rocks, some of them half-concealed in drifting steam. They all stood still, watching.

"Great Scott!" said Church. "It's an earthquake!"

It was a fact that the ground was rumbling and even quivering beneath their feet; and some of the juniors were beginning to look alarmed.

"It's nothing!" sang out Duncan. "The ground's always quaking in this district. Don't take any notice. It's safe enough."

The scene, just ahead, was one of much grandeur—the volcanic rocks being varied in colour, and quaintly shaped. Suddenly, an immensely violent commotion took place, an enormous column of steaming liquid went gushing with startling velocity into the air.

"Look out!" roared Handforth.

"You silly ass!" said Nipper. "It's only one of the geysers!"

"Isn't there any danger?" asked Church, staring.

"Not unless you get too close."

This particular geyser was a big one, and it was throwing the mud and boiling hot water into the air with tremendous force, and to an almost unbelievable height. The top of the column was hundreds of feet above, and the steam was roaring and hissing in a most alarming manner. Mud, too, was being flung upwards.

"Some of these geysers go off like this as regularly as clockwork," said Duncan calmly. "You know the minute when they're going to get busy, and so you can be prepared."

Presently the geyser died down abruptly, and now became a seething, ominously-bubbling pool. Approaching nearer, the schoolboys were filled with awe. On every hand there were these boiling, ever-active pools—restless and steaming, sometimes sending up little spurts a few feet into the air. The very atmosphere was charged with an odour that was reminiscent of sulphur.

Skirting the hot springs, the party continued onwards, and was surprised to find that these geysers were scattered about in endless numbers. Yet, curiously enough, they were divided up by glorious fern glades and patches of country where stately trees grew—wonderlands of greenery. It was by no means a bare, barren tract of volcanic activity.

The St. Frank's fellows were soon to find that they could only see the veriest modicum of all the wonders that were to be found in this district. In the Rotorua country, indeed, one can spend weeks of fascinating wanderings—where the ground rumbles ominously underfoot, where the geysers of mud or water interminably shoot columns of steaming liquid into the air, and where the vapour drifts in choking masses around one. Many of these geysers erupt with the regularity of clockwork.

In this district, too, one may cruise over lakes which are boiling hot here, ice-cold there, and where the cliffs of pure yellow sulphur rise in all their wonder. There are the extraordinary silica terraces, and the enormous streams of boiling water from the springs—running millions of gallons of water a day.

So far, the St. Frank's crowd had only seen a few of these marvels, but the boys were greatly impressed. They had seen the Island of Mokoia, in the centre of Lake Rotorua. An extraordinary island, rising to over fifteen hundred feet—grassy and wooded, and mainly inhabited by Maoris.

The waters of Lake Rotoma were of a particularly vivid hue, and the effect was most striking.

Handforth, of course, was not merely content to look at these wonders from afar. Characteristically, he wanted to investigate closely, and all the persuasions of Church and McClure were in vain. He had deliberately separated himself from the main party—and his chums naturally stuck to him. They feared that if they left him to his own devices he would drop into a mud pool, or get swallowed up by a boiling spring.

"Look here, Handy, why the dickens can't you keep with the others?" demanded Church, exasperated.

"Why should I?" retorted Handforth. "You can go with the crowd if you like, but I'm not having any. Not likely! I want to have a look at some of these rummy bubbling pools."

"If you're not careful, you'll look too closely," said McClure. "You silly chump! Duncan knows all these places, and he'll warn us if we get too near—"

"My hat!" interrupted Church. "They're signalling now."

The main party was on a neighbouring hill-side, while the chums of Study D were in a little hollow, where mud pools surrounded them, and where the vapours arose chokingly and gripped their throats.

"Look out, you chaps!" sang out Duncan. "Better not fool about down there!"

"I knew it!" said Church, in alarm.

"I thought you said there's no danger!" roared Handforth, looking at the crowd.

"There isn't much, unless you fall into a boiling spring!" yelled Duncan. "But you can't be too careful!"

"We can look after ourselves!" replied Handforth confidently.

Yet as he spoke the very earth seemed to crumble beneath his feet. He gave a startled yell, tried to pull himself back, but he was too late. Church and McClure seemed rooted to the spot, scared out of their wits. Handforth had plunged down into a steaming, sticky mass of dark-coloured liquid mud.

"He's trapped!" gasped Church. "Oh, Handy! We warned you—"

"Help!" gurgled Handforth desperately.

"He'll be killed!" wailed McClure. "That mud is boiling! Even if we drag him out it'll be too late!"

They both started forward, their one thought being to rescue their unfortunate leader. But Handforth, surprisingly enough, appeared to be possessed of plenty of energy—considering that he was wallowing in boiling mud. He was so energetic, in fact, that he splashed the mud about in cascades, and even went completely under.

Truth to tell, he was lucky—as lucky as usual. He might easily have blundered into a really fatal pool, but fortunately this one was only moderately hot. Handforth felt, in the first moment, that he was being boiled alive, but the mud was really no hotter than an ordinary hot bath.

Floundering wildly, Handforth managed to reach the crumbling bank of the pool. Church and McClure grasped his outstretched hands and pulled him half out; but the clinging mud defeated them, and the unfortunate junior was dragged back again. By this time a number of the other fellows had arrived, and their faces were all expressive of the acute alarm which filled them.

"He'll be killed!"

"Give a hand," snapped Church, "and don't talk so much!"

"I'm not dead, you fatheads!" yelled Handforth. "My hat! This mud's hot, but it's not skinning me yet! Can't you lend me a hand?"

An ominous bubbling and hissing sounded from the very centre of the mud-pool.

"Back!" panted Fullwood. "Look out, you chaps!"

The pool sprang into active life, enormous bubbles of vapour rising to the surface and bursting with noisy, menacing reports. Handforth, caught in the midst of the sudden uprush of mud, was sent shooting into the air, tossed about like a ball on the top of the column of liquid mud.

Fortunately, before he was flung too high, he was tossed sideways, and when he fell he wallowed in a shallow patch. He was instantly seized, dragged clear, and everybody gathered round him, shouting excitedly and getting in one another's way.

"Let's have some room, my sons!" said Lord Dorrimore crisply. "Give the poor kid air! He seems in a bad way. We shall have to rush him back to the town and get him into a hospital."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Alec Duncan was roaring with laughter, and the others stared at him indignantly and amazedly.

"No need to get the wind up," said the New Zealand boy. "I know this mud-pool of old—it's not dangerous. It's only a warm pool."

The heap of mud on the ground—which was really Handforth—gave a convulsive wriggle, and a thick voice sounded from the midst of it.

"Warm!" it howled. "You silly ass! It's boiling!"

"Rats!" said Duncan. "If that mud had been boiling, you would have been dead long ago. There's a warm spring just near by—clear water—and you'd better have a bath at once. You look as if you need it!"

Dorrie grinned with relief.

"By the Lord Harry!" he said. "I was fooled, too! I thought it was all up with the poor beggar! This way, Handy! Your bath is ready!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Greatly relieved, the rest of the fellows helped Handforth to get to the neighbouring spring. But they took care not to help him too thoroughly, for they saw no reason why they should make themselves eligible for a cleansing bath, too.

Handforth plunged into the warm crystal waters, converting them into murky depths of drabness. Slowly he re-appeared out of the mud, and after plenty of splashing about he looked himself again, although very wet and very red in the face.

And after that Church and McClure had an easier time with him. For Handy had lost much of his eagerness to investigate these wonders of nature at close quarters. They could be better appreciated from a distance!

CHAPTER 8

A Surprise for Alec Duncan!



THE juniors passed a curious kind of valley, sombre and grotesque, which abounded in mud volcanoes. There were more of the hot-springs, too, and other forms of volcanic phenomena. There was something impressive in this scene—something which filled the schoolboys with an ever-present awe. The acrid fumes, the steaming mists, the constant and continuous bubbling of the mud—all this gave an impression of the mighty forces that were at work so near to the surface of the earth's crust.

"It doesn't seem safe to me," said Hubbard nervously. "I think it's a dotty idea to bring us here. For all we know, the whole countryside might go up at any moment, enveloping us with it."

"Let's clear out!" said Teddy Long, scared.

"Idiots!" said Fullwood, who was near by. "If there was any danger here the New Zealand Government wouldn't allow people to approach. These mud geysers are safe enough, as long as you treat them with respect."

"What about earthquakes?" asked Hubbard. "Just now the whole ground seemed to ripple under us. My only hat! Supposing the ground suddenly opened and swallowed us up?"

"What's the good of supposing?" chuckled Fullwood. "The fact is, you chaps have got the wind up."

They stoutly denied it, but there was a lack of assurance in their tones, and they were glad to leave that Dante-esque inferno, and to pass on to a scene of fern-strewn beauty which lay only a short distance away in the next valley. They found themselves passing some more boiling springs during the next five minutes. These were different from any of the others they had seen—great pools, from which immense clouds of steam rose high into the air. The juniors were standing on an extraordinary crust formed by silicate deposits from the thermal springs. Seen from a distance, one might have supposed that the schoolboy party was standing on a lake, so curious was the effect of this silica.

"These geysers and hot-springs haven't always been active like this," said Duncan, with the air of a guide. "In about 1880 they were all dead. Nothing doing at all. Then, in 1886, there was the Tarawara eruption."

"The which?" asked Handforth

"Tarawara is about sixteen miles from Rotorua, and it's a sort of volcano," replied Duncan. "When the eruption happened in 1886, it changed the outline of several of these lakes. Some gigantic geysers came

into existence, and water and mud and stones were chucked up to a height of nearly a thousand feet. But things got quieter after that, of course, and since then this region has always been active."

"A sort of curative inferno, eh?" smiled Lord Dorrimore. "It's rummy how nature evens things up. These eruptions kill people with ruthless mercilessness, and the very district which distributed death now becomes a health resort, with sanatoriums all over the place. These vapour fumes may not be very pleasant—I've got an infernally nasty taste in my mouth now—but I dare say they're doing us a heap of good."

It was plain to see that Alec Duncan was getting impatient. Not much time had been wasted, it was true, and he was keen enough to show his Form-fellows the various wonders of the neighbourhood. Yet, at the same time, he was anxious to get to his parents' home—his own home. This surprise visit of his was a joy that he had been looking forward to with ever-increasing glee, and it would be all the more enjoyable because he had heard nothing whatever from his father or mother. However, Alec was just a little worried. It had occurred to him that Mr. Duncan, knowing that the School Ship would be in Auckland for a day or two, might have made his own arrangements. There was a distinct possibility that his parents had planned their own surprise. Perhaps they had failed to write or wire because they had planned to visit the School Ship. Perhaps they were in Auckland now! It would be rough luck, indeed, if Duncan and his people had crossed en route, thus missing each other.

If so, it would be because of this wheeze of Alec's to surprise them, and he was already beginning to doubt the wisdom of the policy. Surprise visits, after all, are never very satisfactory. In his own mind, Alec was blaming Handforth for having pitchforked him into this piece of folly. Far better to have sent his wire from Auckland, as he had previously arranged.

Still, it was no good grumbling now. So Alec held his tongue, hoping that everything would be all right.

The Duncan Hotel was situated amidst some of the most charming scenery in the whole Rotorua district. The party came within sight of it suddenly, unexpectedly, after they had emerged from a fern-bordered path amidst the tall trees.

"By George!" said Handforth. "That's a ripping scene!"

"Rather!" said Church.

"Priceless, laddies—absolutely priceless!" muttered Archie. "I mean to say, dashed picturesque, and all that sort of thing, what?"

They were on a hillside, and below them stretched the vividly blue waters of a small lake. One or two boats and canoes were to be seen, with paddles or oars flashing in the brilliant sunshine. People in white flannels or gaily-coloured frocks were in these

pleasure craft. Further up the lake a motor-boat was cruising round, and the soft purr of its engine came floating up the hillside.

Just round the shore of the lake, about half a mile distant from the St. Frank's group, arose the front of a great building. It was a charming old-world place, set in the midst of green lawns and vividly coloured flower-beds, with terraces and an endless profusion of surrounding trees.

"Some millionaire's home, I suppose?" commented one of the juniors.

"It's my home!" said Duncan, smiling.

"What!"

"My hat! Is this your people's place?" asked Handforth.

"Rather!" said Duncan, not without a touch of pride. "It's not a private house, of course. It's the Duncan Residential Hotel. A cut above the ordinary hotel, isn't it?"

"Your pater knew what he was doing when he sold his giddy farm and invested his money in this property!" said Travers. "For the love of Samson! We'll never be able to drag you away! You won't want to leave!"

"It'll be a wrench," said Duncan soberly. "It wouldn't be so bad if I could spend a week or two here, but it seems a shame that I must go back to the School Ship tomorrow."

Farther along the lake-shore, opposite the hotel, a number of figures made their appearance, and even at this distance the boys could see that they belonged to a crowd of St. Frank's seniors. Not that Dorric's party was interested.

"Let's all go marching up to your people's giddy hotel," said Handforth briskly. "Might be a good idea to stay there for a bit, and grab some cooling drinks. And I could do with a wash and brush up, too."

"You'll be my guests," said Duncan. "No paying for anything, you chaps! My father will be only too jolly pleased to welcome you. And don't forget you've got to stay for lunch, too."

"Very good of you, young 'un, but your father is liable to have a fit if we all pile in like that," smiled Lord Dorrimore. "He's a man of business, and I'm going to pay for the luncheon."

"He won't let you pay, sir!" said Duncan indignantly.

"Won't he?" said his lordship. "We'll see about that."

They all moved on, and presently the fine hotel was lost to sight, owing to a turn in the hillside path and the intervention of trees. After a while the boys found themselves on an excellent motoring road. They came upon it suddenly, and only just avoided being run into by a swiftly-gliding automobile which came round a curve, filled with holiday-makers.

"By the look of things your pater is doing well," said Nipper, to Duncan. "Plenty of visitors here, anyway."

"Let's get there!" said Duncan breathlessly.

Now that the actual moment was drawing near, he was bubbling with excitement. Until now he had managed to suppress it, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that he restrained the desire to break into a run, and dash like mad over the final hundred yards.

They came out upon one of the noble terraces, and were soon in front of the hotel itself, where there was a wide-open space, flower-bordered and with green lawns on either hand. The hotel front was gay with creepers, and with brightly coloured sun-blinds. People in holiday attire were lounging on the lawns, or sitting under the trees, or passing in and out of the big main entrance.

"Easy—easy!" said Lord Dorrimore, with a chuckle. "My sons, this is a swell place. I'm in charge of you, and I'm responsible. So no larking about. Let our young host do the honours. Duncan, you'd better buzz in first, and find your guv'nor. We'll dally here, and admire the general scenery."

"Thanks awfully," said Duncan gratefully.

He appreciated Dorrie's thoughtfulness. A few minutes' privacy with his people would be rather ripping.

But before Duncan could move off, a rather biggish man came striding towards the St. Frank's group. He was a man of perhaps forty-five, dressed in a kind of Palm Beach suit, and looking very prosperous. His face was not particularly attractive.

"Welcome to the Duncan Hotel, gentlemen," he said breezily. "If you're thinking of making a stay—"

"We're only just calling," said Duncan. "These are all my friends—St. Frank's fellows—and this is Lord Dorrimore. Is father about anywhere? I'm as keen as mustard on finding him."

The big man smiled.

"It all depends upon whom your father is," he replied genially. "A visitor here, eh? If you'll tell me his name—"

"No, not a visitor," interrupted Duncan. "He's the proprietor—Mr. Alexander Duncan."

An instantaneous change came over the big man's face.

"Duncan! Your father!" he said curtly. "He's gone."

"Gone!" echoed Alec, staring. "Gone where?"

"I don't know where—and I don't care where!" said the big man. "But he's gone—and you'd better go, too. I don't care for his breed!"



CHAPTER 9

The Usurper I

LEC DUNCAN'S face was utterly blank. Lord Dorrimore carelessly lit a cigarette, and appeared to be

interested in a couple of men who were fooling about with some golf-sticks on one of the

lawns. The majority of the other St. Frank's fellows allowed their attention to wander, too. There was a vague feeling that something was wrong—or, as Archie murmured to Alf Brent later, something had apparently come unstuck.

"Gone!" said Duncan in amazement. "But—but I don't understand! My father is the owner of this hotel—"

"You're behind the times, sonny," interrupted the big man. "Three months ago your father was the owner of this hotel, but I found it necessary to turn him out."

"Turn—him—out!" repeated Alec disjointedly.

"That's what I said," snapped the other, apparently relishing his brusqueness. "My name's Peter Garrod, and I'm the sole owner of this property. That's all. Now you know, and I've already told you that you're not welcome here!"

But Alec Duncan was by no means satisfied. He was bewildered, dumbfounded. The thing had hit him like a blow between the eyes. He had been half-prepared for the shock of finding that his parents had left for Auckland, and that he had missed them. But this! It bowled him over. For a moment or two his brain almost refused to function.

"But—but it's impossible!" he panted. "My father hasn't told me anything about it—he hasn't written—"

"I can't help your father's omissions," broke in Mr. Garrod unpleasantly. "I hate to be so blunt, kid, but you're asking for it. This property is mine—every stick of it. Your father owed me money, and I kicked him out."

Alec's eyes blazed.

"What do you mean?" he shouted angrily.

"Kicked him out!" repeated Mr. Garrod, with relish. "I don't know where he is now, and I'm sure I don't care. If he hasn't told you of his whereabouts, it's his own fault—and your funeral!"

There was something inexpressibly contemptuous in Mr. Garrod's tone, and Alec Duncan, in spite of his dismay, was filled with fury.

"Why do you speak like that?" he asked fiercely. "My father never did you any harm, I'll swear! I want to know why he was—was turned out, as you say? Oh, it's—it's a practical joke, isn't it? You're trying to fool me!" he added, with a sudden gulp.

"It's no joke," retorted Mr. Garrod harshly. "How many more times have I got to tell you that your father has gone? And you'd better not make a scene here, or I'll take pretty strong measures with you!"

"You—you bullying—"

Alec paused, words failing him, and then he felt Lord Dorrimore's hand on his shoulder.

"Better come away, young un," said his lordship quietly. "This—er—gentleman apparently knows what he's talkin' about, and we've no desire to trespass on his property."



An unpleasant scowl came over the man's face as he learned Alec Duncan's name. "Your father's gone from here—I found it necessary to turn him out—and you'd better go, too!" he said harshly. "I don't care for his breed!"

"I should think not!" burst out Handforth excitedly. "I wouldn't stay on his rotten property if he paid me! He ought to be kicked for talking to Duncan like that! The beastly brute!"

Mr. Peter Garrod flushed with anger.

"Get off these premises!" he said thickly. "All of you! English schoolboys, eh? Well, I don't want you here! Clear off!"

But for Lord Dorrimore's presence, there would probably have been a bit of trouble. Even Archie was prepared to start "a spot of bother" without any further provocation. And Handforth, naturally, was burning with a desire to dot Mr. Garrod on the nose.

Dorrie succeeded in drawing them all away, and they eventually found themselves on the road, beyond the limits of the hotel property. Everybody was asking questions, and giving Duncan their sympathy.

"But—but I can't understand it!" ejaculated the New Zealand junior, slowly recovering his composure. "It's so mysterious—and so unexpected! My father hasn't told me anything about leaving the hotel! I didn't even know that he was in any kind of trouble! It's awful! Where is he now?"

"It's no good getting excited," said Nipper gently. "You'll probably be able to find out something in Rotorua, old man. Naturally you're bowled over—anybody would be!"

"And mother, too!" muttered Duncan tragically. "Where are they? Where's Annie? And Stewart?"

"Annie?" said Handforth. "Stewart?"

"My brother and sister."

"I didn't know you had any brothers and sisters," said Handforth in astonishment.

"Cheese it, Handy!" protested Church. "Why the dickens should Duncan go about telling us his family affairs? He can have brothers and sisters if he likes, can't he?"

"Annie's about fourteen," muttered Duncan dazedly. "Stewart's a kid about twelve. And they've gone—all of them! And that man says they were turned out! I can't believe it!"

"There's something rotten in the state of Denmark," said Nipper, shaking his head. "I didn't like that fellow Garrod, directly I set eyes on him."

"But what's he got to do with Denmark?" asked Handforth, staring. "Why drag in a foreign country? We're in New Zealand, aren't we?"

"My dear chap, it's only an expression—a quotation from 'Hamlet,'" said Nipper. "It's used in a general sense—"

"Fathead!" interrupted Handforth scornfully. "This is no time for quoting proverbs! Poor old Duncan is looking groggy."

"Wilting at the knees, dash it!" said Archie sympathetically. "I imagine the dear old boy is most frightfully hit. Not merely hit, I mean, but absolutely biffed. Straight between the eyes, what?"

"You've got it, Archie," said Duncan, taking a deep breath. "I feel just like that—as if somebody had knocked me on the head. It's so—so stunning. I can't realise it—not hearing anything, and coming here expecting to find—"

He broke off, incoherent.

The others could easily appreciate his agony of mind. The New Zealand junior had proudly brought his Form-fellows to this delightful spot—to this magnificent residential hotel, tucked away so charmingly on the shores of this exquisite lake. So far as he had known, the hotel was his father's property—bought outright from the proceeds of the farm. And now he had learned, without the slightest preliminary hint, that his people had been kicked out! This man Garrod—this usurper—was in his father's place!

"Frankly, I don't like it," said Dorrie thoughtfully. "It doesn't look straight to me, Duncan."

"I—I don't understand, sir!"

"I may be wrong, of course, but it struck me that Garrod was infernally uncomfortable," said Dorrie shrewdly.

"That's what I thought, sir," put in Nipper quickly. "Not only uncomfortable, but uneasy—as though he had a sort of guilty conscience. As soon as he heard Duncan's name, he changed—he looked really scared, and then he faked that anger in order to cover his confusion."

"I won't go as far as that," said Dorrie cautiously. "I won't say he was scared, but, by gad, he was unquestionably uncomfortable! And if this deal had been put through on the square, Garrod would have acted differently. I've had a bit of experience of the world, and I know more than you kids. That man was uncomfortable when he heard that this youngster was Duncan's son. And why? Apparently because he's had some shady dealing with Mr. Duncan."

"I believe you're right, sir!" panted Alec. "Anybody is liable to sell property, and people can buy it, too. But if Mr. Garrod had bought it honestly, he wouldn't have acted like that! Where can we find out the truth? What can we do?"

"Well, to start with we mustn't get too excited," said Dorrie easily. "We'd better go back to Rotorua, and I've no doubt that a few inquiries will soon bear fruit. It won't be long before we locate your people, Duncan."

Alec felt somewhat reassured after his lordship had talked a little longer in this strain. The other fellows, too, did all they could to comfort him. They had forgotten all about the geysers and the hot-springs by now. They were no longer interested in the scenic wonders of the thermal district. One of their number was in trouble, and all their thoughts were concentrated upon getting to the bottom of this distressing little mystery. The scenic wonders could wait.

An intensely human element had entered the situation; Alec Duncan, so light-hearted half an hour earlier, now looked like a

fellow who had been without sleep for a week. His expression was drawn. His eyes were unnaturally bright. And his whole appearance was haggard.

"We must find them—we must find them!" he muttered feverishly. "I've got a feeling that something terrible has happened—something worse than that man told us! Oh, can't we get back to Rotorua quickly? Why must we walk? Can't we get some cars?"

"Well, you ought to know best, old man," said Harry Gresham gently. "We're all strangers in these parts."

Gresham was particularly cut up, for it was Alec Duncan who shared Study J with him at St. Frank's, along with Adams, the American junior. Adams had not come on this world trip, although he was an Ancient House boy.

Gresham and Duncan were study-mates, and had always pulled together famously. Gresham, in fact, knew more about Alec's affair than anybody; he had often heard about Annie and Stewart, and had seen their photographs. He had seen snapshots of the hotel, too, and he had eagerly looked forward to this meeting with Duncan's people.

The whole party was now hurrying along the road, concentrating their attention upon reaching Rotorua as quickly as possible. They were not interested in the woodland beauty, in the fern glades that flanked the road.

"That man isn't a New Zealander, I'll bet!" said Handforth abruptly.

"He's a rotter, whatever he is," said Nipper. "If he had an ounce of decency in him, he would have broken the news gently to Duncan, instead of contemptuously telling him that his people had been hoofed out. I could have smashed him for that!"

"I came jolly near to biffing him in the eye!" said Handforth fiercely. "The rotten cad!"

A sudden cry came from Duncan—a shout of recognition.

"It's Otoko!" he ejaculated breathlessly.

"Eh?" said Handforth. "What the dickens—"

He broke off, for Duncan had started running forward, outstripping the rest. A figure had appeared in sight, some little way ahead. Even at this distance the schoolboys could see that the man was an aged Maori, white-haired, and clad in a sort of white drill-uniform, even including a peaked-cap. Apparently he was one of the hotel servants.

"Toky!" shouted Duncan, as he met the old Maori.

For a moment the old man stared at Duncan in a sort of bewilderment, then he dropped a satchel he was carrying and clasped the junior's hand tightly.

"Master Alec!" he said, in a rumbling voice. "You've come! And you know about the hotel! I can see it!"

"Toky, what's happened?" panted Duncan. "Where are my father and mother? When did they leave the hotel?"

By this time the other St. Frank's boys

had crowded round, and the old Maori was looking somewhat bewildered.

"These are all my friends," said Alec quickly. "You chaps, this is Otoko, one of my father's old servants. Been with us nearly all his life. He was more of a friend than a servant, though. Used to nurse me when I was a baby."

Otoko, in spite of his age, was a rather fine-looking man, and his English was well-nigh as perfect as Alec's. As all the juniors knew, the Maoris have equal rights with the whites in New Zealand, and are a fine race.

"Toky will tell us everything!" said Alec breathlessly. "Who's that man at the hotel, Toky? What's he doing there?"

A frown came into the old man's eyes.

"Mr. Garrod—no good!" he said fiercely. "A bad man! He turned your father out—three months ago. And you weren't told, Master Alec?"

"I knew nothing!"

"The master wanted to spare you," said Otoko gravely. "He thinks he can beat this man. But I think not. Mr. Garrod is clever—and wicked. He is in possession."

"And where are my father and mother?" asked Alec quickly.

"In Rotorua," said the old man, after a brief hesitation.

"Where?" shouted Duncan. "Tell me! I want to go to them at once! Where can I find them? And why aren't you with them, Toky?"

The aged Maori sadly shook his head.

"I wanted to be, but the master said 'no,'" he replied.

It turned out that Otoko was working in a sanatorium, near by, and not in the hotel as the boys had believed. He was indignant at the suggestion that he should work for the man who had turned his master out. He seemed very reluctant to give any details, and this, in itself, was significant.

But at least he had told Duncan where the latter's family was to be found.

And, post-haste, Alec Duncan hurried there.



CHAPTER 10

The Re-union.

"IMPOSSIBLE!" muttered Duncan, in a tone of stupefied unbelief.

He was staring at a small wooden shack—a mere shanty—which stood by itself some little distance out, on the other side of Rotorua. And it was this place which had been pointed out to him as his new home!

It seemed like some nightmare to Alec. He had spent all his earlier boyhood on the big farm, further south, and it seemed only a few months since he was larking about the great old house. Then had come the sumptuous hotel with the apparent jump in his father's fortunes. Such a jump, in-

deed, that Mr. Duncan had been able to send his boy to a famous English Public School.

And now—this shack!

It was fantastic and unreal. Alec expected to awaken at any moment, and to find himself in his bunk, or board the School Ship. All this couldn't be true. It was too awful.

"Keep back, you fellows," said Nipper quietly. "Let Duncan go in alone. We'll amuse ourselves until he comes out again. In fact, we oughtn't to have come here at all."

"Rot!" said Handforth bluntly. "Perhaps we can do something to help?"

But most of the fellows were sorry they had come—for Duncan's sake. They knew how acutely he must feel the situation. A few juniors of the more frivolous type, such as Gore-Pearce and Gulliver and Bell, had stayed in the centre of the town, indifferent as to Alec Duncan's affairs, and it was just as well that they had done so, for they would probably have indulged in some cheap sneering at the sight of this abode.

The others were genuinely upset. Lord Dorrimore felt wretched. But he, too, decided to keep out—particularly as he had caught sight of Nelson Lee in the distance, with a group of Sixth-Formers. Dorrie felt that it might be as well to give Lee a few details of this matter. For Duncan was a St. Frank's boy, and Nelson Lee was the Head. It seemed that something would certainly have to be done.

Duncan, after a brief hesitation, ran to the door of the little wooden building, and he did not waste time in knocking. He broke in, and found himself in a little, tastefully-furnished room. At the same moment a figure appeared in an inner doorway, opposite.

"Mother!" panted Duncan, with a gulp.

He ran forward, and embraced her. He was quite breathless by the time he had finished, and Mrs. Duncan, a kindly lady of not more than forty, was considerably flustered and disconcerted.

"But, Alec!" she protested, gazing at him with wondering eyes. "We didn't know you were coming!"

"No; I meant it to be a surprise!" said Alec. "And, by jingo, it has been a surprise, too! I mean, I went to the hotel, and—"

He broke off, noting the pained look in his mother's eyes.

"Of course, dear," she whispered. "That's where you would go. You didn't know, did you? Things—things aren't quite so good with us, Alec. But your father will tell you everything."

And then there was a sudden rush, a yell of joy, and Alec Duncan was overwhelmed by the greetings of his brother and sister. In the middle of it all, Mr. Duncan himself appeared—a rather frail man, still quite young-looking, but obviously in poor health. Alec had now lost all his previous gloom. Here were his mother and father—his brother and sister—and nothing else really

seemed to matter at the moment. Humble or not, this was his home, and here was his family. After his recent wild thoughts—thoughts that he had hardly been able to grasp—he was aware of a great sense of relief.

"You bounder, Alec!" his younger brother was saying. "Why didn't you tell us you were coming?"

"It's fine to see you again, Alec!" cried Annie gleefully. "You've got to tell us all about England—and the School Ship—and your adventures in Australia."

"Yes, rather," said Alec. "Of course I will; but I want to know—I mean, I'm all bewildered. Dad, what does it mean? What about the hotel? It's all so—so unexpected."

His father, who had given him a warm greeting, now shook his head.

"I don't think you would understand, my boy," he said, with a sigh. "Things are—well, bad. No need for me to tell you that. But they won't be as bad as this for long—at least, I hope not."

"You mean you'll get the hotel back, dad?"

"I'm afraid not," said Mr. Duncan. "Garrod has the upper hand—and he's not the kind of man to relinquish his hold once he has taken his grip. No, Alec, I'm afraid that things will never be as rosy as they were."

A thought occurred to Alec.

"If things are so bad, dad, I mustn't go back to England," he said quickly. "I must stay here—to help."

"Nonsense!" said his father uncomfortably. "Things aren't as bad as all that, my boy. Your education mustn't suffer—"

"But there are plenty of good schools in Auckland!" said Alec eagerly. "Not that I need to keep at school. I'm over fifteen, and—"

"Put all those thoughts out of your head," said Mr. Duncan. "Your school fees at St. Frank's are already paid for the remainder of this year. So you will go back to England, just as though nothing has happened."

"But even now I don't understand what it all means," protested Alec. "I always thought that you were rich, dad. It doesn't make any real difference—but—but— Well, I brought a crowd of my schoolfellows along, and I don't know what to say to them."

Mr. and Mrs. Duncan exchanged glances.

"Is it necessary to say anything?" asked Alec's mother. "We're not ashamed of living in this small house. And if it hadn't been for that wicked man we should never have been here!" she added, with a sudden outburst of indignation. "Oh, Alec, I've told your father a hundred times that Garrod has swindled him."

"Hush, hush!" muttered Mr. Duncan, distressed. "It doesn't do any good, dear, to talk like that. If I was foolish, I must suffer the consequences. In this life, we must pay for our mistakes." He turned to Alec. "I suppose your friends are outside?" he

went on. "You had better bring them in, if you please."

Tap-tap!

A knock sounded on the door, and when Alec ran to it and opened it, he found Lord Dorrimore outside, with Nelson Lee.

"Sorry if we're buttin' in," said Dorrie, "but I spotted Mr. Lee, and I thought it would be advisable to bring him along. He's your headmaster, young 'un, and he might like to meet your father."

"I should certainly like to, Duncan," said Nelson Lee.

Three minutes later the introductions had been made, and Lee and Dorrie were sitting down in that small room. Mrs. Duncan had discreetly retired, taking the younger children with her. Only Alec remained.

"It gives me very great pleasure, of course, to meet the father of one of my boys," Nelson Lee was saying. "Lord Dorrimore has been telling me that your son was considerably perturbed owing to your unexpected removal from the hotel."

"Unexpected is the right word, Mr. Lee," said Mr. Duncan. "Six months ago I thought I was a prosperous man, but to-day I have bitter reason to know otherwise."

It was a delicate situation, for Lee had no excuse whatever for probing into Mr. Duncan's affair—and, indeed, would never have dreamed of doing so. But Lord Dorrimore was a blunt man—and, in many ways, a blunderer.

"Look here, Mr. Duncan, if there's any financial help wanted, can't I step in?" he asked. "I don't want you to misunderstand me. Business is business, and I am quite prepared—"

"No, no!" interrupted Mr. Duncan quickly. "I am grateful to you, sir, for making the suggestion. I will be frank with you. I am in this present condition because I was once foolish enough to—borrow."

"But, hang it, I'm not that kind of man—"

"I know that," said Mr. Duncan earnestly. "It is very difficult for me to explain myself without giving offence. I am not a business man, and never pretended to be one. Most of my life I have been a farmer—and a prosperous one. It was only because of ill health that I came to Rotorua, and invested my money in this hotel."

"And things went badly—eh?" asked Dorrie sympathetically.

"On the contrary, they went well—so exceedingly well that I was encouraged to enlarge the motel beyond my means," Mr. Duncan said. "That was the trouble—that was where I got caught in the snare."

"Snare?" said Nelson Lee.

"That's the only word, sir," replied Mr. Duncan grimly. "I became acquainted with a man named Garrod in Auckland—"

"A rascal, if ever I saw one," put in Dorrie, with a nod.

"I put my proposition before him, and he was enthusiastic," continued Mr. Duncan. "He advanced the necessary money for the

renovations I had planned—for the addition of a new wing, and the modernising of the lighting and drainage. It was a big job—running into tens of thousands. And now the Duncan Hotel is one of the finest establishments in the whole of the North Island."

"But surely this property is mainly yours?" asked Nelson Lee. "Forgive me, Mr. Duncan, if I appear inquisitive. I understood that this property was yours—that you borrowed a certain sum to make these improvements."

"A strictly business arrangement," nodded Mr. Duncan. "My agreement with Mr. Garrod was quite plain. He was to receive a reasonable percentage on his capital, the principal to be paid off during the course of some years. You can imagine my startled amazement when, a month after the builders and decorators had finished their task, Garrod bluntly and brutally ordered me off the premises."

"Gad! Your own premises?" asked Dorrie.

"My own premises," nodded Mr. Duncan quietly.

"Oh, dad!" panted Alec. "But you didn't go?"

"You don't understand, my boy," said his father. "I had to go. I resisted at first—until Garrod legally proved his claim. Unfortunately, he is a lawyer—and I am not. Possibly I was too trusting—too gullible. I thought the whole business was straight, and I signed Garrod's documents without question. I trusted him. As a result, I find myself nearly penniless, while my property—in which I had invested my life's savings—has been wrested from me by this—this shark."

"The infernal scoundrel! He ought to be kicked out!" said Dorrie hotly. "Hang it, you can't sit down under such a state of affairs, Mr. Duncan! This fellow has no right to your property! How can he claim the whole building when he only advanced sufficient money to add a wing or two?"

"It was a legal trap," replied Mr. Duncan wearily. "I'm sick and tired of all these legalities. I don't feel capable of fighting any longer. The man has beaten me, and I must suffer the consequences."

"But what about the courts, dad?" asked Alec eagerly. "Can't you fight it out in the courts?"

"Fight it out!" said his father, with bitterness. "You can't fight in the courts, my boy, without money. Garrod knows it—and that's why he's safe. He's rich, too, and could beat me."

Dorrie slapped the table.

"Look here, Mr. Duncan, I'm going to butt into this affair—whether you want me to or not!" he said fiercely. "It's a personal affair! Garrod insulted me—he insulted all the St. Frank's boys—and your son most of all. I'd like to get my whack at him. How much money will be required to put this fight through the courts? Ten thousand? Twenty-five? Look here, Lee—

you know more about these sort of things than I do. Name the figure, and—"

"I am very grateful to you, Lord Dorrimore," interrupted Mr. Duncan, very quietly, but very firmly, "but I cannot possibly accept this offer of yours. I have absolutely no claim upon your generosity—and I have my pride. I beg of you not to continue with this subject."

Dorrie opened his mouth, gulped and closed it again.

"There cannot be the slightest doubt, Mr. Duncan, that you have been victimised by a very astute man," said Nelson Lee. "I won't call him a criminal, because he's apparently acted within the law. But, judging by what you tell us, he must be utterly unscrupulous and conscienceless. If you wouldn't regard it as an impertinence, I should very much like to examine any documents that you may have relating to this transaction."

"Gad, that's a good idea!" said Lord Dorrimore. "Do it, Mr. Duncan. Mr. Lee is a schoolmaster—but he's the keenest detective on record! What he doesn't know about legal twisters isn't worth learnin'! If there's any catch in your agreement, he'll nose it out in a split second. He'll smell it like a bloodhound!"

"Don't be such an idiot, Dorrie," said Lee, smiling.

Yet, five minutes later, there was every justification for Lord Dorrimore's statement. For Nelson Lee had hardly glanced over the papers before a keen gleam came into his eyes. He read on more closely, watched feverishly by Alec, eagerly by Dorrie, and almost apathetically by Mr. Duncan.

Then Nelson Lee looked up, and his expression was grim.

"I am glad you showed me these papers, Mr. Duncan," he said bluntly. "I said that Garrod was working within the law. Well, he isn't. The man is a palpable swindler—and he has no more legal right to your property than I have!"



CHAPTER 11

Handforth Wants to Help!

M

R. ALEXANDER DUNCAN flushed in his sudden excitement.

"Do you mean that, Mr. Lee?" he asked huskily.

"I certainly do."

"But I cannot understand it," said Mr. Duncan. "Without wishing to question your statement, I would like to tell you that I placed all these papers before an independent lawyer in Auckland, and he assured me that there was nothing to be done—that if I brought any legal action, I should inevitably lose."

"The man was lying to you," replied Nelson Lee. "In all probability, he was

The juniors formed a living barrier across the road, and Garrod was forced to bring his car to a standstill. He looked on apprehensively as the juniors closed round him in an ominous circle. Trouble was brewing for Mr. Garrod!



hand-in-glove with Garrod—another lawyer. You appear to have been singularly unfortunate in your choice of legal help, for I know for a fact that New Zealand is especially well served with reputable legal practitioners. I can only assume that you have been the victim of a plot."

"In other words, Mr. Duncan, they saw you comin'," nodded Dorrie.

"But—but can we do anything, sir?" asked Duncan. "I mean, is there any chance of having Garrod pitched out?"

"I'm afraid not," said his father slowly. "You see, gentlemen, it simply amounts to this. At the time of the actual—well, eviction, the position, according to Garrod, was quite simple. Either I paid him ten thousand pounds spot cash, or I cleared out. One or the other. If I could pay him the money, all well and good—if not, the property became his."

"But it's worth five times ten thousand, dad!" protested Alec.

"More than that," said Mr. Duncan. "Not that that even enters into the case. In such legal battles the loser generally sacrifices all—for the mere want of a comparatively small sum. I was helpless. I had already invested every penny of my money in the hotel, and in the renovations. Garrod's share was merely ten thousand."

"So if he's paid that ten thousand now, he can be kicked out?" asked Dorrie quickly.

"It's too late now," said the other. "I've lost my chance."

"You certainly have not, Mr. Duncan," said Nelson Lee. "This man has no legal claim whatever beyond the ten thousand pounds that he advanced. The main property is yours, and your claims will be upheld in any Court of Justice."

"But I have no money to fight —"

"Let me help!" urged Dorrie. "Confound it, Mr. Duncan, you mustn't be as obstinate as all this! I'm a beggar for making investments. Let me have a ten thousand pound share in your hotel."

Mr. Duncan looked helpless.

"I am confused," he confessed. "I have not told you that I had some property near my old farm, farther south. Garrod himself valued this property at ten thousand pounds, and therefore I assumed that my obligation to him was nullified."

"Then you don't owe the brute a penny!"

"I owe him nothing—since he has seized all my property," replied Mr. Duncan bitterly. "Even before he seized the hotel, I believed that I owed him nothing. But it seems that the proceeds from the sale of my farm property only just covered the amount of interest that had accrued. The ten

thousand pounds owing on the hotel still stood intact. I couldn't pay this, and so he took possession of the hotel."

"This man has robbed you right and left," said Nelson Lee angrily.

"By the Lord Harry! He's worse than a burglar!" said Lord Dorrimore. "There's no need for me to advance you any money. You don't owe Garrod a cent! That hotel is yours—lock, stock and barrel. He has simply rooked you."



It was, indeed, becoming more and more apparent that Mr. Duncan had been cruelly victimised by the clever lawyer. Mr. Duncan himself was a shrewd man in most ways, but his legal knowledge, like that of many other men in the same position, was limited. Ill-health, too, had hampered him, and he had found himself in the swindler's net.

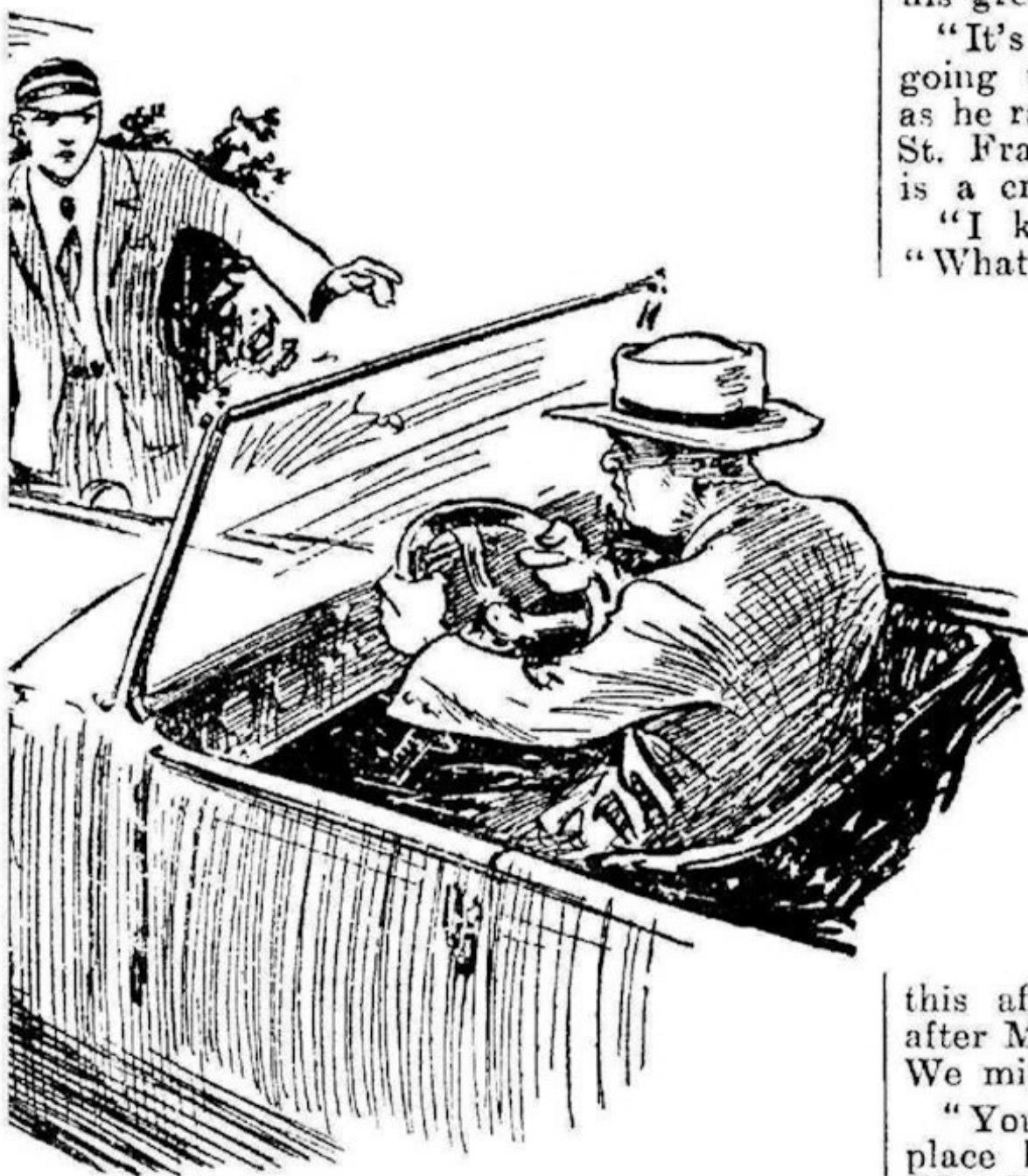
Nelson Lee could well understand Mr. Duncan's helplessness—his apparently tame submission. There had been nothing else for

him to do but surrender his property, since he had been convinced that all the legal lights in the world would not aid him.

"I want you to leave this matter in my hands, sir," said Lee crisply. "I shall take these documents to Auckland, and I'll guarantee that within a week we'll have Garrod pitched out. The expenses will be nil. There's justice in this land, and you shall have it."

Mr. Duncan looked amazed.

The juniors formed a living barrier across the road, and Garrod was forced to bring his car to a standstill. He looked on apprehensively as the juniors closed round him in an ominous circle. Trouble was brewing for Mr. Garrod!



"But—but will this be possible?" he asked.

"This man has bluffed you, sir—cunningly and cleverly, but without question it is a bluff," replied Lee. "He's nothing better than a common blackmailer, and he shall get the deserts he deserves."

"And Mr. Lee knows what he's talking about," said Dorrie gleefully. "If he says within a week, Mr. Duncan, he means within a week. Leave everything to him, and you'll be O.K."

"Oh, dad!" panted Alec, his eyes gleaming with excitement.

"I can hardly believe that this can happen, Mr. Lee," said Mr. Duncan quietly. "I had not dared to hope for anything so wonderful."

"But there'll be nothing wonderful in it," smiled Lee. "That's just the point, sir. Once this man's bluff has been called, he'll crumple up. He thinks he has robbed you of your weapons—by convincing you that you are penniless—but he'll find that he has made a grave blunder."

Alec could not possibly keep the secret to himself. First of all he rushed out to the rear of the little shanty, and found his mother and brother and sister. Breathlessly he told them the great news, and although Annie and Stewart were too young to understand much, they made plenty of noise in their rejoicing. Mrs. Duncan remained calm—believing, perhaps, that Alec was exaggerating, and that the situation was not so rosy as he painted. After all, he was only a schoolboy, and Mrs. Duncan did not know that he had every reason for voicing his great faith in Nelson Lee.

"It's all right, you chaps—Mr. Lee is going to fix everything," said Alec easily, as he ran up to a crowd of concerned-looking St. Frank's juniors. "That rotter, Garrod, is a criminal."

"I knew it!" said Handforth promptly. "What did I tell you?"

"You mean that the gov'nor is going to handle the affair for your pater?" asked Nipper quickly.

"Yes."

"Good man!" said Nipper. "If the gov'nor says it's all serene, it is."

"I know!" said Duncan happily. "Oh, my hat! The only thought that's troubling me is that I shan't be here to see that rotter kicked out! It might not happen till the middle of next week."

"Why wait till then?" demanded Handforth aggressively. "If he's going to be kicked out, let's kick him out ourselves—now!"

"But it can't be done, Handy," protested Church. "We can't take this affair into our own hands—especially after Mr. Lee has promised to see it through. We might go and spoil everything."

"You can't spoil kicking a man out of a place he doesn't own!" argued Handforth. "In fact, Duncan, you'd better leave the whole thing to me!" he added kindly. "I'll go along and see Garrod, and after I've biffed him on the nose, and punched him in the eye, I'll chuck him into the lake. Then I'll drag him out and do it all over again!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Our tame Goliath!" grinned Travers. "A fruity scheme, dear old fellow, but I'm afraid it wouldn't work. Mr. Garrod would be liable to walk back into the hotel and

resume possession. It needs something legal before you can keep him out altogether."

"I don't believe in all these legal tricks," said Handforth sternly. "The sooner we can go to the hotel, the better—Mr. Lee says that Garrod is a swindler, and we don't need any further proof. How many of you are game to come with me to chuck this man out?"

To Handforth's astonishment, nobody took advantage of the offer.

"Well?" he said, looking round. "Isn't anybody coming?"

"They don't seem to be in a tearing hurry," grinned Nipper.

"You're a lot of wash-outs!" said Handforth disparagingly. "In fact, you're cowards! Practically two dozen of you, and afraid to face one man! What have you got in your bodies? Backbones, or chunks of jelly?"

But the juniors were in no way insulted.

"You can't pitchfork us into the thing like that, Handy," said Church, shaking his head. "Duncan knows that we'd do anything for him within reason—and without hesitation. But there's no need for us to go dotty."

"Does that mean to say that I'm dotty?" roared Handforth.

"Well, you can draw your own conclusions, old man."

"If you're looking for trouble, Walter Church, I'll soon give you some!" snorted Handforth. "I'm willing to help Duncan, and all you can do is to insult me!"

He was allowed to ramble on, for Church was perfectly safe with so many of the other fellows on hand. If Handforth had started any of his fistie tricks he would have been instantly seized and held.

Nobody could doubt his good intentions. All the other fellows also felt that they would like to help Alec Duncan and his people, but they realised the difficulties of the situation.

It was far better to leave it in the capable hands of Nelson Lee. And now that the matter was more or less settled, the schoolboys were keen upon doing some more exploration, and discovering some more of these local marvels.



CHAPTER 12

Dorrie's Little Wheeze!

LORD DORRIMORE came out presently, and he was rather mysterious in his manner. In the

meantime, Alec Duncan had been giving a brief account of the facts to the interested crowd of juniors, and they now knew the general situation.

Dorrie came up briskly, and he beckoned to the fellows to follow him into a shady retreat, just off the road. The juniors, rather mystified, gathered round.

"Do all these chaps know the facts?" asked his lordship, looking at Duncan.

"Yes, sir."

"Told them everythin'?"

"As much as I know, sir."

"Good man," said his lordship. "So now we know where we are. You can all tell that the position is pretty rocky. Mr. Duncan has been swindled, and Mr. Lee is going to start a few things in Auckland in order to get Garrod pitched out."

"I hope he succeeds, sir," said Fullwood.

"He'll succeed all right," put in Nipper confidently.

"But here's the point," said Lord Dorrimore, dropping his voice. "I don't see the fun of waiting until next week. If it comes to that, we can't wait. We shall be out in the Pacific by the middle of next week, and I have a fancy to see this blighting Garrod chucked out!"

"But it can't be done, sir," protested Gresham. "We'd all like to stay, but Mr. Lee won't allow the School Ship to—"

"Never mind the School Ship," interrupted Dorrie. "I've got a perfectly simple wheeze. I've never had any use for legal delays, and I don't see why we should suffer them now. My wheeze is for us—just the little crowd of us—to go back to Duncan's Hotel, get hold of friend Garrod, and give him his marching orders."

"That's what I suggested!" said Handforth excitedly.

Dorrie nodded.

"It has been well said that great minds think alike," he agreed.

"And when I suggested it these chaps jumped on me!" roared Handforth. "They called me crazy! They said I was mad!"

"Perhaps they'll say I'm mad, too," chuckled his lordship. "You must always remember, Handy, that the great are seldom appreciated. Of course, it's nothing but rank jealousy."

There were many chuckles, but Handforth took it all seriously.

"Jealousy!" he echoed. "My hat! You're right, sir! These chaps are always jealous of me—and whenever I think of a

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brilliant wheeze they laugh at me, just to hide up their envy."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Let's change the subject," said Dorrie diplomatically. "Or, rather, let's keep on with the same subject—about this beggar, Garrod. I don't even like his name. It's all very well to trust these matters to lawyers, but I'm a believer in action. Always have been. Garrod's a bluffer, and as soon as he finds that he's unmasked he'll crumple up. That's my opinion."

"But won't it upset the gov'nor's plans, sir?" asked Nipper.

"Not that I can see."

"Does he know that you're thinking of doing this?"

"Great Scott, no!" said Dorrie. "He'd have a fit if he knew it. Your respected gov'nor, Nipper, is inclined to be a cautious bird. And I dare say he's right, too. But there are exceptions to every rule, and this is one of them. Lee wouldn't dream of going to this ugly rat and laying hands on him; but I'm going to try it on."

"Good old Dorrie!"

"We'll back you up, sir!"

"Rather!"

"I knew I could rely upon you," nodded Dorrie, grinning. "I'm particularly certain of you, Handy. In fact, if I'm not jolly careful, you'll do the violence before I can get my hand in."

"I'll jolly well have a try for it!" replied Handforth promptly. "These poor fatheads thought they were jolly clever when they scoffed at me, and now you've come forward with the same stunt."

"With a difference, Handy," said Nipper. "Garrod is liable to take notice of Dorrie—but I'm dashed if he'd take notice of you. You couldn't expect him to be scared by a schoolboy—or even a couple of dozen schoolboys. But when he finds Dorrie on his track he might knuckle under."

"If he doesn't knuckle under you can call me a codfish!" said Lord Dorrimore calmly. "I've got a hankerin' to see Mr. Duncan and his people back in the old home. If we let Lee rule the roost we shall leave Rotorua in the morning, and nothing will have been done. Nothing violent, I mean, and I'm a perfect beggar for violence in a case like this. Garrod's face is just the kind that I love to pulverise."

He rubbed his fists longingly, and looked round at all the eager faces.

"Well, let's go," he added briskly. "If we don't Lee might call us back, and then we should be dished. Before we leave this township I want to see your parents back where they belong, Duncan—and Garrod bolting with his tail between his legs."

"You're a brick, sir," said Duncan happily.

"All I hope, young 'un, is that my fists become bricklike when I meet Garrod," replied his lordship. "He's not merely an ordinary swindler—he's a regular hound. By glory! I'm going to enjoy this scrap!"

Dorrie marched off, with all the schoolboys crowding round him, excited and animated. They had desired to carry out this programme all along—even when Handforth had suggested it. But whereas it had been an impossibility under Handforth's leadership—although Edward Oswald couldn't see this—it now became distinctly and alluringly possible.

If the juniors had thought well of Dorrie before, he had now gone up greatly in their estimation. He was a man of action, and after their own hearts. As a matter of fact, Dorrie was little better than a schoolboy himself, with the same irresponsible, happy-go-lucky spirit.

If Nelson Lee had known of this project he would certainly have scotched it. Not that there was any real danger of Lord Dorrimore jeopardising the issue. He could do no harm to Mr. Duncan's affairs, but it was quite likely that he would get himself into personal trouble. And when it involved the inclusion of all these St. Frank's boys, Dorrie was undoubtedly instigating something that Lee would have been obliged to stop.

So it was just as well that they all got off before the famous schoolmaster-detective came out.

Dorrie hated the idea of leaving Rotorua with Mr. Peter Garrod still in possession of the Duncan Hotel. He wanted to see this matter righted. Although he had not examined the documents himself, he was convinced that the whole thing was a fraud; and, in his simple logic, the sooner Garrod was ousted, the better!



CHAPTER 13

Face to Face!

Y only sainted aunt! Look at that!" said Church, in wonder. "Whoa! That's a noisy beggar, if you like!"

He was pointing to a geyser which, at the moment, was spouting immense volumes of steaming water into the air—directly upwards, in a gigantic fountain.

"Never mind that!" said Handforth briskly. "We've got no time to bother with these silly geysers! There's nothing much in them, anyway. When you've seen one, you've seen the lot."

"But this is a beauty!" said Church. "By jingo! Look at the way—hallo! It's died down again. That was pretty sudden, wasn't it?"

They were not far from the Duncan Hotel now, and walking briskly down the winding road through a rugged sort of gorge. At this point there was a break in the rocks, and through the opening they could see a number of geysers and hot-

springs. Volumes of steam half-concealed the view.

The geyser Church had referred to had just simmered down, and was now a mere pool of disturbed water.

"That's one of the old regulars," said Duncan. "I remember it well. Spouts up every fourteen or fifteen minutes."

But he, like the other juniors, was not interested. Everybody was wondering how Lord Dorrmore would act when the hotel was reached, and most of the schoolboys were afraid that his lordship would tackle Garrod in the latter's private office. If so, the whole affair would be a frost.

"Well, well!" said Travers abruptly. "Talk of the gentleman with the spiked tail, and he appears!"

"It's Garrod!" went up a general exclamation.

Round a bend in the road, just ahead, a powerful open car had appeared, and the man seated at the wheel was Mr. Peter Garrod himself.

"Hallo! This won't do!" said Dorrie quickly. "We can't let the beauty slip past us like this. We might not get another

chance at him to-day. We've got to stop him, boys!"

"That'll be easy, sir," said Nipper crisply. "Quick, you chaps—spread right across the road! But be ready to jump in case he ignores us."

In a moment the juniors had formed themselves into a living barrier. Mr. Garrod, after a stare of surprise, throttled his engine and applied his brakes. The car came to a standstill at the side of the road, and, ominously, the St. Frank's boys pressed closely round in a kind of body-guard.

"What's the meaning of this?" demanded Garrod harshly. "Confound your impudence! What do you kids think you're doing?"

"It was my suggestion, Mr. Garrod," said Dorrie smoothly. "If you want to blame anybody, blame me. Frightfully sorry to delay you in any way, but I'd like to have a few private words with you."

Garrod stared.

"It's a pity you couldn't choose a better way of seeking an interview," he said sourly. "If young Duncan has been talking to you

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"We needn't bring young Duncan into it," interrupted Dorrie. "The question is, are you going to let me have these few private words? I intended coming to the hotel, but it's even better that we should meet out here."

"Oh!" said the other, his temper rising. "I'm sorry, but I've no time to waste. I'm in a hurry."

"That's decidedly awkward, especially if you're relying upon keeping an appointment," said Dorrie. "I'm afraid you'll be a bit late for it, Mr. Garrod. I'd like you to come just off the road, into this glade, say. No need to conduct this interview too publicly."

"Have you gone mad?" shouted Garrod furiously. "I'm not going to give you an interview, and I'm not leaving this car. I've no time to waste on your idiotic fancies!"

Dorrie shrugged his shoulders.

"I was expectin' some such reply," he said coolly. "So you don't want to come, Mr. Garrod? It resolves itself into this. Will you come amiably, or shall I ask these young friends of mine to escort you into the glade by force? It's up to you to choose."

Mr. Garrod, now looking somewhat alarmed, turned his attention from the smiling peer to the crowd of St. Frank's juniors. He saw a number of grim, set faces, and he was left in no doubt as to what would happen if he refused to comply with the request—which practically amounted to a command.

"I don't want a scene!" he said harshly. "It's like your confounded impudence, but I suppose I shall have to humour you!"

He climbed out of the car, and the man was disconcerted to find that the boys closed round him.

"Stand clear!" he said, glaring. "What do you think you're doing?"

"This way, sir," said Nipper sweetly.

"Why, you young brat—"

"Straight ahead, Mr. Garrod!" said Handforth, giving the man a push.

The bewildered man was compelled to leave the road and to accompany the crowd into a secluded little defile, half-hidden in the trees and rocks. There were ferns and wild flowers in abundance, and ordinary the fellows would have been struck by the beauty of the scenery. Now their eyes were confined to Mr. Garrod.

"This'll do first rate," said Dorrimore smoothly. "Nicely out of sight of the road, and really private!"

"Private!" shouted Garrod. "What the blazes do you mean? How can we be private with this mob of schoolboys crowding round us? What's the game? I'll make you answer for this outrage."

Dorrie grinned.

"If he calls this an outrage, boys, I wonder what he'll call the next item on the programme?" he asked amusedly. "As for privacy, Mr. Garrod, all these boys are in the know. To put it quite frankly, they're

perfectly well aware of your swindlin' game!"

Garrod started as if struck.

"How dare you!" he thundered. "If you have the impudence to repeat that lying assertion—"

"Oh, I've plenty of impudence," interrupted Dorrie grimly. "And if I'm not knocking you down for calling me a liar, Garrod, it's because I want to reserve that pleasure until I have called your bluff."

"Bluff!" stormed Garrod.

"I dare say it was comparatively easy to hoodwink Mr. Duncan," continued his lordship contemptuously. "Mr. Duncan's an honest man—a simple man—unacquainted with sharks of your type. Quite a easy thing to land him in the net, wasn't it?"

Garrod went nearly purple.

"Wait!" he panted, controlling himself with difficulty. "Before you continue this—this outrage, I want to know what authority you have for stopping me and forcing me into this impossible position. By Heaven, sir, I'll make you suffer the extreme penalty of the law for this indignity."

Lord Dorrimore laughed.

"More bluff, Mr. Garrod, but it doesn't weigh an ounce with me," he said, with exasperating calmness. "Or with these boys, either. Let me get this thing out—straight from the shoulder. We know exactly what you've been doing, and we know that you have robbed Mr. Duncan of his property."

"You had better take care—"

"I am saying this deliberately!" cut in Dorrie, his eyes blazing and his voice rising. "You contemptible hound! Do you think you can fool me with this bluster? You've swindled Mr. Duncan, and we've got proof of it."

If Dorrie had seen any evidence that he had made a blunder, he would probably have retracted his words. But Garrod's startled expression, his sudden look of fear, and the pallor which abruptly affected his cheeks were enough. In that moment, Dorrie had proof positive that Nelson Lee's statement was correct. Garrod had given himself away, and when he tried to pull himself together it was too late.

"I suppose Duncan has been lying to you?" he snarled. "You fool! What do you think you can do? This Rotorua property is mine, and I'm in possession. Duncan is helpless."

"He was—but he isn't now!" snapped Dorrie.

"Mr. Lee has taken up the case!" shouted Alec excitedly. "He's getting out a warrant for your arrest, you swindler!"

Garrod gulped.

"I'm not afraid of you, or Lee, or anybody else!" he panted to Dorrie.

"You may not be afraid of me—but you'll have to watch your step where Lee is concerned," said the sporting peer complacently. "Mr. Nelson Lee is a clever man—and he happens to be a pretty famous criminal investigator. You've heard of him, eh? Kindly remember, Mr. Garrod, that you're

not merely dealing with a mild schoolmaster and a brainless peer of the realm!"

Garrod went pale again—for he clearly understood the real situation. Until now, possibly, he had been contemptuous of these visitors, but the name of Nelson Lee almost made him rock on his heels. For, guilty as he was, he knew on the instant that his position was precarious. Yet he had probably protected himself sufficiently to make sure that he was in no actual danger from the police authorities.

"Well, and what do you want me to do?" he asked, glaring. "What's the idea of interfering with my business affairs?"

"Mr. Duncan was more or less at your mercy—but we're here to lend him a hand," said Dorrie. "It'll save an awful lot of bother, Mr. Garrod, if you'll sign a document, here and now, relinquishin' the Duncan Hotel property. You know more about these things than I do—so you'll probably gather what I mean."

Garrod laughed with scorn.

"I'll sign nothing!" he said curtly.

"That's unfortunate—for you!" murmured Dorrie.

"Is it? How?"

"Well, you'll either sign a document of that nature, or I'll give you the biggest hidin' of your life!" said his lordship calmly. "Handy, old man, hold my coat, will you?"

He peeled his jacket off, and commenced to roll up his sleeves with businesslike efficiency—and with a relish, too, that gave Garrod a fresh shock. There was something startling in the size of Lord Dorrimore's biceps, and with his coat off his shoulders looked ominously broad.

"Come along, Mr. Garrod—it's up to you," said Dorrie cheerfully. "Personally I shall be frightfully bucked if you jib for a bit, although I'm afraid you're rather the type who'll knuckle under. It'll give me no end of pleasure to thrash you. And I shall thrash you unless you make up your mind pretty quickly."

"Good old Dorrie!"

"Go it, sir!"

"Smash him!"

The juniors pressed round excitedly, hoping against hope that Garrod would take up the challenge. A schoolboy fight was always good to see—but it would be exceptionally entertaining to see Lord Dorrimore in action.

"Fight, you rotter!" roared Handforth. "Great Scott! You're not going to knuckle under, are you? You're not going to diddle us out of the scrap?"

"Fight—fight!"

A perfect roar went up, and Garrod looked round him like a caged animal. There was no possibility of getting back to the road, for a mob of schoolboys barred the way. In the other direction, however—up the gorge—there was only a few of the boys.

And Garrod, who certainly had no intention of fighting, and who had less intention of signing his name to any document, made a sudden break for liberty.

With one push he bowled Gresham and

Duncan clean over. The next second he crashed into Travers and Church—and then he was through. He went running up the gorge.



CHAPTER 14

Mr. Garrod Gets a Rise in the World!

"LETTER him!" roared Handforth wildly. "Here, get out of my way, you fathead! Let me pass! You've

let him go, you idiots!"

"He biffed us over!" gasped Gresham.

Handforth and Nipper and most of the others went tearing up the gorge in full pursuit, and Lord Dorrimore was well on the track, too. He had hardly expected that dramatic dash on Garrod's part—implying, as it did, his guilt. It was a direct admission of his fear.

Now Garrod was stumbling over rough masses of pumice rock at the end of the gorge, where it opened out into a steep hillside beyond the trees. In front of him the man beheld a steaming vista of hot-springs and gushing streams.

For a moment he felt trapped, since there appeared to be no way out of that inferno-like valley. But fear was urging him on, and he quickly noted that if he skirted round close to the rocks he would be able to avoid the springs and the bubbling pools of mud.

"There he goes!" went up a yell.

Dorrie and the boys, swinging along in pursuit, caught a glimpse of Garrod's figure, shadowy and elusive amidst the wreathing steam.

"Go easy here!" yelled Duncan. "These are boiling springs—and they're horribly dangerous. If you make a slip, you'll be killed! Better let him go!"

"Not likely!" shouted Handforth.

"Duncan's right, young 'un!" ejaculated Dorrie. "No sense in getting yourselves killed for the sake of—"

"If he's gone this way we can go, too, sir!" argued Handforth, as he still ran. "Come on! If we keep close to these rocks, we're all right!"

It was a risky business, for in places there was only a narrow ledge of wet, slippery rock, streaming with moisture, and rendered fantastic owing to the effects produced by the siliceous deposits, and by the action of the boiling water.

At any moment one of these boiling geysers might erupt, spraying the appallingly hot water upon the juniors. Hardly any of them realised their dire peril; if they had been caught in any such outburst, they would undoubtedly have been scalded to death. Nothing on earth could have saved them.

They caught sight of Garrod again, like a wraith out of the mist, running hard over a rocky basin, where the way was more open, and where there were no immediate geysers.



"You'll either sign the document or I'll give you the hidin' of your life!" said Lord Dorrimore calmly, as he took off his coat and commenced rolling up his sleeves in a businesslike way. The scoundrelly Garrod turned pale, while the youngsters pressed round expectantly. It would be great fun to see old Dorrie in action!

Once on this safe ground, they made better speed.

Zurrrr—zzwoooooosh!

Abruptly, startlingly, a terrific outburst came from their rear. Those behind turned, alarmed. They beheld a vast fountain of boiling water shooting up in a cascade, the steam issuing from it in blinding, choking clouds. The noise was overwhelming.

The boiling water came splashing down on that very ledge they had just traversed—hundreds of gallons of it, drenching the rock over a distance of fifty or sixty feet.

"Oh, my hat!" panted Fullwood shakily.

"We've had a narrow squeak, old man," said Russell.

"Narrow isn't the word!"

It was only too true. If all those school-boys had essayed that chase a minute later, they would have been caught in that cascade of superheated water!

Even as it was, they felt uncertain as to their safety—for they were in a veritable pandemonium of steaming mud-pools and bubbling horrors. At any second, another of them might burst into violent activity.

However, Garrod was now being rapidly overhauled. He had run fast to start with, but he was in no condition for a sustained effort. Lord Dorrimore and Nipper and Duncan and Handforth were in the lead, and they were closing upon the fugitive.

"Better take it calmly, Garrod!" shouted Dorrie. "We only need that document, and your troubles will be over."

Garrod shouted some inarticulate words at them, glancing over his shoulder at the same time. It was unfortunate for him that he should have looked over his shoulder at that particular moment, for it was a vital moment. Owing to the thick steam, he had failed to observe that he was near the brink of a big pool!

By the time he looked ahead again, it was too late. He saw the pool, and tried to swerve. He slipped on the wet rocks, skidded, and a wild, hideous scream came from his throat—a scream that most of the juniors remembered for many a day!

Splash!

Garrod went in, and that awful scream was cut short. Everybody believed that the water was boiling, and that he had gone to his death. As in the case of Handforth, however, Garrod was lucky. This was no boiling spring. It was, in fact, the one that Alec Duncan had pointed out to the other fellows shortly before they had met Garrod on the road.

"He's killed!" yelled Handforth.

"Not yet!" panted Duncan. "This is the geyser I spoke to you about—the one that Church pointed out. I've bathed in it many a time—the water's only just comfortably hot."

"That's a relief, anyhow!" said Dorrie. "We'd better fish him out before he's drowned!"

Garrod was floundering about madly, but by this time he had realised that his danger was nil. Apparently he was unable to swim however, for he was wallowing in the pool, helpless.

"Get me out—get me out!" he gurgled frantically.

Dorrie leaned over the edge.

"If we do, will you sign a statement that you're a swindler, and that you've robbed Mr. Duncan of his possessions?" he asked calmly. "Come along, Mr. Garrod! Now's your chance!"

"Yes—yes!" gasped Garrod. "You fool! I'm drowning! Get me out of here!"

"In the circumstances we'll forgive your rudeness," said Dorrie. "Stand by, boys. I'll soon lug him out."

A curious sound came from far beneath, and the rocks trembled and quivered.

"Look out!" yelled Fullwood. "Something's going to happen."

"Stand back, everybody!" roared somebody else.

Fullwood was quite right. Something did happen. The geyser—one of the faithful old regulars—burst into violent activity. A column of water shot up, and for the next moment or two nobody could see anything but spray and steam and a watery haze.

Then a chorus of amazed shouts went up. For Mr. Peter Garrod, caught with the full force of that terrific jet of water, was being sent skywards, his arms and legs waving madly.

He had been caught fairly on the column of water—like a celluloid ball on a fountain at a fair-ground rifle range!

Up he went—up and up! At last he was nearly fifty feet in the air, and only just discernible amidst the sprays of water. Everybody was drenched, for the cascades were coming over with great force. Then suddenly Garrod seemed to slip, and he came hurtling down, checked once or twice by the water column.

Splash!

He was in the pool again—more dead than alive, it seemed. The geyser abruptly ceased its activities, and Garrod was driven under the surface by the final fall of water.

A minute later he was dragged to the edge of the pool and hauled out—a very subdued man!



CHAPTER 15

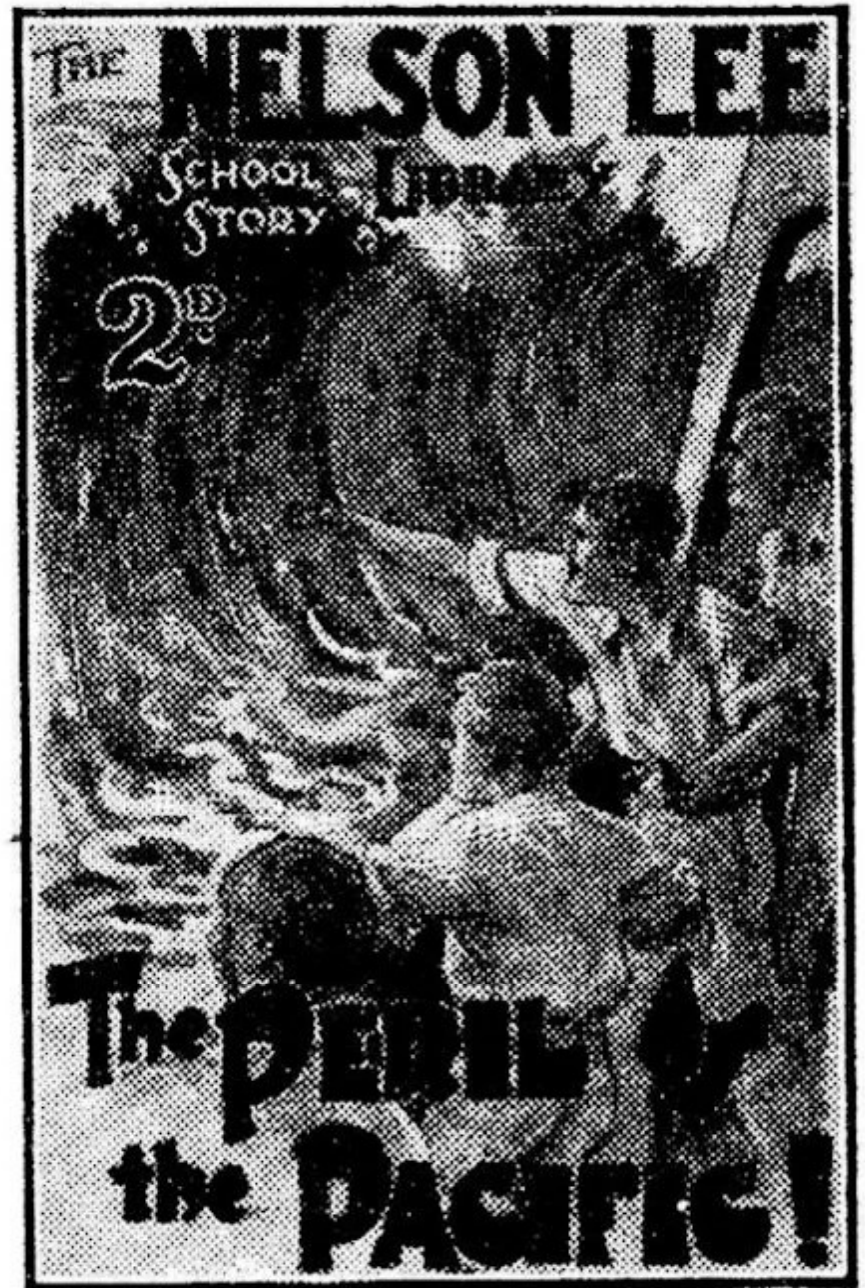
The Surrender!

NELSON LEE started slightly. "Upon my word!" he muttered. "What can be the meaning of this? What have these boys been up to, I wonder?"

He had just emerged from the Duncan abode, and he beheld a crowd of St. Frank's juniors approaching. The majority of them looked as though they had been through a rough time. Their clothing was wrinkled and rumpled, and obviously damp. Several of them were hatless, and in many cases they were torn and tattered.

But they all looked happy. Lord Dorri-more towered above them all, and Dorrie was apparently on very affectionate terms with a burly companion. At all events, he kept very close to him, and even had his arm linked through that of the other man's.

NEXT WEDNESDAY!



Nelson Lee frowned.

"I was half afraid of allowing Dorrie to take charge of those boys," he murmured. "He's just as irresponsible as they are—perhaps more so. What can he have been leading them into now?"

Lee was soon to know. The crowd came up, gay and blithe. Dorrie grinned widely.

"No need to trouble about those documents and things, Lee, old man," he said. "Here's Garrod himself, and he's left the Duncan Hotel for good. A very reasonable man. He's quite ready to hand over the keys to Mr. Duncan at once."

"What are you talking about, Dorrie?" said Lee grimly.

"Oh, he's a most obliging fellow," continued Dorrie genially. "Says he'll sign a little document—in front of witnesses, too—to the effect that he's frightfully sorry about

the mistake, and that the Duncan Hotel property isn't his, after all. We've been havin' a rare time with Mr. Garrod, what with one thing and another."

The juniors all grinned, and Garrod scowled evilly. By this time he had recovered from the effects of his run and his immersion. But he had sense enough to realise that it was impossible to deal with these men as he had dealt with Mr. Duncan.

"Is this man Garrod?" asked Lee abruptly.

"My name's Garrod!" snapped the rascal. "If you are Lee, I'd like to tell you that you're an infernal busybody for—"

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ORDER IN ADVANCE!

"Easy—easy!" interrupted Dorrie. "You're not startin' that game again, surely? There's a very handy geyser just off this road, Mr. Garrod. A real beauty—muddy and odorous. If you care for another dip—"

"This is nothing more or less than criminal assault," interrupted Garrod hoarsely, "and now you are threatening me."

"Not at all," said Dorrie. "If you continue to be reasonable you'll find us very gentle."

His lordship turned to Lee.

"Sorry if we've spoilt any of your own plans, but we thought it better to get the thing over and done with," he explained. "Garrod's ready to hand over to Mr. Duncan—and to do it legally. Nothing like strikin' while the iron's hot."

"I am glad that you have come to this conclusion, Mr. Garrod," said Lee, looking

straight at the man. "You may have convinced yourself that no legal proceedings could have been taken against you, but if such is the case, you would have been wrong. However, if you are ready to make redress privately, Mr. Duncan will be ready, I am sure, to receive you."

Just for a moment it seemed that Garrod was about to bluster again. Perhaps he caught sight of Lord Dorrimore's eyes—or perhaps he recognised the grim confidence in Nelson Lee's manner. At all events, he shrugged his shoulders, and merely glared.

"If I sign over the hotel property to Mr. Duncan I shall be doing him a very big favour," he said bombastically. "However, rather than allow this idiotic farce to continue, I will relinquish my claim."

"Your generosity is less than it appears to be," retorted Nelson Lee.

For, indeed, he recognised that Garrod was now solely actuated by fear—the fear of criminal proceedings. There was a chance for him to escape such an awkward development if he made immediate redress.

Nipper and Handforth and the others watched with a sort of satisfaction as Lee, Dorrie and Garrod disappeared into the little wooden building.

"Well, that's that," said Handforth complacently.

"Good old Duncan!" said Nipper. "It's a jolly good thing we came to Rotorua, my son. We seem to have been pretty useful."

"Dorrie was worth quids and quids to see!" grinned Gresham.

"Oh, rather! I mean to say, absolutely!" declared Archie Glenthorne. "Odds whirlwinds and cyclones! The dear old cheese was absolutely as energetic as a hurricane! I mean, he didn't give that blighter much chance, what? Absolutely scared him into a dashed jelly!"

None of the fellows ever knew exactly what took place between the four men. Even Alec Duncan wasn't allowed to attend that conference. But after an hour Mr. Peter Garrod emerged—his face set, his eyes burning with baffled fury, and his whole bearing aggressive.

He strode past the juniors without even glancing at them, and they, for their part, made no attempt to hinder him. If Nelson Lee had let him go, it was apparent that his wings had been clipped, so to speak.

Then Nelson Lee and Mr. Duncan appeared in the doorway, chatting. There was an amazing change in Alec's father. He seemed to be years younger, his shoulders were straighter, and he bore himself with a new strength.

Then Dorrie came along and joined the waiting crowd.

"Everything all serene, sir?" went up a chorus.

"You bet is it," said his lordship. "No need to go into any details, but I can tell you that Garrod has capitulated completely."

"He's done what, sir?" asked Handforth.

"He has surrendered," said Dorrie. "Knuckled under like the coward he is. Mr. Duncan is in full possession of his property again—and, what's more, Garrod will have to pay a very considerable sum into Mr. Duncan's bank. Profits from the hotel during the past three months. You can be certain that Mr. Lee has done the thing properly."

"Good egg!"

"Hurrah!"

"Good old Duncan!"

"I'm afraid there won't be any compensation for the months of worry and anxiety and privation," continued Dorrie, "but I rather think Mr. Duncan is satisfied. The main object is achieved. Garrod has been compelled to disgorge."

"When are the Duncans going back to the hotel, sir?" asked Handforth eagerly.

"Straight away, I think," replied his lordship. "Garrod's gone there first to get a few of his personal belongings, and to inform the manager of the change of 'ownership.' But you can bet he won't remain there long—he'll probably be gone by the time the family gets back to the old home."

"Then I'll tell you what!" said Handforth, looking at all the other fellows. "What about forming a kind of escort? Let's take Duncan and his family back to their home in state!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Come on, you fellows!"

"Hurrah!"

They were all eager for it, and it seemed to them that it would be a fitting termination to the adventure. In the meantime, Nelson Lee was still chatting with Alec's father.

"I'm afraid you'll think I was very much of a fool, Mr. Lee, to be so easily hood-winked," Mr. Duncan was saying. "And I shall never be able to express my gratitude for the splendid help you have given me. It was amazing how you caught Garrod on those finer points. The rascal was helpless under your expert cross-examination."

"I think you'll have to do a good deal of thanking, Mr. Duncan, if you look at it in that way," smiled Nelson Lee. "Lord Dorrimore and the boys came in very useful, didn't they? What I did was comparatively trivial. And as for your being a fool, I certainly don't agree."

"But I was absolutely caught in the trap."

"That is an indication of Garrod's cleverness," replied Lee. "The man had worded his documents with astounding subtlety. You have admitted that you are not a business man, Mr. Duncan, and it was natural that this sharper should have deceived you. But need we go into these questions?"

"I was the more easily duped because my second legal adviser assured me of the hopelessness of taking any action," said Mr. Duncan. "I knew, of course, that I had been robbed—shamelessly robbed. That was apparent. But my trouble was that I could see no hope of obtaining redress."

Lee's eyes twinkled.

"To be perfectly frank, Mr. Duncan, a fight in the courts would have been a long business," he admitted. "Garrod would have concentrated all his batteries, and would have put up a stern resistance—and, although I don't think for a moment that he would have won his case, he had obtained your signature to so many favourable deeds that you would have been very fortunate in obtaining a complete return of your property. It was Lord Dorrimore's high-handed action that really did the trick."

"I've been thinking the same thing."

"My sporting friend put fear into Garrod's heart," chuckled Lee. "He played Garrod with his own cards—bluffed him as he had bluffed you. Our little conference, on the top of that, was sufficient. Garrod got frightened, and surrendered. Rascals of that type very frequently collapse when they are strongly dealt with."

"I shall be eternally grateful to you both," said Mr. Duncan fervently.

As the juniors had hoped, a move was made without delay for the hotel. Dorrie turned up with a big car, and he had been thoughtful enough to provide two or three others—for the boys. So, when the procession started, it was quite an impressive affair. Alec could hardly believe it all—he was so bewildered by the speed of everything.

But later, towards the evening, when Mr. and Mrs. Duncan and their family were entertaining Lee and Dorrie and the school-boys to a sumptuous meal in their own private dining-room, there were no longer any doubts. This thing was a reality.

The Duncans were back in their own home—in full possession—and there wasn't the remotest chance of Garrod turning up again.

In point of fact, Mr. Peter Garrod was at that very moment en route for Auckland, and such was the effect of Nelson Lee's personality that Mr. Peter Garrod was busily making plans for his hasty departure from the shores of New Zealand.

He had an idea that this particular climate had become most unhealthy for him!

CHAPTER 16

Good-bye to New Zealand!



"WAITOMO?" asked Handforth, with interest.

"Yes," said Alec Duncan. "Dad was

just talking about the Waitomo Caves. It would be a pity for us to go back to the School Ship without paying a visit to the famous caves. They're marvellous."

"Better than the geysers and hot springs—eh?" grinned Nipper.

"Some people think they're better," replied Duncan.

The meal was over now, and everybody was taking it easy. A group of the juniors was out on one of the lawns, enjoying the coolness of the evening. They would be reluctant to leave this beauty spot on the morrow. But at least they had the satisfaction of knowing that Alec Duncan's people were now "all serene."

It was Mr. Duncan himself who had mentioned the Waitomo Caves, and Nelson Lee had smilingly shook his head at the suggestion, pointing out that it was necessary for the school to get back to the ship by the following evening, since the St. Francis was due to sail on Monday.

That night the Removites and Fourth-Formers stayed at the Duncan Hotel. Alec's father insisted upon it—although they had already made arrangements for their accommodation elsewhere. These juniors had helped so loyally on Mr. Duncan's behalf that he wanted to have them with him for as long as possible. The rest of the school, of course, made no alteration to its programme.

Next morning, when Alec woke up, he could hardly believe that all the happenings of yesterday were true. It was even necessary for him to jump out of bed and look out of the window to assure himself that he was really in his old home. Yes, everything was all right.

Mrs. Duncan was a changed woman to-day—although she had borne her troubles bravely and sturdily. Annie and Stewart, of course, were dashing about the place like young whirlwinds, gleeful to be "home again."

As it happened, there was a telegram for Lee that morning, from the School Ship's captain—announcing that the start could not possibly be made before Tuesday. He advised the ship's Head of this in case Lee desired to keep the boys at Rotorua for another day.

"Good idea!" said Dorrie, when he heard. "Why not?"

"I was thinking of those Waitomo Caves," replied Nelson Lee, with a smile. "Nothing like adding to the school's education, Dorrie."

His lordship sighed.

"I wish I had had an education like this when I was at school!" he remarked.

"We weren't so lucky," chuckled Lee. "Waitomo, after all, isn't much of a detour. If we go south for a bit, after reaching Hamilton on the way back, the railway leads direct to Waitomo—on the main line, of course, to Wellington. And I rather think that these Waitomo Caves are worth a visit. We've got the time now, so the school might as well go."

"And you can bet the school will be

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pleased when it hears the news," said Lord Dorrimore. "After all, it's not seeing much of New Zealand, so a little extension will be all to the good."

Alec Duncan was allowed special permission to stay behind. His father had planned to go up to Auckland on the Monday, anyhow, and it was only natural that Alec should want to spend as much time as possible with his own people. Mr. Duncan promised to deliver him safely on board the School Ship by Tuesday morning.

The visit to the Waitomo Caves was one that the boys—seniors and juniors alike—were to remember for a long time. In some respects, this district was even more interesting than Rotorua, with all its geysers and mud pools and miniature volcanoes.

Once in the caves the boys were lost in wonder. The caves were of limestone, and the grottoes themselves were formed in astounding fashion in the ever-growing rock.

"It's just as though some brainy sculptor had come here and worked it all out," declared Handforth.

"The sculptor in this case was brainier than all the human sculptors," said Nipper. "Nature, old man! She's the most wonderful sculptor of all."

The St. Frank's fellows went through the caves, admiring all the different forms—the Organ Loft, the Banqueting Hall, the Cathedral—and many other show places. And when they went into the Glowworm Grotto, they were dumbfounded at first by its sheer novelty. It was, indeed, unique in the whole world. There was no other limestone district that could boast of such a cave. Literally, it was a cave that sparkled with living fire. The fellows passed through it by boat, on the enchanted surface of an underground river.

"It's alive!" ejaculated Church, in awe. "Look at it twinkling and shimmering!"

"It must be some kind of chemical," said Handforth dubiously. "I expect they call it the Glowworm Grotto just for the sake of a name."

But he was wrong, of course. The entire roof of that extraordinary cave was covered with the tiny creatures.

"They sometimes call this the eighth wonder of the world," remarked Lord Dorrimore. "I've seen a few remarkable things in my travels, but this comes near to beating them all."

"One of the men told me that it's called the Milky Way of God's Own Country, too," said Nipper. "By Jove! What a pity we can't take photographs of it—at least, photos that will show it as it actually is."

Afterwards, they went to the caves at Ruakuri and Aranui, which in some respects were even more grand than those of Waitomo. And when, at last, the visit was over, and the fellows were once more on the train for Auckland, they felt that they had indeed seen something worth while.

Their memories of New Zealand were destined to be vivid. They had not remained long in this really great country,

but they had visited some never-to-be-forgotten places.

It wasn't until very late on the Monday night that Auckland was reached. A special train had been used for the school on this trip, and everybody was glad enough to roll into their bunks on board after a tiring day.

Next morning, however, they were refreshed and alert. It was a school day today—with lessons as usual.

"Oh, well, we can't expect to be holidaying all the time, you chaps," said Handforth consolingly. "Where do we go to next?"

"Home!" said Church, in a dreamy voice.

"I know that, ass; but we shall call somewhere shan't we?" asked Handforth. "We've got a jolly long voyage ahead of us—right across the Pacific, and then through the Suez Canal, and into the Atlantic."

"I suppose you mean the Panama Canal?" asked McClure.

"What's the difference?"

"Not much—only that they're on different sides of the world," said Mac sarcastically.

"What's the good of this trip to you, Handy? Your geography is worse than ever!"

Handforth waved an airy hand.

"Why quibble over more names?" he asked. "Well, we shall go through the Panama Canal, but not until we've crossed the Pacific. And—who knows?—we may get stranded on a desert island before we reach the Panama Canal."

"That's very probable—I don't think!" said Church.

"Or an atoll!" said Handforth firmly.

Nipper, who was standing near by, shook his head.

"Not much chance of any adventures of that sort for us, old man," he said. "This liner won't go near any atolls, and it'll be a period of stiff work for the whole school. We've got a lot of leeway to make up, and when we get home we want to prove to all the other chaps that our studies haven't been neglected."

Alec Duncan came on board soon after breakfast, as his father had promised. Mr. Duncan reported, too, that he had interviewed one of Auckland's most famous lawyers, and everything in connection with the tricky transaction with Garrod was legally straightened out.

The school was sorry to leave New Zealand, but it was necessary for the voyage to be continued. And so, that day, while everybody was at work in the class-rooms, the St. Francis slipped gently away.

And perhaps Handforth's talk of coral atolls was not to prove so wildly improbable, after all. For in the wide spaces of the Southern Pacific—even on such a great ship as the St. Francis—strange things can happen!

(And strange things, amazing and thrilling things, certainly do happen in next week's gripping long complete story, featuring the Cheery Chums of St. Frank's, which is entitled "The Peril of the Pacific!" Order your copy now, chums!)



E. S. BROOKS

BETWEEN OURSELVES!

OUR AUTHOR CHATS WITH OUR READERS

NOTE.—If any reader writes to me I shall be pleased to comment upon such remarks as are likely to interest the majority. All letters should be addressed, EDWY SEARLES BROOKS, c/o The Editor, THE NELSON LEE SCHOOL STORY LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.



POPPY HERBERT

IF I thought that all readers shared your generous views—Edward Magnanie (Monte Carlo)—I should be a very happy man indeed. And I should go ahead with my work with a greater zest than ever. You tell me that I can quote your letter, and at first I almost decided not to do so because it might smack of patting my own shoulder. But I ask all other readers to remember that they are your words, and I am only repeating them here because I am painfully aware of the fact that there are still heaps of people who object to their sons and daughters reading my yarns, assuming them to be harmful. You are an old reader, and your words should carry some weight, since you know what you are talking about. So here goes to repeat your words: "No, Mr. Brooks, I shall never be able to haul you over the coals for your stories. For I am quite positive that they will always be up to the mark—they will always contain that which is good and healthy for all. Mainly—lessons of kindness and good-will. Whether the reader be old or young, she or he will, I am sure, derive heaps of good from the Old Paper. And I wish you to live yet many long years to carry on with your noble work, which has done so much good for thousands." I can assure you, Ted, old man, that I agree with you regarding the "long years" part of it, for I feel quite sprightly yet, and I'm as anxious as you are to be able to keep on writing. But you mustn't give me all the praise for my stories; don't forget that it is the Editor who decides the policy, and I write my stories according to this. This doesn't mean to say that I'd write drivel if I was told to! If any other readers are in trouble with their parents, or friends, or schoolmasters, for reading my stories, I'd like them to place this paragraph in front of the prejudiced ones, following it up by persuading them to read one of my yarns for themselves.

* * *

Your photograph appears at the top of the page this week—Poppy Herbert (Ilford)—and I would like to take this opportunity of giving a gentle hint to readers in general. No photographs are printed without the permission of the senders. And I'm running short of permissions

Lots and lots of readers' photographs are in my albums, and these readers know that they're in. So come along, please; drop me a line to say whether I can have them printed or not. And those of you who haven't sent your photos, post them along, please, mentioning whether they can be published. As some sort of exchange, they'll get my autographed photo by return of post, in any case.

* * *

It's rather a good idea of yours—Reg. T. Staples (Walworth)—to suggest that all old and loyal readers, or readers of at least one year's standing, should send me their considered opinions of the series that appealed to them most in 1928. Here are the series in the order in which they appeared—Boot Boy Baronet series, Edgemore Manor series, Handforth The Outcast series, Split In The Remove series, St. Frank's in India series, River House Rivals series, Greyhound Racing series, Corcoran of the Blue Crusaders series, Christmas series. During the summer, too, there was quite a few complete-in-one-issue stories. If I get to know the general run of opinions, it'll help me to write the kind of stories that are most wanted. I don't know who wrote those lines you quoted in one of your earlier letters, Reg, but I can't do better than conclude this page by quoting them. When next you write, please tell me whose they are, so that I can mention it in a future issue for the benefit of those who would like to know:

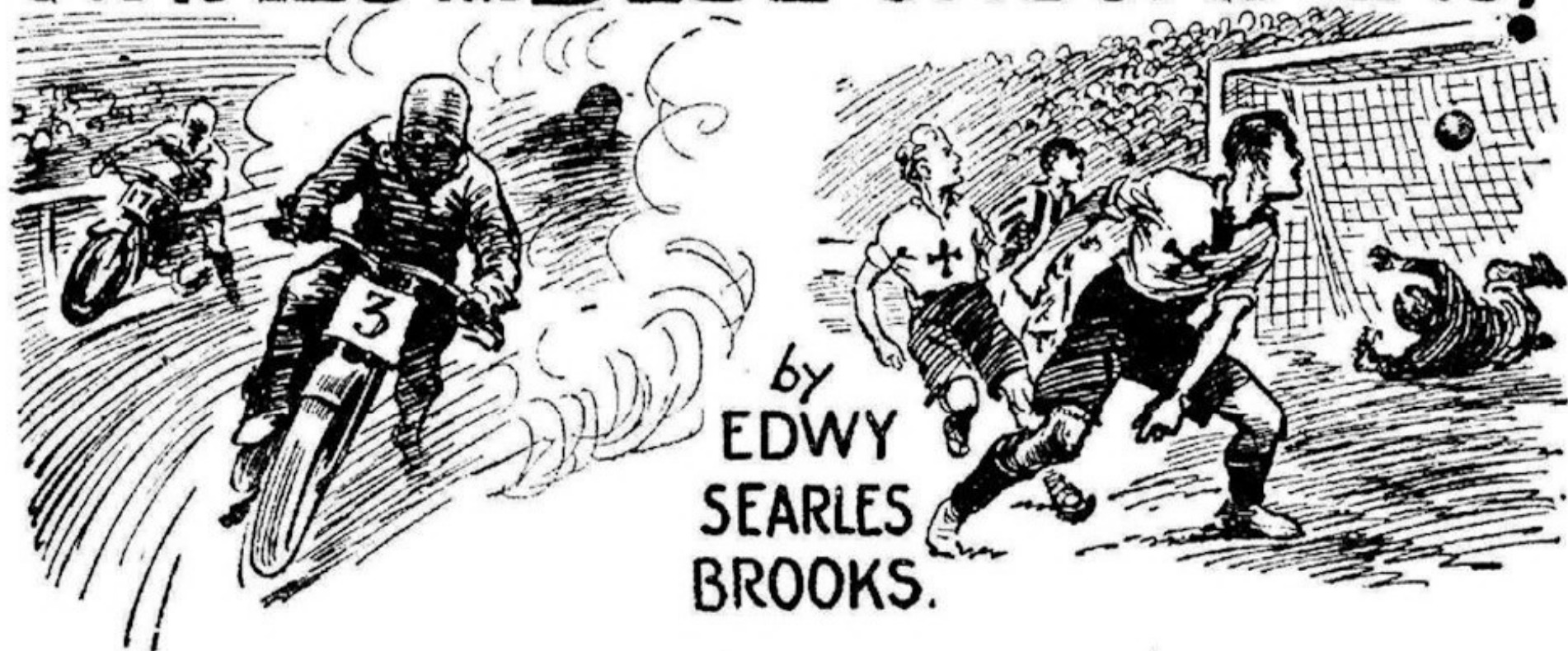
"A little more kindness, a little less creed,
A little more giving, a little less greed;
A little more 'we,' a little less 'I,'
A little more smile, a little less cry;
A little more laughter, a little less frown,
And not so much kicking a man when
he's down;
A few more flowers on the pathway of
life,
And less on the graves at the end of the
strife."

I'm not going to put my name immediately under that, or people might think that I'm taking the credit for the lines. So I'll shove it here—

EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

Thrills Galore in This Week's Magnificent Instalment!

RIVAL^{OF} THE BLUE CRUSADERS!



by
**EDWY
SEARLES
BROOKS.**

Peter Burke, manager of the Speedway, is determined to get Rex Carrington away from the Blues by hook or by crook. This week he goes a long way towards achieving his object—by decidedly crooked means!

Jeers Or Cheers?

Trembling with the excitement of it all, but cool enough, nevertheless, Rex brought his machine to a standstill, and he could hear the cheers thundering out from all sides.

"Well I'm hanged!" muttered Rex.

Being a professional footballer, he was well acquainted with the caprices of the crowds, but this demonstration rather took him by surprise. The ovation thrilled him, too—it caused the blood to flow warmly through his veins. This game was worth the risks!

"Well done, young man!"

Rex glanced round, and found the track manager by his side. Mr. Peter Burke was smiling.

"Did I win, sir?" asked Rex.

"Why ask? You know well enough that you won," replied Burke. "This means another twenty-five pounds in your pocket, my friend. Worth picking up, isn't it?"

Rex could hardly believe it. Twenty-five pounds—for riding in a race that had been sheer enjoyment from start to finish. It wasn't work at all—it wasn't even a risk! It was money for nothing! This was the way he looked at it.

"Well, what is it going to be—jeers or cheers?" asked Mr. Burke dryly.

Rex started.

"Eh?" he said, staring. "What do you mean?"

"Need I explain?" said the track manager. "This afternoon you were jeered, Carrington; and you were even jeered before this

race started. But they're cheering you now. Boy, you're a born racer! Why don't you throw up football, and go in wholeheartedly for this new game? I tell you, it's a paying proposition."

Rex frowned, and Burke eyed him narrowly. The track manager needed him more badly than ever now; he had only raced once or twice, and yet he was becoming tremendously popular. With Rex as a regular attraction at the Speedway, the "gates" would get bigger and bigger. Never before had Peter Burke wanted a man so keenly as he now wanted Rex Carrington.

"Why hesitate?" he went on. "It doesn't need any thinking about—"

"A race now and again may be all right—but I'm a footballer," said Rex, a stubborn light coming into his eyes. "I'm a Blue Crusader, and I've got to stand by the club until the end of the season."

"Just as you like," said Burke, turning away.

Perhaps he turned because he did not want Rex to see the gleam in his eyes. He knew that he was dealing with an obstinate customer, and Mr. Burke was getting impatient. He felt that action of some kind was necessary—and he was ready!

In the Toils!

REX did not compete in any more races that evening. He had got rid of some of his excess steam, as it were, and he was feeling in a better humour.

Twenty-five pounds in notes was in his pocket. Mr. Peter Burke had seen to it that the money was promptly paid over—a procedure that Rex regarded as purely normal. He was new to this game. And it was not to be denied that the "feel" of that money had a big influence on him.

For Rex had always been fond of money, and the knowledge that he could obtain it so easily wrought an insidious change in him. It filled him with doubts and uncertainties. It made him dissatisfied with his lot as a professional footballer, particularly so as he was such a success on the dirt-track.

He remembered, too, his miserable failure of the afternoon, forgetting that the treachery of that device in his boot was mainly responsible.

"Not going yet, are you, Carrington?" asked Peter Burke, as he found Rex over-coated and gloved, ready for departure.

"I thought so," said Rex.

"Might as well come along with me, then," said the track-manager. "I'm off home now, and I'll give you a lift in my car."

"But I'm going to Bellton," said Rex. "You don't live in Bellton."

"No, but I live on the outskirts of the town," replied Mr. Burke easily. "There isn't a 'bus just yet, and you can come in and have a drink with me while you're waiting. The 'buses pass my house, you know."

"It really doesn't matter——" began Rex.

But Mr. Burke seized him by the arm and laughingly propelled him towards the main exit. Outside a saloon car was waiting, and they both entered, Mr. Burke driving himself.

"It's not for me to influence you, my young friend, but you'll be very foolish if you don't take up track-racing as a pro-

fession," he said, after a bit. "You'll never earn as much at football——"

"I know that, but I'm tied to the Blues for the present," said Rex.

"Tied?"

"Yes. My contract——"

"Simply a matter of arrangement," interrupted Mr. Burke. "If you don't want to do any more footballing, your club will be quite prepared to release you. There's no trouble there."

"You needn't think that I'm concerned about Mr. Piecombe, my manager," said Rex gruffly. "He's got his knife into me just now, and I'm none too friendly with him. Hang Piecombe!"

"If these are your feelings, what are you hesitating about?"

"I'm thinking of the boys—the other players," said Rex. "They're a good crowd, and I should hate to let them down. They've set their heart on winning the championship this season——"

"They won't regard you as much of a help if you play as you did this afternoon," said Mr. Burke.

"I was off form," said Rex, flushing. "I'm not likely to play as badly as that again. And there's young Corcoran, too!"

"The schoolboy, you mean?"

"Yes, he's the owner of the Blue Crusaders," said Rex. "He's a young sport—a regular good 'un. He's doing wonders for the club, and it seems to be that it would be a dirty trick if I deserted the crowd at a time like this. No, Mr. Burke, I'm not going to have anything to do with speedway-racing until the footer season is over."

Mr. Burke smiled.

"Well, just as you like, you're your own master," he said. "I'm not going to press you any more."

He realised, indeed, that in Rex Carrington

The Opening Chapters in Brief.

ULYSSES PIECOMBE—more commonly known as Piecan—manager of that famous Second Division Football Club, The Blue Crusaders, is worried; very worried. Not because the Blues are doing badly—indeed, at the moment they are playing splendid football—but because a dirt-track has just been opened near the Stronghold, the Blues enclosure. The players, however, seem unperturbed. Especially

REX CARRINGTON, the Blues' brilliant centre-forward. Rex is keen on dirt-track racing, and he enters for a race. He wins—and his clever riding considerably impresses

PETER BURKE, manager of the Speedway. Burke, indeed, asks Rex to chuck up football, and become a dirt-track rider. Rex angrily refuses—he's not a traitor to the Blues! The Speedway manager is not deterred, however; he's determined to get Rex. Curly Hankin, of the Blues' Reserves, helps Burke in his scheming. Piecan, fearing that Rex will crock himself, forbids the footballer to enter the Speedway again. Rex is rebellious, and promptly enters for a race. He rides recklessly, and comes a cropper, injuring his foot, with the result that in the Blues' next match he plays badly. The Blues lose; Piecan blames Rex, and Rex, in a temper, goes off to the Speedway. Burke persuades him to enter for a race. Rex agrees, and wins in fine fashion.

(Now read on.)

ton he was dealing with a fellow with a strong will; and the more he tried to persuade Rex, the more likely it was that Rex would resist him. Far better to assume an air of indifference.

The car pulled up outside a small modern villa, near the outskirts of Bannington, on the Bellton road. It was one of the new houses—detached, and quite artistic.

"You'll come in, won't you?" asked Mr. Burke agreeably.

"Well, I'd rather not——"

"Your 'bus doesn't come along for another ten minutes, at least," said the track-manager. "Let's have a drink together, Carrington, just to show that there's no ill-feeling. You don't want to leave the Blues in the lurch, and I suppose you know best. We'll leave it at that."

Rex felt rather more friendly towards Mr. Peter Burke, and he accompanied his host into the house. He soon found himself in a well-lighted sitting-room, where there were two or three other men seated round a table, playing cards.

"Friends of mine," said Mr. Burke, waving his hand. "Boys, this is Carrington, of the Blues."

Rex was greeted warmly, and he was provided with a long drink of whisky and soda.

"Care to join in, Carrington?" asked one of the men. "We're looking for a fourth, you know. You play Bridge, I suppose?"

"Thanks all the same, but I've got to get back," said Rex.

"Afraid of Mr. Piecombe?" asked Burke, with a suggestion of a sneer in his voice. "Afraid of being spanked for being late home?"

Rex flushed.

"Hang Piecombe!" he retorted. "I can be in at any time I like!"

"Then why not wait for the next 'bus—in an hour's time?" suggested Burke. "Come along! A friendly little game will do you good."

Rex laughed, and finished up his drink. He wasn't in the habit of drinking spirits of any kind, and this one, being a stiff dose, soon affected him.

Within five minutes he was playing Bridge, and the rubber did not last very long. Then the game was changed to Solo Whist. And an hour later Rex was being shown the intricacies of Faro.

In the meantime, he had had two or three more drinks, consuming them thoughtlessly, without any inkling of the harm they were doing. He was becoming more reckless—more indifferent as to the outcome. He told himself that he could do as he pleased, and that if he didn't get in till two or three o'clock in the morning, it was only his own business.

He had forgotten all about his 'bus, and it was not until one o'clock had struck that he even thought about going home. And by now he had become so fascinated by the gentle game of Faro that he wanted to carry on with it.

"No, Carrington, I think you've had enough," said Mr. Burko gently. "You've already lost that twenty-five pounds, and some of your own money besides. I'm not sure whether you can settle up."

Rex laughed amusedly.

"I can settle up all right," he said. "How much do I owe, anyhow? What do these things stand for?"

There were lots of chips on the table, and Mr. Burke was counting them up, reckoning the few that Rex had had left in front of him.

"We've been playing for pretty high stakes, my young friend," he said significantly. "I don't want to give you too much of a shock, but you owe me just over a hundred and fifty pounds!"

Rex started.

"A hundred and fifty—pounds?" he repeated, his brain clearing very rapidly.

"That's what I said," replied Mr. Burke. "You knew the stakes before we started, and——"

"All right, I'm not squealing!" said Rex, with a gulp. "But I can't pay you to-night, Mr. Burke. I'll give you an I O U if you like."

"That'll suit me," said Mr. Burke easily.

While Rex Carrington wrote out that simple document, Mr. Burke winked to his companions. This lamb had been caught in the toils very easily!

A Shock for Fatty Fowkes!

"**W**ILL that do?" asked Rex, as he put his fountain-pen away.

Mr. Burke took the I O U and scanned it. Then he laughed, and held the slip of paper in front of Rex.

"My dear boy, there's really no need for this," said the track-manager dryly. "I can trust you, can't I? And a small sum like a hundred and fifty pounds is nothing to you—you can easily win it in the Speedway. Put this precious little document in your pocket."

"You mean that you don't want it?" asked Rex, staring.

"Of course I don't want it," said Mr. Burke. "Keep it, if you like, just as a reminder of the figure. But I don't want to hold the thing over you. As I said before, I can trust you to keep your word."

Rex put the slip of paper in his pocket, warming towards Mr. Peter Burke. He came to the conclusion that his first impression of the track manager was wrong. It was very decent of the man to trust him like this.

Mr. Burke went even farther; he took Rex home in his car, and dropped him at the gateway of St. Frank's. Then he waved a cheery good-night, and went back.

"A thundering good sort!" Rex decided. "That's what he is—a thundering good sort!"

He dimly realised that he had been very much of a mug, and he couldn't quite understand how he had lost so much money over that card game. His mind was a bit uncertain about it all.

To tell the truth, Rex was feeling just a little ashamed of himself. He knew that he had been weak—that he had acted not only foolishly, but very wrongly. This sort of thing was not calculated to improve his form.

He went to the Ancient House, and found the door unlatched. Just at present, while half the school was away on a trip abroad, the Blue Crusaders were occupying the Ancient House, and the players found the arrangement very congenial.

Just inside the door, in the lobby, Rex came face to face with Mr. Ulysses Piccombe.

In his bed-room Rex found Fatty Fowkes—wide awake and pacing up and down, attired in his dressing-gown.

"Good glory!" said Fatty, halting and staring. "So you've come home at last, have you? Where the thunder have you been all the evening—and half the night?"

"Are you going to start now?" said Rex savagely.

"You smell like a public-house!" said Fatty, backing away. "Great Scott! What have you been doing?"

Rex sat down on his bed, feeling very tired.



"I don't want to give you a shock, Carrington, but you owe me just over a hundred and fifty pounds!" said Burke. Rex Carrington, although he didn't realise it at the moment, was slowly but surely being drawn into the net!

"So!" said the manager ominously. "You have condescended to return, Carrington! Did you know that the hour is nearly 2 a.m.?"

Rex flared up—incensed by Mr. Piccombe's very tone.

"I'm not a prisoner!" he retorted. "I went to supper with some friends, and——"

"You are trying my patience very severely, Carrington," said the manager curtly. "You know well enough that I disapprove of these excessively late hours. It is not good for your—er—constitution. Why are you late?"

"Oh, what does it matter?" said Rex impatiently. "You needn't think that I shall be off-colour for our next match, sir. There's no harm in being late for once in a while, I suppose?"

He walked on, and went upstairs. Mr. Piccombe made as if to call him back, but he merely shrugged his shoulders and pursed his lips. He realised, perhaps, that it would be unwise to say anything further at the moment.

"I've been acting the fool, Fatty—that's what I've been doing!" he said bluntly. "I realise it now, and I wouldn't tell anybody else but you. But, by Jove, I've been acting the fool!"

"You don't need to tell me that," said Fatty Fowkes. "Feeling a bit reckless, I suppose? Fed up with Piccombe and life in general, eh? I've had the same sort of feeling myself, but it doesn't do any good. What's the trouble, Rex, old son? Tell your uncle!"

"Oh, it's nothing," growled the centre-forward. "I went to the Speedway—that's all."

"I suspected that—but you're not going to tell me that you've been at the Speedway all this time," said Fatty. "It's nearly two o'clock in the morning!"

"I went home with Burke, after the racing."

"Burke! That crook!"

"He's not a crook, Fatty," said Rex. "I thought he was a bit of a wrong 'un at

one time, but he's proved to me that he's a fairly decent chap. I owe him a hundred and fifty pounds, and he's willing to trust me——"

"Hey! Whoa! Hold on!" gasped the big goalie. "What did you say? You owe Burke a hundred and fifty pounds?"

"Yes."

"Great gosh!"

"Didn't I tell you that I've been acting the fool?" snapped Rex. "I played cards with Burke and some other men, and by the time the game was over I found that I had been losing pretty heavily."

Fatty stared at Rex in sheer astonishment.

"And you're telling me that Burke isn't a crook?" he said incredulously. "Why, you silly great idiot, Burke and those pals of his were twisting you!"

"They couldn't have been," said Rex, shaking his head.

"You don't suppose they won a hundred and fifty pounds off you by fair means, do you?"

"It was partly my own fault," said Rex. "We played Bridge at first, and then drifted from one game to another until we got to faro."

"Ye gods and little fishes!"

"Anyhow, there it is, Fatty—and I'm glad I've told you," continued Rex. "No more of this sort of thing for me! It's a rotten sort of game!"

"I'm glad you know it," said Fatty. "But it's a pity you don't know that Burke is a wrong 'un."

"He isn't!" insisted Rex. "I gave him an I.O.U. for that hundred and fifty pounds, but he handed it back to me."

"He did what?"

"Handed it back to me, and told me that he could trust me," said Rex. "That wasn't a crooked sort of thing, was it?"

"I bet there were some snags tacked on to it," said Fatty suspiciously. "And how do you propose to pay this money back? By going in for more dirt-track racing?"

"Well, that would be an easy way——"

"In direct defiance of Piecombe's orders," grunted Fatty. "You can't do that, Rex. You'll only make Piecombe go absolutely crazy. He's bad enough as it is. I tell you, these men have trapped you, and yet you can't see it! Their wheeze is to make you go in for track racing until you're so 'in' with it that you won't be able to back out."

Rex looked startled, realising the shrewdness of Fatty Fowkes' words.

"I wonder if you're right?" he muttered. "What can I do, Fatty? I've got to pay that money back——"

"The best thing you can do is to go straight to Piecombe, or go to him in the morning, anyhow," said Fatty promptly. "Tell him all the facts, and put it up to him. Piecombe's a good sort in the main—he'll see you through. He'll probably advance the money and pay Burke off, and then you

can square up later, in your own time. Anyhow, take my advice and see Piecan."

"And this I.O.U.?" said Rex, feeling in his pocket. "I suppose I'd better——"

He broke off, searching his pockets with a puzzled expression on his face.

"You'd better tear the I.O.U. up," said Fatty. "And as soon as Piecan has settled with Burke——"

"It's gone!" interrupted Rex, in a startled voice. "I put that piece of paper in this waistcoat pocket, and now it's gone!"

He remembered vaguely that Mr. Burke's companions had pressed round him very closely as he had taken his departure—they had helped him on with his overcoat. Was it possible that they had "lifted" that I.O.U. out of his pocket?

One thing was certain—Rex was caught in the meshes of some cunningly spread net!

Rex Sees Reason!

REX CARRINGTON slept uneasily that night.

He had acted very foolishly, and his conscience affected him somewhat. Further more, he had recklessly indulged in a few drinks, and he was not accustomed to this. His head ached abominably. In the morning he found that it was aching still more.

"I feel rotten, Fatty," confided Rex.

Fatty Fowkes grunted.

"You deserve to feel rotten," said the big goalie severely. "I'm jolly glad to hear it, you dummy! Going about playing cards until two and three o'clock in the morning, and guzzling rotten spirits!"

"There's no need to shout about it," growled Rex.

"I suppose you think Piecan doesn't know?" retorted Fatty.

"Does he?"

"Well, if he doesn't know, he suspects," said the sixteen-stone goalkeeper with conviction. "Wasn't he waiting up for you last night? Do you suppose that he didn't smell your breath?"

Rex was silent. He realised the truth of Fatty's words. It was quite on the cards that Mr. Piecombe suspected the real truth. Rex was worried, too, about the wretched I.O.U. Had he lost it, or had it somehow been taken from him?

"The best thing you can do, old man, is to go straight to old Piecombe," said Fatty.

"No sense in delaying. He's not a bad old stick, and if you make a clean breast of it he'll do the decent thing."

"And let me off, I suppose?" asked Rex, with the trace of a sneer.

Fatty leaned over, and patted his companion on the shoulder.

(Fatty's scheme sounds all right in theory, but how will it work out in practice? You'll know when you read next week's enthralling instalment, chums.)

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IN 1930?



ARCHIE JACKSON

He is one of Australia's coming batsmen, and great things are expected of him in the future.

England's got the "Ashes"—until 1930 at least. Australia is sending a team to England that year, and the Aussies will be all out to avenge the defeat they suffered in the present series of matches. Our special contributor discusses their chances in this outspoken article.

Welcome Home!

ON the twenty-fifth of March there will sail from Freemantle a happy band of cricketers—the gallant Englishmen who have triumphed in Australia. We shall watch through the newspapers the progress of the R.M.S. Osmonde, for that ship will contain, not only the cricketers, but the "Ashes" which have been won in Australia. And as the ship comes nearer and nearer "home" we shall work up our welcome, and get ready to greet our victorious warriors with a mighty cheer.

It is fully expected that the welcome home will be more enthusiastic than any which has ever been given to a cricket side, and there is every justification for a right royal welcome, too. The men who have been to Australia have broken many records; have done worthy things to uphold the cricket prestige of the mother country. We shall greet them as heroes all.

After the first greetings are over, we shall ask of them, one by one, this momentous question: Do you think the Australians will be able to bring over in 1930 a team good enough to beat us and take back the "Ashes"? We shall hold the "Ashes" till 1930, in any case, but the programme for an Australian visit in that year is all completed. I wonder what the answer will be, when we put the question to our players?

Out for Their Revenge!

Not knowing, I will try to give some sort of answer to the question of what will happen in 1930. In the first place, we can be quite certain that the Australians will already have made up their minds that 1930 will be their year. They will come with one set purpose—with one great idea in their minds: to avenge the defeats of the season now coming to an end.

It is not in the nature of the Australians—it should not be in the nature of any true sportsman—to take defeat lying down; to accept continued defeat as inevitable. There must ever be the determination to strike back, and the Australians will leave no stone unturned in their efforts to find a team which will be capable of striking back effectively.

As I write these notes I have before me a letter, written by a member of the English team, and posted immediately after we had won the fourth Test match. Here is a quotation from it: "As we were coming off the field at the end of the fourth Test, one of the Australian batsmen said to me: 'Wait till 1930. You'll catch it then.'" That's the spirit: that's the feeling which dominates Australia. 1930 will see them worked up to as mighty an effort as any team has ever made.

Actually, and in spite of the fact that England have done to Australia during the present season things which have never been done to them "down under" before, there are certain reasons for optimism concerning 1930 from Australia's point of view.

Better and Better!

Her players were almost hopelessly beaten in the first two Tests. In the third Test they came nearer to winning than the finishing score suggested, for there was at least one day when the issue was in the lap of the gods. And in the fourth Test

the issue was so close that there was almost as much kudos to one side as to the other.

We must all feel fairly confident that Australia would have won the fourth Test if Don Bradman had not been run out at the most critical stage of the match. So Australia's record during the present season, if somewhat doleful in a general way, has this encouraging feature: the team has gradually improved; gradually come nearer to the English standard. To a nation of born optimists this fact will be considered weighty argument why they ought to win again in 1930.

The reason for Australia's bad patch is that several of the star players of the past grew old at the same time, and that the selectors of Australia's team did not introduce enough young blood before it was too late—before the "Ashes" were almost lost.

Australia's Young Hopes!

When the young players were introduced, however, they certainly played their part valiantly and well: so well as to inspire hopes for 1930. Archie Jackson, Don Bradman, Ernest â-Beckett. These are the names of three young Australians who did wonderfully well once they were introduced into the Test team, and the combined ages of these three only amount to sixty years. Here are players for the future—for 1930. Lads who can come into Test games when they are only twenty years of age, and can give such a show will doubtless prove the backbone of the side two years later—when they will be even better cricketers by all the laws.

In addition to the players I have named, there are others coming along, and thus, though it may be to a very large extent a new team of Australians which we shall see in England in 1930, it seems likely that in this new team there will be men worthy to uphold the traditions of the greatest "Cornstalks" of the past.

Already we can see a side of Australians coming over who will be extremely difficult to get out: it will contain wonder-batsmen, who will be sure to get a lot of runs under anything like good batting conditions. When one looks round, however, it is perfectly obvious that Australia will have to find bowlers—new bowlers—to send over here in 1930. In my mind's eye I can see extraordinary efforts being made by the Australian selectors to find those bowlers between now and the Spring of 1930.

Bowlers Wanted!

We have talked a lot about doing everything in favour of the batsmen in England: of making wonderful pitches which

didn't give bowlers a chance to get the batsmen out. But if we have done that in England they have done it to a much greater extent in Australia. The pitches on which first-class matches are played in Australia are all in favour of the batsmen. Now pitches in favour of batsmen don't produce bowlers: all they do is to break the hearts of the bowlers.

Take it from me, however, that Australia will make an effort right now to remedy this state of affairs. They will be so keen to win back the "Ashes" when they come to England in 1930 that I am quite prepared to hear of them making drastic reforms in respect of Australian pitches during their next season "down under." They will try to play some matches, at any rate, under conditions such as are likely to be met with in England.

Why the Third Test Was Lost!

The vital third match of the present series was lost by the Australians for one reason only: when the weather conditions provided a sticky wicket there was no Australian bowler who could make complete use of it. This, of course, is not surprising. "Glue-pots" are only met with in Australia once or twice in a season at the outside; sometimes they go through a whole season without the weather making a "sticky dog." But in an average summer in England we get a fair number of wickets on which the bowler who can spin the ball can make it "talk," and have the batsmen more or less at his mercy.

The Australians will now try to find bowlers who can make use of such conditions, and I hear that they intend to produce such conditions by artificial means. Then they must also look round for a fast bowler—a MacDonald or a Gregory. This type ought to be easier for the Australians to find. They have always had at least one good fast bowler in their teams until Gregory went lame at the beginning of the present Tests. They are pretty sure to find another fast bowler somewhere during their next season.

A Great Struggle in Store!

I wonder, too, if the Australians will completely revise the conditions for their inter-state matches in order the better to prepare the players for 1930. The Tests in Australia, as you all know, are played to a finish, without any time limit. When the Australians come to this country in 1930 there will be a four-day limit to each game, with the proviso that if the "Ashes"

(Continued on page 44.)



Our Weekly Pow-Wow!

By
The Editor.

Your Editor welcomes letters from all his readers: send him one now. Address it to: The Editor, "Nelson Lee School Story Library," Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Those Seven Wonders!

A STAUNCH Norwich reader has written asking me to tell him the seven ancient wonders of the world. He says he has asked many of his chums this same question, and while they have been able to tell him one or two, he has found that none of them know the whole seven. So he suggests that I answer his question on this page, for he feels sure that there are many other N.L. readers who are in the same boat, as it were, and who would therefore be interested.

I agree. And although I believe I have answered this same question in the Old Paper before, I propose to do so again, believing, like my Norwich chum, that many readers will be interested.

Here's the list: (1) the Pyramids; (2) the Tomb of Mausolus, King of Caria; (3) the Temple of Diana at Ephesus; (4) the Walls and Hanging Gardens of Babylon; (5) the Colossus at Rhodes; (6) the Ivory and Gold Statue of Jupiter Olympus; (7) the Pharos, or Watch Tower, built at Alexandria by Ptolemy Philadelphus, King of Egypt.

What's Your Opinion?

And that's that. Which leads me to another interesting topic. What are the seven modern wonders of the world? I've often thought about this myself, and I expect many of you have done so, too. There's a whole list of things which can be called wonders: wireless, telephone, television, robots, submarines, Sydney Bridge, Woolworth Building in New York, talkies, Simplon Pass, express railway engines, battle-ships—those are only a few which spring into my mind on the spur of the moment.

Which do you think are the seven modern wonders of the world? I'm sure many readers must have their own views on this interesting subject, and I, for my part, should also be interested to hear those views. So, when you are writing to me, and if you feel like

it, perhaps you could jot down your selections. That's a chance for those readers who tell me that they never know what to say when they're writing to me!

Coming Next Week!

And now for a few words about next week's school story. This week the Boys of St. Frank's are enjoying the wonders of New Zealand. They're only there for a few days, however, and next Wednesday finds them on their way—home!

But there are still some more adventures awaiting Nipper and Handforth and all the others before they reach England—and they strike them when they're crossing the Pacific Ocean. For the School Ship gets caught in a cyclone—a real, honest-to-goodness, roaring fury of a cyclone from which there seems no possible escape!

Edwy Searles Brooks is a master of description, but even he has excelled himself in his description of this cyclone.

After I had read this story—which is entitled, "The Peril of the Pacific!"—I happened to meet an old seafaring friend of mine, and I told him about it. He immediately wanted to read the story for himself, and so I passed it on to him. Next day my friend brought back the yarn. He was full of praise for the way in which Mr. Brooks had described the cyclone. He himself had been through one of these terrors of the sea—apparently it had been almost a miracle that he had got through safely—and he said that Mr. Brooks had described it to the "T." Real praise that, if you like!

And so I want all readers to look out especially for next week's magnificent school yarn. It is, without doubt, one of the very best that Edwy Searles Brooks has penned for a long time. I am sure it will live long in the memories of all Nelson Leeites. Don't forget, chums. "The Peril of the Pacific!"—next Wednesday!

THE EDITOR.

What Will Happen in 1930?

(Continued from page 42.)

still hang in the balance the best game will be played to a finish.

The play which wins a four-day match and that which wins a match without time limit is different. Australia must remember that, and prepare accordingly.

To sum up, then, the situation in respect of 1930 is this: We in England can't afford to rest on our oars. The "Ashes" are ours, but we shall only keep them by organising for continued victory; not by trusting to luck.

Like the Australians we shall have to find some new players, at least. It seems unlikely that we shall be able to rely on that wonder-man, Jack Hobbs, in 1930. Even Herbert Sutcliffe, his opening partner in many a wonderful start, may by then be past his best.

But we are not going to despair or imagine the position hopeless. Why

should we do so when we produce Hammonds? A gigantic struggle is in store for 1930. If the people responsible for the big grounds on which the Tests of 1930 will be played have their eyes open, so to speak, they will start extending the accommodation right now!

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Horace Dilley, Station Road, Langford, Bedfordshire, wants back numbers of the N.L.

Miss Ida Locke, Ferndale, Liss, Hants, wants girl correspondents overseas and in Hants.

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