

# The NELSON LEE



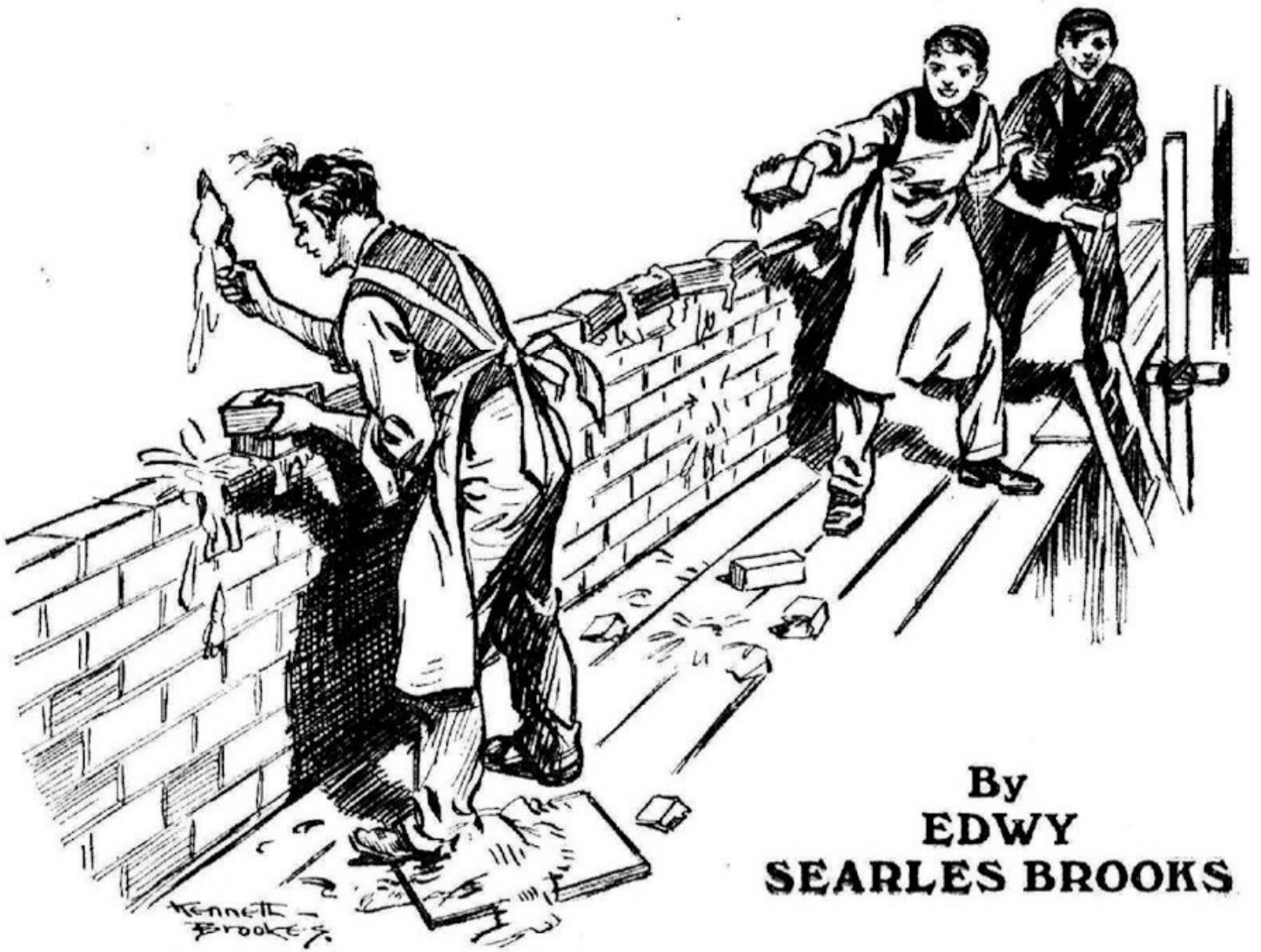
An amusing incident from the corking complete school yarn inside, featuring the cheery Chums of St. Frank's.

New Series No. 26.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

July 19th, 1930.

# HANDY'S "HELPING HAND"!



By  
**EDWY**  
**SEARLES BROOKS**

## CHAPTER 1.

### Mr. Jingle in Trouble!

"LOOK at that!" said Handforth indignantly.

The burly skipper of the Remove at St. Frank's was standing on the Ancient House steps. Church and McClure were with him—as usual—and there was a number of other Removites close at hand.

It was a half-holiday, and the juniors were rather at a loose end because they were supposed to have gone over to Redcliffe to-day for a cricket match; but the Redcliffe Junior skipper had rung up saying that as so many of his men were down with serious colds, it might be better to postpone the match for a week. It seemed that there had been an open-air carnival at Redcliffe two days earlier; and a large number of fellows had got drenched through in a thunder storm.

Handforth, emerging from the lobby, stared across the Triangle towards the East House—which was still in the course of construction. The rebuilding of St.

Frank's was not yet completed. A burly, thick-set man was grabbing hold of a skinny-looking youth in overalls, and blaring at him at the top of his voice.

"It's only that beast, Jingle, again," said Harry Gresham. "He's been causing trouble ever since he started work here at the beginning of the week."

"It's a pity the old foreman left," remarked Jimmy Potts. "This chap, Jingle, is a bit of a bully, by what I've seen. None of the men like him."

Handforth bubbled with anger.

"Come on, you chaps!" he urged. "We'd better take a hand here. He's lamming into poor old Pipes! And Pipes is a pal of ours!"

"Wait a minute!" ejaculated Church. "We can't very well interfere——"

"Can't we? Why not?"

"Well, the Head once warned us not to get mixed up with these workmen——"

## HANDY

### THE BRICKLAYER

*is an unqualified success—in everything except as a bricklayer!*

"The Head's out for the afternoon!" broke in Handforth tartly. "And Mr. Crowell is away on a holiday.

It'll be as safe as houses. By George! Look at him now!"

Mr. Jeremiah Jingle was a red-faced man with a stiff, bristling moustache on his upper lip. At the present moment he had seized Pipes Parker, the plumber's mate, by the scruff of his neck, and he was shaking him in very much the same way as a terrier shakes a rabbit.

"I'll learn you!" Mr. Jingle was shouting. "I don't allow no kids to get saucy with me. I don't want any back answers, neither!"

"You ain't my boss!" said Pipes indignantly. "You'd best be careful——"

"Hold your lip!" bawled Mr. Jingle. "It don't make any difference whether I'm your boss or not. You're workin' on this job—an' I'm foreman on the job. See? And when I tells you to get a move on, don't give me none o' your lip!"

He gave Pipes a final push, and then delivered a hefty kick.

"Yaroooooh!" hooted Pipes wildly.

Mr. Jingle was a heavy man, and the unfortunate plumber's mate fairly sailed through the air. He was hurt. Judging by his yells, he was hurt very much. He sat down in the Triangle and then half-staggered to his feet.

"All right!" he said thickly. "I'll show you——"

But he was not allowed to do any showing. Handforth and a crowd of other Removites had arrived at that moment. They did not ask any questions; they had seen all that they needed to see. They just flung themselves at Mr. Jingle, whirled him off his feet by sheer weight of numbers, and swarmed over him.

"Ere, what the——" came from underneath the heap.

"You shut up, you bully!" interrupted Handforth. "We're going to teach you a lesson! You can't kick one of our pals like that. Turn him over, you chaps—so that I can get a slosh at his ugly mug."

Mr. Jingle, gasping and grunting, was turned over.

"You young varmints!" he howled, desperate and alarmed. "I'll get you into trouble for this, see if I don't!"

"Rats!" said Handforth. "You may be the foreman on this job, but you haven't got any right to kick a chap in such a ruffianly manner."

Mr. Jingle was nearly inarticulate. It only made matters worse when he realised that he would, indeed, have some difficulty in explaining this affair away. He knew that he had lost his temper with Pipes Parker, and that he had far exceeded his authority.

"Look 'ere, young gents!" he panted. "If you let me go I won't say nothin' more about it. I didn't mean to 'urt the kid."

"Tell that to your grandmother!" said Harry Gresham. "If you didn't mean to hurt him, why did you kick him?"

"My dear fathead, why argue?" said Handforth, looking round. "What shall we do with the blighter? What about the mortar mixer?"

"Empty," said Church, shaking his head.

"The fountain pool?" hinted Handy.

"Not nearly severe enough," said Vivian Travers. "It seems to me, dear old fellows, that the ditch just outside the main gates—— But one moment! Wait! What do we see here? As I live, a bath of paste!"

"Paste!" ejaculated Handforth joyously.

"Being prepared for the paperhangers in the Modern House, I expect," said Travers, nodding. "They've finished the outside work there, and they're getting busy——"

"Come on—bring him along!" yelled Handforth, leaping up. "Good egg! He deserves a pasting—and we'll give him one that he's never tasted before!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"All hands to the pumps!"

"Heave ho!"

Yelling with alarm, Mr. Jingle was carried swiftly through East Arch, and into East Square. There were mortar mixers here, dumps bricks, and all sorts of other untidy-looking collections. Just against the rear door of the East House stood a big zinc bath. It was filled nearly to the brim with greyish, dirty-looking paste.

Men were looking on from all quarters—some from the windows, some from the scaffolding, high above. There were looks of approval, and some of disapproval. Most of the men, however, were frankly astonished, and not one of them even thought of interfering.

"Here we are!" sang out Handforth. "Now then—one, two, three!"

"Go!" roared the other juniors.

Mr. Jeremiah Jingle shot through the air, and there was a dull, splodgy sound; a horrid sort of splash, thick and glutinous.

Mr. Jingle went into the bath of paste head first; he rolled completely over, vanished for a moment, and then sat up. But he was no longer recognisable. He was far more like an under-done pudding than a human being!

## CHAPTER 2.

### Rubbish Dumped Here!

PIPES PARKER, gazing appreciatively at the scene, grinned silently.

"I'll bet he won't kick you any more, Pipes," said Handforth, taking a deep breath.

"I'm sure!" said Pipes.

"And it'll take him the rest of the afternoon to get this giddy paste off," added Handforth.

"I'm sure!"

"And serve him jolly well right, too," said Handforth.

"I'm sure!" agreed Pipes, with emphasis.

He seldom used any words except these two. They formed the bulk of his vocabulary; if he ever had any occasion to use others he always looked rather pained. Pipes was a very efficient plumber's mate, but in no circumstances could he be called a brilliant conversationalist.

Mr. Jingle, lurching out of the bath, shed

great blobs of paste in all directions. The boys scattered wildly, giving him a wide berth. The unfortunate foreman, digging his knuckles into his eyes, got rid of some of the paste.

"You—you——"

Mr. Jingle started blaring, but unfortunately a quantity of paste rolled down his face and fell into his open mouth. For some seconds he became inarticulate.

"Try again, old chap!" invited Handforth.

"You'll pay for this!" shouted Mr. Jingle thickly. "You—you young varmin'ts! I'll call every man out on strike! You won't get your bloomin' school finished until this time next year! Hi!" he went on, his voice rising to a bellow. "Come down off that buildin'! Every one of you! I calls a strike! Understand?"

"My hat! That's done it!" said Travers, with a grimace. "If there's really a strike over this, dear old fellows, there'll be a whole packet of trouble for us."

"Who cares?" growled Handforth. "It's taught him a lesson, anyhow!"

"Do you 'ear me?" yelled Mr. Jingle, waving his hands wildly and splashing paste in all directions. "Come down off that buildin'! All you bricklayers an' plasterers! I calls a strike!"

He was nearly incoherent with fury, and he tottered over to a big packing-case and sat down heavily.

Much to his satisfaction—if, indeed, he was in the mood to feel any kind of satisfaction—the men "downed tools" and left the building. They trooped off with grim-looking expressions on their faces, and within ten minutes not a workman remained on the premises.

"It's a strike all right," said Church ruefully. "This means trouble, Handy—for us."

Even Handforth was a bit startled. But neither he nor the other fellows—nor Mr. Jingle, if it came to that—knew that the men had gone on strike for a very different reason from the one which the onlookers supposed. They hadn't downed tools because they were in sympathy with Mr. Jingle—but because they were fed up with Mr. Jingle. They had been getting more and more fed up all the week, and this latest exploit of the foreman's had proved the last straw. They weren't going to stand him another minute.

However, the St. Frank's fellows did not know this, and, in consequence, there was a bit of a misunderstanding.

"The rotters!" said Handforth, frowning. "I thought the men had more sense. Fancy going on strike because we ducked old Jingle in that paste! I think we ought to do something about it!"

"Haven't we done enough already?" asked Church tartly. "Do you want to get the sack, you ass?"

They had ceased to take interest in Mr. Jingle, but now they looked at him again. They looked, they grinned, and they howled. For Mr. Jingle, suddenly making up his mind—and feeling considerably better—leapt

to his feet. He had overlooked the fact that he had been sitting on that packing-case for practically ten minutes; and he would have been better advised to move gently. As it was, there was a ripping, tearing sound.

"My hoye!" gasped Mr. Jingle, leaping round.

But there was nothing much wrong with his eye. It was another part of his person which had suffered. To be blunt, he had left the seat of his trousers on that packing-case. That paste was evidently of super-excellent quality.

"Swelp me!" gurgled Mr. Jingle, spinning round in circles in an endeavour to look at his rear. He did, in fact, catch a glimpse of some check material, fluttering about like a flag at half-mast. He gurgled with dismay when he recognised it as the tail of his shirt. "'Ere! What shall I do?" he babbled. "I ain't respectable!"

"All right—hold still!" sang out Travers, dashing up with something. "Lend a hand, you chaps!"

Travers had found a big roll of wallpaper, and he now proceeded to wrap it round Mr. Jingle's middle. That gentleman was thinking only of his appearance, and it wasn't until too late that he realised that the boys were playing a fresh joke on him.

The paste was far from dry, even now, and the wallpaper stuck to it tenaciously. It had become positively gluey in its consistency, and one touch was enough. Within a few seconds, Mr. Jingle was completely enveloped in rolls and rolls of wallpaper. They encircled his ankles, his knees, his body, and even his head.

"You're respectable now, Mr. Jingle," said Travers cheerfully.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are we going to do with him?" asked Handforth.

"There's a lorry just leaving," sang out Reggie Pitt. "By jingo, and it's the very lorry for Mr. Jingle, too! Grab him, you chaps, and bring him along!"

The foreman, hooting and protesting, was whirled through East Arch. A big lorry, heavily laden, was just grinding by on its way out. It was one of those open lorries with a special box for the driver. Thus the driver knew nothing of what was happening at the rear.

The juniors made a valiant effort, and, uniting their strength, they hoisted Mr. Jingle with one heave and sent him hurtling into the vehicle. He rolled over, a mass of wallpaper and humanity. And the engine was making such a noise that the driver heard none of his yells.

"We've got rid of him, anyhow," grinned Handforth. "That lorry's full of rubbish—old bricks, bits of wood, refuse, and goodness knows what else! We couldn't have found a better place for him!"

"Any place is better than St. Frank's," said Travers calmly. "He's safely out of the way now, and we're lucky, you chaps. Not a master or a prefect spotted anything. We might escape scot free even yet!"

**M**R. JINGLE had a free ride to Bannington—and it was a ride which he was not likely to forget for many a day.

That wallpaper hampered him. To make things worse, his legs had got stuck together, and his arms had become glued to his sides. Struggling, therefore, was rather worse than useless; and as shouting had absolutely no effect, Mr. Jingle saved his breath—and fumed. As the journey proceeded he became hotter and hotter, and angrier and angrier.

The climax was reached when the lorry got to the big rubbish dump, just outside Bannington. The tipping mechanism was operated, and Mr. Jingle was shot on the rubbish heap with the rest of the refuse. Gurgles and cries caused the lorry driver to investigate. He was a very startled man,

Jingle, without doubt, was determined to stir up trouble.

### CHAPTER 3.

#### Handy—Bricklayer!

**“W**HY not?” said Handforth abstractedly.

“Eh? Why not what?” asked Church.

“Oh, leave him alone!” said McClure, the Scottish junior. “He’s been looking mooney for the past ten minutes. I think it would be a pretty good idea if we went for a row on the river.

They were standing near the fountain pool, and the hot summer’s afternoon certainly suggested a lazy hour on the river. But



The juniors heaved. Mr. Jeremiah Jingle sailed through the air and shot head first into the bath of paste.

particularly when he discovered his unwilling passenger.

“Well I’m blowed!” he ejaculated, fishing Mr. Jingle out.

Mr. Jingle was an utter scarecrow. Tattered remnants of wallpaper were all over him. Only with difficulty did the lorry driver force his glued legs and arms apart. The dried paste clung to Mr. Jingle stickily; his face was caked with it.

“Them boys!” gurgled the foreman hoarsely. “Just you wait!”

And he streaked off, as fast as his legs could carry him, to the offices of Messrs. Stimson & Douglas, Limited, who were the contractors for the rebuilding of St. Frank’s.

Edward Oswald Handforth was thinking of other matters.

“Those men have gone on strike,” he declared. “They went on strike without any justification. I mean, it’s a bit thick, you know!”

“Well, we can’t do anything, can we?” asked Church.

“Can’t we?” retorted Handforth. “Why not?”

“Is that a riddle?”

“Why shouldn’t we get on with the building?” said Handforth triumphantly. “I’m pretty good as a bricklayer. In fact, I’m a handy man in all sorts of ways. I suggest that we go up on the scaffolding and continue the work where those strikers left off.”

"My only hat!" said McClure, groaning.

Kirby Keeble Parkington, Handforth's deadly rival in the Remove, was passing at the moment.

"What is it, sweetheart?" asked Parkington genially. "I hear that you merchants have been stirring up a little bother? Causing the men to go on strike, eh?"

"We didn't cause it!" growled Handforth, with a glare at the red-headed young giant. "You mind your own giddy business!"

"My dear old sport, I was only going to say that I approve of your wheeze," said Parkington gently.

"Eh?"

"It's a first-class idea," continued Parkington. "Let's all get on with the building. Something to do this afternoon, what? And I'm pretty sure that Handy can do bricklaying as good as the next man!"

Church and McClure looked at him suspiciously, but Handforth, whose leg had been made to be pulled, took him seriously.

"Will you help?" he asked eagerly. "No rof, you know! We'll chuck japes for this afternoon. How about all of us going up on the building and getting on with the work?"

"An idea," said Parkington, "of singular brilliance."

**W**ITHIN a couple of minutes it had "caught on."

It was generally understood, of course, that it would make an excellent excuse for pulling Handy's leg; and any wheeze for going up the scaffolding and swarming over the new building was welcome. The boys, particularly the juniors, were always keen to climb to dizzy heights, to clutch at ladders, and walk daringly along unprotected planks at nerve-shattering heights from the ground. Ordinarily, they couldn't do it. During the day the workmen were all over the building, and in the evening special measures were taken to protect the scaffolding and the ladders so that no unauthorised persons could get up.

With the men going off on strike, however, everything was different; everything, in fact, was in favour of an immediate invasion. Most of the prefects were away, none of the Masters was to be seen, and the afternoon was an idle one. And there was always the excuse of the strike if somebody should happen to come along and ask questions.

Handforth, with an old white apron wrapped round him—one that he had borrowed from the painters' shop—was getting really busy. Church and McClure were supplying him with bricks and mortar, and he was at the topmost height of the building, laying bricks for all he was worth. In fact, in his anxiety to show how easily he could do this work, he was not taking all the care that he might have done. As a consequence the row, as he proceeded with it, was inclined to be somewhat zig-zag and undulating. But trifles of this sort didn't worry Handforth in the least.

"Bricklaying?" he laughed, as he sloshed a trowelful of mortar on to some bricks. "Why, my dear chaps, there's nothing in it! These men get big money for laying bricks, and I can do it as well as anybody. When I grow up, I've a dashed good mind to become a bricklayer."

"Why wait till you grow up?" asked Church. "You're one now."

"I mean, I'll be a proper one when I grow up," said Handforth.

"Well, of course, that's different," agreed Church, as he glanced at the row.

Parkington and Harvey Deeks and Clement Goffin, the cheery chums of Study C, were active, too. They were also bustling about, clad in aprons similar to Handforth's, and there was plenty of work going on.

Handforth finished his first row, stood up to stretch himself, and gave a sigh of satisfaction.

"By George! It's hard work, but it's good to know that we've been doing something worth while," he said, in a satisfied tone. "At least, I have. You chaps are only my labourers."

"We wouldn't steal any of your credit for worlds, old man," said McClure.

Handforth took no notice. He was staring at the wall, along which he had been progressing so laboriously.

"That's funny!" he said, frowning. "There were eight rows of bricks on this wall when I started. I counted 'em."

"That's right," said Church, nodding. "We all counted 'em."

"Well, there are eight rows now!" said Handforth, pointing. "What about the row I've just put on? And look how beautifully even it is! I suppose we must have made a mistake; there could only have been seven rows when I started. What about some more bricks? We'll go back this way."

Church and McClure grinned behind their leader's back. It was extraordinary that Handforth had not seen, for some time past, that Parkington & Co. had been calmly and coolly removing all the bricks which Handforth had laid. They had been following in his wake, in fact, undoing all his good—or, rather, bad—work!

At first, Church and McClure had been inclined to protest. Then they had changed their minds. After all, Handforth was a chump to try his hand at bricklaying, and it was just as well to spoof him.

"There we are!" said Handforth, after another period of struggling with the bricks and mortar. "That's another row done. Pretty good speed, eh? I'll bet those ordinary bricklayers couldn't—Hallo! What the dickens is the matter? There's still only eight rows!"

He stared at the wall blankly, bewildered. Sure enough, from the scaffolding upwards, there were only eight rows of bricks laid. It was a mystery which baffled Edward Oswald Handforth completely.

## CHAPTER 4.

## The Rise and Fall of Handforth I.

"EIGHT rows!" said Handforth dazedly. "My only sainted aunt! This is too rummy for words! You counted 'em, didn't you, Churchy?"

"Yes," said Church.

"And how many rows were there before I started?"

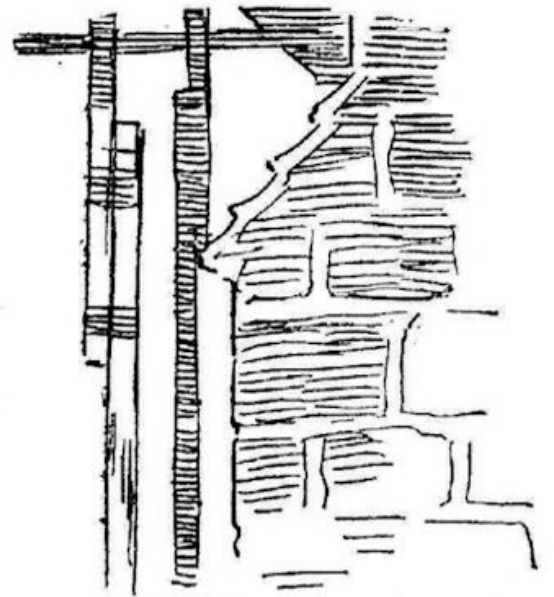
"Eight."

"And how many rows have I laid?"

"Two."

"And yet there's only eight rows now!" ejaculated Handforth. "How do you account for that?"

"I don't account for it," replied Church.



The juniors spun the tyrannical foreman round and round until he was enveloped in the clinging wallpaper from head to foot.

"It's nothing to do with me. You're laying this wall, aren't you? It was your idea to come up here and lay bricks, and Mac and I have been handing you bricks and mortar so that you can carry on. You can't grumble at us."

"I'm not grumbling, you ass!" said Handforth. "But where are those two rows of bricks that I've just laid?"

"Well, one would naturally think that they'd be the two top rows," said McClure sagely.

"Of course they're the two top rows, you silly duffer!" frowned Handforth. "And, by George, those two top rows are beauti-

fully even and level. Funny how we made such a mistake in counting, though. How long did we take over that last row?"

"About twenty minutes," said Church, glancing at the school clock. "By the way, it's getting near to tea-time, you know. We've got some special salad for to-day. Lettuce and tomatoes and hard-boiled eggs and—"

"We can't be bothered with tea and salads!" interrupted Handforth. "Bring that hod of bricks forward. And let's have some more mortar, my sons! I'm just beginning to enjoy this bricklaying job."

He got to the end of the next row, gave

a satisfied sigh, straightened his back, and gazed at the wall. Then he jumped about a foot into the air.

"Here, steady!" gasped Church. "You nearly toppled over—"

"Look!" yelled Handforth, opening and shutting his eyes rapidly. "Am I dotty, or what?"

"Dotty, I think," said McClure wearily.

"There's *still* only eight rows!" babbled Handforth. "I've never seen anything so mystifying in all my life! The more bricks I lay, the smaller the wall gets! At least, it doesn't get any larger."

"If you were getting paid for this job, you wouldn't have much to draw at the end of the week, then," said Parkington, shaking his head. "I don't think it would be a very profitable job for you, Handy, old man."

Handforth looked at him with sudden suspicion.

"Do you know anything about this?" he asked darkly. "By George! If you've been playing any of your tricks—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Deeks and Goffin and Baines and Travers and a few others could not stand it any longer. They roared with laughter, and fairly held their sides.

"Poor old Handy!" grinned Vivian Travers. "My dear old chap, you've been spoofed ever since you started! As you laid the bricks, somebody came along and unlaid them. And it's taken you three whole rows before you've spotted it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"What price Handy as a detective?"

Handforth turned red, then he clenched his fists and unclenched them. For some moments he seemed to fight for his breath.

"You—you mean that you've been undoing all my work as I went along?" he asked faintly.

"Merely a matter of kindness, darling," said Parkington. "We couldn't bear to see those bricks you just laid. We knew what a lot of trouble you would get into when the men come back."

"Why, you—you—"

"Indeed, there isn't any doubt that we have saved at least three or four men from destruction," continued Parkington. "If the workmen had come back upon this scaffolding and seen the wall that you had erected—well, they would have tottered to the edge and fallen over. As it is, everything is all right. You have had your little pleasure, we have had our joke, and the wall remains the same. What could be nicer?"

"You—you—"

"Exactly," murmured Parkington. "Didn't you make the remark just now, old dear?"

Edward Oswald came to the conclusion that

words were useless. Action was demanded here. He gathered himself together, so to speak, and then he hurled himself at his tormentors. Only in the nick of time did they dodge. And Handforth, rushing blindly forward, was unable to check himself when he reached the dizzy parapet. He tried valiantly, but it was too late.

"Look out!" he howled. "I'm going! I'm —"

He had reached the edge of the scaffolding, and with a despairing cry he plunged over into space—and it must not be forgotten that the juniors had been indulging in their operations at the very top of the building.

"Don't let me see!" said Parkington, holding a hand over his eyes.

Handforth, expecting to feel himself hurtling downwards, was amazed to feel, instead, a sharp tug at his back. He now found that, instead of dashing to the ground, he hung in mid air. Indeed, he was rising instead of falling!

"What the— How the— Hi!" he howled.

He hadn't noticed the loop of rope which had been adroitly fixed round his body, under his arms a moment or so earlier. The other end of that rope was attached to the crane, near by. Parkington had more than expected that Handforth would suddenly make a rush, and he had prepared for it. So Handforth dangled in mid air, while Harvey Deeks calmly operated the crane.

"That'll do!" sang out Parkington

cheerily. "You can let him down now, old man. Gently does it!"

Deeks' idea of "gently does it" was peculiar. Or perhaps something went wrong with the crane. Anyhow, the rope whistled shrilly over the pulley, and Handforth shot down at the run. It was decidedly unfortunate that the headmaster's car, arriving back just then, should pass immediately beneath.

Crash!

Handforth landed on the roof of the Head's saloon at the critical moment. His feet went clean through, and Dr. Morrison Nicholls, sitting back at his ease, was startled to find two mortar-bespattered feet within six inches of his face!

## CHAPTER 5.

### The Strike Ends—And Begins!

"CAVE!" gasped Parkington tragically. "What's up?" asked Church, startled.

"Handy's dropped through the roof of the Head's car!" groaned Parkington.

**LOOK OUT**  
for an  
**IMPORTANT**  
**ANNOUNCEMENT**  
concerning  
**ST. FRANK'S—Shortly.**



"Oh, my hat! This is going to lead to an awful lot of cushions being used! We shall have to eat our meals off the mantelpiece for days!"

Down on the ground, Dr. Nicholls was ordering the chauffeur to stop the car; not that any such orders were necessary. The man knew that something strange had happened.

The Head, climbing out, stood back and looked at the figure on the top of the saloon. Handforth was about two-thirds outside and a third in. He was smothered in brick-dust and mortar, and he looked several kinds of a scarecrow.

"Handforth!" ejaculated the headmaster, startled. "You! I thought one of the workmen had fallen upon my car!"

"It was me, sir," said Handforth unnecessarily.

"Are you hurt, young man?"

"No, sir; I don't think so, sir," said Handforth, as he extricated himself. "Only a bit of a graze, and a bruise or two. I believe I've damaged your car a bit, though."

"Come down here, Handforth."

"Yes, sir," gasped Edward Oswald. "I say, I'll mend the car, sir," he added eagerly. "I smashed it, so I'll mend it. It'll be all right if you leave it to me, sir."

"Fortunately, Handforth, my car is insured, and I shall not, therefore, require your own inimitable services," said the Head, his voice becoming more grim. "Now, tell me. How did you come to drop through the roof of my car? Where did you come from? And what is the meaning of this extraordinary get-up? Am I to understand that you have been up on the scaffolding?"

"Yes, sir. You see, it was like this——"

"Have I not already warned you boys that these new buildings are strictly out of bounds?" asked Dr. Nicholls curtly. "I can see that I shall have to make a severe example of you——"

"Hold on, sir!" panted Parkington, as he came running round the building with all the other japers. "It wasn't Handforth's fault, sir! We let him down on a rope from the crane, you know. Something went wrong, I believe——"

"Oh!" interrupted the headmaster. "So all you boys were playing about on this new building? Wilson!" he added, beckoning to a passing prefect. "Take the names of all these boys, please."

"But we were doing it in the interests of the school, sir!" said Handforth breathlessly. "All the men have gone on strike, and we thought it would be a good idea to carry on with the building until the strike was settled."

"Oh!" said the Head, glancing round. "So that is the reason why you boys have had such freedom? When did these men go on strike? There seems to be no end to the trouble. These buildings should have been completed weeks ago, and now there is this fresh delay."

"We knew how annoyed you would be sir, and that's why we thought we'd help," said Handforth eagerly.

"Ahem! I appreciate your thoughtfulness, young man, but I cannot accept this as an excuse for your conduct," said the Head, trying hard not to smile. "You have already been warned that these buildings are out of bounds. I am afraid I shall have to punish all of you."

Just then swarms of men appeared. They were all looking cheerful and happy, and they commenced distributing themselves briskly in every direction, some removing their jackets as they did so. Work apparently, was to continue. The strike was over.

"One moment!" said the Head, beckoning to a group of the men. "Where is your foreman?"

"That's me, sir," said a tall man in a blue serge suit. "Name of Barlett, sir. Sorry there's been this bit of trouble, but it hasn't lasted for much more than an hour, and the men are going to work an hour's overtime."

"I am glad they have come to their senses," said the Head coldly.

"Well, I'm not so sure about that, sir," said Mr. Bartlett. "You see, they were tired of their other foreman—a man named Jingle. Ever since the beginning of the week he has been playing them up, and when he started kicking young Parker, the men thought it was about good enough. They downed tools on the spot, and walked out."

"Oh!" put in Handforth. "Then the men didn't strike because Jingle ordered them to? They weren't striking against us, or anything like that?"

"Why, of course not," said Mr. Bartlett. "They would have struck just the same, whether you had taken any action or not. They've got rid of the old foreman, and I'm on the job in his place. I don't think there'll be any more trouble. Anything I can do?"

"No, thank you," said Dr. Nicholls, as he suggestively exercised his right arm. "I think I am quite capable of doing everything that is necessary."

He was.

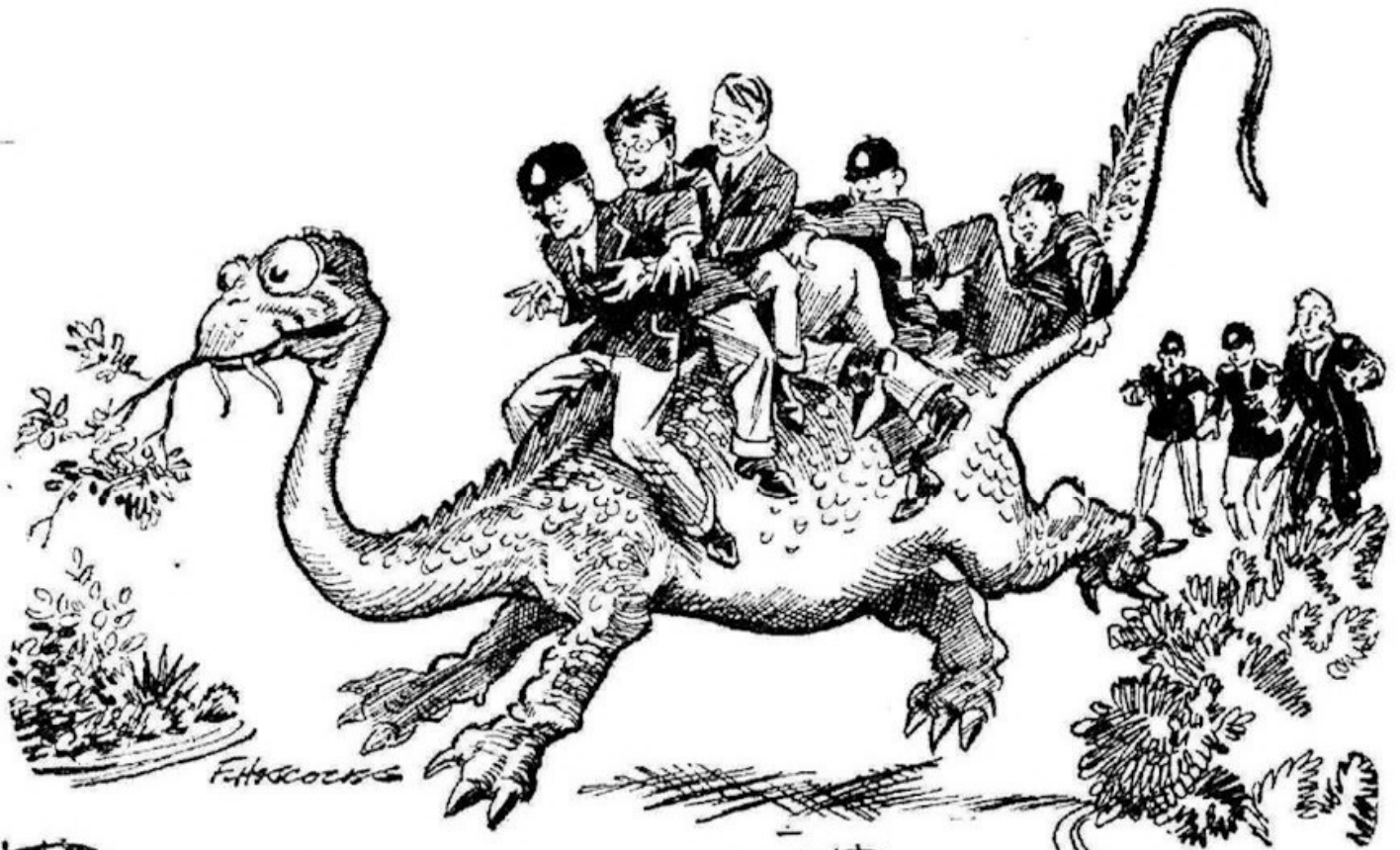
The strike, as regards the workmen, was over; where the St. Frank's juniors were concerned, however, it was only the beginning. In the Head's study it began. Dr. Nicholls selected his most pliant cane, and he wielded it often and vigorously—very vigorously. Some minutes later a line of juniors crawled from the study. They groaned and groaned *and* groaned; and they held a certain portion of their trousers tenderly.

And Parkington's words came true. Handforth and all the juniors who had helped him to give the workmen a "helping hand" *did* eat their meals from the mantelpiece!

THE END.

(Another amusing complete yarn featuring the cheery Chums of St. Frank's, next Wednesday. They're forbidden to go to the Test Match at Manchester—well, they go, all the same!)

Meet Dusty The Dinosaur—He's A Perfect Scream!



# DICK and his DINOSAUR

## An Egg—And What Came of It!

“GOLLY! I do believe the jolly old egg's hatching!”

Dick Daring's eyes nearly popped out of his head as he gazed at the curious and very large egg which stood on the study mantelpiece. Dick had never expected for a moment that the egg would hatch, for that particular egg was supposed to be thousands of years old.

It had been discovered by Dick's uncle, who was an explorer, in the wilds of the Mongolian desert, and it was popularly believed to be the egg of some extinct reptile.

Consequently, when the egg cracked with a mighty sound, Dick jumped from his chair in amazement.

When he saw what emerged from the egg, Dick made tracks for the study door. For the creature which made its appearance was the most amazing object Dick had ever seen. It was about the size of a large duck, and had a long tail and neck and a curiously small head, out of which two reddish eyes gleamed as they fixed themselves upon Dick.

“My giddy aunt!” gasped Dick, who, through his uncle, was fairly conversant with the appearance of prehistoric animals. “It's

a jolly old dinosaur, or I'm a Dutchman—unless I'm dreaming?”

But the dinosaur soon showed Dick that he was not dreaming. The monster “chicken” seemed to take a sudden liking to Dick. Before he could reach the study door, the reptile was upon him, frisking around him like a dog, and making a curious purring sound which evidently was its particular way of showing affection.

“I do believe the brute wants to be pally,” said Dick, and gingerly he bent down and stroked its thick hide.

The dinosaur purred and then threw back

its head, making a curious gurgling noise.

“It's hungry—or thirsty!” gasped Dick. “I wonder what the dickens dinosaurs eat and drink.”

The next moment the dinosaur had settled the question for him. Dick had been engaged on the irksome task of writing out some five hundred lines for his Form-master, Mr. Thwacker, and he had almost finished the imposition at the time the dinosaur, hatched by the warmth of the study, had emerged from its egg.

The dinosaur finished the lines!

It finished them completely. With **one**

## Comedy No. 1:

### “INTRODUCING DUSTY!”

*Dick Daring breaks all records for school pets—and his Form-master breaks all records for running!*

leap it was upon the study table. The next minute the sheaf of neatly-written papers disappeared down the rapacious throat of the reptile.

"Here, what the dickens are you doing?" demanded Dick.

But the dinosaur took no notice of Dick. Its attention had been held by a bottle of ink on the table. Seizing it in its beak-like mouth, the reptile up-ended the bottle of ink and swallowed the lot. Then it purred again, and jumped from the table, frisking around Dick like a dog.

"That's all very well!" grumbled Dick. "But what will Thwacker say when I don't hand in those lines?"

The dinosaur was not particularly worried about that. Intoxicated with its freedom from the egg, it began to nose around the study. It had already accounted for a Latin primer, a fives bat and an old football boot before Dick managed to check its voracious appetite.

And it seemed to thrive on its unusual diet, for even as Dick looked it appeared to be growing. Dick began to get alarmed. A dinosaur as a pet was all very well—but Dick knew that they sometimes grew to a length of about sixty feet! Pets were frowned upon at Skinton School, and Dick wondered what the authorities would say when they learned that there was a pre-historic dinosaur in the precincts!

Suddenly Dick started. A voice in the corridor outside had called his name.

"Daring!" it cried, and Dick went pale.

"It's old Thwacker!" he gasped. "My hat, if he sees Dusty, the dino, there'll be ructions. Come here, you brute!"

The next moment he had seized the dinosaur and thrust it into a cupboard. He was not a moment too soon. The study door opened and the magnificent figure of Mr. Thwacker, resplendent in cap and gown, entered. As he entered he swished a cane through the air in significant manner.

"Your lines, Daring," he demanded. "If they are not done, you know what I promised you!"

Dick groaned.

"Well, you see, sir, there's been a—little accident, sir," he gasped. "I had done the lines, but—but—"

The eyes of Mr. Thwacker went to the study table as Dick hesitated.

"I see no signs of any lines Daring," he said. "I suppose you were idling your time instead of working. What were you doing in that cupboard as I entered?"

He took a step towards the cupboard. Dick, in trepidation, stood between the master and the cupboard. At all costs Dusty the dino must not be discovered.

"I—I shouldn't open that cupboard, sir, if I were you," he gasped.

"And why not?" demanded Mr. Thwacker. "I suppose you have been indulging in a study spread! Very well, if that is the case, I will confiscate any foodstuffs I find there."

"I—I advise you not to open that cupboard, sir," gasped Dick in desperation, but

Mr. Thwacker, believing that he had bowled out Dick, shoved him to one side.

Next moment Mr. Thwacker received the shock of his life. Dusty the dino did not wait for the master. During his brief incarceration in the cupboard he had accounted for a tennis racquet, a football jersey, a couple of undeveloped camera spools and a few odd school books.

Dusty certainly thrived on his strange diet, and he had grown considerably. The result was that when the cupboard door flopped open, Mr. Thwacker found himself gazing into the glittering eyes of a three-foot long Dusty!

Dusty the dino seemed to be a creature of instant likes and dislikes. He had liked Dick instinctively. And, instinctively, he disliked Mr. Thwacker.

With one mighty bound he made for the astounded master. Crash! Over rolled Mr. Thwacker, his eyes almost popping out of his head with wonder. But, as Dusty made another rush at him, Mr. Thwacker came to the sudden conclusion that this was not an earthquake, and neither was it a nightmare.

With a howl of terror he turned and fled. Dusty was after him in a flash, and, as the Form-master tore down the corridor, Dusty was only a few feet behind. Instantly the whole place was in confusion. Fellows flocked to their study doors and nipped themselves vigorously as they beheld the sight of the austere Mr. Thwacker running for his life, pursued by a partially-grown dinosaur.

What would have happened if Mr. Thwacker's gown had not come undone and fluttered from his shoulders, would have been hard to say. As the gown fell to the floor, Dusty halted, and decided to sample it. In a few moments the gown had disappeared down the throat of Dusty, and Mr. Thwacker, sending a terrified glance over his shoulder, saw that he had gained. Away went his mortar-board—and Dusty stopped again to deal with this.

The two slight delays were sufficient to allow Mr. Thwacker to gain the quadrangle—but Dusty was soon after him again. Perhaps he thought that Mr. Thwacker might divest himself of his other garments. Mr. Thwacker's clothes seemed to taste good to Dusty!

As for Dick, he tore after his peculiar new-found pet, and nearly every fellow at Skinton tore after Dick. They were lucky enough to be "in at the death," for, as they swept into the quadrangle, it was to see Mr. Thwacker shinning up a tree with agility, while Dusty, with the tenacity of a bull-dog, hung on to the nether garments of the Form-master.

R-r-rippp!

The trousers gave way. For the time being Mr. Thwacker was safe, and he hastily scrambled to a high branch and remained there, while Dusty, with a peculiar smile on his reptilian face, sat at the bottom of the tree and gazed upward at Mr. Thwacker!

## Trouble for Thwacker!

"WHAT is it?"

Half a hundred fellows asked the question as, gathered at a safe distance, they looked at Dusty the dino. It was Dick who enlightened them, and when the fellows learned that Dusty was quite tame—except for his rooted aversion to Mr. Thwacker—they gathered nearer.

Meanwhile Mr. Thwacker, perched precariously on his branch, was howling: "Murder! Police! Help!" and similar cries at the top of his voice. As his eyes fell upon Dick, he yelled out to him:

"Call this creature off, Daring! Call him off at once! I'll expel you! I'll thrash you! I'll——"

An ominous growl from Dusty cut him short. It seemed that Dusty understood the gist of Mr. Thwacker's threats against the young master to whom he had attached himself, and did not like them. He made a spring in the air. Mr. Thwacker howled, and ceased his threats.

But, in attempting to draw back, so that Dusty should not get at him, Mr. Thwacker over-reached himself. There was a thud as he dropped from the branch and hit the hard earth beneath. Instantly Dusty sprang forward. With a howl, Mr. Thwacker sprang to his feet and darted behind Dick Daring.

"Call that brute off!" he yelled. "I—I'll flog you if you don't!"

Dusty growled and made a spring. Dick, keeping between the dinosaur and the Form-master, swung the latter round.

"He doesn't like you saying such things, sir," he said. "You—you shouldn't let him see you're afraid of him."

"I am not afraid of him!" cried Mr. Thwacker—a reply which sent the fellows into roars of laughter. "I am not—Ow! Wow! Keep between us! Don't let him get at me!"

"Keep back, Dusty!" cried Dick, but it looked as though the dinosaur did not intend to obey him, and Mr. Thwacker sent out shrieks of terror as he believed that the dinosaur would rend him limb from limb.

"I'll tell you what it is, sir," said Dick. "Dusty thinks you're annoyed with me."

"Annoyed with you?" roared the master. "I tell you I'll flog you! I'll teach you to bring monsters like this into the school. I'll——"

"In that case, sir," said Dick, "you'd better settle with Dusty yourself."

He moved away, and Dusty sprang forward. His teeth gripped the back of the Form-master's coat, and there was a ripping sound as the coat gave way. Dusty calmly proceeded to swallow the coat, and then fixed Mr. Thwacker with a hypnotic stare.

Mr. Thwacker by this time was in a condition verging upon hysteria. He did not know that Dusty was a vegetarian—if a creature whose diet was so varied and unusual could be called a vegetarian! Dusty,

as a matter of fact, wished to play with Mr. Thwacker as a cat plays with a mouse—but the Form-master did not know that, and had visions of being swallowed up whole by this creature which seemed to be growing in length every minute.

Mr. Thwacker made another dart for safety—and Dusty went after him. For some time they chased round and round the quadrangle, the Form-master in a state of chronic funk. Then, in desperation, he threw his arms around Dick Daring's neck and clung there.

"Save me! Save me!" he gasped.

Dusty, who had been pursuing Mr. Thwacker hotly, suddenly stopped dead. To Dusty it appeared that Mr. Thwacker was embracing Dick. Dusty began to think he had made a mistake—that, after all, Mr. Thwacker was friendly disposed towards his master. Dick, seeing the dinosaur hesitate, realised what was passing in Dusty's mind.

"He—he thinks we're friends now, sir," he whispered. "You'd better play up to it! Don't let him get into a rage again. Say something to show that we are friends."

"Friends?" snorted Mr. Thwacker. "You dare to tell me to lower myself to—Ow! Call him off" he yelled, changing his tone as Dusty made a dash towards him. "I'll say anything you like! Yes, we're friends! Of course we're friends! You're my favourite pupil. You—you're a wonderful scholar, a most brainy boy!"

He shot a sideways glance at the dinosaur. It really seemed that Dusty understood his words, for he had quietened down considerably. Dick Daring grinned. He was thoroughly enjoying the situation.

"And those lines, sir?" he queried. "Dusty ate them. You—you won't expect me to write them again, will you, sir?"

Mr. Thwacker was about to explode again, but a glance at Dusty showed him that he had better be careful.

"Oh, certainly not!" he gasped. "Certainly not! And now, tell that monster to behave itself. You must send it away from the school at once, do you understand?"

Dick pulled a wry face. He was beginning to like Dusty, and to see the possibilities of some fun if Dusty remained at Skinton School. It struck him that Dusty was going to be a valuable acquisition to the school.

"Suppose he won't go away, sir?" he asked.

"He must! He must be sent to the Zoo!" cried Mr. Thwacker—but the next moment he wished he could recall the words.

"Grrrh!"

Dusty launched himself forward, and Mr. Thwacker found himself seized by the back of his waistcoat. Then, followed by the boys of the school, who were all convulsed with mirth at seeing the Form-master handled so unceremoniously, Dusty started off in a loping run.

There was a small lake in the grounds of Skinton School—little larger than a pond and

decidedly stagnant and smelly. Straight to this pond went Dusty, and halted on the brink. Then, waving his long neck from side to side, the dinosaur suddenly flung Mr. Thwacker right into the middle of the pond.

Mr. Thwacker disappeared below the surface—and when the Form-master's head and shoulders reappeared, every boy gave vent to a roar of uncontrollable laughter. For a festoon of weeds hung around Mr. Thwacker's head, while his face was liberally besprinkled with mud.

And Dusty the dino, enjoying himself to the full, romped and frisked around the pond as though inviting Mr. Thwacker to come out and be thrown in again.

But Mr. Thwacker was not having any!

#### Dusty Makes Himself at Home!

**"DARING!"** yelled Mr. Thwacker. "Take that—that object away! I command you! I'll call the police! I'll call the fire-brigade. I'll have it shot!"

"Grrrh!" Dusty's roar was louder than ever. Dusty was "growing-up" quickly, and to look at him one would not have believed that it was only half an hour since he had poked his scaly nose out of his shell.

He made as though to dash into the shallow pond after Mr. Thwacker, and the Form-master, like an ostrich, promptly bobbed down to hide himself. As he had bobbed down with his mouth open, however, he very soon bobbed up again, spluttering like a grampus.

"It's no good, sir," said Dick. "Dusty here seems determined to remain at the school, and I'm afraid he won't let you out of that pond until you give permission for him to remain."

Mr. Thwacker was in a quandary. And he looked like remaining in a quandary—and in the pond—unless he did as Dick suggested.



Mr. Thwacker was just a second too late in clambering up the tree. Dusty the dino obtained a tenacious grip on the irate Form-master's nether garments; he pulled— R-r-r-rip!

There was no other way out. It was distinctly cold and unpleasant in the pond, and Mr. Thwacker had to capitulate.

"I—I suppose I'll have to give in!" he gasped. "Very well, you can keep your—your monster. You—you'd better take him round to the stables and put him there."

"Hurrah!" yelled Dick, and immediately turned to Dusty. "Do you get that, 'old bean?' he asked. "You're to stay here—understand?"

It seemed that Dusty did understand. He frisked around like a terrier, and then, in the excess of his joy, seized Dick gently by the back of his coat collar, swung him into the air, and then deposited him upon his back.

By this time Dusty had grown to quite generous proportions, and there was any amount of room on his back for several boys. Dusty deposited about half a dozen of them there, and then began a triumphant march around the quadrangle.

Round and round went the dino, followed by the cheering boys. Occasionally Dusty stopped to help himself to a snack in the shape of a small bush or a few stones. Eventually the stables were reached, and

(Continued on page 43.)

# TRAPPED IN THE



## CHAPTER I.

### Lord of the Island!

**C**APTAIN BLACKFORD ANGEL, of the brig *Vulture*, stroked his stubbly beard with a coarse, gnarled hand.

"Sink me for a wall-eyed shark, but I've been in many a wuss port than this," he declared. "Takin' everythin' all round, Mr. Cragg, the position ain't half so bad as what it might 'ave been."

Mr. Reuben Cragg, first mate, grunted.

"Tain't so good, neither," he said sourly. "I know the sea as well as you do—mebbe better—an' once a sailorman gets trapped in the Sargasso there ain't no escape. We're booked 'ere for the rest of our days!"

A more disreputable pair of rascals than these two had never disgraced the British Mercantile Marine. The captain and mate of the *Vulture*, through sheer inefficiency and slackness, had allowed the brig to become a partial wreck during a fierce storm.



"It ain't such a joke as you seem to think," continued the captain cunningly. "What do we find when we come 'ere? An island—a floating island—made from scores of these 'ere derelicts, which 'ave collected in this weed for 'undreds of years. We find between thirty an' forty people 'ere, mostly men. Two or three old women, a few middle-aged women, one or two pretty girls, and some kids. A reg'lar kingdom of its own, tucked away 'ere in this blamed back-water. I've allus said, Mr. Cragg, that the sea is more full of surprises than any durned land!"

**T**HE door opened, and an unshaven, evil-faced ruffian came in. Captain Angel looked at him grimly.

"Guess we're sitting pretty," said the newcomer, swaggering into the centre of the room. "Gosh! We've lit on some-thin' good 'ere, ain't we? Better than dyin' in mid-Atlantic in an open boat!"

The captain breathed hard.

"Since when, you watery-eyed son of a porpoise, was you allowed to come inter my cabin without knockin'?" he demanded ferociously. "Since when did you stop tackin' 'sir' on to your words when you spoke to me? For two pins I'd knock your 'ead off!"

The newcomer stared.

"Aw, be yourself, captain," he said. "Things is different now, ain't they?"

"Mighty different—but that don't allow you to give me any o' your infernal insolence!" roared Captain Angel. "Aboard the Vulture you was only a deck-'and, Schwartz, and you needn't think that you can—"

"I was bo'sun!" interrupted Schwartz aggressively.

"Whatever you was, I don't allow none o' my crew to become familiar," said the skipper. "I was captain aboard the Vulture—but on this 'ere dump I'm king! Understand, you fish-eyed lubber? What do you want, anyway?"

Schwartz glowered.

"I figgered that we was all in the same boat now, cap'n," he replied. "One man's as good as another—"

"You'd best start figgerin' again," interrupted Angel. "An' if you speak to me any more without sayin' 'sir' I'll kick the in'ards outter you!"

"One o' these 'ere men wants to speak to you—sir!" growled the German-American ruffian. "Says it's important."

"Oh, 'e does, does 'e?" retorted the captain. "Well, you can tell 'im that I'll see 'im when I want to—an' not before. I'm boss now."

There was a sudden commotion outside, and the next moment a smallish elderly man ran into the saloon. He was flushed and excited, and he was dressed in curiously made shorts and open-fronted shirt. He was bearded, but in spite of his general appearance of incongruity he was obviously a man of refinement.

"This is outrageous!" he panted hoarsely. "You, sir!" he went on, advancing towards the table and looking angrily at Captain Angel. "You, I believe, are responsible for this dastardly attack?"

"Hold 'ard, my friend—'old 'ard," said the captain grimly. "You'd best learn, straight away, that you can't come bustin' into my cabin—"

"This is not your house!" broke in the other. "It is Captain Weston's—and you know it! Heaven alone knows what you have done to him."

"It was his own fault that he got a dose o' lead," retorted Angel. "'E was warned, wasn't 'e? I told 'im plain that I was boss, an' e' didn't like it. All right, there was a bit of bother. An' who do you 'appen to be, anyhow?" he added, staring.

"My name is Dr. Pearson," said the other, with dignity. "I was a passenger on Captain Weston's ship when, twelve years ago, it was caught in the Sargasso. My wife and child were also passengers—"

"I don't want to 'ear your fam'ly 'istory!" interrupted Captain Angel impatiently. "Take 'im away, Schwartz. I can't be interrupted—"

"You rogue!" shouted Dr. Pearson. "You came here as a castaway—you and your fellow ruffians. We took you in, we fed you, we gave you shelter. You told us abominable lies concerning the men you had abandoned on your own ship. We believed you, and when they came to us we were hostile. Since then we have learned differently—for you turned upon us."

"Because you wasn't reasonable!" said the skipper. "I tried to be nice an' peaceful, but your 'igh an' mighty king wasn't 'avin' any of it."

"You told him you were 'going to be boss'—you thrust yourself forward in a drunken frenzy, and, naturally, we resented your interference," said Dr. Pearson angrily. "But this is no time for arguing. I have a patient seriously ill; I must go to her at once. Your men have refused to let me leave this ship."

"But my orders," nodded Captain Angel. "Nobody's leavin'—or movin' anywhere—until I give orders."

"But I tell you that this woman is in serious need of medical attention," urged the doctor. "She is elderly, and she is alone except for a child. She lives over at Islington, and it is necessary—"

"Islington?" broke in the captain, staring. "What the thunder are you talkin' about?"

"I do not suppose you would understand," said the doctor wearily. "But we have our own names for the various parts of this quaint island. We have our own geography. This particular part on which we are now standing is known as Westminster, since it is the seat of our tiny parliament."

"Well, I'm durned!" ejaculated the skipper. "Not a bad idea, at that! Well, I'm sorry, but you ain't goin' over to



Islington to-night, doctor. Take him away, Schwartz."

Dr. Pearson fairly quivered with anger.

"But it is important!" he panted. "I am the only doctor here—and this woman might die before the morning."

"That'll be too bad," said Captain Angel.

"Until you came we lived peacefully and in harmony," said the doctor bitterly. "You are a scoundrel, sir—an unmitigated rogue! But, by heaven, you will pay for this sooner or later! You cannot come here and enforce these bullying methods of yours."

Captain Angel rose to his feet.

"Get out o' here!" he blared. "I'm boss here—I'm king! An' the sooner you understand that, the better it'll be for your 'ealth. Nobody is movin' until I give 'em permission. To-morrow I'm goin' to have a general look round, and, what's more, I'm goin' to let everybody know who's boss. Take 'im out, Schwartz, and see that he doesn't get loose ag'in."

The unfortunate man was dragged back, and in spite of his protestations he was forcibly hauled out of the cabin. Captain Angel sank back into his chair again.

"That's the way to do it!" he said, with an evil grin, and the first mate nodded his approval. "The iron 'and, Mr. Cragg—it allus pays! Treat 'em rough, an' keep 'em under your thumb!"

## CHAPTER 2.

### Enemies of the Night!

**T**HE so-called island was really a large number of sailing vessels and steamships, most of them derelict, which had drifted into the heart of the Sargasso Sea at various times. Some of these ships were without masts, some had their funnels and superstructure blown away; rust and decay had laid a heavy hand on all.

But this strange community of castaways had employed much of their time during the years on improving their home. They had selected those hulks which were grouped closely together. Stagings had been erected, forming roads and passage-ways, leading from one ship to another. Great areas had been covered in, the roofs being heavily thatched with dried weed, and looking, in the full daylight, very incongruous.

All round, of course, there were other derelicts, but these were not inhabited, or hardly ever visited. They were beyond the compact "island," dotted about in the thick Sargasso weed. No matter where one looked there was no sign or indication of the sea. Weed—weed—in every quarter. And so thick was this weed that it formed an eternal carpet all round these derelict ships.

The vessels themselves at every vulnerable point were provided with barricades, and these were capable of being erected as soon as darkness fell. It seemed, indeed, that there was some unknown danger from the weed itself—some peril which made it necessary for these precautions.

It was night now, and an utter stillness brooded over the mysterious Sargasso. There was not a breath of wind, and swirling billows of white mist drifted lazily over the floating island. Overhead there was no sign of the stars. The darkness was so intense that it could almost be felt.

Nearly a mile away from that central collection of lost and forgotten ships lay the battered hulk of the brig Vulture. She was dismasted and rudderless; the eternal weed packed itself closely around her. Lanterns were standing about on the decks, casting yellowish circles of glowing light, revealing figures moving to and fro.

They were the second mate and the rest of the crew—all those, in fact, who had been abandoned to their fate by Captain Blackford Angel.

One of the figures stood out from the rest; he was a tall, lithely-built man, with a suggestion of leanness in his frame. He was dressed in a pair of improvised shorts, with a loose shirt, the sleeves of which were rolled up. A belt round his waist contained a useful-looking service revolver. His face was alert, keen and even grim.

"Everything ready, Mr. Adams?" he asked, in a tone which left no doubt that he was the leader.

"Everything, sir," replied Mr. Adams, who was a clean-limbed, fresh-faced youngster.

On the face of it, it seemed strange that Mr. Adams, the second mate, should speak so respectfully to an ordinary sailor—a man who had shipped before the mast. But then, this deck-hand was no less a person than Mr. Nelson Lee, the world-famous detective.

**N**ELSON LEE'S presence aboard the Vulture can be easily explained.

He and his six "cubs"—Nipper, Watson, Tregellis-West, Browne, Stevens and Fenton—had been shanghaied whilst the Vulture was still at anchor in the Thames.

One of Nelson Lee's enemies had bribed Captain Angel to take the seven aboard—as members of his crew. So Nelson Lee and the boys had been trapped, and when they had awakened they had found themselves on the high seas, bound for South America. They had had rather a bad time of it for some days, for Captain Angel and Mr. Cragg, the mate, led them a dog's life. Then the storm had come, with its dramatic consequences.

Nelson Lee had been surprised the previous day to find that the People of the Weed had shown signs of hostility. Lee and the boys had approached, and they had been ordered away. Then, by chance, Lee had caught sight of Captain Blackford Angel—and that had told him a lot.

He could guess that Captain Angel had told these good people a string of lies. Then corroboration had come—and from an unexpected quarter. A slim slip of a girl of fifteen—a remarkably dainty creature, in fact—had suddenly appeared as though from the weed itself. She was

Mary Weston, the daughter of Captain Weston, the man who had formed this little community, and who had ruled it with a kindly hand.

Not half an hour ago she had sobbed out her pitiful tale—how Captain Angel and his men had suddenly turned upon their benefactors; how Angel had “seized” the island. In the sudden fight Captain Weston had been shot—perhaps fatally wounded. Perhaps he was already dead. In a fever of worry, this brave child had crossed the weed in utter darkness—knowing full well that she could get help from Nelson Lee and the boys. She had already met Nipper, and that meeting, although brief, had given her confidence.

She was talking to Nipper now, as they stood against the battered old bulwarks of the brig, waiting for Nelson Lee to give the word. Mary was the most graceful child of nature Nipper had ever seen; since a mite of three she had lived in this wilderness, and she had grown into a girl of surprising beauty. Her dark eyes were now filled with intense anxiety.

“Oh, why don’t we go?” she murmured. “My father may be dying! And my mother—”

“We’ll soon be off now,” interrupted Nipper gently. “And you can be certain that the gov’nor—that is, Mr. Lee—will make short work of these ruffians. I want to get a smack at Captain Angel myself—if only to pay him for this!”

He indicated the girl’s shoulder. She was wearing a quaint dress of dried weed. Her fair shoulders were bare, and on one of them there was a length of surgical plaster—hiding the deep furrow that had been scored by a bullet.

“It’s nothing!” she said quickly.

“It might have killed you,” replied Nipper. “The dirty hound! Firing on women and girls! Captain Angel thinks that he’s going to rule things, does he? By Jingo! Wait until we get on the scene!”

She looked at him with frank curiosity.

“You have great faith in Mr. Lee, haven’t you?” she asked.

“Faith!” echoed Nipper, with a laugh. “Why, the gov’nor can do anything! He’s a corker! And in an affair of this sort, when he’s up against some crooked rotters, he’s at his best. Just between you and me, Mary, the gov’nor revels in excitement and adventure. You won’t have heard of him, of course, but he’s one of the greatest detectives in the world—a man who has been tracking criminals for the better part of his life. The only pity is that we haven’t got old Dorrie with us.”

“Old Dorrie?”

“A friend of ours, named Lord Dorri-more,” explained Nipper. “He’s a beggar for adventure, too. He would have revelled in this business. As brave as a lion, and—”

“Ready, old man?” asked Fenton, joining them. “We’re just off, you know.”

“Oh, I’m glad!” cried Mary. “But you must be very careful; those horrible men will kill you if you give them the chance!”

Nelson Lee came up, brisk and active.

“I don’t really like taking you, young lady, but I’m afraid I shall have to,” he said. “We want you as a guide—for you seem to know your way about this wilderness of weed in the darkness, and even the mist does not confuse you.”

“I’m used to it,” she replied simply. “I’ve lived nearly all my life here.”

“Mr. Adams and myself will lead the way—with you between us,” continued Nelson Lee. “The boys will follow, and then the men will bring up the rear.”

The castaways of the *Vulture* numbered fourteen—or fifteen, with the girl. For in addition to Nelson Lee and the boys there were Mr. Adams and Olsen, a kindly old Swedish sailor; Chips, the cockney cook, and four other sailors. Two were Danes, and could not speak much English. The other two men were apparently Americans, but they were tough customers, anyhow, and Nelson Lee did not entirely trust them.

However, this was no occasion for picking and choosing; and, in any case, it was impossible to leave these two men behind. They professed themselves to be willing to fight, and to “get their own back” on Captain Angel. More than that Lee could not expect.

All of them were armed with heavy lengths of wood, which would serve as excellent weapons in an emergency. Nelson Lee and Mr. Adams, in addition, possessed revolvers and plenty of ammunition, and one or two flares which they had found in the *Vulture*’s hold.

The lanterns were extinguished, and then the trek across the weed commenced. It almost seemed that Mary Weston could see in the dark. She led the way unfalteringly, and without the slightest sign of hesitation.

The weed was spongy underfoot, but so thickly was it massed that the adventurers did not even get their feet wet. The weed, it seemed, projected many feet above the level of the sea. It was a thick, densely-packed growth—probably extending downwards for several hundreds of feet. Only here and there were pitfalls—loose masses where a false step might lead one into a watery trap. But Mary seemed to know exactly where these treacherous spots lay, and she avoided them with ease. The mists swirled round continuously, and everything ahead was obscured.

Suddenly, the girl clutched at Nelson Lee’s arm.

“I heard something then!” she whispered.

“No, no—not from the island. It was something else—something nearer! Oh, I believe those men are out, and that—”

A sudden shout came from one of the boys.

“What is it?” called Nelson Lee sharply.

“I—I don’t know, sir!” came Watson’s voice. “But something touched me—some



Before Captain Angel could fire Nelson Lee leapt forward. His fist crashed against the other's face and the brutal captain staggered backwards.

thing horribly cold and clammy and slimy! Like—like a human hand! I felt it—Ugh! There is it again! Something's coming at me, you chaps! Quick, I can't see—"

He broke off, panic-stricken, and Nelson Lee, running back over the spongy weed, quickly ignited a flare. There was a sizzling crackle, and the flare burst into dazzling fire.

"Look!" yelled Nipper incredulously.

There were gasps from some of the others. Figures were to be seen just within the radius of the light. The queerest, strangest figures imaginable. They seemed human, and yet, at the same time, they had an appearance of weird grotesqueness!

### CHAPTER 3.

#### The Weed Monsters!

"WHAT are they?" asked Nipper huskily.

"I may be wrong, brother, but they closely resemble the earliest form of mankind," said Browne. "Half fish—half man! Yet it is difficult to determine in this uncertain light. Are they animal, or are they human?"

The creatures were almost beyond the radius of the flare; for as it had blazed out the weird figures had retreated. They could just be seen, scuttling farther and farther back.

They walked on two legs for the most part, although every now and again some of them would adopt crouching attitudes, running about like gorillas. They seemed to be covered with thick furry hair. Their faces were hairy, too, with flat noses, huge mouths, and tiny, bead-like, staring eyes.

"They are the Weed Monsters!" whispered Mary Weston fearfully.

"You have seen them before?" asked Nelson Lee.

"Only once," she replied, clinging to him. "Five years ago, when I was a little girl. They attacked our island, and it was only after hours and hours of fighting that they were beaten off. Father says that they only came because they were starving; there had been three or four months of terrible dryness, and the weed was shrivelled up everywhere. Half of us were suffering from fever, and if it hadn't been for Dr. Pearson we should all have died. Then the rain came, and saved us."

"Rain?" mused Lee. "Then you do get changes of weather in this queer place?"

"Oh, yes; these misty nights only last for a month or two, and generally in July," replied Mary. "Oh, look! They're coming nearer—they're getting bold!"

The flare suddenly went out, and the darkness which descended was deeper than before. A rolling bank of mist came sweeping down upon the party, damp, clammy, and bringing a deadly chill with it.

"These Weed Monsters live miles and miles away—right on the other side of the Sargasso," explained Mary breathlessly. "We thought we should never see them again; they must have found out, somehow, that you people had come. They only attack at night. Father says they can't see properly in the daytime; and any kind of light helps to drive them away."

"Are they human?" asked Mr. Adams, with a shiver.

"Father says they are," replied the girl. "He thinks they must be the descendants of some unfortunate people who were trapped in the Sargasso hundreds of years ago—perhaps thousands of years ago."

"And during the centuries they have descended to this pitiable level," said Nelson Lee. "They have lost speech, probably, and are now more animal than human. Their bodies have become covered with hair, their mouths have developed, their ears are double the size of ours, too."

A sudden shout came from one of the men; a frightened yell, shrill with terror.

"Come nearer!" shouted Nelson Lee urgently. "We must keep together in a compact body. Boys, do not hesitate to use your sticks if necessary."

Gurgling grunts and gasps came from the darkness. Browne and Stevens and Nipper and Watson were already fighting. Out of the darkness, slimy hands had clutched at them. They felt themselves being surrounded; there were scores of these loathsome enemies.

Nipper felt physically sick. The air was filled with a noxious, fish-like odour. Reaching out, Nipper clutched at a hairy arm—a wet, slippery thing which wriggled instantly out of his grip.

"Where are the lights?" he panted. "Hasn't somebody got another flare? Guv'nor!"

More hands came out of the darkness. Nipper hit out wildly, but he couldn't do much. The Weed Monsters were pressing round; they had isolated him from the rest. In spite of all his efforts he felt overpowered. Hands were clutching at his shoulders, his arms, his neck, his legs. They bore him down. He fell upon the weed, struggling frantically.

"Lights—lights!" yelled Tommy Watson. "They've got Nipper, sir! They're trying to get us, too! For goodness sake—"

He broke off with a scream, for a number of the creatures had surrounded him, and had dragged at his feet, pulling him over. He sprawled on the weed, clutching at the tough, cable-like growth.

"Look out, you fellows!" came Nelson Lee's steady voice.

Zizzzzzh!

With a hissing roar, another flare blazed out. Nelson Lee beheld an amazing sight. Several members of the party were beset and surrounded by the horrible creatures of the weed.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Both Lee and Adams let fly. Their revolvers spat fire and lead. Screaming cries came from some of the Weed Monsters, and they fell back. Some of them collapsed, writhing. The others scuttled off.

"I hate doing it, but it's their lives or ours," muttered Nelson Lee. "By James! We'll need to fight even harder!"

He dashed forward, holding the flare aloft. Nipper was still held, and Lee recklessly plunged in amidst the Weed Monsters. Hitting out right and left, even thrusting the flare into the faces of the loathsome creatures, he rapidly dispersed them. They scuttled away, with strange, guttural cries.

Olsen the big Swede, was fighting hammer and tongs. He was an elderly man, but he was as hard as nails, with the strength of a giant. Lee caught a glimpse of Olsen as he lifted one of the weed creatures clear into the air. Olsen flung him amongst his fellows, and there was a fresh series of horrible shouts.

Crack! Crack!

Mr. Adams was still shooting. Browne and Fenton were fighting like mad. It was hot while it lasted, but after another minute or so the Weed Monsters seemed to realise that they stood no chance. They ran in all directions, progressing in great leaps, most of them now using all fours.

"Anybody hurt?" asked Lee sharply.

"I don't think so, sir!" said Fenton, breathing hard. "Nipper seems to have been treated more roughly than anybody

—"

"I'm all right," panted Nipper. "Ugh! The awful things fairly got hold of me, and they were carrying me off! Oh, my hat!"

"Hadn't we better light another flare?" suggested Mr. Adams.

"That is the difficulty," said Lee, frowning. "We don't want to give Angel any warning that we are approaching. So far, I think, we are safe; the light from these flares has not penetrated through the mist as far as the island."

Mary plucked at Nelson Lee's sleeve.

"I don't think the Weed Monsters will bother us any more," she said softly. "Some of them were injured, and they have been carried off. Father once told me that when these strange creatures are hurt, they lose their desire for fighting. I believe they have gone completely away."

"I hope you are right," said Lee quietly. "At all events, there is only one thing we can do—and that is to carry on."

He urged them all to collect round more closely. The flare had now gone out, and they were once again in the utter blackness. Mary was in a fever of impatience; even now she did not know exactly what had happened to her father. Perhaps he was dead—killed by those brutal ruffians who had turned so suddenly upon their benefactors. All Mary wanted to do was to get back to the island as quickly as possible.

They advanced in a solid body, Mary leading the way. Out of the mist a dull, yellowish glow now appeared. The girl tightened her grip on Nelson Lee's arm as they came within sight of it. The glow was curiously unreal, and it seemed to come from somewhere in mid-air.

"I think we are safe, now, from the Weed Monsters," said Mary. "They wouldn't dare to attack us so near to the island."

"What is that light?" asked the detective.

"It is the lamp at the top of the mast on Westminster Pier—father always keeps it burning," replied Mary. "These weed creatures don't like light, and it helps to keep them off."

"Westminster Pier!" repeated Nipper in astonishment.

"It is a wooden staging which has been built out from the stern of father's old ship, the *Araminta*," explained the girl. "We always call it Westminster Pier—because this end of the island is known as Westminster. Years and years ago, when I was quite a baby, father and all the other men had a big meeting, and the different parts of the island were called by different names. There's Westminster and Bayswater and Camden Town and Hampstead and Islington and Camberwell and Streat-ham, you see."

"Well I'm jiggered!" said Nipper, with a grin. "Not a bad idea, when you come to think of it."

"Father thought it was better than calling the ships by their proper names," explained Mary. "It's—it's more like a real township, isn't it?"

"I can see that we are going to be exceedingly interested in your wonderful floating island," said Nelson Lee. "Now, tell me, young lady: in which—er—district do you live?"

"Westminster," replied Mary promptly. "Father and mother live in Westminster because father is the king. And here, in Westminster, too, is the island parliament—but it only meets once or twice a year, you know."

"Then I don't think we'll attempt any landing, as it were, at Westminster," said Lee, in a low voice. "Captain Angel is bound to be here—and we want to take him by surprise." He pointed. "Where do we get to over in this direction?" he added.

"That's Camden Town over there," replied the girl.

"And who lives there?"

"Well, it's really an old steamer," explained Mary. "It juts out from the rest a bit, and it's joined up by a lot of wooden staging. Dr. Pearson lives in Camden Town; he's fitted up part of the ship as his surgery, and he's got ever such a comfortable home, too."

"Then," said Lee, "I think we will concentrate upon Camden Town."

They stole off over the spongy weed, until the beacon light on Westminster Pier had been swallowed up in the mist.

## CHAPTER 4.

### The Attack!

"**CAREFUL!**" warned Mary Weston, in the faintest of whispers.

Suddenly a great iron wall loomed up just ahead. It was the rusty side of a derelict steamer.

"If we creep along here, towards the left, there's a little staging," said Mary. "In the daytime there's a ladder in position leading down to the weed, but every night it is pulled up. Not that it makes any difference to me," she added simply. "I generally slide down the posts, and it's just as easy to climb up again."

Still keeping together in a compact body, the adventurers moved parallel with the hull of the old steamer, and presently they came to the staging which the girl had referred to. They could feel it rather than see it, for just here the mist was thicker than ever.

Nelson Lee was the first to swarm up one of the upright posts of the staging. Nipper, Browne, Fenton and the other cubs followed. Mr. Adams waited behind to see that all the men were successful. Mary, of course, reached the top of the staging even before Lee, for she climbed with the agility of an acrobat.

"Where are we now?" whispered Nipper.

"There's a sort of wooden barrier between us and the deck," she replied. "In fact, the whole deck is roofed over with a big,



Nelson Lee and his party  
found themselves attacked  
on all sides by the loathsome  
Weed Monsters. A desperate  
fight for life ensued . . .

heavy thatch. I don't quite know how we're going to break through."

"Will it be safe to strike a match?" asked Lee softly.

"I think so," she said. "There's nobody who can see from here—especially with this mist."

Nelson Lee struck a match, and he saw immediately in front of him something which looked like the wall of a barn. It was covered with weatherboards, and overhead there was the thick thatch. But during those brief moments Lee saw that some of the boards were warped, and he could get his fingers into the interstices.

"Catch hold here, some of you," he said quickly. "That's the style!"

The match went out, but it had served its purpose. Lee, Adams and several of the boys grasped the long board, and they exerted all their pressure. Suddenly there was a splintering crack, and the board broke away.

"My hat!" muttered Nipper. "Somebody must have heard that!"

"Never mind!" cut in Nelson Lee. "Get hold of the other board—quickly! The main thing is to get in—and if it comes to a fight, we shall be ready."

Now that the first board was out the others were easy. Two of them were torn completely away and tossed down to the weed. Then Nelson Lee wormed his way through, followed by the others. They found themselves on the dry deck of the steamer, and Lee, creeping forward, now detected a glow from the saloon skylight amidships. The skylight was open, and Lee was very careful as he approached.

With a word of warning to the others not to come too near, he peered down into the saloon. The skylight was wide open, and a haze of tobacco smoke was rising. The first man Lee saw was Schwartz, the bo'sun of the Vulture. Schwartz was sitting back in a chair, smoking and drinking, and there was another man with him.

"Don't know what it was," Schwartz was saying. "Sounded like some wood cracking. Hey, you!" he added roughly. "What was that noise just now?"

Lee, looking towards the other side of the saloon, saw a tired, elderly man sitting on a comfortable settee. This man was Dr. Pearson. The saloon was more like a comfortable living-room than a ship's lounge.

"I don't know," came Dr. Pearson's voice wearily. "Why ask me? Some of your infernal companions, I dare say. You rogues! You will be made to pay for this sooner or later!"

"Aw, cut it out!" said Schwartz, with an oath. "We don't wanna hear any more from you!"

Nelson Lee backed away, and he found his companions waiting in a group some little distance from the skylight.

"I don't think we shall have much trouble here," whispered Lee. "As far as I can make out, there are only two men. There is another, however—a slim, elderly bearded man—"

"That's Dr. Pearson!" interrupted Mary. "How is he? Have they hurt him in any way? Oh, please let's do something!"

"Well, my girl, you'll have to remain here," said Lee. "I



will not allow you to be mixed up—"

"But I've got to show you the way down!" interrupted Mary quickly. "Come on—this way."

Without waiting for Lee to make any further objections she darted down the deck. She was evidently a girl of exceptional spirit—a girl of sterling courage. The boys, who had admired her from the first, were now ready to be her willing slaves.

The companionway stood wide open. A light at the bottom of it enabled the invaders to see what they were doing. There had been many structural alterations since this vessel had been caught in the grip of the Sargasso—the roof overhead, the wooden walls, with the various windows—and this very companionway was no longer akin to a ship. It had been converted into a wide, open stairway, and over the top of it was a beautifully designed flower arbour,



Nelson Lee and his party found themselves attacked on all sides by the loathsome Weed Monsters. A desperate fight for life ensued . . .

Nelson Lee was the first to get to the bottom of the stairs; he saw a light gleaming through the transom of the big door just ahead. With two strides he reached the door and flung it open.

Schwartz leapt to his feet, his hand reaching for his revolver.

"Hands up!" commanded Lee curtly.

"You doggone son of a sea cook!" snarled Schwartz. "Who told you to come 'ere interfering—"

"Hands up, I say!" snapped Lee dangerously.

Crack!

Schwartz recklessly attempted to fire, but Lee was first. The man gave a scream of agony, and his weapon went flying across the room. He twisted round, clutching at his right arm.

"Hold them!" ordered Lee as the boys rushed in.

There was no actual fight. Schwartz and the other man were seized, bowled over, and within a couple of minutes they were held down. Mr. Adams found some rope, and the pair were quickly tied.

"How many more of you here?" demanded Mr. Adams, as he bent over Schwartz.

"Find out!" grated the ruffian.

"How many?" repeated the second officer of the Vulture, as he dug his fingers into the man's windpipe. "Better hurry, my friend! I'm in no mood for nonsense!"

"Let go!" gasped Schwartz. "There's—there's nobody! Only Straker and me. The rest are over on one of the other ships; we've been lookin' after this guy."

"All right," said Mr. Adams, satisfied that the man had been forced into telling the truth.

Without compunction Schwartz and Straker were bundled into an adjoining cabin, and the door was locked upon them. Dr. Pearson, in the meantime, was looking at his rescuers with wide-open eyes.

"Who are you?" he asked. "And Mary! What are you doing here?"

"Oh, these people are friends—they have come to help us!" cried the girl, as she ran to Dr. Pearson and clung to him. "This is Mr. Nelson Lee, and these boys

are—"

"Thank Heaven!" interrupted the doctor. "Perhaps there's hope for us, after all! Perhaps these brutal scoundrels will be overpowered."

"Where is my father?" asked Mary fiercely. "Please tell me! Oh, don't hide anything from me, doctor! If father is dead I'd rather know—"

with artistic trellis-work. Creepers were growing in profusion, and, hanging in pots, there were all manner of gaily-coloured flowers. It seemed that these people—these castaways who had been lost to the world for so many years—had done their utmost to camouflage the ships so that they more closely resembled ordinary houses.

However, Nelson Lee and the others had no time to appreciate these interesting points.



"He is not dead, child," interrupted Dr. Pearson, stroking her hair. "There, there! Don't look so frightened."

"But they shot father—I saw them!" she breathed.

"He is injured, but I do not think for a moment that he is in any danger," said the other gently. "The bullet lodged in his shoulder, but I was not allowed to help him in any way. Your father is strong, and if he receives prompt attention there is no reason why he should not make a quick recovery."

"Oh, but where is he?" asked Mary, looking round wildly.

"I think they've got him over at Hampstead," said the doctor, his words sounding strange to the others. "The last I saw of your father and mother was when those men were taking them along the Hampstead road. They were just going round the Spaniards Corners."

He turned to Nelson Lee.

"All this, no doubt, sounds very strange to you, sir," he said, with a quiet, old-world dignity. "We have our own names for these ships. The vessel we know as Hampstead is really an old steel brigantine. The Morrison family lives there—Mr. and Mrs. Morrison, their two girls, and an infant son. Mr. Morrison is our tailor," he added dryly.

"How do we reach Hampstead?" asked Nelson Lee. "We have come here, Dr. Pearson, to help you in every way we can. We know that Captain Angel and the men with him are ruffians of the worst type. They have, I understand, attacked you and seized the entire island?"

"I believe they have done so—but, to tell you the truth, everything is so confused that I don't quite know what has actually happened," replied the doctor wearily. "We took these men in thinking that they were castaways—that they needed succour. They told us abominable lies concerning you—that you had mutinied, that you were murderers. I know now how foolish we were to believe such a story. I cannot express my gratitude—"

"You can thank us, doctor, after we have been successful in this mission," broke in Lee. "If you will act as guide we will go at once to Hampstead. Adams, I think you had better remain here with two or three of the men. If you are attacked, and need help, fire three shots of your revolver."

"Right you are, sir," said Mr. Adams promptly.

Nelson Lee took the boys with him, and Olsen and one of the other men. Mary and Dr. Pearson led the way. They went up the stairs again, crossed the old steamer's deck, and reached a rough, crude length of staging which stretched away into the blackness of the night.

"We call this the Camden Town road," explained Dr. Pearson. "It is just a short structure leading from this ship to the next—for, of course, they are not absolutely hull to hull. Some of our ships are two or three hundreds yards apart, indeed."

"And connected by staging in this way?" asked Lee.

"Oh, yes—all of them," said the doctor. "We have made many improvements during the past five or six years. There is not a single ship in this central group which is not connected by a road or footpath of some kind. The more isolated vessels are merely used as storehouses and such-like."

Having crossed the staging, they now found themselves on another ship. Lights were gleaming from the skylights here, too, and overhead there was a thatched roof, just the same as the other. Voices could be heard—raucous, singing voices.

The deck of this particular ship had been converted into a veritable flower garden. In the subdued light Lee could see that there were cunningly contrived flower-beds all round. There were wooden boxes filled with a loose, gravelly kind of soil, in which grew tomato plants, cucumbers, and even melons. Creepers ran overhead in profusion.

"Plenty of ballast in some of these old crocks," whispered Dr. Pearson, "and we found one ship with a big cargo of fertiliser."

Lee nodded. He did not even approach the skylights, but made straight for the staircase which led down to the saloon and the cabins. As before, the doors were wide open. Captain Angel's men obviously were not expecting any attack. They fondly believed that the peaceful inhabitants of this "island" were incapable of any hostility; and such was their arrogance that they did not even think of the party from the Vulture. After all, the Vulture was far away across the weed, and it was inconceivable to these rascals that Nelson Lee and Mr. Adams and the others should cross over in the blackness of the night.

Nelson Lee strode boldly into the big apartment, where two lamps were glowing. Three of Angel's men were sitting round the table; they were playing cards. Over in one corner crouched a woman and two girls—these latter being about seventeen and eighteen. There was a little boy, too. Not far from them were two men, and one was Captain Weston, the elected "king" of this strange community. He was lying back on a big chair, his face pale and drawn. His ankles were bound. The other man was small, round-shouldered and elderly. He was bound hand and foot.

"Father!" cried Mary, running recklessly forward.

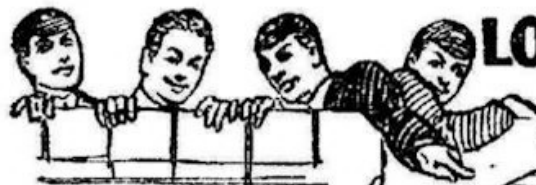
Nelson Lee took no notice of her, but walked quickly to the table, his gun ready.

"Hands up—all of you!" he commanded sharply. "Now, then—no nonsense!"

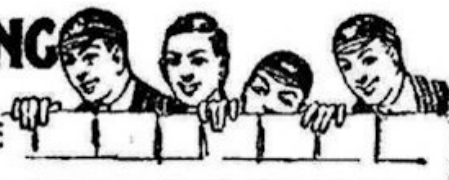
"Gosh!" gasped one of the men. "It's that swell detective guy!"

Before they could take any action the boys were upon them. Nipper and Tommy Watson pulled one of the men back in his chair, and he crashed over on the floor. The next moment the two youngsters were on him. Browne and Stevens attended to the

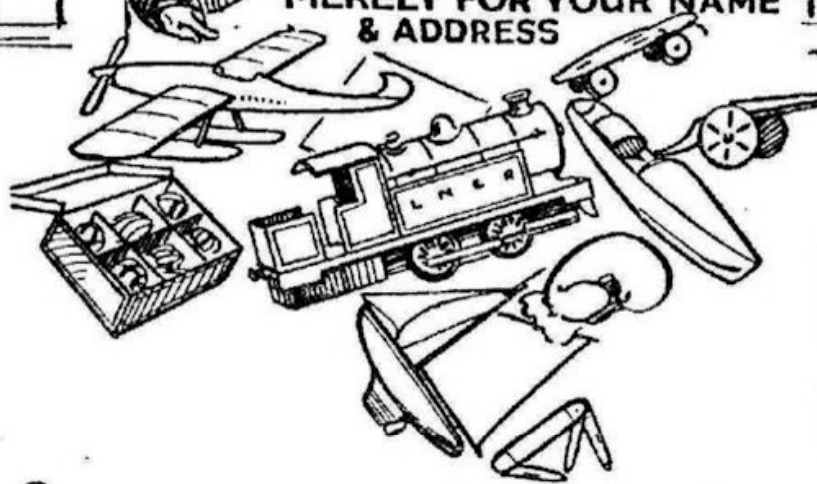
(Continued on page 26.)



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- W. Ward, 58, Wise Road, Stratford, E.15.
- E. W. Wood, 10, Green Road, Kendal.
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## TRAPPED IN THE SARGASSO!

(Continued from page 24.)

second man—and they made no mistake. Fenton and the doctor dealt with the third. They were roughly bound and pushed into another room. A quick search proved that there were no more of Captain Angel's men here.

"Short shrift—it is the only way," said Nelson Lee cheerfully. "These impudent rogues must have been off their heads, or they would never have attempted any such *coup*. Heaven knows that we are all in the same boat, and it is sheer madness for us to be at one another's throats."

"I am glad to hear you say that, sir," said Captain Weston quietly. "It was because we never dreamed that these men would turn upon us that we allowed them the full privileges of our homes."

Dr. Pearson was bending over him.

"Everything will be all right now, old friend," he said. "Mr. Lee and these others will soon put things to rights. Now, you must not concern yourself at all. Let me have a good look at your injury."

Before Captain Weston could answer there came the distant sound of firing, accompanied by raucous shouts. Evidently the excitement of the night was only just commencing.

### CHAPTER 5.

#### What the Dawn Brought!

**R**UNNING up to the covered deck, Nelson Lee came face to face with Mr. Adams and his men.

"Sorry, sir!" panted Mr. Adams. "Angel and Cragg and several others must have got wind of what was happening, and they suddenly swarmed upon us. Olsen has been hit in the arm, but except for that we haven't suffered any casualties. We had to quit, though—the game was too hot for us."

"And Angel and Cragg?" asked Lee quickly. "Where are they? What are they doing?"

"Coming this way, I think," replied the second mate. "Angel is like a madman—raving and roaring and cursing. He's out for mischief."

"It's high time that ruffianly hound was subdued," said Lee angrily.

Dr. Pearson came running up.

"Gentlemen—gentlemen!" he urged. "Captain Weston has made a suggestion. Any kind of fighting is difficult in the darkness, and it may lead to tragedies. Captain Weston suggests that we should move at once."

"Move? Where to?" asked Lee. "I am not sure that I approve of running away."

"You don't understand!" interrupted the doctor. "This island is really two islands, if you can understand me. When daylight comes you will see what I mean. There are actually two collections of ships, and they are joined by an extra long length of stag-

ing. It is what we call the Central Road. Captain Weston suggests that we should take the women—in fact, everybody—and get across that road. Once on the other part of the island we shall be comparatively safe. Let these rogues have this other part to themselves."

Nelson Lee thought rapidly.

"It might be a good idea—until tomorrow, at all events," he said, with a glance at Mr. Adams. "It will save a lot of promiscuous shooting in the dark. Well, we are in your hands, Dr. Pearson; it is for you to lead the way."

**C**APTAIN WESTON, supported by his daughter and Dr. Pearson, were the first to go off into the darkness. Nelson Lee and his party formed a body-guard. Mrs. Weston, it seemed, had been taken away by some of the other people on the island at the first attack. She and the majority of the other inhabitants were already on the other section. From hulk to hulk they went, an extraordinary journey for the newcomers.

"It is not far now," said Captain Weston, with an effort. "This ship we are just approaching is an old United States destroyer. Once across this we come to the long staging which spans the Central—"

He paused abruptly, and the others could tell why. There was a glare of lights ahead. The figures of men could be seen carrying great flaring torches.

"We are cut off!" said Dr. Pearson anxiously. "Those men are standing at the junction—or crossroads, as we call them. There is no other way."

"Wait here," said Nelson Lee. "I don't think this will take us very long."

He strode forward, Mr. Adams with him. Nipper and Browne and the others quickly followed.

This old destroyer was not covered in like the other ships; it was only used, it seemed, as a roadway from one part of the island to another. Scarcely any of the superstructure was left; it was little better than a total wreck—although time, aided by these Lost People, had done much to soften the gaunt ugliness of the debris.

At the other end, where the staging commenced, the men with the flares were standing, barring the way. There were two stagings—a junction, as Dr. Pearson had said. One led off to Westminster; the other branched at right angles, and connected up the other part of the island. The figures were those of Captain Blackford Angel, Mr. Cragg, Schwartz, and some others.

"Sink me for a one-eyed porpoise!" came Angel's blaring tones. "It's that cussed swab, Lee! Him an' his bloomin' boys!"

Nelson Lee ran now, and he was the first to approach the burly rascal.

"What madness is this, Captain Angel?" he demanded angrily. "What do you hope to gain by creating all this disturbance?"

"None o' your durned lip!" roared Captain Angel. "I'm boss here! See? I was skipper aboard the Vulture—an' I'm skipper here! When I gives an order, it's got to be obeyed!"

"You have apparently forgotten that you are no longer in command of a ship, Captain Angel," snapped Nelson Lee. "I have one or two old scores to settle with you—but they can come later. For the present, all I want you to do is to get out of the way."

"I'll get out o' your way when I want to—an' not afore!" thundered the skipper. "An' see 'ere! I've got a gun, an' if you ain't more respec'ful, I'll use it!" A sudden murderous light leapt into his eyes. "I'll use it now!" he went on ferociously.

"Who's to stop me? There's no police 'ere—no prisons! An' I'm king of this island, too!"

He levelled his revolver, and pulled the trigger. There was a flash of fire, a vicious hum, and a bullet sang past Nelson Lee's head. Had the captain been more sober,

his aim might have been more accurate. Nelson Lee leapt forward with deadly purpose.

Crash!

Before Captain Angel could pull the trigger again, Nelson Lee's fist drove with tremendous force into his evil face. The skipper reeled back, swayed sideways, and crashed against the wooden rail of the staging. It gave way under the pressure, and a wild scream sounded. Captain Angel plunged down, to strike the spongy weed with a dull thud.

"On 'em, you chaps!" yelled Nipper. "Come on—now's our chance!"

"Hurrah!"

The boys were glad enough to get into action. They flung themselves to the attack, and within a moment a free fight was in progress. It was hot and desperate while it lasted.

Mr. Cragg went down on to the weed, following his precious skipper. Schwartz and the others, considerably the worse for wear,



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managed to escape and bolted back to one of the other hulks. A few random shots came in the darkness, but they were not dangerous.

"I think we can get through now," said Nelson Lee crisply.

Within fifteen minutes that part of the island had been completely evacuated by its rightful inhabitants. It was left in the sole occupation of Captain Angel and his men.

There was great rejoicing amongst the simple people of this island when Captain Weston was brought in, and when all the others were found to be safe. It had been a night of anxiety and torment so far; but now it seemed that the peril was over.

Nelson Lee left Mr. Adams, Oslen and Fenton at the end of the Central Road; they were to hold it against any possible invaders, and if an attack developed they were to send for help immediately. Not that there was much likelihood of this.

In some subtle way, Nelson Lee's personality had already impressed itself upon all. He was, indeed, a born leader; and the manner in which he had handled this affair had proved that he was a man to be trusted and respected. He took command of the latest situation with the same coolness, and nobody even thought of questioning him.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen, I want you to get some rest," he said. "You have had a harrowing night, and what you need is sleep. You may confidently rely upon us to afford you every protection from now onwards."

"We are grateful to you, sir," said Captain Weston quietly. "Why should you take all these risks on our behalf?"

"Later, Captain Weston, you will understand," replied Lee. "We have our own scores to settle with Angel and Cragg. I am glad that we now have the opportunity of settling that account."

"It will be difficult—very, very difficult," put in Dr. Pearson, shaking his head. "Life here, Mr. Lee, is not the same as elsewhere in the world. We are cut off—forgotten—with no earthly possibility of ever escaping from this eternal weed. In our own simple way, we have done our best to make life bearable. But what would I not give—what would not any of us give—for the opportunity of returning home? England! By Heaven! What pictures I can conjure up!" he added, with a sigh.

"And now, like a blight, these ruffians have come amongst you to destroy your peace," said Nelson Lee. "Well, we are here, too—and I do not think that Captain Angel will stand much chance. Before long he will be put in his place—and kept there."

THE night passed.

Nelson Lee joined Mr. Adams outside. Nipper and the other boys reluctantly obeyed Nelson Lee's orders and found some sleep. When they awoke, broad daylight had come. The sun was shining through the haze, and the heat was already

becoming intense. Going out, the boys found much activity; and they were amazed and freshly startled by the wonderful spectacle which was spread before their eyes.

Hitherto they had only seen this island from afar. It had seemed very much like an ordinary collection of hulks and wrecks. Now they were actually on the island itself, and from this viewpoint everything was different.

Many of the decks were beautified with flower beds; in other places there were elaborate gardens—with all sorts of vegetables growing. The ships, in most cases, had been converted into homes. In every possible way the rooms had been made to resemble sitting-rooms and bed-rooms of houses. Standing on one of the highest points, the boys could see the network of staging, leading from ship to ship, forming roadways and passages in a bewildering profusion.

There was the one big staging joining up the two collections of hulks—the Central Road. That other part of the island, which consisted of Westminster, Camden Town, Hampstead and Bayswater, was much smaller than this. It was now solely occupied by Captain Angel and his men.

"We'll soon have them out," said Nelson Lee grimly. "We can't allow them to have their own way for long."

"But what, exactly, are we going to do with them?" asked Mr. Adams dubiously. "I mean, what *can* we do? We can't lock them up."

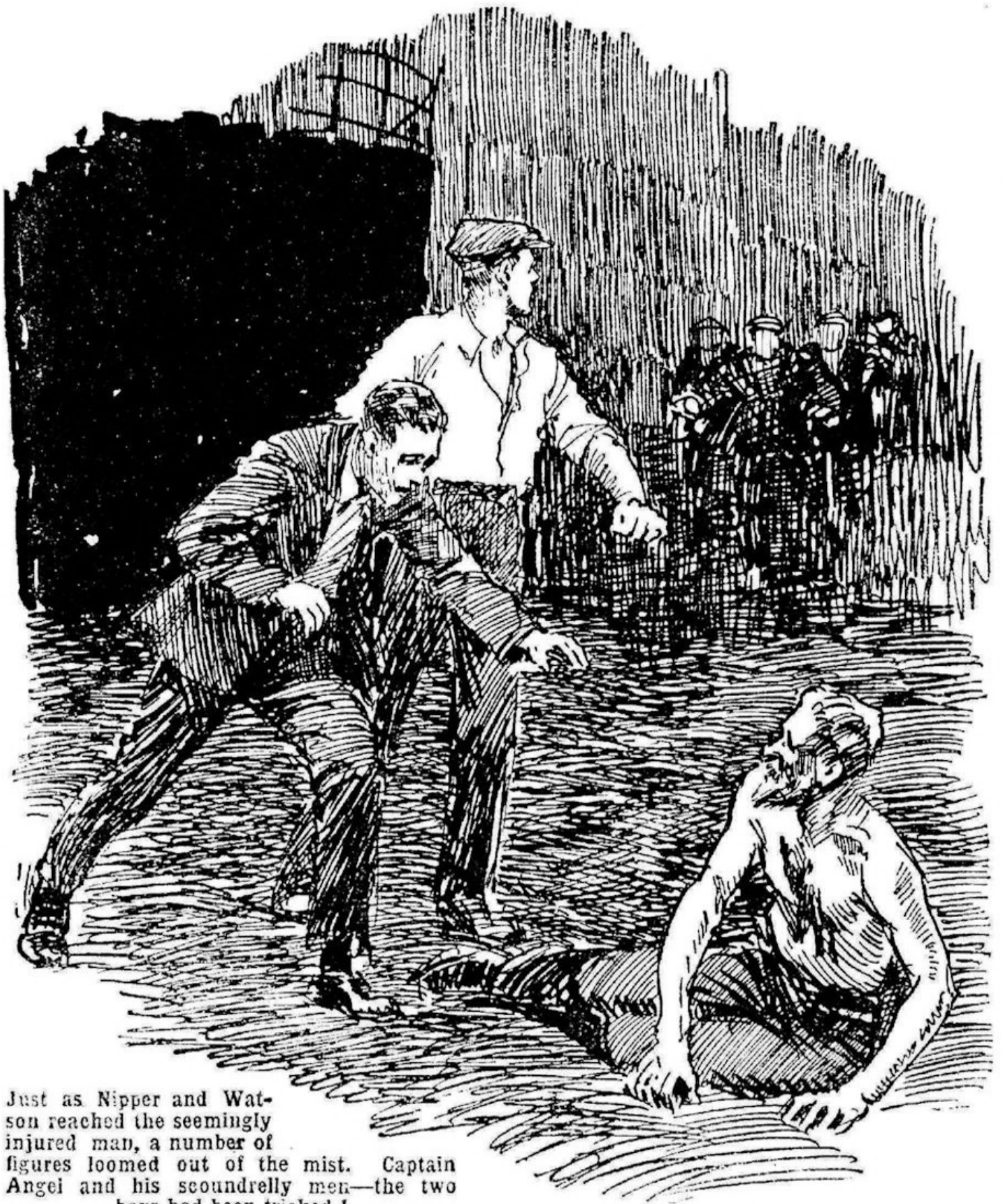
"We can deport them," retorted Lee. "We can consign them to some old hulk, a mile or two away from this central island, and we can take such measures that we shall not be bothered with them in the future. They have alienated themselves by their conduct; they have forfeited their right to live with these good people in this community."

Captain Weston and Dr. Pearson joined Nelson Lee later. The elected "king" was looking rather pale and shaky, and he carried one arm in a sling; but he refused to take to his bed.

"Before I commence to thank you for what you have done, Mr. Lee, there is one other duty I have got to perform," he said. "I want you and your boys to come round with me. My desire is to introduce you to our wives and children and friends. We shall know one another for a very long time."

"So, for the next hour, Lee and the "cubs" were escorted from ship to ship, and introduced to all and sundry. Everywhere they went they were regarded as conquering heroes. Even Nelson Lee was only just beginning to realise the panic and confusion which the rascally Captain Angel had spread through this community.

"It was so unexpected," explained Weston, some time later. "What reason was there for this man turning on us? We had given him shelter. He was a fellow mariner; the captain of a ship which had



Just as Nipper and Watson reached the seemingly injured man, a number of figures loomed out of the mist. Captain Angel and his scoundrelly men—the two boys had been tricked!

met with disaster. He told a story of mutiny and murder—

"I know," broke in Lee gently. "And when we tried to approach you, you warned us off."

"It was because of your approach that the trouble started," said the other quickly. "After you had gone I turned to Angel and questioned him very closely. I told him bluntly that you did not look like murderers and ruffians; and, in fact, I discredited his story to such an extent that I told him bluntly that we should take steps to get into immediate touch with you."

"He was very afraid of that, I dare say," said Lee dryly. "Having abandoned us to death by thirst, he was very anxious that he should not meet us again. There, Captain Weston, is your explanation for Angel's revolutionary movement. He decided that his only safe course was to seize control—to use his brutal methods here as he had always used them on his ship. As supreme controller, he could do very much as he liked; and by taking you by surprise he won the battle."

"Thank Heaven it was short-lived," put in Dr. Pearson fervently. He made a sweep-

ing gesture. "You see our years of work," he went on. "We get our wood from the decks of ships that we do not desire to use. These wrecks supply our every need—medicine, food, fuel, lighting, crockery, cooking utensils, and hundreds of other things. Eight years ago a hulk drifted in which contained a glorious supply of flower and vegetable seeds, and you can be sure we utilised them at once. Since then we have been enlarging our agricultural department."

"We've got two hulks out there," said Captain Weston, pointing, "the decks of which we have converted into fields, and we have grown some really excellent crops of potatoes and other vegetables. Our weather is steady as a rule—with a good deal of rain from November to March. By August, by the way, these mists will have completely gone, and then we get our really hot season."

"I take it that you never get gales?" asked Lee, with a glance at some of the fragile stagings.

"No, we get practically no wind at all," replied Captain Weston. "And, of course, referring back to food, occasionally our problems get acute. Most of these hulks contain big supplies—but it ferments or becomes rotten and is unfit for consumption. We are solving the problem to an extent by growing our own vegetables. We have found that monkey flesh is quite palatable, too—and there are plenty of monkeys. Again, by cutting deep holes in the weed, we have found that we can obtain a constant supply of fish. We are now making experiments with fruit."

"And, of course, a new wreck occasionally drifts in, such as ours," said Lee.

"We sight them at a distance now and again," said the monarch of this strange colony. "Naturally, there is a lot of excitement on such an occasion. Expeditions start off at once. Seldom do we find any living persons, but a new wreck generally means a fresh supply of tinned goods, and so forth. One came in three months ago with sufficient cases of condensed milk and bully beef and all kinds of canned fruit to last us for years. The one advantage of being in the Sargasso," he added dryly, "is that it is the central magnet, and these hulks are always drifting in with persistent regularity."

"A one-way traffic," nodded Lee gravely. "Of course, you have considered the possibilities of getting away from here—and returning to the outer world?"

"We have considered them, and we have put many schemes into operation," said the other. "And let me tell you at once, Mr. Lee, that there is absolutely no hope of escape. You and your boys are doomed to remain here for the rest of your lives. A stunning thought—one which will take you some weeks—perhaps months—to realise fully. It is a ghastly tragedy; yet we manage to enjoy life in our own quiet way.

Some people on earth are worse off, I dare say."

"We shall have some wonderful talks for weeks," said Dr. Pearson eagerly. "You must tell us all the latest news, Mr. Lee—and there must be a great deal for us to learn, since you are the first strangers who have come in for years. Our last arrival was a solitary sailor, nearly dead from thirst, on a derelict schooner."

"But about escaping," went on Lee. "In these days of wireless, surely you have been able to find some servicable apparatus on one of these wrecks?"

"There is not a man amongst us who understands wireless," replied Captain Weston. "And what would be the good, anyhow? Supposing we induced a vessel to come to our help, we should only lure them to share our own fate—for once a ship gets deeply into this weed it can never escape. We have travelled for scores of miles over the weed—we have sent expeditions in all directions. The ocean currents are too strong to allow of any escape. And there are other perils out beyond the weed," he added quietly. "You had a taste last night. There are the Weed Monsters. No, we are safer here."

And there was a note of quiet finality in his voice.

## CHAPTER 6.

### Captain Angel Pays a Call!

CAPTAIN ANGEL was in a black mood. He strode up and down the covered deck with his jaw aggressively thrust forward.

"They'll pay for it, Cragg!" he declared ferociously. "By hokey! They'll pay for it good and plenty!"

Mr. Cragg grunted.

"Easy enough to talk," he said, with a sneer. "I'd like to know just what we can do? They've got the bigger part of the island to themselves—and there's a mighty crowd of 'em. What with Lee an' them others, there must be nearly fifty men, an' thirty of 'em, at least, good for fightin'. We're only a 'andful by comparison."

Captain Angel made no reply for a moment or two. He continued to pace up and down. From below came the sounds of clattering and rough talk. Schwartz and the others were at breakfast.

"Besides," went on Mr. Cragg, "what's the good? Seems to me we're all in the same boat. There ain't no escape from this blamed place, an' if we're allus goin' to be at one another's throats—"

"Oh, no!" interrupted the rascally skipper. "Not allus, Mr. Cragg! That's where you're wrong. There can only be one boss in a place like this 'ere—an' I'm goin' to be the boss!"

"So you said yesterday," nodded Mr. Cragg,

"'Ow was I to know that Lee 'an them others would come interferin'?" blared the skipper.

"Well, they came, anyway—an' I don't see 'ow you can handle 'em," continued the mate. "They're too many for us, cap'n. I reckon the best thing we can do is to eat a bit of 'umble pie; send a message across sayin' that we was half drunk, an' didn't know what we were doin'. See? Get pally with 'em, like. Then, later on, we might be able to work things proper."

Captain Angel shook his head.

"In the fust place, they wouldn't believe us," he said. "In the second place, I ain't the kind of man to admit defeat. Not me! Seems we're booked to spend the rest of our days 'ere. There ain't a chance in a million that we'll ever see the outer world ag'in. And, by hokey, we might as well be the bosses in this blamed one-horse kingdom."

"Sounds all right, but——"

"We'll live a life of ease an' comfort, an' we'll make these other swabs do all the work," continued the captain. "My word is goin' to be law. Understand, Mr. Cragg? If I say that a man's got to be put to death, there's goin' to be no appeal! An' arter I've took command, the fust man I sentence will be Mister Blinking Nelson Lee!"

Mr. Cragg was practical.

"As I said afore, it's easy enough to talk," he grunted. "'Tain't no good us goin' for them others. There's too many of 'em. We'd be wiped up in a scrap."

"You ain't got no brains—an' you never 'ad any!" retorted Captain Angel sourly. "Strategy is what we've got to use 'ere—strategy, you fool!"

"You seem to fergit that Lee is pretty clever at strategy, too," the mate pointed out. "What about last night? What about the way 'im an' his boys took us by surprise? That wasn't strategy, was it?"

"Two can play at that game!" said the captain harshly. "We'll lie low for a bit, see? We won't do nothin' to-day; we'll make 'em think that we're at a sort o' loose end. Then, when they're off their guard—we'll strike!"

For the better part of the day Captain Angel prowled about on the decks of the ships that formed his part of the island. Now and again he ventured across some of the stagings, and constantly he stared over at the main section; but not once did he attempt to get into communication with the enemy. He displayed a lofty indifference.

Captain Angel was trying to think of some scheme whereby he could get the upper hand; and as the day progressed he was becoming more and more convinced—to his disgust—that Mr. Cragg was right. What, indeed, could they do?

They were a much smaller force, and they were not particularly well armed. There were only one or two firearms amongst them,

and only a very limited supply of ammunition. It was clear enough, too, that Nelson Lee had set a close watch; boys and men were posted at every strategical spot. If Captain Angel made the slightest aggressive move, it would be seen. After nightfall the position would be exactly the same. Guards would be placed everywhere, and any attempted surprise on the part of Angel's party would be doomed to failure.

It was as the evening mists were creeping over the weed that Angel thought of a plan. He considered it for some time before he took Mr. Cragg into his confidence. Cragg knew at once that some change had occurred, for Captain Angel's eyes were burning, and his face was deeply flushed.

"See them two boys?" said the skipper, pointing with a gnarled finger.

"Them two stuck on the end o' that old whaler?"

"Yes."

"What about 'em?"

"They're on the watch," said Captain Angel. "Put there by Lee's orders, I reckon. D'you see 'ow the mist keeps sweepin' in an' 'iding 'em up for a bit?"

"Well?" asked Mr. Cragg curiously.

"I just got an idea," said the skipper. "When the mist gets a bit worse we'll take Schwartz an' one o' the others, an' we'll slip across the weed."

"An' then what?"

"We'll grab them two boys and bring 'em here," said Angel cunningly. "If we do the job right, nobody won't see—or 'ear, either!"

"I don't foller," said the mate, staring. "What's the blamed good o' grabbin' them two kids? If you're lookin' for trouble, you'll find plenty of it. Them kids is wuss than wild tigers!"

"You wall-eyed son of a barnacle! Ain't you ever 'eard o' hostages?" demanded Captain Angel impatiently. "If only we can get them two boys as 'ostages we're sittin' pretty. We can dictate our own bloomin' terms. Rather than let them boys come to any 'arm Lee will agree to do any blamed thing I suggest."

Mr. Cragg stared, and then whistled.

"Blame me if I don't think you're right, cap'n," he said at length. "'Tain't such a bad idea, arter all."

IT was about half an hour after this that Nipper and Tommy Watson, leaning over the bulwarks of the old whaler, noticed that the mists were becoming dense.

"About time we were relieved, isn't it?" asked Watson. "We've been on duty for three hours."

"Mr. Adams and Olsen are relieving us, I think," said Nipper. "They ought to be here any minute now. By jingo! I'm hungry. Can't quite understand those



beggars over there," he added, with a nod towards the enemy's camp. "I believe they're up to some mischief. It's funny that they've made no sign during the day."

Tommy Watson shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, they can't do much, anyhow," he said. "There aren't enough of them. Besides, with Mr. Lee in command—he's practically king of this place now—we're as safe as houses."

Nipper suddenly rose to his feet.

"What was that?" he asked sharply in a low voice.

"I didn't hear anything."

"A sort of moan—from the weed!" said Nipper, staring down. "I'll swear I heard

He broke off. It came again, and then, dimly seen in the mist, a strange figure crawled into sight. It was the figure of a man, naked to the waist. He was clutching at the weed and dragging himself along with agonising slowness. Right across his chest, which was smeared with crimson, was a horrible, ugly wound.

"Help!" he moaned faintly. "Them brutes 'ave finished me!"

The man's pitiful condition aroused Nipper to immediate activity. A hot flush came into his face as he realised the meaning of this. This man, no doubt, had opposed Captain Angel, and he had been maltreated in consequence.

"Buzz back, Tommy, and bring the guv'nor!" said Nipper sharply. "I'll drop down to this man's help. Bring Dr. Pearson, too."

"Hold on!" said Watson. "I'd better help you first."

They dropped to the weed, rebounding on the spongy surface. Then, plunging across, they reached the side of the helpless man.

"All right," said Nipper gently. "We'll soon have you— Why, hallo! What the

He broke off, a note of alarm sounding in his voice. For his keen eyes had detected something which aroused his deepest suspicions. It wasn't blood on this man's chest. There was no wound at all. The whole thing was a fake!

"Look out, Tommy!" said Nipper tensely. "We'd better get back—"

Again he broke off. Figures loomed up out of the mist: Captain Angel and Mr. Cragg and Schwartz and another! They fell upon the two boys before they could move a couple of yards.

"Got 'em!" snarled the rascally skipper. "Careful, Cragg! Don't let 'em make an outcry!"

"What do you take me for?" retorted Mr. Cragg sourly.

He had fallen upon Tommy Watson, and he was forcing the unfortunate Tommy's face into the weed. Ropes were quickly bound round the boys, heavy cloth pads were wound round their faces. The two young prisoners were dealt with effectively and swiftly.

## CHAPTER 7.

### The Threat—and What Followed!

MR. ADAMS was not alarmed at first; he was only mildly annoyed.

"Young idiots!" he said, frowning. "Mr. Lee distinctly told them to remain here until you and I relieved them, Olsen. And they've gone!"

"You were a boy yourself once, sir," said the old Swede, shaking his head.

"Yes, I know—and all boys, I suppose, are irresponsible," said Mr. Adams. "Still, Nipper is a bit different. I can't understand why he should— By thunder! I wonder if something has happened to them?" he added, with sudden concern. "There's only a narrow passage-way connecting this ship with the next. They didn't pass us, Olsen. They're certainly not aboard here. What has become of them, then?"

They searched high and low over the old whaler. Nipper and Tommy Watson had certainly disappeared. Mr. Adams soon came to a decision.

"You wait here, Olsen," he said sharply. "I'll run back to Mr. Lee and report. Perhaps the boys have got in by now, and, if so, I'll give them the length of my tongue."

When Mr. Adams returned to the main party he received a fresh shock. Nipper and Watson had not been seen. Nelson Lee was instantly worried.

"I'll come with you, Adams," he said. "Perhaps an examination of the whaler's deck will provide us with a clue."

Just then one of the castaways—a man named Collins—came running up, his face expressive of excitement.

"Captain Angel is coming along the Central Road!" he panted. "He's holding a white flag!"

Nelson Lee drew his breath in sharply.

"I wonder?" he muttered. "Can there be any connection between the disappearance of these boys and Angel's visit? I don't like the look of things, Adams." He turned to Collins. "Is Captain Angel alone?" he asked.

"Yes, I think so," said Collins. "Mrs. Morrison told me that he was coming, and I thought I'd better let you know—"

"Quite right," said Lee. "Perhaps we had better see what Angel wants before we do anything further."

They went towards the big staging known as the Central Road. Browne and Stevens were on duty here, guarding the spot. Captain Angel was just approaching. He came along at a swagger, and on a piece of stick he carried a fragment of white rag.

"Ahoy, there!" he called boisterously. "No need to git nervous; I ain't lookin' for trouble. All I wants is to 'ave a nice, quiet talk with Mister Lee."

"I regret, brother, that there is no thoroughfare," said Browne. "This is a one-way street and you are progressing in

the wrong direction. Be good enough to rightabout face and vamoose."

"None o' your darned lip!" said Captain Angel cheerfully. "I've come 'ere under the white flag, ain't I? All I want is a parley. Seems ter me that we can fix things up nice an' comfy if we 'ave a square talk."

Nelson Lee arrived, and he nodded to Browne and Stevens to stand aside.

"What do you want here, Captain Angel?" he demanded.

"Well, well! If it ain't my old friend, Mr. Lee!" said the captain, with obviously forced geniality. "You can't tell 'ow pleased I am to see you ag'in, mister! Aboard the old Vulture you was a deck 'and an' I was skipper. But now we meet on equal terms, hey?"

Mr. Adams strode forward and ran his fingers over the captain's clothing.

"'Ere, keep your filthy paws to yourself!" roared the skipper. "What's the blamed idea—"

"No weapons," said Mr. Adams, glancing at Lee.

"I didn't expect any," said the detective. "Well, Angel, you'd better come along."

The ruffianly skipper's very manner told Nelson Lee that a dramatic change had come over the situation. And the mysterious disappearance of Nipper and Watson was significant. They all halted on one of the covered decks. Dr. Pearson had joined

them by this time, and he was looking at Angel with **angry eyes**.

"Why do you allow this scoundrel to come here?" he asked wonderingly.

"Just a little chin-wag—that's all," said Angel. "The fact is, gents, I want us to come to an understandin'. See? Now, I've sort of made up my mind that there can't be two bosses in a show like this. An' I've got a hankerin' to rule the roost. Now, what about it? Are you willin' to let me take command?"

"No, we are not!" said Dr. Pearson hotly.

"I wasn't speakin' to you—I was speakin' to Mr. Lee," said the captain, with a sneer. "All I want is your word that you'll accept my authority—that you'll allow me to give orders. In fact, me an' my men are goin' to run the whole bloomin' show, an' the sooner we come to a proper understandin', the better."

"The man must be mad!" put in Collins.

"Look here, Captain Angel, I know very well that you would not adopt this attitude unless you had something up your sleeve," said Nelson Lee grimly. "What is it? What trickery have you been up to now? Out with it!"

"If I wasn't a patient man, I'd be insulted at them words," said Captain Angel gently. "But, seein' as your nerves is a bit on edge, Mister Lee, I'll overlook it. Now, there's a question of two boys—"

*Souvenirs of The Great Fight For the Ashes!*



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**2d.**

"You tricky brute!" burst out Mr. Adams furiously.

"Two boys," continued Captain Angel. "They was foolish enough to fall into a little trap I set for 'em. They're now out on the weed, bound 'and an' foot, in charge o' some o' my men. See?"

"What are you going to do with them?" asked Lee harshly.

"That all depends upon you, mister," replied the rascally captain. "If you give me your promise—an' your word goes for all these others, too—that you'll accept me as your leader, I'll let them boys come back. In other words, what you've got to do is to surrender. Do you get that, gents? You've got to surrender unconditionally, an' arter that I'll rule the roost."

"And—if we refuse?" asked Lee steadily.

Captain Angel shrugged his shoulders. "If you refuse, it'll be pretty bad for them two boys," he said, with a leer. "They'll be took out across the weed, an' left by themselves. You know what'll 'appen, don't you? There's a lot o' queer critturs on this weed. Monsters they call 'em, don't they? They ain't very nice critturs to be mixed up with, by what I've seen an' 'eard, and if they get 'old o' them two boys—why, I reckon it'll be the end of 'em!"

"You hound!" grated Nelson Lee hotly. "Unless we surrender, you'll forsake those boys to the Weed Monsters?"

"You've put it in a nutshell," nodded Captain Angel. "Neat, ain't it?"

Nelson Lee's fists became clenched. Only with the greatest difficulty did he prevent himself gripping Captain Angel by the throat. He felt helpless—baffled. The whole position was horrible; Captain Angel had them in a trap.

"We must not do this, Mr. Lee!" urged Dr. Pearson excitedly. "Never will we surrender to this dog! He cannot mean what he says about those boys—"

"Knowing Captain Angel as I do, I am convinced that he is in earnest," interrupted Lee. "This man is a blackguard of the worst type—"

"'Ere, you'd best be careful what you say," snarled Angel. "Why, for two pins I'd knock your 'ead off, you lop-sided land-lubber!"

He suddenly flung himself upon Nelson Lee, inflamed by the detective's scathing denunciation. Mr. Adams, whose nerves were on edge, too, quickly pulled his revolver.

"Keep your hands off, you scum!" he shouted.

"Scum, am I?" reared Angel, twirling on him. "By hokey! You'd talk to me like that, would you?"

He raised his fist, and Mr. Adams dodged. Crack!

His revolver spoke. But Adams deliberately fired into the thatched roof. He thought, perhaps, that the report would bring Angel to his senses. It certainly did. The infuriated skipper was cooled down on the instant; his hands dropped

and a startled, almost bewildered, expression came over his face.

"Gosh!" he gasped. "You fool! What did you do that for?" Before Mr. Adams could answer, Captain Angel became frantic. "You don't understand!" he went on. "I made an arrangement with Schwartz and Cragg before I came 'ere. They're out there on the weed—out in the mist. They've got them boys with 'em."

"Well?" rapped out Lee.

"They're waitin'," said the skipper. "An' I told 'em that if they 'eard a revolver shot they was to take it as a signal. An' that signal was to mean that you wouldn't surrender!"

"What!" panted Lee, clutching at the skipper's arm. "You mean—"

"I mean that the signal's bin given!" growled Angel aggressively. "They're goin' to take them boys further out upon the weed, an' leave 'em there. It don't matter what you do now, they'll obey my orders. You fools! You've thrown those boys' lives away by lettin' off that gun!"

Lee sprang into instant activity.

"Hold this man!" he ordered. "Bind him if necessary, and take him below. Adams, come with me! Fenton, Browne, Stevens. Get flares! We've got to rescue those two boys!"

OUT upon the weed, Cragg and Schwartz, having heard that signal, carried their youthful prisoners father and farther out.

"Reckon this'll do," said Mr. Cragg, as he glanced uneasily round at the gathering mist.

Nipper and Watson were left there—bound hand and foot. The two men returned with considerable haste—for they could not forget the Weed Monsters. They certainly did not wish to be caught themselves!

They ran into Nelson Lee's party when they got near the island.

"Those boys!" shouted Lee. "What have you done with them? That signal was a mistake. Hands up, you scum!"

Startled, Cragg and Schwartz explained where they had left the two boys. Parties were sent out in every direction. But the results were nil. The weed was searched for miles, and the hunt went on for hours.

At last Nelson Lee was forced to give up the hunt. It was clear enough that Nipper and Watson had been seized by the Weed Monsters, and that they had been carried off. It was impossible to guess what their fate had been.

Little did the castaways dream that the capture of Nipper and Tommy Watson by the Weed Monsters was to lead to the ultimate salvation of the entire party!

THE END.

(Amazing adventures await the castaways in next week's smashing long, complete yarn. Look out for the title—"Galleon Gold!" and order your NELSON LEE in advance, chums!)



Jokes from readers wanted for this feature! If you know of a good rib tickler send it along now—and win a prize! A handsome watch will be awarded each week to the sender of the best joke; all other readers whose efforts are published will receive a pocket wallet or a penknife. Address your jokes to "Smilers," Nelson Lee Library, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4.

#### NOT APPRECIATED.

Mother: "Willie, I hear you were caned at school to-day. What for?"

Willie: "Well you see, mother, teacher told us to write an essay on laziness—and I sent in a blank page."

(G. Coles, 79, Watson Street, Derby, has been awarded a handsome watch.)

#### LOST PROPERTY.

It was a kit inspection, and the soldiers had their things laid out on the beds. The orderly officer walked into the room and approached Private Brown.

"Three shirts, Brown?" he asked.

"Yes, sir. One on, one in the wash, and one in the box."

"Two pairs of boots?"

"Yes, sir. One pair on, the other pair in the box."

"Good! Now, where is the box?"

"Dunno, sir. I've lost it."

(W. Dudley, 3, Haughmond View, Mountfields, Shrewsbury, has been awarded a penknife.)

#### TOO TRUE!

Bill: "Go back and lick him, you coward!"

Alf: "B-but he's already given me two black eyes."

Bill: "Well, he can't give you any more, can he, fathead?"

(R. Rixson, 13, Varcoe Road, S.E.16, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

#### ALL AT SEA!

Mistress (instructing the butler): "Now how do you address a baronet?"

Butler: "Your Lordship."

Mistress: "And his wife?"

Butler: "Your Ladyship."

Mistress: "And an Admiral?"

Butler: "Er—Your Flagship."

(J. A. Franklin, 3, Eva Street, Rusholme, Manchester, has been awarded a penknife.)

#### BE PREPARED!

A student failed in an examination in all five subjects he took. He telegraphed to his brother: "Failed in all five. Prepare Pa."

The brother telegraphed back: "Pa prepared. Prepare yourself."  
(D. Wainwright, Runnymede, Droom Road, Rotherham, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

#### INSULTED!

First burglar: "Hallo, Bill, what's the matter?"

Second burglar: "Matter? Do you see this notice on the police station board? Well, they're only offering fifty pounds reward for my capture, and it used to be a hundred pounds. An insult, I call it!"

(E. Drury, 27, Tufton Road, South Chingford, has been awarded a penknife.)

#### THE DIFFERENCE!

Johnny: "Look at that rhinoceros."

Willie: "That ain't a rhinoceros—that's a hippopotamus. Can't you see it hasn't got a radiator cap!"

(T. Flook, 56, Crooke Road, Deptford Park, S.E.8, has been awarded a penknife.)

#### HIS ONE REQUEST.

The manager was signing on a new player.

"Now, look here," he said. "While you are with this club you cannot ride a motor-cycle, drink, stay out late at night, go to dances, bet, or write articles for the newspapers."

"But please," said the footballer, "can I kick the ball on Saturdays?"

(F. Hipwood, 23, Gas Yard, Union Mill Street, Wolverhampton, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

#### LAST LAP!

The small country theatre was playing "The Forty Thieves." As they had only eight players, the scene where the thieves entered the treasure cave was performed by the same actors entering and re-entering from the other side of the stage. Un-

fortunately, one of the players had a bad limp. After he had entered the cave for the fourth time a man from the gallery was heard to shout:

"Go it, Hoppy! Last lap!"

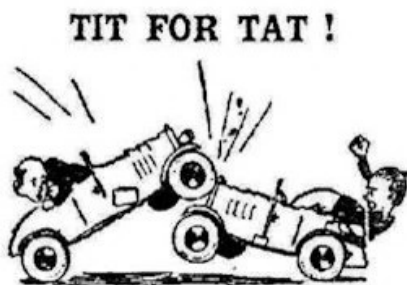
(E. Bloom, 27, Cromwell Grove, Hammersmith, W.6, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

#### EXCEEDINGLY DULL!

Green: "I say, that new clerk Bifkins seems very dull."

Browne: "Dull isn't the word. He is absolutely hopeless. Do you know that if brains were made of canvas, he wouldn't have enough to make a pair of spats for a canary!"

(J. Jones, "Royal Oak," Rookery Street, Wednesfield, Staffs, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)



Two motor-cars had collided. Said the first motorist:

"You ought to be pushing a pram!"

"You ought to be in it!" came the retort!

(D. Jarvis, 11, Centre Street, Grimsbury, Banbury, Oxon, has been awarded a pocket wallet.)

**Warning : This Riotously Funny Yarn Will Make You Grow Fat!**

# THE THREE "K" BRETHREN!



*Earl Ern & Co. seek  
vengeance against  
their arch-enemies,  
the Hooded Horrors!*

## Cinema Battle!

THE triumph of Dicky Dyke, cap'n of the Hooded Horrors, over the Three "K" Brethren was short lived. The spoils of war which he had carried away from Mrs. Drawback's coal-cellar adorned his bed-room. The night when the Hooded Horrors had crept home after their great victory, Dicky had hardly placed his noble head upon the pillow when a stone whistled through the open bed-room window and landed on his chest.

Round the stone was a piece of paper, and on the paper was a message. It was a message that nearly turned the cap'n's blood to ice and almost made his hair rise on end, for it said:

**"Beware—The Earl of Backstreet rests not neither does he sleep until he's got his own back."**

There was no signature to the warning—just a sketch of a lion rampant on a blade of grass; the crest of the valiant Ern, Earl of Backstreet, who was the chief knight of the three "Kourageous Krusade Knights," or the Three "K" Brethren, as they called themselves. My Lord, Lou of Alleyway and

Sam, Squire of Gashouse Property, were the other two members.

Scared though Dicky was, he felt rather proud of his unique position. He ceased to go abroad unless his gang formed a body-guard; and even at school two at least sat by his side. Darkly he hinted every time he said good-bye to his mother that maybe she might never see him again.

Ern, Earl of Backstreet, awaited his opportunity. Three days passed. Dicky Dyke commenced to feel angry at the band of little children who accompanied him everywhere, expecting to see him pounced upon and "done unto death." Advance guards went before and rear-guards came after. Mrs. Dyke, scenting evil, took and brought her son to and from school. He told her that a terrible, dreaded "gang" was after him. Mysterious warnings were placed through the letter-box; some were stuck to the windows and walls of the house during the night, others were found in the milk bottles, and even in a loaf of bread that had been left on the doorstep. The warnings consisted of the following dreaded words:

**"Beware—Death Lurks!"**

Four days passed, and Dicky Dyke commenced to wish he wasn't cap'n of the

Hooded Horrors. His face had paled and his eyes became heavy and his footsteps slow.

Meanwhile, smarting under defeat, Ern, Earl of Backstreet, and his brave brethren looked upon the funking Dicky Dyke as a kind of devouring dragon, which was their knightly duty to destroy, even as did St. George of old.

Armed with a new, glistening shield, the noble earl rode his spasmodic steed, Micky, the motor-bike, round the district, seeking in the old haunts for the face of Dicky Dyke. Sam, Squire of Gashouse Property, rode pillion when he didn't have to push Micky, while Lou, Lord of Alleyway, spied upon the residence of the cap'n of the Hooded Horrors.

Five days passed, and the Hooded Horrors commenced to grumble at having everlastingly to form a bodyguard for their threatened captain.

And then, one fine evening, escorted before and behind and on either side, Dicky Dyke sallied forth to enjoy fivepen'orth of pictures. Well in the rear, the fat Lou followed. Seeing them vanish within the palace of thrills, he went in search of Ern and found him dragging Micky out of a duck pond.

"E's gorn to the pictures," breathed my lord.

"Alone, good friend?" commanded the proud earl.

"Armed and attended, sire!"

"Suffice!" snapped Ern. "Give us a 'and."

Five minutes later the motor-bike was hidden in a shed in Mrs. Drawback's garden, and the knightly band were making steps for the pictures. The wily earl sought to creep upon his enemy under the cover of darkness.

Fortune favoured him. They were placed in the row immediately behind Dicky Dyke, cap'n of the Hooded Horrors, who was so lost in the reels of a thrilling drama that he realised not his enemy was behind him.

The hero of the film was about to be triumphant over the rascally villain, when Ern, Earl of Backstreet, felt the hour had come and leapt upon his foe.

A ringing cry echoed through the hall. Sounds of a mighty struggle came from the front row. Benches creaked and were splintered; strong children escaped and weak ones yelled for help.

The lights were turned on, the film was stopped and an enthralled audience saw a life drama in the front-row. Dicky had lost his collar and Ern was jacketless. Sam, the valiant squire, was coupling on the water-hose, while Lou, the weighty lord of fifteen stone, was atop of four screaming Hooded Horrors.

Dicky Dyke put up a fine fight. A loud voice from the eightpennies yelled: "Atta, boy!" as he jumped upon the stage, with Ern following. Seizing a palm in a large pot, he whirled it above his head. Unfortunately the pot flew off, sailed across the stage and

struck the perspiring manager on his shirt-front as he came yelling down the gangway.

Many of the audience were now upon their feet, cheering the combatants. The Hooded Horrors had fled from the cinema, leaving their cap'n and Ern to settle accounts upon the stage. A fire extinguisher caught the cap'n's eye and he seized it.

Ern received the spout of liquid full in the face and toppled off the stage. Snatching the fire-hose from his noble squire, he attacked again. The pair became locked in an embrace, with the hose clasped between them. Deluges of water were hurled in all directions.

Within three minutes all the fivepennies and half the eightpenny seaters were flooded out of "house and home." The manager and four gorgeously-attired attendants made efforts to rush in and capture the fighters, but the force of water hissing from the hose defeated them each time.

The arrival of the police brought a warning cry from the lips of Lou, Lord of Alleyway, and a dive was made for the emergency exit. Dicky Dyke was the first through, and he vanished into the darkness of the night, quickly followed by the Three "K" Brethren.

Dicky's mother understood him to say that he had been attacked by fifty armed ruffians, who had slashed at him with swords. His condition, bedraggled and half naked, suggested something unusual had occurred.

### The Traitor!

THE earl could hardly claim the victory of Cinema Battle. Defeat rankled deep in his heart. Dicky Dyke still had Ern's shield and his father's lost pants.

The cap'n of the Hooded Horrors became more closely guarded. His movements were kept secret. His father took him out at night for an "airing"; while his mother escorted him to school and to Sunday school.

One day, when the broody earl sat on the edge of the swill-tub in his mother's backyard, scheming schemes for the defeat of Dicky Dyke, a small boy with a cunning face and a pair of trousers which ended under his arm-pits, and a peaked cap that covered his features, appeared over the fence and dropped as silently as the dew upon Mr. Drawback's marrow bed. On tiptoe he advanced down the garden and paused within a foot of the unhappy earl.

"Frien'," said the husky voice of the intruder, in a breathless whisper.

Startled by the accents of a foreign voice, Ern fell backwards and vanished within the swill tub. With a frightened cry the startled intruder glanced round as if in search of a life-belt, but perceiving one leg sticking up, he seized it and yanked Ern from the perils of the tub.

"Wotcher wan'?" hissed the earl, recognising Gassy, Hooded Horror No. 6.

"'Ush," rasped Gassy. "To-morrow Dicky Dyke goes to the Vicar's tea fight, mate, an' there's yer chance!"

The surprised earl sucked in a lungful of air and chortled.

"Honour bright?" he demanded.

"Becher. I'm fed up wif bein' a 'Ooded 'Orror. I wanna become a Three 'K' Brethren. It's nothink helse but guardin' our cap'n."

The thoughtful earl did not answer. His blood boiled within him, so to speak. Dicky Dyke had been asked to the Vicar's tea fight and not he! By my shield, sword, butler and boot-boy, this shall not be!!!

With a lordly wave of the hand the troubled earl dismissed the traitor and summoned his two faithful henchmen. It was to be war to the final bun!

Next afternoon was sunny and bright. Like a lamb gambolling amid the trees, the Vicar passed from child to child, his guests at a tea struggle on the lawn. Dicky Dyke appeared, washed, brushed and very hungry, looking demure and saintly. The Vicar sighed on beholding such a model and said something about why couldn't Ernest Drawback be like him!

In the shade of the trees, tables were spread. Eager eyes looked in that direction instead of paying attention to what the Vicar was saying. Little mouths and big ones commenced to water.

Dicky Dyke had pinched the leg of the little fellow next to him and got him sent home for "bad behaviour," when the Vicar said that he thought that perhaps they were just a little hungry, ay, and maybe a trifle thirsty, a suspicion fully confirmed by the loud cheers which greeted the announcement.

"I think Richard Dyke should take the head of the table," suggested the Vicar.

Richard Dyke advanced to the table strewn with the most dishes of cakes.

Three forms watched and waited in the shadows of the trees. Ern, Earl of Backstreet, helmeted and mounted upon Micky, the motor-bike, had his lance poised ready for the charge. Lou, the weighty Lord of Alleyway, had his mother's expanding toasting-fork at full length (four feet), ready to prong the good things from the Vicar's tables. Sam crouched ready to push the fiery steed into action.

The Vicar, in a voice of woe, had just passed a touching reference to absent friends, including Ernest Drawback, Louis Smith and Samuel Jesse James Peat, whose conduct during the past year had debarred them from the enjoyment of the day, when there came a resounding bang from the direction of the copse.

Blanched faces turned to see something shoot from among the trees and come speeding across the lawn. The earl's lance gleamed in the sunlight, and his face was masked behind a paint-pot helmet. In his rear followed Sam, the goodly squire, and Lou, with his mother's toasting-fork in line with the nearest dish of cakes. The guests scattered as chaff before the wind. Many,

with promising presence of mind, escaped with dishes of cake.

Dicky Dyke, cap'n of the Hooded Horrors, however, found retreat impossible. The motor-bike was upon him. Calling his battle-cry of "BEANS," he turned to face his old enemy.

Unable to stop Micky, Ern rode straight for Dicky, who seized the bucket of milk beneath the table and hurled it over Ern's head.

The Hooded Horrors produced their catapults and used buns as ammunition. Three times Ern charged, and three tables were toppled on top of the valiant defenders.

Seizing Dicky Dyke, Ern and Sam emptied jam over his face and hair; they poured milk over him and then crumbled cake. Not content with such a valiant victory, they stuffed buns and bread-and-butter and sugar down his neck. He cried, fought, screamed, but the Hooded Horrors were in flight, bearing away as many cakes as were left fit for human consumption.

Two minutes later the Three "K" Brethren departed. With them they took Dicky Dyke's shorts as a trophy of war.

### The Night Raid

A MYSTERIOUS signal flew that night from Mrs. Drawback's wireless pole. The lady was unaware of the fact, but the street assembled in full force to discuss the meaning of a pair of shorts flying like a two-pointed flag. They were the nether raiment of Master Dicky Dyke, and Ern, Earl of Backstreet, thus advertised the defeat and disgrace of his old enemy.

Dicky Dyke, his mind seething with a desire for vengeance, staggered home wearing a pair of the Vicar's "cast offs," turned up many times. Mrs. Dyke's horror on perceiving the return of her offspring was such that her screams were heard in Mrs. Drawback's back yard, where the emblem of Dicky's defeat fluttered bravely in the evening breeze.

Flushed with pride of victory, Ern called his gang together to attack the very castle of their foe that night, and bring back the trophies which the cap'n of the Hooded Horrors still had.

Their silent approach upon the domain of Mrs. Dyke went well until something went wrong. Lou, Lord of Alleyway, became wedged in the pantry window, their means of entrance, and his two comrades could neither pull him through nor push him out.

Sam, perspiring, suggested a little grease might help, so they used all Mrs. Dyke's butter, lard and dripping, and pulled and pushed afresh—but in vain.

"Tell yer wot," suddenly gasped Ern. "let 'im cool off. 'E's over'eated, 'Eat expands!"

They left him to cool, and ascended the darkened stairs. Entering Dicky's bed-room, they leapt upon him and smothered him with the clothes.



Dickie Dyke whirled the palm pot round. The pot flew off, missed Ern, sailed across the stage, and struck the cinema manager on the shirt front.

On the walls, revealed in the moonlight, were Mr. Drawback's lost pants, Ern's shield and other trophies of war. Sam took a seat upon the struggling and half-suffocated Dickie Dyke, while Ern tied the trophies in a bundle, adding to it every stitch of Dickie's clothing he could find.

Then they gagged him and tied him to the bed-rail.

By this time Mrs. Dyke had an impression that something was happening in the house. To commence with, during the final struggle on Dickie's bed it had collapsed, and the force of impact with the floor had brought down a yard of plaster from the ceiling in the room below. The sound set Mrs. Dyke thinking.

"Can't be cats," she thought, and awoke Mr. Dyke.

Mr. Dyke cautiously opened the door an inch, just in time to see a sight that set his heart racing. Two forms, one with gleaming helmet on his head, dressed in a white jacket upon which was painted the Cross of St. George, and bearing a sword, passed and descended into the hall below.

"It's cats, dear," he breathed, closing the door and getting beneath the bedclothes.

Next morning Dickie Dyke was found by his mother. Brave even in defeat, he told a story of how a horde of ancient knights in gleaming armour, and carrying naked swords, had roused him and had almost killed him.

Mr. Dyke's confirmation that he saw two of the knights led to the story that the house was haunted, and Mrs. Dyke decided to quit.

The news that the cap'n of the Hooded Horrors were seeking pastures new spread from one to the next of his valiant band. The Vicar called to inquire how the nice boy was getting on, and incidentally to recover his trousers, and learned of the house being "naunted!"

Why the ghosts should have attacked Dickie no one thought of inquiring. Every time he repeated his story it became more startling, until in the end he commenced to believe it himself.

Flushed with his sudden publicity, Dickie Dyke challenged the Three "K" Brethren to battle on the Common outside the town, to be fought on the day Mrs. Dyke was to move. Having issued his challenge, Dickie Dyke settled down to write his last Will and Testament, and then to examine his catapult and discuss plans of action with the other Hooded Horrors.

On Mrs. Drawback's doorstep Ern, Earl of Backstreet, sharpened his sword, for the morrow was to see the battle of the Three "K" Brethren against the Hooded Horrors; and it was to be a battle to the death—unless, of course, they survived!

THE END.

(All about the "grim" battle in next week's Three "K" Brethren yarn. It'll make you weep tears—of laughter!)



*This Corking Serial Just Started—Begin Reading It Now!*

# Knights of the Road!



**A Romance  
of Olden  
Times.**

**By  
DAVID  
GOODWIN.**

*Branded an outlaw, with a price upon his head—that's Dick Forrester!*

## The Law Against Him!

**T**URPIN stood his ground calmly as Dick rushed forward with rapier poised. He laughed.

"Put it away, lad! Are we to cross swords so soon? Never! These Riders are not much harmed, I tell you, and if it will please you, I will spare them. Indeed, I am inclined to be grateful towards you. It will save me valuable powder."

Dick's anger subsided as quickly as it had come. Sheepishly he put back the rapier in its scabbard.

"I am mighty sorry, Turpin," he said. "But the thought that you were going to—"

"Say no more," cut in the highwayman, laughing heartily again. "Well, well, are we going to leave these men for their comrades to carry home or"—banteringly—"perchance it would please you better to carry them up to the assize court yourself."

"Not I," exclaimed Dick. "Since they are not greatly hurt, they may rest. They have brought me far out of my way."

"And by the same token it behoves us to leave this place without delay," said Turpin, "for the rest of the knaves will soon be here, and you have not a horse. Even a King's Rider will capture you if given

chances enough, believe me. See, yonder stands the two nags these fellows rode; wait while I catch you one."

The highwayman spoke to his beautiful mare and trotted off, soon returning, leading the better of the two horses by the bridle—a roan gelding, with heavy quarter and a fiddle head.

"A poor mount for a Forrester of Fernhall," said Turpin, grinning, "but it must suffice. Up with you, lad, and let us be going, for the beast is pumped already with the chase after you, and he will not carry you far if the hunt begins afresh. Onward!"

They rode away and entered the shade of the wide forest called Birkham Woods by a narrow bridle-path. But Dick paid little heed to the road they went. He rode along, looking straight before him over the horse's ears, silent and moody.

"Well, Dick," said Turpin at last, "what do you propose to do?"

"I don't know," said Dick, with a rather bitter sigh, "and 'tis very little I care. My uncle seems to have found a very likely chance to rid himself of me, and the fates have helped him strangely."

"Why, it seems to me there is no choice for you," laughed Turpin. "You are a

marked outlaw, sought by the gallows for highway robbery, and with a price on your head."

"I cannot believe it," cried Dick. "How am I driven into this strait, and hunted like a felon, because I took from your hands what my uncle robbed me of?"

"And a horse from his coach," chuckled Turpin.

"That was no more than a frolic. Should I go afoot? The horse was from Fernhall stables, and all there is mine by right!"

"Your uncle is in possession, lad, and his tale is a different one, depend on it. Fortune has played into his hands, and if your death would make him safer, I would lay a wager on his chances now."

The dawn was breaking, and they left the wood and struck out upon the highway, nearing a village. It seemed rash, but Dick followed his companion's lead, taking no heed of their route. He was occupied with his own wrongs, and hardly observed that they rode through the village street.

"I cannot believe it!" said Dick again. "I have done no wrong, though, as you say, they can set the law against me—and they have. But it must pass. I am a free man, and they will soon learn it."

"Will they?" said Turpin, drawing rein before the window of a house as recklessly as though he were the squire of the village instead of a hunted outlaw. "Read you here, Dick Forrester! S'death, but your uncle has lost no time!"

Dick's brow darkened as he followed the highwayman's gaze. In the window of the house, stuck upon the pane, was a large bill, with the following legend in bold-hand printing for all the world to see:

**"TWO HUNDRED GUINEAS  
REWARD!**

"Richard Forrester, aged Seventeen, but looks Older. Dark-brown hair, blue eyes, height five feet ten. Wearing silver-grey Riding-clothes of good quality and Cut, three-peaked Hat, and Knee-boots.

"Be it known to all Honest Men, that the said Richard Forrester, being under ban of the Law for Robbery on the King's Highway, the above sum will be paid to any who shall apprehend and

bring him into the Custody of the Authorities in this Parish or Elsewhere.

"Know also that the said Richard Forrester was last seen at the Merton Cross Roads, in company with the notorious Rogue and Highway Robber, Richard Turpin. And hereby we declare the said Richard Forrester Outlaw, and beyond the protection of the King, his Statutes, and call upon all Good Subjects to beware his Evil Schemes, and aid in bringing him to Justice."

White with anger grew Dick's cheeks as he read this notice.

A meeker or more reasoning spirit would have done the lawful thing and given himself up to justice, to declare himself an innocent man, and stand to the trial by his countrymen.

Should he do it?

**Black Satan!**

**D**ICK FORRESTER knew the blackness of the evidence against him. He knew his uncle's pitiless hatred, and his power. It would be little more than handing himself over to a dishonourable death upon the gallows. Yet that was the right and the lawful path to take—to yield himself to trial, and trust in a Higher Power to prove the truth and proclaim his innocence.

For a moment he wavered. But the boy came of a hot-headed stock—a fierce, headstrong, turbulent breed, whose blood rose in passion at any interference or command!

The black injustice he had suffered filled his heart to bursting. He had been turned out of the home and possessions that were his, hunted like a felon across the open country, and this last written insult and threat turned the scale. He smote his hand upon his knee.

"Be it so!" he cried fiercely. "My home is taken from me; and since I am branded for an outlaw, an outlaw I'll be! A good horse, a good sword, and good pistols, with these I'll seek my fortune on the King's highway!"

"'Tis the bailiff's house that that bill is stuck upon," said Turpin, as they rode onward.

**HOW THE STORY STARTED.**

*DICK FORRESTER* learns upon the death of his father that all the vast Fernhall estates and fortune, with the exception of a hundred guineas, have passed into the hands of his rascally uncle,

*VANE FORRESTER*. The latter refuses to give the boy his money and, appointing himself guardian, states his intention of sending Dick and his brother,

*RALPH FORRESTER*, to Duncansby School—a notorious place in the north of England from which, once they arrive there, they are not likely to leave. Travelling north by coach, Vane and the two boys are held up by

*DICK TURPIN*, the famous highwayman. Dick joins forces with Turpin, and after bidding Ralph to be of stout heart and promising to fetch him soon, the two ride away. Vane sets the King's Riders on their track, and Dick is only saved from capture by the resourcefulness of his companion. Turpin suggests finishing off the men—dead men tell no tales—whereat Dick is horrified and withdraws his rapier. "If you attempt it I shall run you through the body!" he cries, springing forward.

(Now read on.)

"Is it, in faith?" cried Dick. "Then let's go back and tie the bailiff to his own pump, with the bill pinned on his chest!"

The young horseman had shaken off all care and moodiness now. Since his decision was come to, he bore himself with a laughing, devil-may-care recklessness.

"A very pretty prank to play," said Turpin, with a chuckle; "but before you start on your new career, Dick, you had better mount and arm yourself as befits the brothers of the Black Mask. If you trusted to that sorry nag to escape the King's Riders, you would soon be laid by the heels. And if cornered you have nothing to fight with, save that old single-barrelled barker I gave you."

"And a good sword," added Dick, touching the rapier at his left side. It was a jeweled-hilted court sword, rather light for field work, but of beautiful temper.

"Pistols are better when there are three to one against you," said Turpin; "they help to even the odds before it comes to the steel. But that horse is little better than useless. I have a worthy friend not far away—a horse-coper, who has done me many a service. You need the best of horseflesh for the highways, for your neck oft depends on your steed's legs, and, if I might suggest it, you will find that hundred guineas of yours well laid out on the best that Jacob Astley has in his stables. You will not get another Black Bess for the money, but at my word Jacob will let you have one worth far more than a hundred for that sum. He owes me a service."

Dick suddenly clapped his hand to his belt, and gasped with dismay.

"All gone!" he exclaimed, pulling out a couple of gold pieces from his pockets. "'Od's fish! All gone but these! Here's a pretty how-d'ye-do! I tied them in the leather wallet when you handed them to me, and slung them to my belt. They must have broken away when the coach-horse came down with me!"

Dick Turpin held his sides and roared with laughter, as if it were a huge joke. Then he became solemn again.

"Forgive me, comrade!" he said, wiping his eyes. "But you pulled such a long face over it—an archbishop would have laughed. What a find for the Riders. 'Twill be a rare salve to their wounds, unless their comrades find it first and pocket it. 'Tis a grievous loss, though."

"What am I to do?" said Dick blankly. "A pretty figure I should cut on this old nag!"

"That is a difficulty," replied Turpin. "But come, we must see if we cannot induce Jacob Astley to mount you and wait for his money, though I have no great hopes of it. I am out of funds myself, or I would gladly offer you a horse. Failing Jacob, you must go on foot till you can stop the best-mounted squire you can find, and so on, till you get a perfect steed."

"Not I!" exclaimed Dick. "I've heard of a younger son of the Forresters who took

to the highway in James I's time, but there was never one of my blood a footpad, and I will not begin."

"'Tis a sorry trade, and one for tinkers rather than gentlemen," said Turpin. "A bludgeon is the only weapon needed. But the highwayman's is a dainty profession enough, and your ancestor showed good taste. However, there is the smoke of Jacob's homestead among the trees, so let us hasten there."

The elder man led Dick to a comfortable-looking farmhouse set well back from the road, and the horse-breeder, Jacob Astley, came to welcome them. He was a shrewd-looking, big-limbed man, with black side-whiskers and a straw in his mouth.

"Good-morrow, Dick!" he cried. "Do you bring good news? Whether or no, I have some for you."

"That's good hearing," said Dick Turpin, "but we will leave it till later. I present you to a young friend of mine, who has lost his estates and fortune through trickery, and has joined me on the road."

"My respects to you, sir," said the horse-coper to Dick; "and now, since by the look of your mounts you have been out all night, let us have breakfast."

The new-comers assented gladly. Dick was half famished, and he made an excellent meal, for Astley's table was always well spread with the best. The coper proved a merry host.

"To come to business, Jacob," said Turpin, as they settled themselves after the meal. "My young friend wants a mount."

"To be sure," said Astley.

"There are little difficulties in the way," continued Turpin, with a wave of his hand, "but they are nothing. Mr. Forrester had a good round sum when we met, but he lost it during a brush with the Riders last night, and is now somewhat short of funds. But give him the best mount in your stables, and I'll warrant he will soon bring you the guineas for him."

The horse-coper pulled a long face, and shook his head.

"Times are too bad," he said. "It would mean a heavy loss to me if Mr. Forrester met with a misfortune at the hands of the Riders before I was paid."

"The Riders will ride long before they lay Dick Forrester by the heels, if I'm any judge of a man," said Turpin. "I did not look to find you so obstinate, Jacob. There must be some way over the difficulty. Let us look round the stables."

Jacob made no objection to this, and led them out. Dick was surprised to find how well the horses were lodged—the house was comfortable enough, but the stables were sumptuous, and half a dozen grooms were tending the beasts.

As they reached the yard, Dick noticed a strange-looking creature doing some light work, and doing it slowly and with difficulty. It looked more like an ape than a man, though dressed in stable clothes. As they approached, the boy saw it was a crippled

man. Both legs were gone, being replaced by stumps, and one arm below the elbow was also missing. The other was twisted like an old oak branch. The creature hobbled with a lopsided gait, his back bent, and when he turned his face up it was wry and scarred almost out of human resemblance.

Before Dick had time to ask any questions they had passed on to the stalls, and, used as he was to good horses, the boy looked with surprise and admiration at the inmates. Some of them were as good hunters and thoroughbreds—to look at, at any rate—as he had ever seen.

"Come, there's a pretty chestnut mare there," said Turpin; "she can go like the wind, I'll warrant. Let Mr. Forrester have her, Jacob, and he'll soon win her price!"

"Can't do it," said the horse-coper, shaking his head; "but look yonder," he added, with a cunning grin. "There's a horse worth five hundred, if he had a rider. If Mr. Forrester will break him, an' sit him up to the Grove an' back, he shall have him. Don't go too close, sir!"

He pointed to a stall in which stood a magnificent coal-black horse, standing sixteen hands, pawing at the paving-tiles. Dick looked at him, lost in admiration. The horse was the flower of the whole stable, without a doubt. But as the animal turned his head and looked at the newcomers, there shone a look in his eye that was absolutely startling. The white turned up, the great black pupil swivelled and glinted, and it was as though the devil himself were looking through the beast's eye. Even Turpin shifted his position and shivered slightly.

"Ride him, Mr. Forrester," said Jacob, with a sour grin, "ride him, and though there ain't such another hoss in England, save Black Bess, you shall have him as a gift."

"Done!" said Dick Forrester.

"Why, man alive, it's Black Satan!" cried Turpin. "Enough of this, Jacob Astley! The boy's too game to be thrown away, and this is sheer murder! Leave the beast in his stall!"

"You hear what he says, Mr. Forrester?" grinned Astley evilly. "That hoss has never been ridden, an' never will be, while he has hoofs and teeth. Four men have mounted him, these three years. Three o' them he killed in the first minute, an' not their own relatives could swear who they were afterwards. The third lived."

"Who was he?" cried Dick.

"You saw that crippled, twisted beggar with the face like a dried apple?" said the horse-coper. "It was he. I keeps him now an' gives him jobs, though he ain't a man no more. Folks come from miles around to see him. Well, young sir, what d'ye say? There's Satan afore you, the best hoss in England—an' certain death. If you can ride him, he's yours. Are you game?"

(Will Dick attempt to ride Black Satan—knowing as he does that he is taking his life in his hands! Next week's rousing instalment will tell you, chums. Don't miss reading it on any account.)

## DICK and his DINOSAUR!

(Continued from page 13.)

Dick led the dino into the largest, and slipped from his back.

"I'm sorry, Dusty, old scout," he said, "but it's time for us to part. You stay here, and we'll see you again in the morning."

Dusty the dino showed no particular desire to stay in the stables, but Dick was too quick for him. He nipped out of the door and closed it before Dusty was aware of what was going to happen.

Then, followed by the mournful whines of the dinosaur, the boys hurried back to the school, just in time to see Mr. Thwacker, drenched to the skin and covered with mud and weeds, hurrying to hide himself from human gaze.

That night, in the Fourth Form dormitory, the boys were in the last throes of excitement.

"Gosh, we'll have some fun with Dusty the dino!" grinned Dick. "I hope he'll be safe in the stables. I wouldn't like him to get loose and go roaming around the countryside."

Crash!

Every eye turned towards the dormitory window. Outlined against the dark sky beyond, the boys saw the shape of a head they knew only too well. It was Dusty!

The next moment the entire window was wrenched out, and there came a shuffling and a creaking. Dusty was not going to remain in any stable if he could help it! He had broken loose and made his way in search of his master, climbing the walls by means of the tough old ivy!

Flop! Dusty was in the dormitory now, and, with a satisfied grunt, he stretched himself out between the long rows of beds, dropped his head on his forepaws, and then, as calm and as unperturbed as a well-behaved terrier, he dropped off to sleep!

Dusty the dinosaur intended to make himself at home at Skinton School!

THE END.

(More about Dusty the Dino in next week's amazing—and amusing—complete yarn.)

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Printed and published every Wednesday by the Proprietors, The Amalgamated Press, Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Advertisement Office: The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, E.C.4. Registered for transmission by Canadian magazine post. Subscription Rates: Inland and Abroad, 11/- per annum; 5/- for six months. Sole Agents for Australia and New Zealand: Messrs. Gordon & Gotch, Ltd.; and for South Africa: Central News Agency, Ltd.