



Detective Sexton Blake, while resting at Swatley Cove, determines to elucidate the mystery of the Lamp of Death, the terror of all the fisher-folk along the coast. He is visited by Muriel Lane, who tells a sad story. Her father, who was in a fair way to make a fortune out of a new submarine boat, has been ruined by the theft of his plans. Blake promises to help Muriel. Only one man—Frederick Seale, a rejected suitor for her hand—knows the secret of her father's invention, and, with the idea of visiting this man's chalet at Dunkirk, Blake embarks for Calais, by a vessel carrying bullion from the Bank of England. In mid-Channel he sights the light from the Lamp of Death, and immediately afterwards there is a terrific explosion; the steamer is blown into a thousand pieces, and Blake finds himself, like his fellow-passengers, struggling in the water. A dreadful scene of carnage ensues. Several armed ruffians in a boat kill all those persons who have managed to keep themselves afloat. Blake alone escapes by clinging to the stern of their boat. The talk he overhears reveals to him that the Lamp of Death is an iron monster of the deep—a submarine boat, used by a piratical crew to blow up vessels carrying bullion for foreign exchange. Towed to shore by the pirates' boat, the detective joins a British cruiser, one of the Channel Squadron, the captain of which resolves to give instant chase to the "Black Barnacle," by which name the fiendish submarine freebooters call their vessel. The "Lamp of Death is sighted, the "Heptic's" torpedoes are got in readiness, and a deadly battle seems imminent.

"A case for the port-quarter tube, I think," said the gunnery lieutenant to his superior, alluding to which torpedo-tube should be used.

"Yes, and look sharp. Get in the first shot, or they'll be fooling us with one of their infernal machines. Keep the boys steady, and mind the first shot goes home."

"Right, sir," and away sped the lieutenant to see to the carrying out of the instructions.

At that moment the light upon the water suddenly vanished.

The suspense of the next few moments was intense. Everyone on board held his breath. Each then realised the tremendous odds against them. They were firing at they knew not what, with no idea

Just after the wreck the "Black Barnacle" was busily at work. It rose and sank, turned and twisted like some monster of the deep, and all the while its great, arm-like claws were raking the bed of the ocean. With a mighty rattling they shot forth and groped among the wreckage, to return laden with a mass of mangled human corpses, spars, and rigging, all tangled together in indefinable confusion.

The hideous loads were drawn into the great black belly of the submarine vessel, and the rubbish, dead bodies, and fragments of human beings were cast out in one continuous stream from an open waste-hole underneath.

All round the sea was one gurgling, eddying

by one stepped on board. The last man, lifting a great stake above his head, ere quitting the boat staved a hole through the bottom. Then, as the gurgling water rushed in, he jumped on the "Black Barnacle." Just as he jumped, the vessel gave a slight lurch. He missed his footing. A shout! an oath! And with a dull splash he disappeared into the inky depths.

"Sarge 'im right!" shouted one of the men in the submarine vessel. "Let 'im go to blazes. 'Twas 'e as bust up our show."

"What's happened, Pete?" asked another.

"That fool that's jest gone to Jeminy went and let a survivor escape!" replied the first speaker, with an awful oath.

Not a hand was outstretched to rescue the drowning man, who blindly, madly beat the water close by in a paroxysm of fear.

He shrieked and cried for help, but no help was forthcoming; and, with a shower of blasphemous curses, he experienced the same treatment as he had so recently been meting out to others.

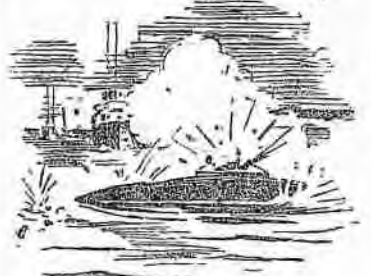
As he sank, the great gangway door shut relentlessly, and the "Black Barnacle" disappeared below the surface.

THE CREW OF THE "BLACK BARNACLE."

Inside all was confusion and noise. As soon as the men from the small boat were aboard, they were surrounded by an anxious, eager crowd of their ruffianly-looking mates, a set of the most dastardly villains that ever breathed.

With oaths and curses they heard of the escape of Sexton Blake, and of how he had gone on board an English war-vessel.

The chief spokesman of the new arrivals was a man of singularly repulsive appearance. His face was puckerd and wrinkled like a bulldog's;



his lower jaw underhung his upper one, and had the two front teeth missing. His fingers were crooked, irregular, and deformed, and both hands were stained a brilliant crimson by birthmarks—a fact which led to his being known as "Red-handed Pete."

In a few moments, Frederick Seale, a tall, fair, good-looking man, made his appearance in the kind of entrance-hall in which the new-comers stood.

His face changed as he heard the news. His crew obviously regarded him with a strange mixture of fear and familiarity, which could not be called respect.

When Seale heard all, his violent temper got the mastery of him.

"What the thunder do you fools mean by this sort of thing?" he roared. "By the powers, I swear I'll kill you all."

"Keep yer lip to yerself," retorted Red-handed Pete, "unless yer anxious to git that lovely moustache o' yourn blooded by my knife."

Seale was mad with fury, and his chief assistant's insolence goaded him to a paroxysm of rage. One by one the others joined in the babel of voices, and with oaths and shouts laid the blame, on one another.

In the heated dispute more than one knife was drawn, and bloodshed seemed imminent.

But at that moment a grim thing happened. Seale was standing exactly opposite one of the port-holes. As it, in the black waters without, there appeared the grinning face of a drowned man, whose ghastly, vacant eyes seemed to leer at the submarine pirate and read his inmost soul.

"Great heavens!" groaned Seale, turning ashy pale. For the moment he did not realise what the thing was whose livid face thus confronted him. His guilty conscience rendered him an easy prey to superstition and evil forebodings.

The others turned instinctively to see the cause of the alarm.

"Ullo!" cried Red-handed Pete, in mockery. "Ullo! who are yer—eh? And what d'yer want?" And going over to the port-hole he knocked upon it, and beckoned the weird visitor to come in. "Come in, won't yer, and 'ave a drink. Why, swipec me, it's that cuss 'the Wrong'un!"

"So it is!" cried the others, between guffaws at the coarse humour of Pete. "The Wrong'un" was the name by which their companion who had just met with his death was known.

A movement of the "Barnacle" shook off the corpse, and it disappeared.

This hideous event had the effect of stopping the quarrel, and Seale, with his characteristic cunning, seized the opportunity to end what he saw would be a dangerous quarrel among his crew.

"My men," he said, "we are in a very difficult position, and it will require some deliberation as to what we had best do. Let us get into the saloon and discuss the matter. You have all had a hard night's work, and will be none the worse for a liquor-up."

"Not we, that we shouldn't, old hoss!" cried several, as they trooped off to the saloon.

Inside, the "Black Barnacle" consisted of three floors. At the top were the navigating-rooms,



IN AN INSTANT THERE WAS A FLASH, A REPORT, AND A HEAVY THUD.

of where their rapidly moving target was, nor how deep below the surface it lay.

And that target had the power to destroy them in an instant of time!

AN IRON MONSTER OF THE DEEP.

Now let us look below the surface. Let us return to the scene of the wreck of the mail boat just after Blake had been towed away by his would-be destroyers.

The "Black Barnacle" was hard at work reaping the harvest of its atrocious act. In appearance it was like a great black torpedo, made of riveted iron plates. It was forty feet long, and twenty feet in diameter at the widest part. A pair of powerful fan-like screws projected from the stern, and on each side was a wide fin of hardened steel running lengthwise.

At the top, just over the broadest part of the vessel, was a large lens composed of crystal glass two and a half feet thick. By way of rudder it had a great fish-tail steel plate, which moved on a horizontal hinge; so that instead of moving to right or left, the end of this rudder moved up and down, and was used to raise or depress the "Barnacle." Its course to right or left was steered by means of the screws. On each side of it hung down enormously powerful grapnels and drags—a grapnel from the bows and stern, and a drag from the centre on each side.

From a ring of port-holes all round the girth of the submarine ship, as well as from the lens at the top, streamed a flood of electric light, whose rays could be concentrated in any direction.

abys, lashed into a seething boil by the giant screws, and made turbid by the constant rise and fall of the noisy drags and grating grapnels.

Headless bodies, shattered limbs, mangled and lacerated corpses, were stirred up by the unceasing motion from their resting-place in the deep. It was a grim and awful sight.

Now and again the great claws would lay hold of some weighty catch, and, straining and groaning, haul up a great piece of distorted machinery, a lumbering portion of the vessel's hull, or some huge iron-bound case.

And so the work went on, until one by one the four great chests of gold which Blake had seen on board the ill-fated vessel were stowed away within the "Black Barnacle."

Suddenly through the water there descended a small, bright-red electric light, lowered from the surface. It slowly neared the lens on the top of the "Black Barnacle," and, as its blood-red rays lit up the water around, scaring the thousand strange fishes who clustered, blinded, round the intense light from the submarine ship, the "Barnacle" became suddenly merged in darkness.

Carefully it steered a spiral course to the surface, and there found the boat whose occupants had so recently been outwitted by **Sexton Blake**.

Once on the surface, by an ingenious contrivance a great mass of ballast water issued in a roaring current from the hold of the "Black Barnacle," and the vessel floated like ordinary craft.

A door working on the lock-gates principle, just flush with the water, was promptly opened from within, and the occupants of the small boat one

the steering-gear, and the gunnery apparatus. The engines, &c., were all on the lowest floor.

Right through the vessel, fore and aft, ran two vertical torpedo tubes. In the bows and stern were the stores, coal, and ammunition.

The centre deck or floor was given up to the living-quarters of the crew. Seale himself and his two lieutenants had cabins on the top floor, beside a large strong-room in which was stored the plunder of each voyage.

Throughout, the "Black Barnacle" was lit by electric light. Immediately under the lens at the top was a strong search-light, and a little platform from which the entire engines, steering-gear, and torpedo-tubes could be controlled by means of electric buttons, telephones, and a wheel. In front of this platform was the binnacle and chart-house, with a number of gauges for showing the depth at which the vessel was, its speed, and its direction upwards or downwards.

Everywhere lavish luxury met the eye. The cabins and saloon were fitted with the spoils taken from wealthy passenger steamers. The rough crew were decked out in diamond and gold ornaments. Priceless rugs abounded on every side.

Seale led the way into the saloon. There stood the four cases of gold, and all round were stacked jewels, ornaments, watches, and purses stolen from the corpses which had been dragged up, searched, and afterwards shot out again into the deep.

The air was heavy with the fumes of wine and stale tobacco; everything was soiled and dirty; the drinkers were inclined to be noisy, and Seale saw that any consultation had better be before the night was much farther advanced.

When all were assembled, Frederick Seale, a frown upon his face, stood up, cigar in hand, and interrupted the brawling babel of noise, calling out "Silence!"

"Look here, my fellows," he said. "Owing to the accused carelessness of the fool that's just been drowned" (cries of "Serve him jolly well right!" "Twarn't the Wrong-un's fault!" "Garn! hitting a man when he's down!" &c.) "we are in a predicament. A Government vessel is, I understand, aware of our existence. The confounded thing is in these waters, and probably before daybreak will be trying to knock a hole in us. It's only a beastly little torpedo-catcher—not half the size of the smallest of the hulks we've sent to blazes; and I propose we bust her without more ado before the fool that escaped the sea-wolves"—this being the nick-name of the band whose duty it was to destroy the survivors of a wreck—"has time to spread an alarm. If we do this, in a couple of days all the Frenchmen who heard his story will think it was a trumped-up cock-and-bull tale, and a couple of you chaps can go ashore as survivors from the wreck and spread another version. 'This fool will have disappeared. You will be on the spot, and before sundown everyone will believe your story. Are you ready to sink this confounded torpedo-catcher, my men? It'll be a rich prize, besides being safest for us."

He paused and looked round upon the throng of ruffians round him with uneasiness.

Michael Sweeney staggered to his feet amidst the hisses and unfavourable comments which greeted Seale's proposal. A drunken cheer was accorded him as, unable to retain a vertical position, whisky bottle in hand, he fell back on to the seat from which he had risen,

"Yer honours—hie!" he shouted. "If that infarnal idiot—hie!—who's just stopped his jaw,

or attempting to touch, a vessel of any kind until they were at the other side of the world.

Seale was livid with passion. It was the first time that his men had openly refused to obey his orders, and his fiery nature was aflame with anger. But he feared that mutinous, drunken crew, and stood looking on, his face darkened, gnashing his teeth in impotent rage.

Red-handed Pete, dangerous at most times, as the acknowledged leader of opinion amongst the crew, sprang up with an oath.

"It's all your own fault," he shouted above the din. "We've told yer scores of times it would happen if yer would go close in shore like that. Why couldn't yer take our advice—oh? Wreck in mid-ocean or out in the open sea, and we're with yer to a man. There would be no need for sea-wolves then, and there wouldn't be no risk of any escapin' neither. Yer've got yerself into this trouble by yer own pigheaded softness, and yer kin git yerself out o' it as best yer kin. We ain't goin' to 'elp yer. Fightin' man-o'-wars ain't exactly in our line—and don't yer fergit it!"



"YOU SCOUNDREL!" HE HALF WHIMPERED, HALF SHRIEKED. "YOU MISERABLE CUR! WHERE IS MY DAUGHTER?" (See next week's instalment.)

Red-handed Pete's remarks were greeted with shouts of approval, and Seale realised that he stood alone.

"Listen a moment," cried he. "When you joined me in this job you all swore that you would obey me and stand by me through thick and thin; that you would go where I wished and do what I would; that my word was to be law; and that the penalty for breaking it was—to be—death!"

He spoke in slow, deliberate tones, through clenched teeth, and even his drunken crew were momentarily hushed by the spell of his determined manner.

"I agreed," he continued, "to give you half of all our gains, to be divided amongst you. I have kept my part of the bargain, so far. By heavens, I'll keep it to the last letter, and shoot the first man who breaks his part of the agreement."

There was a deathly silence as he paused, his hand upon the revolver in his belt.

THE MUTINY QUELLED.

The silence was broken by the drunken laugh of one ruffian more maudlin than the rest, who, heedless of what he did, drew a revolver and levelled it at Seale.

In an instant there was a flash, a report, and a heavy thud.

When the smoke cleared away, the drunken man was lying a corpse in their midst, and Seale stood, with outstretched arm, aiming his revolver straight in front of him at the bulkhead opposite.

His act roused the companions of the murdered man to fury. They sprang to their feet, revolvers and knives flashed in the air, there was a rush for the entrance in which Seale stood.

He never moved, but stood his ground unflinchingly, and his stern, slow voice rose above the babel.

"Behind that bulkhead is half a ton of dynamite," he said, nodding in the direction in which his pistol was aimed. "The cartridges for the torpedoes are close against the bulkhead. Unless every blessed one of you sits down and obeys me, I swear I'll blow the lot of you to blazes!"

The mutinous crew were checked, and, muttering and cursing like snarling hounds deprived of their quarry, they slunk back. At that moment the bell of a telephone rang.

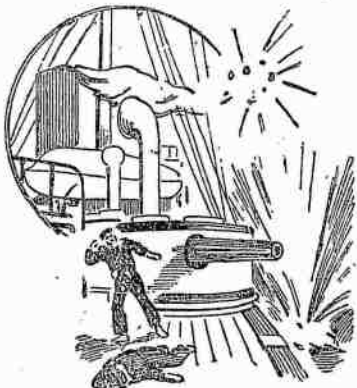
"Red-handed Pete," said Seale, as though nothing had happened, but without lowering his revolver, "answer the telephone, and see what the navigating lieutenant overhead wants."

"The torpedo-catcher is in sight. We are jest goin' under 'er, he says," replied Pete.

"Very well. Now, men, take your choice. Will you obey me, or will you be blown to Jingo—I don't care a red cent."

There was a moment's pause.

(To be continued next Thursday.)



don't withdraw his proposal, by jabbers, I'll make him!"

"Hear, hear!" roused the others, and several sprang to their feet at once, all eager to express their disapprobation of their leader's suggestion.

With oaths and drunken blasphemies they openly insulted him, and swore that they would not move hand or foot to help him, unless he promised to quit these waters without touching,