

**SEVEN GRAND NEW FEATURES
START IN "THE MAG." THIS WEEK!**

THE NELSON LEE
Library and St Frank's Magazine

2d



*Trapped
on the
Trapeze*



As Snayle pressed the switch over, there was a blinding flash of bluish light—a flash which seemed to envelop the wretched man from head to foot. He gave an ear-splitting shriek, and hurtled over backwards!

TRAPPED ON THE TRAPEZE !

A TOPPING STORY OF
SCHOOL AND CIRCUS.



This is the concluding story of the St. Frank's circus series, and relates how Simon Snayle, the ex-manager of Onions' Circus, seeks vengeance against his late employers by a particularly sinister plot that recoils unexpectedly against himself. The exit of Snayle at the very moment his ghastly scheme is about to take effect is handled with great dramatic skill by the author. Not only does this story bring the adventures of the schoolboy circus to a fitting conclusion ; it opens up a new vista of remarkable events, a fresh page in the history of St. Frank's. I allude to the significant visit of Sir Crawford Grey to the School, and his interview with Dr. Stafford, of which you will read in the story below.

THE EDITOR.

CHAPTER I.

THE NEW STUNT.

IRENE MANNERS looked concerned and uneasy.

"Oh, Tessa, but is it safe?" she asked anxiously. "It seems so dreadfully dangerous to me! I'm sure he'll kill himself."

Tessa laughed.

"It's just one of those little circus tricks that look risky, but are really comparatively safe," she said, pressing Irene's arm. "Johnny practised it three times this morning, and at first he thought about putting it in the afternoon show, but decided to leave it until this evening."

The two girls were standing just against the curtains of the entrance. Beyond, lay the vast interior of the big tent of Professor Onions' Colossal Circus and Menagerie. Every seat was occupied, and the circus was, indeed, packed to suffocation.

The glaring arc lights cast a dazzling radiance over the whole gay scene of sawdust and bunting and tinsel. Two or three clowns, led by Bertie Onions, were causing great amusement for the children.

And in the meantime some active preparations were toward at the very edge of the ring—where a number of attendants were at work. The ringmaster—myself, by the way—was getting ready to make an announcement to the audience.

Tessa's words had been spoken more to relieve Irene's anxiety than anything else. For, as a matter of fact, Tessa herself was just a bit concerned about Johnny's safety. But she wouldn't have admitted it for worlds.

Tessa Love was the niece of Simon Snayle—the rascally manager who had recently been presented with the order of the boot. But Tessa, loyal to the circus, had remained behind, careless of her uncle's threats. In all truth, she was happier now than when Mr. Snayle had been about.

Irene Manners and Marjorie Temple and Doris Berkeley had run over from the Moor View School to see the performance, and although they had not known Tessa for long, they had taken a great liking to the circus girl, and were now her firm friends.

For she was so different to what they had expected. Tessa was refined and lady-like—pretty, attractive, and wonderfully

never. It seemed a pity to Irene and Co. that Tessa should not be at school. For she was only fifteen, and it was hard that she should be compelled to work—and to work at such an exacting profession.

Tessa was smiling cheerfully and brightly as she looked through the curtains at the active preparations in the ring. But she was really more concerned for Johnny than Irene was. There is no doubt that Johnny Onions would have been slightly embarrassed if he had known of Tessa's concern for him.

He liked Tessa very much—better than any girl he knew—but even he didn't guess how strong his liking was, and that it was reciprocated.

"I wish it was all over," said Irene, in her direct way. "It seems to me so terribly reckless. Supposing he misses the trapeze? There's no net, or anything, and—"

"Oh, dry up, Renie," put in Doris. "Don't be such a silly! As far as I'm concerned, I'm waiting for the thrill! What did we come here for, anyhow?"

"You sound terribly callous, Doris," said Irene severely.

"Rats!" laughed Doris. "I'm as tender-hearted as those lettuces we had for tea!"

In the meantime, Johnny Onions was making his final examination of the apparatus, which was now in position. The new stunt had been greatly advertised that day—owing to the industry of John Busterfield Boots, the publicity chief—and the public was eager to witness the much boasted trick.

In the advertisements, it was described as "The Death-Defying Plunge Through Space, or The Human Bullet." And anything that promised to be sensational was certain of support.

At one side of the ring there was a huge, old-fashioned artillery piece—a squat, clumsy ordnance unit, such as might have been used over a century ago, but with an immensely wide barrel.

It was highly polished and steely, with impressive-looking wheels and gauges, and mounted upon a solid base. But the cannon was breech-loading, this breech being operated by a wheel, which closely resembled the steering wheel of a motor-car—and which, between ourselves, actually was one.

For this curiously ancient-modern cannon was Johnny Onions' own invention. And although it looked tons in weight, and seemed to be composed of heavy steel, it was really made of comparatively light wood.

Johnny stood by, looking quite calm and collected. He was dressed in tights, and seemed to be measuring the distance between the muzzle of the gun—which was pointed upwards at an acute angle—and a trapeze which hung at the very topmost extremity of the lofty tent.

The distance was considerable, but Johnny was quite serene. The fact that no nets

were spread did not worry him in the slightest. He had plenty of confidence in his own invention.

"Ladies and Gentlemen,—We are now about to see one of the most startling acts ever performed in a circus," I announced impressively. "Our daring acrobat is now about to place himself in the breech of this formidable looking cannon. It will then be fired—with startling results. But be quite calm and cool—there is no danger to yourselves."

I said quite a lot more to the same effect, and the audience was not only impressed, but thrilled. And then Johnny placed himself upon a light wheeled carrier, and stretched himself out full length—as though he were a shell.

The carrier was transferred to the breech of the great gun, and two or three attendants twirled the wheels, until the opening was in the exact position. And then, to the wonderment of the audience, Johnny was slid into the wide barrel. The breech was closed with a slam, and locked tight.

But during these operations, the angle of the gun had not been altered—for this had been set with extraordinary accuracy—for the slightest deviation from its true angle, might have fatal consequences.

It was my task to fire off the cannon with my own hand. I was assisted by the orchestra. Until now, a lively tune had been played, but as I stepped to the breech of the gun, and took hold of the firing cord, the band abruptly ceased.

A tense silence fell.

"Go!" I roared suddenly.

This shout of mine was a warning for Johnny to be ready. At the same instant I pulled the cord with all my strength. There was a loud explosion, a puff of smoke, and something shot out of the mouth of the gun.

It was Johnny—shooting upwards, projected through the air with tremendous force, like an elongated cannon ball.

"Oh!"

The audience gave a sheer gasp of fright and startled alarm as the explosion boomed out, and Johnny rushed upwards into space. In the entrance, Tessa felt her heart give a great throb.

"Oh, it's too risky!" she murmured huskily.

"Look—look!" breathed Irene.

Johnny, with delightful ease, had grasped the lofty trapeze high above, and was now swinging gently to and fro in the very dome of the great tent. A perfect storm of applause broke out—proclaiming the complete success of this new stunt.

As Johnny came slithering down a rope, he was greeted by round after round of hand-clapping, and shouts of enthusiasm. He bowed, and ran lightly out of the ring.

"Oh, Johnny, I was so frightened!" said Tessa breathlessly.

"You scared us out of our wits!" said Doris.

Johnny laughed.

"Nothing to be scared about," he said. "I couldn't miss that trapeze—it's one of the easiest tricks I've ever performed, but it looks impressive. That's the beauty of it."

But the girls did not appear to be convinced.

CHAPTR II.

SIGNOR CASSELLI IS FED UP.



JOHNNY was compelled to take several bows before he was quite free, and Irene and Co. were particularly curious to know the truth about that cannon.

"Won't you tell us how it's worked?" asked Marjorie. "It seems dreadfully dangerous for you to be shot out like that. Doesn't the explosion hurt you at all?"

The schoolboy acrobat grinned.

"The explosion, as it happens, takes place outside the cannon," he explained. "But the audience doesn't notice that in the excitement. I'm really projected upwards by a very powerful spring."

"Oh!" said Irene.

"Quite simple," went on Johnny. "One of the attendants pulls a lever, and the spring is released. Nipper pulls the string, I know, but that just causes the explosion. All I do is to shoot upwards, and catch the trapeze."

"But supposing you missed it?" asked Tessa doubtfully.

"Not one chance in a thousand," replied Johnny. "The apparatus is set so carefully that danger is practically eliminated. And perhaps you failed to observe that there was a big rope hanging down from the tent dome, just beyond the trapeze?"

"I didn't see it," said Irene.

"There you are!" said Johnny drily. "Hardly anybody sees it—they're too interested in the gun. Just one of the tricks of the profession, you know. If I happened to fall short of the trapeze, I should pass underneath it, and grab that rope. So, you see, I'm safe in any case. Anyhow, I'm jolly glad it's such a success."

Everybody else was glad, too, and the show finished amid great enthusiasm. This was the second day at Caistowe, and the pitch was not to be a very long one. But so far every performance had been packed.

The St. Frank's fellows were just as enthusiastic as ever, although their period of assistance would soon come to an end. For when the circus left Caistowe, it would be impossible for the Removites to follow its fortunes further.

And while the fellows were getting out their bicycles, in order to return to St.

Frank's a man, was lurking in the shadows in the next meadow—watching the scene with glowering, hate-filled eyes.

He was Simon Snayle, Tessa's uncle.

Only the previous day, Mr. Snayle had been ordered from the circus, and he had taken his dismissal hardly. He considered that he owed all his misfortune to Johnny and Bertie Onions and the St. Frank's juniors. In a way, this was right.

And Snayle was filled with revengeful ideas. More than anything else, he wanted to perform some act which would satisfy his lust for vengeance. All his schemes were ruined.

For weeks, he had been planning to make the circus a financial failure, so that he could purchase it for a tenth of its real value. He had planned this conspiracy in company with Big Bill Cassell, the proprietor of Casselli's International Circus—which was at present on the way to Bourne-mouth.

Owing to Simon Snayle's inducements, Casselli had brought his circus to Caistowe, hoping to crush the Onions outfit. But everything had gone wrong, and Casselli's Circus had been obliged to leave the field to its deadly rival.

Snayle dared not show himself in the circus again, yet he lurked about unwilling to leave the neighbourhood. He cared nothing for his niece, and was, if anything, rather pleased to be rid of the responsibility of her. For her part, Tessa had no love for her uncle, and she was hoping that he would stay away for good.

Snayle was at a loose end. The circus was his life—he had always been with one of these travelling shows. And although he was not financially worried, he hardly knew which way to turn. He knew that it would be difficult for him to obtain a position as manager of any other show.

He moodily walked away from the field, and made his way in the direction of the town. But he had not gone far before he noticed a familiar figure just ahead of him—a bulky, cumbersome figure, which progressed with a peculiar rolling gait.

Snayle quickened his pace and overtook the other.

"Bill!" he exclaimed gladly.

The big man turned, uttering an exclamation.

"By ginger! So it's you, eh?" said Big Bill Cassell. "You've got a nerve, Simon!"

"I thought you'd gone off to Bourne-mouth—"

"What the blazes has it got to do with you, anyhow?" snapped Signor Casselli. "I'm going on by train—I'm off to the station now. These Onions kids seem to be making a bigger success than ever, darn them!"

"Look here, Bill, it's no good blaming me for what happened," said Snayle eagerly. "Things went wrong—"

"They did!" agreed Mr. Cassell curtly. "But things won't go wrong again, my

friend! I have finished with you and your crazy ideas! Cost me enough already! What do you want, anyhow?"

"I thought, maybe, you'd let me join the show," said Mr. Snayle. "I'll come along to Bournemouth——"

"Let you join the show?" interrupted Big Bill contemptuously. "You? By Peter! You've got a nerve! After the way you've messed things up? Sorry, Simon, but I don't want throw-outs in my show!"

Simon Snayle controlled himself with an effort.

"You'd best be careful!" he said thickly. "It was you who first put me on to this idea of making the Onions' circus a failure! You wanted to grab it for yourself—and you fixed up with me——"

"And you failed!" interjected Big Bill curtly.

"Yes, I failed—but why?" snarled the other. "Because of those infernal boys! The young whelps! I'd like to drown the whole shoot of 'em in the bay! But if it hadn't been for your persuasions, Bill, I'd have kept straight——"

"Straight?" jeered Signor Casselli. "Gosh, that's good! You never was straight, Simon! I never knew you to be anything else but crooked! And the biggest liar in the profession, too—to say nothing of being a drunkard! It didn't take me to make you leave the straight path, my lad! So don't you fool yourself!"

"You make it difficult for me to keep my temper," exclaimed Snayle fiercely. "You led me into this, Bill, and you can't back out! And there's still time to smash up old Onions! I'm glad I met you—I thought you'd gone. I've got an idea——"

"Keep it!" interrupted Big Bill curtly.

"If you'll go into it with me, I'll promise you success," went on Snayle, becoming eager. "Don't you feel a bit wild with them kids? Wouldn't you like to get some of your own back? Listen to me, Bill, and I'll tell you how——"

"I've listened to you too long," put in Cassell impatiently. "You can go to the deuce! I'm fed-up with you, Snayle—fed-up to the neck! You and your rotten ideas!"

"But this one——"

"There's going to be no more!" snapped Big Bill. "I'm finished with you for good—an' that's flat! An' if you show up on my pitch, I'll have you kicked off it! But, look here, if you're hard up, I'll give you a couple of quid——"

"I don't want your confounded money!" snapped Snayle harshly. "If you'll only listen to me, I'll prove to you that——"

"I know when I've had enough!" broke in Signor Casselli. "These kids have bested me, an' they're a set of young whelps! But we'll only make things worse by goin' at 'em again! So you can take your cursed ideas somewhere else!"

And Big Bill Cassell jerked himself away and strode off.

Simon Snayle looked after him with burning, smouldering hatred against everybody. He had been turned down on all sides—even by his former associate.

The ex-manager was in a dangerous mood.

CHAPTER III.

JACK GREY'S VISITOR.



MR. CROWELL looked up with slight impatience as the door of the Remove classroom opened, and Tubbs, the page-boy, appeared. The Remove regarded the arrival of Tubbs with interest.

It was the following morning, and the juniors were at lessons. In spite of the many difficulties, they combined their circus work with school with complete success.

"What do you want, Tubbs?" demanded Mr. Crowell tartly. "I greatly object to being interrupted in this manner. What is it, boy?"

"The 'Ead sent me, sir," said Tubbs.

"Oh, indeed! And for what reason did the 'Ead send you—er—ahem! That is, why did the Head send you?"

"'E wants Master Grey, sir," said Tubbs. "Most important, sir."

Mr. Crowell turned his eagle eye upon Jack Grey.

"You had better go at once, Grey, but be back as quickly as you can," said the Form-master. "I dislike these comings and goings in the middle of lessons! What have you been doing, Grey, that the headmaster should want you so urgently?"

Jack Grey hesitated. He was rather flustered at the news, and not a little worried. But he couldn't think of any reason why he should be placed on the carpet. He couldn't think of any recent misdemeanours.

"I don't know, sir," he said. "I haven't done anything!"

"Oh, well, be off!" said Mr. Crowell impatiently.

Jack Grey left his place, followed by sympathetic glances from Reggie Pitt and most of the other juniors. There was generally only one sequel to an urgent summons to the headmaster's study.

"Poor chap!" said Handforth. "A swishing, I'll bet!"

Jack Grey passed out of the room, grinning, for Mr. Crowell had heard Handforth's incautious remark, and was lecturing him. But Jack soon forgot Handforth's troubles in the contemplation of his own coming ordeal.

He arrived in the Head's study, and all his uneasiness vanished like a puff of steam.

"Dad!" he exclaimed delightedly.

"Well, Jack, my boy, and how are you?" exclaimed Sir Crawford Grey, rising and

greeting his son. "Looking bronzed and healthy, eh? Splendid! What's this I hear about your being a circus performer? Tut, tut! Heaven knows what you boys are coming to nowadays!"

Jack was doubly delighted, for he knew that he had not been sent for to answer for any misdeed, and the unexpected pleasure of seeing his father was altogether cheering.

Sir Crawford Grey was a hale, hearty man with hair turning grey at the temples. Dr. Stafford sat at his desk, looking on until the pair had finished their greetings.

"Your father has made quite a surprise

sacrificed. You will not leave St. Frank's for good, Grey—only for the remaining weeks of this term and the term which follows."

"But what's the idea, dad?" asked Jack, bewildered. "Do you mean you're going to take me away, and that I shan't come back until after the summer holidays?"

"That," said Sir Crawford, "is the precise state of affairs, Jack. As you know, I am something of a naturalist—a mere amateur, I will admit, but a keen one. I am greatly interested in botany and entomology—and, indeed, zoology in general. And an opportunity has just arisen for me



And within fifteen minutes Snayle had scooped out a fairly deep cavity—right beneath the cable. Into this hole he placed the little wooden box.

descent upon us, Grey," said the Head at length. "And he has come with a rather unusual proposition—concerning yourself."

"Concerning me, sir?" asked Jack, looking from the Head to Sir Crawford.

"I want to take you away from St. Frank's, my boy," smiled his father.

Jack's face expressed dismay.

"Take me away, dad?" he ejaculated, startled. "Oh, but— There's—there's cricket, you know, and there'll be the exams—"

"With regard to your studies, all that is being arranged," put in the Head. "The cricket, I am afraid, will have to be

to join a most interesting expedition which is immediately setting off for Central Africa—"

"Central Africa?" echoed Jack breathlessly.

"Yes."

"And—and I'm to go as well?" asked the junior. "Oh, but—but I suppose I'm wrong—"

"Not at all," chuckled Sir Crawford. "I thought it would be of great value to your education if you joined us, my boy. And Dr. Stafford has very kindly consented to your being absent for the interval. Naturally, he insists that your studies shall

be taken full care of, and I will see to that."

Jack Grey stood there, quite unable to make any adequate remark for the moment. This piece of news was so sudden—so overwhelmingly abrupt. It was about the last thing he had been expecting.

An expedition to Central Africa!

A trip into the great forests of the Dark Continent—among the savage tribes, searching for specimens of all descriptions. It was a trip that would naturally appeal to the heart of any healthy boy.

"Well?" asked Sir Crawford at length.

"It's—it's wonderful, dad!" said Jack breathlessly. "And—and are we really

ever heard of, dad!" declared Jack, flushed and almost bewildered. "Leaving within three days! And do we go straight to Africa—"

"I will be able to tell you all the details at a more opportune moment," said his father. "I believe I have brought you away from lessons, so you had better get back to your class-room. However, the headmaster has generously agreed to your having dinner with me privately, so that we may have a nice little talk."

Jack hardly remembered getting out of the Head's study. He returned to the Remove Form-room in a kind of trance, too inwardly excited to realise the abrupt

BOOKS OF SPORT, SCHOOL AND ADVENTURE

Sixty-four Pages Crammed with Enjoyment!

The Boys' Friend Library

No. 717. BROTHER PRO'S.

A Brilliant Yarn of the Cricket Field, introducing Smith of Rocklandshire. By Richard Randolph.

No. 718. FIGHTING DAL BROUGHTON.

A Superb Tale of the Modern Boxing Ring. By Alfred Edgar.

No. 719. THE GOLDEN BUDDHA!

A Magnificent, Long, Complete Story of Adventure Abroad. By Maurice Everard.

No. 720. VOLCANO ISLAND!

A New and Original Yarn of Fun and Adventure, introducing the Famous Comrades, Jack, Sam and Pete. By S. Clarke Hook.

The Sexton Blake Library

No. 335. THE LOOT OF THE NANA SAHIB.

Another Splendid Tale of the Adventures of GUNGA DASS.

No. 336. THE BOARDING-HOUSE MYSTERY.

A Story of Baffling Mystery, Thrilling Adventure, and Clever Deduction. By the Author of "The Farrowshot Park Affair," etc., etc.

No. 337. AN AMATEUR IN CRIME; or, Saved by Sexton Blake.

A Romance of London Adventure, Mystery, and Clever Detective Work. By the Author of "In Double Disguise," etc., etc.

No. 338. THE BRIKHAM MANOR MYSTERY.

An Absorbing Tale of Mystery, telling how Sexton Blake unravelled one of the most intricate crime problems of his career. By the Author of "The Mystery of Rodney's Cove," etc., etc.

Out on Friday!

Price Fourpence Each!

going? I mean, you're not trying to joke—"

Sir Crawford laughed outright.

"You appear to be quite flustered, Jack!" he chuckled. "Certainly I would not joke on such a subject. We are going—and, what is more, we are going quite soon."

"What do you mean by soon, dad?"

"You will leave St. Frank's in about three days, and we sail within a week," replied Sir Crawford. "I should have preferred to give you longer notice, but it was only this week that I definitely decided upon the trip. I don't think I need ask if you are in favour of the proposition?"

"Why, it's the most gorgeous idea I've

change that had come. It was difficult to believe that in a few short days he would be on the sea, bound for Central Africa!

"Ah, I am glad that you have returned, Grey!" exclaimed Mr. Crowell, his voice awakening Jack out of his abstraction. "Perhaps we shall be able to continue our lessons— Why, Grey, has something happened? You are looking very flushed."

"Nunno, sir!" stammered Jack. "It's—it's all right, sir."

"It appears to me, Grey, that you have been severely punished!" said Mr. Crowell sternly. "I will not inquire into your misdemeanour, since the Head has obviously

dealt with the matter in an adequate fashion."

"Poor old bounder!" muttered Reggie Pitt sympathetically.

"I haven't been flogged, sir," declared Jack, coming more to himself. "I've just seen my father, and I'm leaving St. Frank's in three days to go on a long trip into the wilds of Central Africa."

The Remove sat up with a jerk and took notice.

CHAPTER IV.

THE THREAT OF SEPARATION.



"CENTRAL AFRICA!"

"What rot!"

"You can't spoof us!"

"Stop your kidding, you ass!"

Mr. Crowell rapped his desk angrily.

"Silence!" he thundered. "How dare you? What is the meaning of this unseemly disturbance? The next boy who speaks will be detained!"

The Remove became weirdly silent.

"Now, Grey, what is this extraordinary statement of yours?" asked Mr. Crowell.

"Do you really wish me to understand that you are leaving the school to go upon some hare-brained expedition into the wilds? It is not like you, Grey, to make any attempt to deceive me—"

"It's true enough, sir," interrupted Jack. "My pater's a keen naturalist, you know. And he thinks the trip will do me a lot of good—from the educational point of view."

Mr. Crowell compressed his lips.

"Possibly—possibly!" he agreed tartly.

"But I must confess, Grey, that I do not agree with your father. But perhaps it is just as well that we do not all hold the same opinions. I regard this abrupt departure as lamentable. Just as you were progressing so admirably, too. Well, well! You may go to your place."

Jack went to it, but lessons held no further interest for him that morning, and he only made a mere pretence of working. He noticed that Reggie Pitt was looking just a little grave. Vaguely, Jack wondered why. And he was intensely relieved when the hour of dismissal arrived.

He was instantly surrounded by a crowd of inquisitive juniors, who enviously congratulated him on his luck. I looked at Grey somewhat wistfully as he explained the few details that he knew.

"Lucky beggar!" I said. "I'd love to be going with you, but we can't all buzz off on these expeditions. I've been in Africa more than once, and you're certain to find plenty of excitement. Discomforts, too, but I don't suppose you'll mind them."

Jack soon broke away, and went off to Study E with Reggie Pitt. The latter was

still looking serious. And it suddenly occurred to Jack why his chum was so concerned.

"I say, you're not cut up, are you?" he asked quickly.

"My dear old chap, I'm as pleased as Punch!" replied Reggie, with enthusiasm. "But it'll be a bit rotten for me—left alone here, you know. I shall only have T. T in the study, and he's about as companionable as a gramophone with only one record. Still, worse things happen at sea, they say."

"I'm a rotten, selfish beggar!" declared Jack fiercely. "I've been so jolly excited over my own luck that I didn't look at the thing in this way. I'll miss you, too, Reggie, but not so much as you'll miss me, perhaps. Because I shall have so many distractions. And you'll be stuck here on your own—"

"That's all right," interrupted Pitt. "By Jove, I'd give anything to be going with you, Jack! I say, wouldn't we have some sport, eh? I dare say you'll be a bit lonesome at times, without any other chap of your own age too—"

Reggie paused, and his eyes lighted up.

"I say!" he went on quickly. "I suppose there's no chance, old man? It wouldn't be possible for you to persuade your dad— Oh, no, but that's too thick! Like my giddy nerve to push myself forward! Sorry, old man—forget all about it!"

But Jack Grey was thrilled at the prospect.

"Why, you silly chump, it's the idea of the century!" he exclaimed. "You've got to come! As you say, I shan't have anybody to pal with, and you're an absolute necessity! But what about your people? They might bring the chopper down on the whole scheme."

Pitt shook his head.

"Not they!" he replied. "My pater's one of the best—and if he knew I was in safe hands, he'd give his consent in a tick. But I'm afraid Sir Crawford—"

"Who is this taking my name in vain?" inquired Jack's father, entering at that moment. "Well, Reggie! Pleased to see you, my boy! I declare you're looking healthier than ever! You'll soon be losing Jack now, so you must make the most of the next few days."

"Yes, sir," said Pitt awkwardly.

"I'm jolly glad you've come, dad!" put in Jack. "There's something I want to ask you. Will our party consist of all men?"

"Why, yes," said Sir Crawford, in surprise. "At least, with the exception of yourself. But why do you want to know?"

"I was thinking it'll be a bit lonely for me at times, dad," replied Jack diplomatically. "I shall love to be with you, of course, but a fellow rather needs the companionship of somebody his own age—especially on a long trip. I—I was wondering—"

Jack paused, rather at a loss. And Sir

Crawford, glancing from his son to Reggie Pitt, quickly jumped to the truth. His face lighted up, and he chuckled.

"Capital—capital!" he exclaimed. "The pair of you, eh? So you would like Reggie to come with us? A splendid notion, Jack! As you say, you'll need companionship. I hadn't even thought of the possibility. But what about your parents, Reggie?"

"Oh, I could square them, sir!" said Pitt promptly. "But, I say, this seems awfully steep, and I'm sure the Head won't consider it. Thanks ever so much, sir, all the same!"

"Not so hurried!" said Sir Crawford. "You are really convinced that your parents will raise no objection?"

"I'm certain of it, sir."

"Very well, we will see the Head—and there is no reason why we should not get it over at once," said Sir Crawford briskly. "If one boy, why not two boys? And as I have undertaken to keep Jack in form for lessons, it will be no harder to deal with two of you at the same time. That ought to be a point well in our favour, eh?"

"But it seems such an awful nerve, sir—"

"Nothing of the sort, you ass!" whispered Jack. "Why, it'll be simply gorgeous if we can both go. We'll have simply a stunning time."

Reggie Pitt made no further objection, and he was carried off at once to the Headmaster's study—where Sir Crawford explained matters tactfully and concisely.

Dr. Stafford looked rather dubious.

"Well, I don't know, I'm sure," he said at length. "We mustn't allow this affair to become an excuse for a general exodus!"

"But there's only two of us, sir," said Pitt hopefully.

"Yes; I am aware of that," replied the Head. "And I am the first to admit that it will be far better for your son, Sir Crawford, if he has a companion of his own age with him. Upon the whole, I am inclined to give my consent."

"Oh, you're a brick, sir!" said Pitt joyously.

"However, you must not be too optimistic," went on Dr. Stafford. "My consent is only subject to your father's approval. It is quite possible that he will put his foot down firmly on the whole proposition. However, we shall see. I shall communicate with Mr. Pitt at once, and put the matter before him."

"I think you can safely leave that to me, Doctor," said Sir Crawford. "I am returning to London this afternoon, and I will see the lad's father at the first opportunity and see what can be done. In the event of his consenting, I will at once communicate by telegram."

A few moments later, Jack Grey and Reggie Pitt escaped, and they executed a kind of war dance in the Head's corridor.

"It's a cert!" said Reggie breathlessly. "Listen, O worker of miracles! If my dad

doesn't come across with his consent I'll eat my footer boots and swallow the study table!"

Which seemed to indicate that Reggie Pitt's confidence was fairly solid.

CHAPTER V.

THE FIGURE IN THE NIGHT.



THAT evening, Reggie Pitt and Jack Grey did not take their usual interest in Professor Onions' Colossal Circus and Menagerie. Something of a bigger and more

important nature had come along, and the circus was now regarded as very small potatoes. In any case, as Pitt remarked, the St. Frank's fellows would soon be forced to sever their connection with the show, so the time was opportune.

And all anxiety was at an end when the juniors returned to St. Frank's, for a telegram awaited Reggie from his father—a telegram which he opened with doubt and anxiety and hope. He gave one look at the wording on the form and fell upon Jack Grey's neck.

"All serene?" asked Jack excitedly.

"Not merely all serene, but O.K., and any old thing you like!" replied Pitt. "The pater says 'Yes.' He's fixed it up with Sir Crawford, and I'm to leave St. Frank's at the same time as you!"

"Hurrah!" yelled Jack.

"What's all the row?" I asked, coming up with Handforth and a few others. "You fellows seem pretty excited."

They quickly explained.

"You're both going?" demanded Handforth warmly. "Well, of all the nerve! It's a pity you couldn't invite me! Why shouldn't we make up a party——"

"My dear ass, don't be sillier than you can help!" I interrupted. "I can understand the Head excusing two members of the Remove, but there's a limit. If a whole party asked to go the Head would bring his foot down like a sledgehammer. Good luck, Reggie! We shall miss you, but I am glad you are going, for Jack's sake."

He was congratulated on all sides, and the Remove was still discussing the subject when he went up to bed. Reggie Pitt was not the kind of junior to get excited over anything, but to-night he didn't get to sleep till well after midnight—and neither did Jack. For they sat up in bed, whispering about the future prospect.

And at about the same time as this a somewhat curious incident was taking place in the circus meadow at Caistowe.

All was quiet and dark. The circus was asleep, with everything stowed away for the night, and with only the occasional sound of an animal moving in its cage or stall.

A dim, uncertain figure lurked in the gloom, and made its way round the big tent

to a spot midway between the tent and the now silent traction engine—which was also used to drive the powerful electrical apparatus which supplied the circus with light.

The intruder, as can well be imagined, was Mr. Simon Snayle.

And he had not come empty-handed. He carried some rather curious objects—a spade, a short crowbar, and a compact little wooden box which in itself was somewhat mysterious.

Mr. Simon Snayle made a careful survey of his bearings before setting his burdens down. He had been drinking, but not excessively, and he was quite steady. But his eyes burned with a strange light. It almost seemed that the events of the past few days had had an effect upon the man's brain.

He had been cast adrift by everybody. Dismissed from the circus for his undoubted villainies—rejected by Big Bill Cassell—defied by his own niece—the ex-manager felt himself to be at enmity with humanity in general. And his one great desire was to exact revenge for his imaginary wrongs. But he was not insane—his wits were as keen and as unscrupulous as ever. Indeed, Snayle was even more alert than usual.

"I'll give them a surprise this time!" he muttered, with vicious pleasure. "I'll show them they can't play with Simon Snayle and escape unscorched! I'm in earnest this time!"

The very quietness of his surroundings assured Mr. Snayle that he was safe from observation. And he set to work slowly, deliberately, and methodically. His first task was to examine the ground with care and commence operations at a spot where the turf had been recently disturbed—where, as he knew, the main electric light cable passed to the big tent. It was buried only just beneath the surface.

Cutting several pieces of turf out and laying them aside, Snayle then commenced digging. And within fifteen minutes he had scooped out a fairly deep cavity—right beneath the cable. And in this hole he placed the little wooden box.

Before doing so, however, he listened carefully to a solemn tick which proceeded from its interior. The box was, to be exact, a kind of home-made bomb.

It was not powerful enough to do much damage, but the force of its explosion would be quite sufficient to serve the purpose for which it was intended. And the plan was a cunning one.

That box contained a small French clock—one that was provided with a twenty-four-hour dial. That is, the face, instead of having merely twelve figures, as in the ordinary clock, had double the number—the full twenty-four hours of the day.

It was fitted with an alarm, and it was carefully timed to go off at thirty minutes after the hour of twenty—which meant that the bomb would explode at precisely half-past eight on the following evening.

And at that period the circus would be in full swing, with the tent packed with an interested audience. The show would be at the height of its success, and being a Saturday night, the great tent would certainly be jammed to its utmost capacity.

Simon Snayle chuckled viciously over his petty plot as he proceeded to shovel back the earth. There was nothing complicated or involved about this piece of scheming.

The bomb would simply shatter the electric cable, but do no other harm, for its explosive force would be quite local, and would not injure anybody if they were standing almost on the top of it.

But with that cable severed, the circus would be plunged into instant darkness, and it would be some time before the damage could be repaired. And during this period the audience would probably stampede, and there was even a chance that the rowdy element would create a lot of trouble.

Such was the contemptuous, petty nature of Simon Snayle's latest piece of devilry. And it indicated his shallow nature, that he should find pleasure in this type of revenge. But it was quite characteristic of him, and of his sullen, vindictive temper.

With great care, he replaced the turf, and by the time he had finished the result was entirely to his satisfaction. There was not the slightest indication that the ground had been disturbed.

Snayle gave a soft chuckle and picked up his spade. At the same second he stiffened, and a quiver of alarm ran through his frame. Unmistakably, a waft of tobacco smoke had come to his nostrils.

Somebody was up and about!

Snayle glanced round with a kind of gulp. And he saw the figures of two men who had just entered by the gateway—two of the circus men, in fact, who had stayed rather late at the home of an acquaintance.

Snayle vanished like a shadow into the gloom, cursing bitterly that he had taken things so easily. At a safe distance he watched, anxious and worried.

The two men approached the spot where Snayle had been standing, and came to a halt there. They both examined the ground in a casual, but inquisitive, kind of way.

"Nothing here, Jim," said one of the men in a low voice. "I made sure the beggar was monkeying about on the ground. Shouldn't be surprised if he was that tramp who's been hanging about the circus lately."

"Oh, let him!" said the other, stifling a yawn. "Anyhow, I'm not chasin' after the swab! I don't suppose he was up to any mischief. Let's get to bed!"

The pair gave another glance round, but their suspicions were quietened, and before long they went to sleep, and the incident passed from their minds.

And below the turf the clock in that little wooden box ticked away industriously and relentlessly!

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN THE LIGHT FAILED.



JOHNNY ONIONS was looking rather anxious.

"We'll never be able to hold 'em!" he said, shaking his head. "There'll be hundreds turned away to-night!"

"Well, that's nothing to grumble at," said Handforth. "Better to have the tent full and turn people away than play to empty benches."

Johnny laughed.

"Goodness knows, I'm not grumbling," he said. "Thanks to you fellows, we've made the biggest success of any tour that I can remember. I'll bet the dear old pater's as pleased as Punch."

All the electric lights were blazing out, and the circus meadow was teeming with life. The great tent was gradually filling up to its utmost capacity. It wasn't dark yet, but the electric arcs made the whole scene brilliant and gay. Everybody was in the best of spirits—except, perhaps, Johnny himself.

I noticed this when I joined him a moment later.

"Wherefore this solemn look?" I inquired. "Wishing the tent was bigger?"

"As a matter of fact, I'm a bit blue," said Johnny. "We've had some fine times during this last week or two, and now it's got to come to an end. We move off to Fleethaven after this pitch, and it's too far for you chaps to come."

"But aren't you arranging for a crowd of highly efficient professionals to enter the bill?"

"Yes, of course," said Johnny. "My pater's fixing all that up in London. We've got heaps of money now—the show's been such a success that financial worries are over. The show'll be all right; but I'm as glum as the dickens about losing you fellows. Things won't seem the same."

"That's not very surprising, because they won't be the same," chuckled Pitt. "But there's a consolation in everything. It'll be a great relief for you to have the show running on a proper basis. And now that old Snayle's gone, you'll have a free hand. The beast was only a hindrance, anyhow."

All the same, Johnny would not be comforted—in spite of the fact that the present audience was undoubtedly the biggest that had ever assembled under that canvas roof.

Upon the whole, I think most of the juniors were feeling a little relieved. It was interesting enough to perform in the circus, but this life was a terrible tie.

It had been novel enough at first, and the fellows had entered into it with an abundance of enthusiasm. But their interest was just beginning to wane, and a continuation might have been irksome. Enough is as good as a feast, and we had certainly had a feast of circus life.

And there was the school cricket to think about; sports had been rather neglected of late. But there was still heaps of time to pull up, and to have everything humming long before the Whitsuntide holidays arrived.

But for to-night, at all events, we were as keen as ever on the performance. It was to be our last in the circus, for in the small hours the show would be up and away, travelling through Sunday to be ready for the next pitch at Fleethaven on the Monday afternoon.

Johnny's new stunt had caught on well, and had become, indeed, the most talked-of act in the programme. Everybody was eager to see the "Human Bullet."

When starting-time arrived, the tent hummed with life—and it seemed to me, as I entered the ring, that the canvas sides of the vast enclosure were positively bulging. It was a Saturday night audience, full of good spirits, ready to appreciate every turn, and frankly out for enjoyment.

The performance went with a mighty swing.

Jerry Dodd's trick riding, Handforth's comic act with Willy, Tessa's graceful bare-back performance—everything went off beautifully. And the audience worked itself up into a state of high enthusiasm.

And then, just before eight-thirty, came the big event of the evening. The lumbering cannon was placed in position, with a host of attendants hovering round.

The crowd watched eagerly.

Outside, only a few people were about, and most of these were men connected with the circus—to say nothing of a few unfortunate urchins who had not had the wherewithal to pay for admission, and who were gaining some slight consolation by listening to the laughter and applause from within the tent, or peeping through a lucky spyhole.

Some little distance away, concealed by the hedge, Snayle sat waiting. He had been drinking again—more heavily this time—and his eyes were bleary and bloodshot.

Now and again he would glance at his watch. It was getting near the time. Twenty-five minutes past eight! In five minutes—

Indeed, at any moment now, for Snayle was not quite certain as to that time mechanism. He expected to hear a slight report, and to see the entire lights of the circus snuff out. But, so far, everything was satisfactory. The show went on without a soul being aware of the coming peril.

Within the tent, the final preparations for the big act were being made.

Johnny was just being slid into the breech of the huge gun, and he smiled to himself as he heard the intake of breath from the audience. Johnny positively enjoyed these stunts. No matter how many times he performed them, they never seemed to grow stale. His only regret was that his father was not present to see what was being done.

Perhaps Johnny would have felt different

If he had known one or two interesting facts.

At last the moment came for the big climax.

It was almost exactly on the stroke of eight-thirty, and I stood ready at the breech of the gun to pull the cord that would cause the report. Near me, an attendant was waiting, with his hand on the spring lever.

"All ready, Johnny?" I asked softly.

"Yes—fire ahead!" came Johnny's answer from within the barrel.

I paused, throwing up my arm in a dramatic attitude. The band ceased playing abruptly, and the whole audience held its breath. The thrilling moment had arrived.

"Go!" I shouted.

I pulled the cord with a sudden jerk.

Somehow, it seemed to me that two explosions came at once—one from inside the tent, and a sort of dull echo from beyond the canvas walls. In that flash I thought it was a mere trick of sound.

Johnny Onions left the muzzle of the gun and shot upwards. And actually while he was commencing his flight upwards into mid-air, every light in the entire circus went out, and intense darkness followed!

CHAPTER VII.

THE ARREST!



JOHNNY ONIONS was in deadly peril.

Everything depended upon quickness of action and keenness of vision. The spring inside that cannon was just powerful enough to thrust him upwards so that he could grasp the high trapeze.

The whole thing was over in a mere flash, and the audience would sit rubbing its eyes and gazing at the agile performer swinging so easily far above.

But without the assistance of his eyesight, Johnny was helpless. All he could do was to grab wildly at the darkness, hoping blindly that he would find the cross-bar of the trapeze.

During that tense instant he was dimly aware of the confused shouts of attendants, the screams of women, the cries of children. And he was also aware of the fact that death might be near.

The failure of the light at this critical moment was the worst piece of luck imaginable. Bad as Simon Snayle was, he had not deliberately planned this denouement—it had happened by chance.

Johnny touched the top of his thrust, and a thrill ran through him as he felt his fingers touch the trapeze-bar. But, with a sickening sensation of horror, his fingers failed to grasp the unseen support. It failed him, and swung away!

And Johnny, carried forward by the force



Snayle connected a wire—outrageously and skillfully—to that high trapeze which Johnny Onions alone used.

of his projection, plunged into space! A strangled cry came into his throat as he realised that he was hurtling downwards to almost certain death!

And in the same flash his hands encountered a thick rope. With the instinct of self-preservation, he clutched. One hand grasped the rope and tightened. He felt a fierce, burning sensation as he slithered, chafing his skin agonisingly.

But his grip held!

And, swaying and swinging to and fro, he slid down the life-line, and managed to pull his descent up short before touching the ground. With his heart thumping like a hammer against his ribs, he finished the rest of the descent, and stood on solid earth, trembling in every limb.

"Whew!" he murmured. "I thought it was all over that time!"

After missing the trapeze, he had looked upon doom as certain—having forgotten the safety-rope beyond. This rope was merely a precaution, in case the spring in the gun failed to act properly. Johnny Onions was thankful that such a rope had been provided.

In the meantime, all was confusion.

The audience was on the point of stampeding. And, with such a crushed and packed tent, any panic would undoubtedly lead to ghastly consequences. For such a stampede would trample the weaker underfoot.

"Keep your seats—keep your seats!" I roared, at the top of my voice. "The lights will come on in a moment! There is no need to get into a panic! Keep your seats!"

The attendants were shouting the same injunction and, to our intense relief, the major portion of the audience remained still. The pitchy darkness continued.

In addition to my concern for the audience, I felt sick at heart regarding Johnny. I had heard no fatal thud, announcing his crash to earth. But in the confusion this was understandable. I wondered if the poor chap was mortally hurt, or perhaps dead.

And there were others who were equally anxious.

Tessa had been standing just against the entrance, as she had been when this stunt had been first tried. And the last she had seen of Johnny was when he shot upwards out of the cannon's mouth. Then the darkness had snapped down like the closing of a shutter.

Tessa acted with wonderful presence of mind.

Just for one tense second she stood rigid, horrified. Then the power of action returned, and she knew that one thing was required—light! And its prompt arrival might avert a catastrophe. Although no power on earth could help Johnny now.

With a swish of her ring costume, the girl twirled round and ran blindly out of the entrance tent. She remembered that two powerful incandescent oil lamps—those modern lamps that give a brilliant light—

were standing on a lemonade stall only just outside.

In less than twenty seconds Tessa had reached the stall—for those oil lamps stood out like twin beacons, practically every other light of the circus having gone out.

Tessa seized one of the lamps before she could be stopped—before any of the scurrying circus men could know what she was doing. And then, with fleet feet, she dashed back into the tent.

And so, just at the most critical moment of all, she arrived in the packed enclosure—bringing that light with her, and calming the excited audience in one breath. The single hand-lamp seemed utterly dazzling after the inky darkness that had prevailed.

"Hurrah!" yelled somebody.

"Tessa, you're a wonder!" I panted, as I rushed up to her.

"Johnny!" she gasped. "What happened—Oh!"

For at that second Johnny himself had come calmly up from the other side of the ring—and he was even now bowing to the audience! This very action on his part brought calmness to the excited throng.

"How did you do it, old man?" I asked, with a gulp.

"Goodness knows!" said Johnny. "I happened to hit that safety-rope—that's all. I say, what's happened to the electricity?"

"Oh, Johnny, I thought you'd been killed!" said Tessa faintly.

The audience now began to enjoy the novelty of the situation, and watched with keen interest. The very fact that they could see the ring, and everything that was happening, reassured the most excited.

And outside a good many other people were scurrying about.

The electrician himself was at his wits' end. The moment of the light failure had found him standing idly by the throbbing traction-engine, smoking his pipe, and keeping an eye on the generator.

And then a dull kind of thud had sounded—a dazzling, hissing flash of fire had appeared on the ground midway between the tent and the engine. And the lights had petered out.

The engine was stopped at once by the man in charge, and the electrician rushed forward.

"The cable's gone!" he yelled. "Turn off the main switches, Harry! Done it? Good!"

He arrived at the spot where he had seen the flash, and somebody opportunely brought forth an electric torch and flashed the light over the turf. It took only a few seconds to locate the trouble.

"By ginger!" said the electrician, startled.

"The cable's busted clean up!" muttered one of the men.

"There's been foul play here!" snapped the electrician. "Look! Explosive of some kind—it's still smoking! Can't you smell the powder? The cable has been deliberately shattered!"

But, being a man of action—and knowing

the extreme urgency of the case—the electrician left all surmise to others. With feverish haste he made preparations for repairing the damage. Two or three assistants came hurrying up, and a spare length of cable was produced.

As quickly as possible the severed wire was repaired; the whole job being a terrible botch, but temporarily effective. The insulation was quite adequate for the moment, and the electrician was satisfied. A permanent repair could be made later.

Perspiring freely after his exertions, he turned towards the engine.

"Right away, Harry!" he called. "Start her up, and switch on!"

The engine gave a few quick puffs, and in a moment the big generator was humming musically. The switch was pulled over, and the great arcs spluttered joyously and sprang into life.

And the interior of the tent became flooded with illumination, to the accompaniment of a rousing cheer!

"Thank goodness!" I said fervently. "We shall never know how near a panic was! Good old 'Sparks'! He must have worked like the dickens to get that repair done so quickly."

Within five minutes the show was proceeding as serenely as ever, and although the electrician had an anxious time until the audience came surging out, no further misadventure took place.

As soon as the crowd had cleared, an immediate investigation was held. We were all startled when we heard how the light failure had been caused. And two men came forward with a surprising story.

They related how they had come into the meadow after twelve o'clock on the previous night. They had seen a lurking figure near the fatal spot, but had thought little of the matter. It was now apparent that they had actually seen the rascal at his work.

"That old tramp, I'll warrant!" said the electrician grimly. "You know the fellow? He's been hanging round this show for the last few days. I always thought he looked a bit queer! Mad, as like as not!"

It was soon spread throughout the camp that the strange old tramp was suspected. Even the juniors shared this theory. They had seen the tramp on more than one occasion, and his habit of hanging about for no apparent purpose was certainly significant.

Even the local policeman was keen, and he promised, with an important air, to keep his eyes open for the disreputable stranger. As it happened, this wasn't even necessary.

For some shouts from the lower part of the field attracted their attention, and immediately afterwards three of the circus attendants came up, with the old tramp firmly in their grasp.

"We've got him!" said one of the men triumphantly. "Here, policeman, you'd better take him in charge!"

The constable did so with alacrity. He placed a firm, official hand upon the tramp's

shoulder, and fumbled with his other hand for the bracelets. He produced these amid a dramatic silence.

The tramp, however, did not look at all guilty or crestfallen. On the contrary, he broke into a soft laugh, and removed his hat, and his hair at the same time.

Everybody stared in amazement.

"It had not been my original intention to disclose myself just yet," said the tramp calmly. "But having never worn these interesting little ornaments, I have no wish to try them now!"

Johnny and Bertie Onions started forward at the same time.

"Dad!" they shouted joyously.

The old tramp was none other than Professor Onions himself!

CHAPTER VIII.

GOOD NEWS FOR JOHNNY AND BERTIE.



DIPPY, the dwarf, gave a glad cry, and looked at Professor Onions with joy and something that was akin to affection. His action, indeed, was something like that of a faithful dog who recognised his master.

"Dippy happy because boss become himself!" he exclaimed. "Dippy anxious and worried. Afraid boss keep quiet too long."

"That's all right, old friend," said Professor Onions. "Yes, boys, Dippy is the only one who knew my identity. And I don't think you will really need to detain me, eh, constable?"

"It's the Chief!" shouted the crowd of circus men.

By this time Johnny and Bertie were fairly clinging to their father, so excited and delighted that they could hardly form the questions which were ready to burst out.

"But, dad," gasped Johnny, "I—I can't understand it! We thought you were ill in bed! You didn't write and tell us that you had got better, or that you were up and about—"

"I'm afraid you'll have to forgive me, my boys, for practising a rather cruel and foolish deception," said the professor. "My only excuse is that I am getting old, and worried about the future of you two lads of mine. Why, upon my soul! You are even smiling. Bertie! This is indeed miraculous!"

Bertie Onions—who was consistently gloomy, no matter what the circumstances might be—had completely changed under the stress of this sudden excitement. His face was wreathed in happy smiles, and he clung to his father with sheer joy.

"I can't get over it, dad," he exclaimed huskily.

"Then I'll explain in a few brief words," said his father. "When you saw me last, I was in bed, apparently struck down with

paralysis. But that was only a deception. I wasn't ill at all."

"My goodness!" said Johnny blankly.

"I arranged a little conspiracy with my doctor," went on the professor. "Don't judge me too harshly, because I told you from the first that I was quite safe, and that my illness would be a comparatively short one. I don't think I caused you excessive anxiety. And my object in this little scheme was to test you both."

"Test us?" exclaimed Johnny, staring.

"Precisely," chuckled Professor Onions. "I wanted to find out what kind of stuff you were made of—and my discoveries have startled me. I never realised that I had two such splendid boys! Perhaps you will now understand Snayle's abrupt departure. It was I who packed him off and compelled him to resign his position as manager."

Everything was becoming clear, and we were all excited at the news. And Johnny's worries and troubles faded into thin air. His father was here, and from now onwards the Professor would take full charge of the circus. He had, indeed, made complete and exhaustive preparations for the opening of the show at Fleethaven on the Monday afternoon.

It wasn't long before the boys were left alone for a quiet chat with their father—the men getting about their work, and the St. Frank's fellows drawing aside to discuss this latest event.

"Of course, boys, I should have revealed myself to-night in any case," said the professor. "So my arrest hardly anticipated the disclosure. I need hardly tell you how pleased I am with you both."

"You've got nothing to praise us for, dad," said Johnny. "It was these St. Frank's fellows who turned up such trumps. Without them we should have been absolutely shipwrecked!"

"No, no; I cannot allow you to be quite so modest," smiled his father. "It was your keen judgment, Johnny, that made the whole thing possible. And now there is just another matter I wish to talk to you about. You realise, of course, that you will now go to school again?"

"Shall we, dad?" asked Bertie eagerly.

"Having proved that you are really worthy sons, your reward will be as you would both desire," said the professor. "You will go back to school, and finish your education as I had first intended."

"You mean we'll return to the River House School, dad?" asked Johnny.

"Well, I've been thinking," said his father. "You don't seem to have made many friends in the River House School. Your

real companions during these past few weeks have been these St. Frank's boys. Now, St. Frank's is a much better school than the River House—not only more exclusive, but infinitely more expensive. But I think you have earned your own education, eh? What do you think of the suggestion?"

His sons hardly dared grasp the meaning of his words.

"You don't mean you're going to send us to St. Frank's, dad?" asked Johnny breathlessly.

"If you wish it, yes," said his father.

"If we wish it!" echoed Bertie. "Why, it's the one thing we should love, dad! But we didn't hope——"

"We never believed that we should be able to go to St. Frank's!" chimed in Johnny, his face flushed and his eyes sparkling. "Nipper and Handforth and Dodd, and all these other chaps have been simply wonderful. Without them, we should have been lost. They're bricks, dad—true-blue, and sportsmen to a man!"

"So I already understood," chuckled Professor Onions. "Your letters have been sufficiently enlightening on that point. They contained almost nothing else except eloquent praise for your schoolboy friends. And you would really like to join them at St. Frank's?"

"We'd love it more than anything else, dad!" said the pair.

"That's splendid!" smiled Professor Onions. "For, as it happens, I have already been in communication with Dr. Stafford on this matter, and everything is fixed. You will take your places in St. Frank's immediately."

This was a fresh surprise for the boys.

"Oh, the whole thing has been laid before the school governors, and they have accepted you as pupils," went on the professor. "You fully understand, of course, that St. Frank's is exclusive—and at one time I feared that you would be barred, being merely the sons of a circus proprietor—a showman. But the St. Frank's governors are broadminded, and, after all, these are democratic days. By the way, you will go into the Remove."

"Hurrah!" roared Johnny enthusiastically.

CHAPTER IX.

MR. SNAYLE FINDS A HOME.



HANDFORTH turned and frowned.

"What's the matter with those chaps?" he asked. "They're cheering now! Hadn't we better go and see——"

"We'll go and bid them good-night, and get off home," I said briskly. "Even as it is, we shall be late."

But before Handforth could make any move to satisfy his curiosity, or before we

ANSWERS
EVERY MONDAY—PRICE 2s.

could bid the Onions family good-night, Johnny and Bertie came running over towards us.

"We're coming to St. Frank's!" panted Johnny.

"What for?" asked Handforth bluntly. "It's no good coming now; it's nearly bed-time!"

"No, I don't mean to-night—on Monday!" shouted Johnny. "Our dad's fixed it all up; we're coming into the Remove! Instead of going back to the River House, we're going to be with you fellows!"

"That's fine!" I said heartily. "Congrats., old man!"

We all shook hands with Johnny and Bertie.

"College House, of course?" said Buster Boots.

"Rather not!" snorted Handforth. "If these fatheads go in the College House, I'll never speak to 'em again! What's the good of St. Frank's if they only go into a rat-hole?"

"Rat-hole!" roared Buster. "What about your mouldy rabbit-hutch?"

It was Professor Onions who prevented a minor House row starting on the spot, for he joined us, and settled all the argument by announcing that, as far as he understood, his sons would belong to the Ancient House.

"Good!" said Handforth. "That's squashed you!" he added, with a triumphant glare at John Bustersfield Boots.

Buster sighed.

"After all my publicity work, too," he said regretfully. "You calmly desert me, and go into that moth-eaten hovel they call the Ancient House! Oh, well, I expect we shall see something of you, anyhow!"

Johnny grinned.

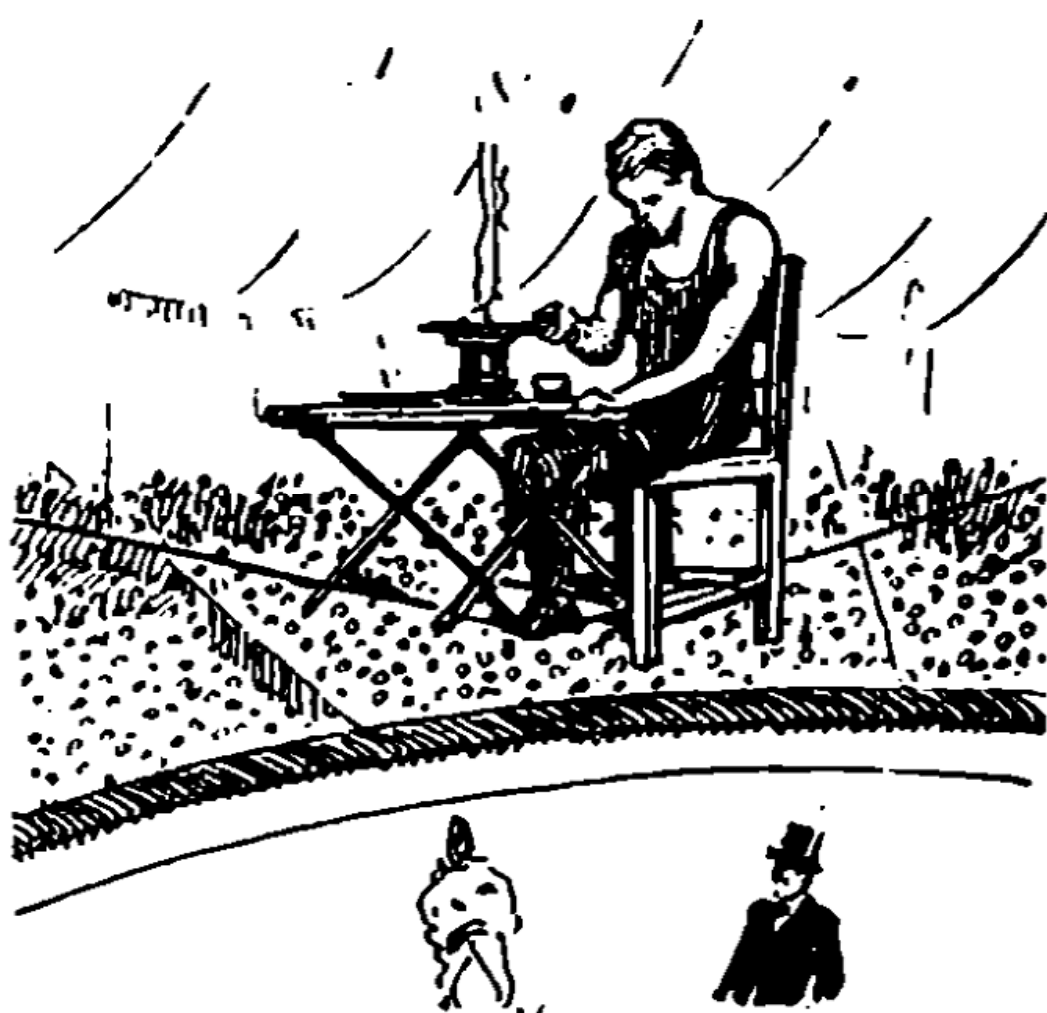
"We shall all be friends together, in spite of these House squabbles," he said cheerfully. "I say, I'm so excited that I hardly know what the dickens I'm saying! It's all happened so quickly—that old tramp turning out to be you, dad, and now this news about going to St. Frank's on Monday, and all the rest of it——"

"Yes, in the excitement you have rather overlooked the original investigation," said Professor Onions. "And the mystery of the light failure remains a mystery. At least, it appears to be one. Personally, I have a shrewd idea as to the identity of the culprit——"

"That crawling beast, Snayle!" said Reggie Pitt promptly.

"Talk of demons, and they show up!" ejaculated Handforth. "Look here, you chaps! Old Snayle himself—and, by George, he's as drunk as a lord! Look out! He's coming this way!"

We all turned, and gazed at a man who had appeared from behind one of the smaller tents. He was reeling unsteadily, and it needed no second glance to assure us that he was badly intoxicated.



Johnny not only seated himself on a chair in the very centre of the almost invisible rope, but he actually produced a spirit stove and a frying pan, and then caused much amusement by preparing his supper.

The man was Simon Snayle. His face was flushed and unhealthy-looking, his eyes burned, and he was considerably dishevelled. He approached us with a rolling, rocking gait.

Snayle, to tell the truth, had been celebrating. He had assured himself that his plot had succeeded; he had witnessed the sudden extinguishing of the lights, and had gone off to drink his own health. And now, incapably drunk, he had come back to the scene, too maudlin to understand the peril of such a visit.

And at the sight of Professor Onions his condition caused him to lose what little control he had left. He rushed up, uttering wild and violent curses. And he stood there, reeling about and shaking his fists.

"You blamed pig!" he roared, thickly. "Turn me out, would you? All right! I've got even; I messed up the show! By thunder! How did you like it when the lights went out?"

"You villainous rotter!" shouted Handforth fiercely. "So you admit it, eh? You might have caused a panic——"

"Not speaking to you!" interrupted Snayle. "Mind your own business! Speaking to old Onions. Curse him! I'm not finished, either! I'll smash him, the old demon!"

And with a sudden drunken rush, Simon Snayle hurled himself at Professor Onions. He was on the circus proprietor before anybody could drag him back, and he clutched madly and with the ferocity of a tiger. The Professor staggered back, defending himself.

A shout went up from the circus men who had gathered round—a shout that was echoed by the St. Frank's fellows. In a moment the intoxicated man was seized, and dragged forcibly away.

He fought like a maniac—kicking and screaming. The very violence of his own struggling soon exhausted him.

"Better go and fetch that policeman back," shouted the electrician. "He's admitted his guilt—"

"One moment!" interrupted the professor quietly. "The fellow is not responsible for his actions, and I shouldn't like to be revengeful. No great harm has been done, so you can take him outside and let him go."

"He deserves penal servitude!" said Handforth hotly.

But Snayle was lucky. In spite of the violent scene he had made—in spite of the dastardly plot he had engineered, he was forcibly removed from the circus meadow, and hurled out into the road.

Twice, in his drunken rage, he attempted to get back. But the circus men assumed such a ferocious aspect that at last Snayle became scared. And he took himself off, shouting at the top of his voice, and hurling abuse at the head of Professor Onions, and all his family.

It was scarcely surprising, therefore, that disaster followed.

Professor Onions had been merciful. In spite of Snayle's rank villainy, he had been allowed to go. In a slightly more sober condition he would have gone quietly, thanking his lucky stars that Professor Onions was so lenient.

But Snayle was now incapable of reasoned thought. His mind was aflame, and all he could do was to rave and curse. His hatred against his late employer was ten times greater than it had ever been before. For in spite of his intoxication, he knew that he had been thrown out like any drunken lout of a public house.

Snayle made his way to the Calstowe High Street, where all was quiet. At least, it was quiet until he arrived. But he awoke the echoes with his shouting and wild laughter. People came to their windows and gazed down at this reeling, mad drunk individual.

His language was horrible, and he continued to shout one long abuse at the name of Professor Onions. And it wasn't long before two policemen arrived.

The constable from the circus meadow had followed Snayle, in fact, but had hardly felt secure in tackling this seeming madman alone. He had therefore hurried for a colleague.

And Snayle's career came to a swift finish.

He was arrested after a wild scramble, literally dragged to the police-station, and charged with being drunk and disorderly. Then he was thrust into a cell, and left to recover from the effects of his drunken orgy.

In the meantime, Professor Onions was

soothing the unfortunate Tessa. The girl had fled, frightened, to her caravan upon hearing Snayle's terrible language. And the professor was kindness itself, treating Tessa as he would his own daughter.

He assured her that she would be perfectly safe and secure under his care, and that she could continue to stay with the circus, with Mrs. Simkins to look after her. Her villainous uncle had forfeited every right to regard himself as her guardian.

And Tessa went to bed at last still rather frightened, but much comforted. She felt alone now—not that the loss of her uncle was exactly a blow. But somehow she could not help feeling that she was a forlorn little figure, only here on the sufferance of her employer.

And in his cell Simon Snayle was slowly but surely recovering the use of his scattered wits. But the hatred against Professor Onions had not been satisfied. This last disaster—arrested and flung into gaol—caused everything that was bad in the man to come to the surface.

He nursed his hatred like a smouldering spark. It seemed, indeed, that even now Simon Snayle had not done his worst.

CHAPTER X

REGGIE PITT'S BRIGHT IDEA.



"It doesn't seem possible," remarked Handforth thoughtfully.

"What doesn't seem possible?" asked Church, helping himself to a boiled egg. "You might pass the butter, Handy, old man. We've got to hurry, too. Cricket practice directly after tea, you know."

The famous trio were in Study D, in the Ancient House at St. Frank's. It was Tuesday, and everything was going smoothly and normally at St. Frank's. The weather continued to be mild and sunny.

"It doesn't seem possible," repeated Handforth. "Only a few days ago we were in that giddy circus, and it seems that weeks have passed. Queer how things soon settle down into the ordinary rut."

"On the whole, I'm pretty glad," said McClure. "After all, things were a bit topsy-turvy. Anybody want these sardines? No. All right; I'll find 'em a home! What was I saying? Oh, yes, about the circus. We never had tea in decent comfort for weeks, and the cricket was going to pot, and all sorts of other inconveniences cropped up. I'm jolly glad to have things ordinary again."

"Same here," said Church, seizing the teapot. "I hear that Pitt and Grey are off first thing in the morning. Lucky beggars! Fancy going to Central Africa like that! We shall miss 'em!"

"Oh, I don't know!" said Handforth. "Pitt and Grey are going, but we've got Johnny and Bertie Onions instead. As for that trip to Central Africa, I wouldn't go on it, even if I was asked!"

"Well, you're safe enough," remarked McClure. "You won't be asked!"

"Central Africa!" snorted Handforth. "Nothing but fever and crawling insects, and niggers and elephants, and polar bears——"

"First time I knew polar bears inhabited a tropical climate," said Church, with a chuckle. "Still, I won't argue. I suppose you know best. In last week's Mag., I noticed you made some humorous replies to several chaps in your Correspondence Page."

"Humorous!" snapped Handforth. "All those replies are serious!"

"Sorry!" said Church hastily.

The conversation seemed to be getting somewhat dangerous, so Church quickly and diplomatically made some highly complimentary remark about Handforth's batting. And Edward Oswald warmed to the new subject with alacrity.

"Yes, I'm improving wonderfully," he declared. "Before long I expect to beat Jerry Dodd at batting. I don't want to boast, but I'm just getting a lovely swing to my stroke, and in the next big match I'll knock the bowling sideways."

"Might be risky to do that," said McClure, shaking his head. "No good cricketer holds the bat sideways. You've had a tendency that way for a week or two past, old man, and it won't do."

The door opened, and De Valerie looked in.

"Not finished tea yet?" he said. "Hustle up, you chaps! Nipper's waiting for us on Little Side."

Thus reminded, Handforth and Co. put some speed on, and soon finished tea. They hurried off to the playing-fields, and found a group of juniors gathered round Reggie Pitt and Jack Grey.

"What's this idea of yours, Reggie?" I was saying.

"Well, it's about our trip," said Pitt. "We're going to-morrow, you know and we shall sail in a few days. There's still a week or two of term interval between now and the first week of the next term."

"What about it?" demanded Handforth, pushing up.

"It'll allow us time to get to Africa, and almost time to send a letter home," replied Pitt. "I've been thinking, and a wonderful idea has smitten the great brain. In short, I'm going to keep a diary."

"Is that what you call a wonderful idea?" asked Watson.

"Well, it's a part of it," replied Reggie. "Look here. This diary won't be the ordinary kind of thing, but a brief, concise record of any adventures that Jack and I happen to strike."

"Good!" I declared. "Good copy for the Mag."

Pitt looked rather taken aback.

"You rotter! That's just my very idea," he exclaimed. "I propose sending you this diary in batches—as regularly as possible. In fact, every week, if it can be done. The first dispatch ought to be here in time for the first issue of the Magazine in the new term."

"By jove!" I ejaculated. "You mean that we'll be able to publish your diary as a kind of serial?"

"Exactly!" said Pitt, nodding. "It ought to turn up pretty regularly, and you'll have some interesting copy. At least, I hope so. I'll do my best to make the stuff readable——"

"Rot!" interrupted Handforth. "Who the dickens wants to read anything about your silly doings in Africa? I wouldn't publish your blessed diary if you paid me!"

"But you're not the editor," said Pitt sweetly.

"Which is just as well, for all concerned," I remarked. "It's a great scheme, Reggie, and if you stick to it I shall be delighted. You can be sure I'll publish those reports of yours in full. If Handforth doesn't like to read them it'll be his loss."

There was no question about the popularity of Reggie's suggestion. Everybody declared the idea to be top-hole. And, indeed, it was. It would be quite a scoop for the Magazine to publish such entertaining copy—received first-hand from the schoolboy travellers.

I arranged all the details with Pitt, and told him exactly how long to make his dispatches, and suggested the manner in which he should write the actual stuff.

Everybody had got quite accustomed to the idea of Pitt and Grey leaving, and the interest in their trip had waned. If there had been any prospect of the other fellows going, they would have aroused themselves with a vengeance. The chums of Study E were regarded as a couple of lucky bounders, and there the matter ended.

And the inclusion of Johnny and Bertie Onions in the Remove was extremely popular. We had had such a great deal to do with the brothers of late, that the whole Remove felt that these two juniors had a perfect right to be regarded as Removites.

And now they were actually full-blown members of the Ancient House, there was a good deal of satisfaction expressed. They had been placed in Study E, as this apartment was just being vacated by Reggie Pitt and Jack Grey. Tucker, of course, remained—he was merely regarded as a piece of the furniture.

And on the following day the wanderers were accorded an enthusiastic send-off. The Remove, in fact, got up quite a big affair for the pair who were leaving for abroad.

A kind of band was made up, and a whole procession escorted Pitt and Grey down to

the station. And there was quite a good deal of cheering when, at length, the train carried the two chums away.

Little did the Remove realise what the ultimate outcome was to be! It would be several weeks before the full significance of Pitt and Grey's African adventure was to become apparent!

CHAPTER XI.

THE WHITSUNTIDE HOLIDAYS.



RALPH LESLIE FULLWOOD whistled.

"Phew! Look at this, you chaps," he said, sitting up and folding his paper in half. "Seen this paragraph about Snayle?"

Gulliver and Bell, who were in Study A with Fullwood, looked up from their prep.

"Don't bother now," said Gulliver. "I'm right in the middle of these rotten verbs! We don't want to hear anything about snails! Dry up, Fully—"

"I'm not talking about snails!" snapped Fullwood. "Snayle—Simon Snayle, that fellow who was arrested for being drunk two or three weeks ago, in Calstowe. He was shoved in chokey, you know."

Gulliver and Bell were not particularly interested, and said so in terms that could not possibly have been misunderstood. But Fullwood disregarded their pointed remarks.

St. Frank's had been very quiet for a week or two, and Professor Onions' Colossal Circus and Menagerie had been practically forgotten. It had been relegated, so to speak, into the dim limbo of the past.

The one great subject that claimed all attention just now was the near approach of the Whitsuntide holidays. The first part of the term had been rendered lively by the circus adventures, but the latter part of the term had been singularly mild and orderly.

That's why I've passed over these two or three weeks with hardly a word. Of course, we had had plenty of cricket—and the Junior Eleven had been playing consistently well. But nothing of any startling moment had occurred. And now Whitsuntide was at hand.

"Yes, old Snayle was remanded, or something," said Fullwood. "He was arrested for being drunk, and shoved in a cell. Then he was brought up before the magistrates, who were kind an' considerate enough to give him fourteen days' free board an' lodgin'."

"What do we care?" demanded Bell irritably. "It wouldn't matter to me if the beast got seven years' penal servitude."

Fullwood tossed the Bannington Gazette aside.

"As a matter of fact, the poor blighter has just been released, after serving his time," he remarked. "I can't help feelin' a bit sorry for that chap. The way Handforth

an' all those other rotters bossed the circus was enough to make any manager lose his giddy head. I shouldn't be surprised if he follows up the circus, an' does old Onions in."

Gulliver and Bell looked a bit startled.

"You ain't serious, are you?" asked Bell.

"Of course I'm serious," replied Fullwood lightly. "I saw Snayle on that night when he got drunk. It wouldn't surprise me in the least if he went off his rocker. Anyhow, another dose of drink would do the trick—temporarily, anyhow—so look out for a startlin' murder story in the papers within the next few days."

"Professor Onions ought to be warned!" said Bell.

Fullwood laughed.

"If he hasn't got enough sense to look after himself, it's a pity," he observed. "It's nothing to do with us, anyhow."

Fullwood and Co. were not the only fellows who were discussing the brief item of news in the local paper. Johnny and Bertie Onions knew all about it, and they did not attempt to hide their anxiety. But I calmed them down.

"There's nothing to be afraid of," I said. "Snayle isn't clever enough to do anything deep. At the worst, he'll only get drunk, and make another scene. And that'll mean another spell of prison—that's all. By the way, where are you fellows going for the holidays?"

"To dad, of course," replied Johnny.

"You mean to the circus?"

"Yes."

"And where's that going to be for Whit week?"

"At Wimbledon—practically in London, you know. And, what's more, I mean to do that human bullet act of mine, too! The dad's told me I can, and I mean to take advantage of it."

"Just keeping your hand in, eh?" asked De Valerie. "Don't be surprised to see me at the show."

"Why not get up a party—say for Bank Holiday?" I suggested. "If we arrange it now, it'll be easy. Most of us will be in London, and it will be rather decent to see the old show again—especially if Johnny is going to perform."

"Absolutely!" declared Archie Glen-thorne. "Allow me to remark, old soul, that the scheme is a fruity one. Just say the word, and I'll be positively on the old landscape."

"Good—that makes four of us, anyhow," I said. "You'll come, won't you?" I added, turning to Tregellis-West and Watson.

"Rather!" they agreed.

And before ten minutes had elapsed, the Bank Holiday party was practically settled. Handforth and Co. were solid for the idea, and fellows like De Valerie and Singleton and Jerry Dodd were also keen on the adventure.

Johnny, therefore, made a list of all the names, and promised that he would have

several boxes specially reserved for us—for the evening performance on Whit Monday.

Of course, we insisted upon paying, and Johnny was compelled to agree. It would hardly have been fair for such a number to get free seats on a Bank Holiday just because we were friends of the proprietor.

Johnny tried to make out that our close connection with the circus entitled us to the privilege, but we had no intention of being "deadheads." Archie, in fact, suggested that he should pay for the whole crowd of us as a special holiday honour.

Upon which, we firmly told Archie that there was nothing doing.

"Just as you like, laddies—I won't argue," said Archie mildly. "I mean to say, arguing is a dashed lagging business, and I fear that the old tissues wouldn't stand the strain. But, oddslife, I'll tell you what! I shall require all the lads of the village to gather at the fountain, as it were. That is to say, to hob-nob at the pater's headquarters."

"Headquarters?" repeated Handforth.

"Absolutely," said Archie. "Glenthorne Lodge, you know—our place in Mount Street. I've had the information straight from the stable that the old boy is going to have a somewhat priceless fancy dress-ball."

"On Whit Monday?" asked Church.

"Absolutely not!" said Archie. "Later on—towards the end of the good old vac. It isn't official, but I think the pater rather wants some of you blokes to rally round. But more of this anon. When we join forces at the old circus I shall have the details, and then we can fix things, what?"

By which we gathered that Archie was inviting us to a swell affair at Glenthorne Lodge. But he was rather handicapped by the fact that his knowledge of detail was scanty. He only knew that the ball was to be, and I rather suspected that the idea of the St. Frank's crowd being there emanated from his own mind, and not from his father's.

The next few days were busy ones, with everybody thinking far more about the holidays than about lessons. Mr. Simon Snayle and his release from prison were forgotten in the general bustle.

The knowledge that Johnny and Bertie would perform on Whit Monday attracted great attention, and the circus party numbered a good many fellows by the time the list was completed.

It would be a kind of farewell visit to the circus—for, as Johnny explained, after the Whitsuntide holidays, the show would start on a tour of the Midlands and the North of England, and we should have no further opportunity of visiting it.

And when we made this arrangement to spend Whit Monday evening at Wimbledon, we didn't know that we were in for one of the most exciting incidents that could well be imagined!

CHAPTER XII.

DR. STAFFORD'S ANNOUNCEMENT.



CLANG-CLANG!

The rising bell echoed out its unwelcome note. It was the first bell, and the Remove, according to every recognised rule, should have turned over in bed, growled at the heartlessness of school discipline, and gone to sleep again.

But the Remove did nothing of the sort.

To be exact, the Remove leapt out of bed, as one man, at the very first sound of the bell. The desire to get up, in fact, was almost indecent. Fellows literally tumbled over one another in their haste to get dressed.

And the explanation was not far to seek. The Remove had not been partaking of a certain famous brand of salts, that were reputed to make humanity leap about like young gazelles; neither had the Remove suddenly formed a resolve to display some of that pep that Ulysses Spencer Adams habitually referred to. No—it was merely the last day of term!

There were no lessons this morning. Work was a thing of the past. There was nothing but packing, bustling about, seeing about trunks and baggage, getting down to the station, and a hundred and one other important items that always crowded the day of departure for the holidays.

And the Remove displayed an energy that would be sadly lacking when the new term commenced. Holidays are supposed to recuperate people, but holidays always had the effect of making the Remove singularly disinclined for work.

"Hurrah!" chanted Handforth, in a voice that could easily have been heard over in the College House. "At last! I thought to-day would never come! And, by George, it's sunny!"

"Real Whitsuntide weather!" said Church, nodding. "We're just getting into June, and summer's here at last! Who's seen my bags? How can I get dressed without any trousers?"

It turned out that Handforth, in his excitement, was industriously donning Church's garments instead of his own. And it was rather unreasonable of him to make a fearful fuss when Church protested.

"It's a pity you can't look after your own rotten clothes!" snorted Handforth, tearing off Church's trousers in the most reckless manner. "All this time wasted now! I've got my own shirt on, anyhow!"

"You haven't!" howled McClure. "It's mine!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Your shirt!" howled Handforth. "You—you rotter! Here, take your confounded bags—I don't want 'em!"

To Church's dismay, Handforth hurled his trousers across the dormitory, and they

narrowly escaped vanishing out of the window—but were rescued in the nick of time by Timothy Tucker, who stood so squarely in the way that Church's trousers wrapped themselves round his head.

And Handforth divested himself of McClure's shirt so violently that an ominous rent sounded, followed by a despairing cry of anguish from its owner. And in consequence of these minor troubles, Handforth and Co. were the last fellows to leave the dormitory—instead of being the first, as they had secretly planned for days past. And the remarkable feature about the affair was, Handforth blamed his chums for the entire trouble.

However, all these trifles were generally attendant on such a celebrated occasion as this, and they ultimately adjusted themselves. Then came breakfast and prayers.

Any normally sane person wandering into the junior quarters soon after breakfast would have come to the conclusion that he had drifted into a lunatic asylum.

The passages were full of flying, leaping figures, study doors were crashed open, and slammed to, and any unwary stranger positively took his life into his hands by essaying a trip upstairs.

And in the middle of all the hustle and bustle, the word went round that the entire school was to gather together in Big Hall. And this was nearly the last straw. The juniors considered it an absolute nerve on the Head's part to demand such an unreasonable thing.

However, the Head was the Head, and he had to be obeyed. And at the appointed time, the school stood in Big Hall, fuming and fretting, and wondering why on earth such an order had been given.

Dr. Stafford appeared at last, and he was received with cold silence. The Remove, in fact, glared with the utmost ferocity, most of the fellows thinking fiercely of half-packed trunks, unlabelled boxes, and scores of other matters that required urgent attention.

"I do not mean to keep you long," began the Head, much to the relief of the school. "But I feel that I would like to say a few words before you all depart, as it is more than probable that you will not see me at St. Frank's during the next term."

The school became somewhat more attentive.

"I desire, therefore, to bid all my scholars farewell," continued the Head genially. "As the summer holidays immediately follow the forthcoming term, I shall not meet you all again until the Autumn—and that will be two or three months hence."

"You're not leaving for good, are you, sir?" shouted somebody.

"I sincerely hope not," replied Dr. Stafford. "No, the fact is I am going out to Africa."

"Another of 'em!" grunted Handforth. "Everybody seems to be going to Africa!"

"You probably know that two of our junior boys are now in the Dark Continent," pursued Dr. Stafford. "They left here two or three weeks ago, and joined Sir Crawford Grey's expedition. Sir Crawford has been good enough to invite me also, and I shall take advantage of the opportunity."

"Good luck, sir!"

"We shall miss you, sir!"

"Thank you! I need hardly say that I shall miss you, too," returned the Head. "There is just a chance that I shall see you on the first day of the new term, but of this I cannot be sure—it all depends upon the sailing date of my boat. You may depend upon it that I shall personally introduce your new Headmaster if I can—and I shall strive to this end."

"New Headmaster!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"Let's hope he's not like old Ponsonby Small!"

"Help!"

Quite a buzz went through the entire school.

"I rather think I heard the name of Mr. Ponsonby Small mentioned just now," said Dr. Stafford, when he could make himself heard. "I think we all remember Mr. Small with something akin to pain, and it would be better to forget the gentleman entirely. I can assure you that your new Headmaster will be very different, indeed. He will act in my place for the forthcoming term, and I would like you to know that Dr. Beverley Stokes is one of the most brilliant men of the present day. The School Governors and myself have the utmost confidence in his ability to take full and complete control of St. Frank's."

The Head said very little more—but he had said more than enough. The school knew that Dr. Beverley Stokes, M.A., would be the ruling power during the next term, and the school wasn't altogether overjoyed. Under Dr. Stafford's kindly hand, St. Frank's got on very nicely. But there was no telling what changes would take place when a strange hand was at the helm.

"Some fossilized old buffer, I'll bet!" growled Handforth disgustedly, when the school was at liberty once more. "This is the kind of thing we've got to put up with—and we haven't got any voice to alter it!"

"There are worse disasters at sea!" said Church philosophically.

"Who's talking about the sea?" demanded Handforth. "This Dr. Beverley Blokes, or whatever his name is—he'll probably turn the whole school upside down, and make a mess of everything!"

But there were not many fellows who wasted any time on the subject. It could easily rest until the first day of the new term. At the moment, the holidays were the one matter of paramount importance.

And so Dr. Beverley Stokes had to wait.

CHAPTER XIII.

A DASTARDLY SCHEME.



THE big circus ground was quiet and dark. It was just after eleven o'clock on Sunday night—the eve of Bank Holiday. On the morrow it would be Whit Monday, and

London would give itself over to holiday pleasures.

Wimbledon was staid and highly respectable—as, indeed, it should have been at a late hour on Sunday night. The circus pitch was situated in a quiet section of the suburb, not far distant from the common. And it was more than usually quiet because a good many of the working hands had taken the opportunity to visit friends and relatives. All the performers were also absent.

There would be nothing doing until tomorrow. Then, of course, the activity would be stupendous. For there would be three shows—morning, afternoon, and evening. But now, in the quiet of the night, the circus seemed to be practically dead.

Only one or two of the caravans were occupied, and the great tent was dark and utterly silent. Two watchmen were on duty, but they had no opportunity of seeing the stealthy figure that crept towards the main tent like a ghostly shadow.

Silently and cunningly, the figure wormed its way beneath a portion of the tent, and at last reached the ring itself. The interior of the tent was pitchy dark, and quite deserted. Even the watchmen would not come here during the whole period of the night. For there seemed no earthly reason why any chance marauder should get into a circus tent—where there was not the slightest thing of value that could be stolen.

But this stealthy figure was not here after booty.

It need scarcely be said that the man was Simon Snayle. On this occasion he was religiously sober. The work he was engaged upon demanded a clear head. He must make no mistake over this task.

As a matter of fact, Snayle had thought out the cunning scheme during the long, wearisome hours of confinement in prison. He had had merely fourteen days in the second division, but it was his first experience of prison, and he had no love for it.

During that period of captivity, he had dwelt upon his imaginary wrongs. He conceived that Professor Onions and his sons were to blame for all his misfortunes. Simon Snayle did not realise that his present degraded condition was entirely due to his own plotting and mischievous misdeeds.

And, upon coming out of prison, he had made it his business to find out the exact whereabouts of the circus. It had been an easy task for him. But now, on this quiet Sunday night, it was his first oppor-



Handforth over-ran himself, checked, and in an instant his feet were swept from under him. He landed on his back with a beautiful thud, and the whirling turntable carried him half round.

tunity of putting into practice the plan he had already outlined in every single detail.

He had the advantage of knowing the circus.

Every item of routine was familiar to him, and he knew all the rules and regulations, and was thus practically certain of success from the very outset.

And it struck him that it would be particularly fitting that he should exact vengeance on a Bank Holiday—when the great circus would be crammed to suffocation, and when Professor Onions would be there in person.

Snayle's plot was concerned with Johnny.

Everything depended upon the schoolboy acrobat—and that famous act of his which was performed by the aid of an imitation cannon. Consequently, it had come as something of a shock to Simon Snayle to learn that Johnny had left the show, and was at school.

Snayle had known nothing of this until coming out of prison. But his hopes were raised when it had seemed likely that he must abandon his whole diabolical plot. At first he had thought that there could be no way of carrying out the plan. But then, to his intense satisfaction, he had seen an announcement that Johnny Onions, the famous young acrobat, would appear in person at the evening show on Bank Holiday.

And Snayle was able to carry on.

The rascal had come fully prepared. He brought with him coils of wire, electrical switches, and numerous other appliances.

And, by the aid of a small electric torch, he lost no time getting to work.

He knew that he would be undisturbed. He was aware, also, that the electric wires in the big tent were quite dead. For the engine which supplied the power was still and silent, and all the main switches disconnected.

His personal knowledge of the circus served him well.

There had been no alteration in the general plan since his departure, and Snayle therefore found the big electric cables without even troubling to search for them.

His first task was to ascend to the very dome of the big tent, using one of the numerous rope ladders that were at hand. He carried wires with him, and for hours he was working—patiently, grimly, and with his revenge to give him strength and endurance.

He connected a wire—cunningly and skillfully—to that high trapeze which Johnny Onions alone used. He fixed the wire so cleverly that the cross-bar was no longer the innocent thing it seemed. The wires which connected it up were hidden in the ropes. And they continued even higher—to the cables which supplied the powerful arc lamps.

Having performed this part of his task satisfactorily, Snayle ran other wires down the maze of supports, finding no difficulty in concealing these fatal wires.

They led to a small private box—which, in order to be on the safe side, Snayle had already booked for the evening performance, and had paid for. He had obtained the ticket through an agency without trouble.

And in this box, just near the edge, and hidden beneath the woodwork, Snayle fixed a small switch. And now his work was completed. He discovered with a start of alarm that it was already dawn. He had been working so industriously that he had lost all count of time.

But, in spite of the risk in remaining, he could not help pausing at the edge of the box, and gazing upwards at the dim, ghostly trapeze, far above, in the dome of the vast canvas erection.

"At last!" he muttered fiercely. "I'll have you this time, my fine young fellow! And I'll be even with both you and your infernal father—two birds with one stone!"

He chuckled evilly over that grim thought.

For, after all, Simon Snayle's plot was simple—now that the wiring work had been completed. First and foremost, he had made certain of safeguarding himself. And yet his scheme entailed nothing more nor less than black, premeditated murder.

The switch in that private box connected with the trapeze. When the powerful current was turned on, in the ordinary way, nobody connected with the circus would realise that the cables had been tampered with. And all would be safe—until Snayle, secure and unsuspected in his private box,

silently turned that insignificant little switch.

And he would do this when Johnny was calmly sitting on that high trapeze, listening to the applause of the crowd, at the conclusion of his cannon act. The turning of the switch would send a powerful current shooting through that support bar—on which Johnny would sit.

The electric shock would not be sufficient to kill the boy outright—for it was not excessively powerful—but it would be utterly impossible for any human being to cling to that electrified bar.

And Johnny would fall—to crash to earth and be instantly killed.

That was Simon Snayle's cunning plan. And the cleverness of it lay in the fact that Johnny's fall would be put down as an accident. Everybody would assume that he had lost his hold. There would be an inquiry—no search for the responsible culprit.

Afterwards, when the circus was being taken down, the wires would be discovered—and the truth would be known. But that would be days later, and even then the only evidence obtainable would be against the unknown occupier of that box on Bank Holiday. To discover his identity would be practically impossible.

And so Simon Snayle considered that he was absolutely safe. He had finished his preparations, and now there remained nothing but to press the switch at the appointed time.

Without doubt, the rascal's last bid for revenge was diabolically likely to succeed!

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BANK HOLIDAY CROWD!



"HERE we are again!" said Handforth cheerfully.

He and Church and McClure took their seats in one of the big private boxes in Professor Onions' Colossal Circus and Menagerie. It was Bank Holiday evening, and the great show was alive with bustle and activity, and blazing with brilliant lights.

The evening was fine, and the crowds were coming up in hundreds. Handforth and Co. were not the only St. Frank's fellows on the spot.

In response to my original idea, a great many fellows had turned up, including Archie, De Valerie, Jerry Dodd, Adams, and a whole crowd of others. Tommy Watson and Tregellis West were with me, of course, and we had booked a whole row of the private boxes—and some of the fellows were rather annoyed because a solitary stranger had previously obtained a box, thus dividing the St. Frank's party into two.

However, it couldn't be helped, and it

didn't matter much, anyway. Willy Handforth had unexpectedly turned up with a contingent of the Third. Nobody knew what trouble he had been to in order to drag these fags away from their various homes—but once Handforth minor set himself to a task, nothing on earth stopped him. He was young, he was small, but he possessed a volcanic nature which surmounted every obstacle.

The Remove fellows felt decidedly humiliated when the fags crowded into the cheapest seats, immediately opposite the private boxes. And once settled there, in the front rows, Willy and Co. proceeded to shout cheerful remarks across the ring, intermingled with sundry observations regarding the personal appearance of the Removites.

However, it was Bank Holiday, and this sort of thing was only to be expected. The juniors were particularly pleased when Tessa came into the boxes, and greeted them all warmly and cheerfully. She was looking in far better spirits than when they had seen her last.

The reason for this was fairly obvious. Since her villainous uncle had passed out of her life, she had been taken care of by the Professor. Tessa had feared that Snayle might put in an appearance after his release from prison—she had even believed that he would use his lawful authority as her legal guardian to take her away from the circus. But Snayle had not even written to her, or communicated in any way.

And the Professor had been treating her as his own daughter. He had always had a particularly soft spot in his heart for this clever, refined, motherless girl, and had taken particular pains to assure Tessa's safety and comfort in the show.

So we renewed our acquaintance with the girl in the highest of spirits, and when, at length, the performance started, we settled down to enjoy it, as we had never enjoyed it before.

Indeed, previously we had taken our various parts in the actual show, and had not been able to act as mere spectators. But now we were secure in the boxes, looking forward to a happy evening.

Professor Onions had been right in declaring that he had secured a crowd of talented performers. The circus went with a rousing swing from the very first, and until this evening we had never realised how remarkably clever Johnny Onions was.

This was a special occasion, and he made the most of it.

His cannon act was not to come on until after the interval, but in the earlier part of the performance he gave a wonderful display on the tightrope—even better than he had provided during the period of our own connection with the circus.

There was no thrill or risk about this tightrope act of Johnny's, but for sheer skill it would have wanted some beating, and the audience was held enthralled.

The tightrope was stretched at about twelve feet above the ring, and Johnny proceeded to do some really extraordinary actions—balancing himself with consummate ease during the entire display.

He not only seated himself on a chair in the very centre of the almost invisible rope, but he actually produced a spirit stove, a frying pan, and then caused much amusement by preparing his supper. He fried some eggs and bacon, and there was no fake about this—for he actually cooked the dish to a turn.

And then, still balancing himself and the chair, he accepted a small folding-table from an attendant, set it up on the wire in front of him, and held it in position with his knees. And to the amusement of the audience, he proceeded to demolish the result of his cooking.

Nobody but Johnny knew the tremendous strain of that performance. It seemed so easy, and yet it was extremely difficult. During every second of that period, he had been compelled to concentrate on his balancing. One false move, and the display, instead of being a success, would have ended in a disastrous fiasco.

There was one member of the audience who watched with feverish, savage impatience. And this man was the stranger who occupied the private box in the very middle of the St. Frank's fellows. For some reason which the boys could not understand, the stranger kept far back in his box, practically out of sight.

Not only this, but he kept his coat collar turned high up over his chin—in spite of the fact that the evening was intensely warm. His wide-brimmed soft hat was pulled down over his eyes. Some of the fellows had displayed a brief interest in the man, but by now they had completely forgotten him.

Truth to tell, Simon Snayle had received a shock.

He had come to the circus prepared—having, in addition to his slouch hat and upturned collar, a bandage right across his face. This served as a very adequate disguise.

But Snayle had never reckoned upon having over a dozen St. Frank's fellows within touching distance of him. He was glad, indeed, that his box was well divided off from the others.

He was filled with a constant anxiety. All the time he feared that one of the boys might recognise him. And that would be utterly disastrous. Indeed, it would mean that he would have to abandon his plan—for, after being spotted, he would never dare to turn that switch. Snayle's desire for vengeance was powerful, but his desire to escape the gallows was even more so.

And there were the fags opposite, too.

Snayle had full reason to know the sharpness of Willy and Co., and he was afraid to come to the front of the box, lest some of those keen eyes should see through his

disguise. And he watched all the opening turns with his impatience growing more and more acute.

And then came the interval—another anxious time. For with their attention off the show, the St. Frank's fellows were leaning out of their boxes, talking to one another, and Willy and Co. were making further signals across the arena.

The plotter remained at the back of his box, and kept his head down, apparently studying the programme. Never for an instant did he take the risk of raising his head. The electric arc lamps were too brilliant—too searching in their pitiless glare.

He was glad when the second half of the programme commenced, and congratulated himself upon the fact that he had attracted no notice. He was not aware that three or four of the Remove fellows had eyed him very curiously, and had even discussed him at some length.

And the fatal moment was rapidly approaching!

CHAPTER XV.

THE SWITCH OF DEATH!



PROFESSOR ONIONS himself was acting as ringmaster, and he was greatly enjoying the experience. For years he had taken no part in the ring, but on this special

occasion—when his son was performing—he had taken an active part once more.

He announced, amid a tense hush, that his eldest son would now perform one of the most remarkable feats in circus history. And while the ring was being prepared for the cannon trick, there would be a kind of competition, in which members of the audience were open to compete.

It was merely a stunt to keep the audience amused while the big cannon was being fixed in position. A huge turntable was carried into the ring, and one of the attendants got underneath it and commenced turning a big handle. The turntable whizzed round, and two of the circus acrobats leapt on the top and ran round the tricky contrivance with consummate ease.

And the audience was invited to try their luck.

Anybody who could keep an upright position, and maintain his equilibrium for one minute, was offered two best seats for the next evening's performance. And a great deal of hilarity was caused when a string of young fellows came forward to win these free seats.

It seemed so easy—but apparently it wasn't. For, one after another, the aspirants slithered off the turntable into the ring, tumbling in such comical atti-

tudes that the audience was kept rocking with laughter.

Handforth viewed these proceedings with disdain.

"It's all spool!" he declared. "I'll bet those chaps were paid to come and fall about like that! It's only a stunt—just to keep the audience in a good humour."

"Don't you believe it, old man," said Church. "It looks easy, but I wouldn't like to try it! I haven't any fancy for making myself an ass before all these people."

"Nature made you an ass years ago!" said Handforth tartly. "As for that turntable, there's nothing in it! I don't want any free seats, so I'm not going to compete. But I could keep my balance for five minutes at a stretch without any trouble at all!"

"Absolutely not!" declared Archie Glen-thorne firmly. "I don't wish to be personal, old gargoyle, but I must observe that your remarks strike me as being bombastic."

"Bom—which?" said Handforth, glaring.

"I mean to say, all this boasting!" said Archie. "Dash it, I couldn't keep my balance on that bally turn-table for one single second. The very idea causes my spine to quiver in every dashed joint! I mean, a fellow's clothing has got to be considered—"

"Are you accusing me of boasting?" snorted Handforth. "You rotter! I'll bet I could keep my balance longer than you!"

"Rubbish!" said Archie, adjusting his monocle. "I hate to be so blunt—but, rubbish! In fact, rubbish with knobs on!"

"Why not settle the point by having a try?" I asked blandly. "You go first, Handy, and show Archie how it should be done."

"By George, I will!" retorted Handforth briskly.

He leapt out of the box and pushed his way through a number of waiting competitors. Archie looked at me with a kind of glassy stare. His whole frame was quivering.

"I say!" he protested. "I say! Dash it all, old horse, you've positively torn it now! I mean, the position is absolutely frayed at the edge! You've committed me to dashing on that bally turn-table and making a frightful duffer of myself."

"Never mind, old son—it's Bank Holiday," I said. "I'll tell you what—I'll come with you to keep you company."

Archie brightened somewhat.

"A brainy scheme, old thingummy, but I am still in fear and trembling," he declared. "In fact, I don't mind confessing that I have the wind up in furious gusts!"

"Look out!" grinned Church. "There goes Handy!"

The St. Frank's fellows watched with sheer joy. Handforth was as full of confidence as ever. He took a running leap at the turn-table, landed beautifully, and then

commenced racing away at top speed, although, of course, he remained in the same spot.

"He's doing it!" gasped McClure blankly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Handy!"

Handforth waved his fist.

"Didn't I tell you it was easy?" he yelled. "It's as simple as— Hey! Whoa! Look out— Whoop!"

Handforth overran himself, checked, and in an instant his feet were swept from under him. He landed on his back with a most beautiful thud, and the whirling turn-table carried him half-round and then shot him off into space like a pea from a catapult. He alighted in the sawdust in an inverted position, and proceeded to turn a somersault.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Good!" said Willy, clapping. "But I didn't quite see it all, Ted. Be a sport, and do it again!"

Handforth picked himself up, dazed.

"Was—was I on there a minute?" he gasped.

"Just ten seconds!" replied an attendant cheerfully.

Handforth gave a kind of gulp, and then caught sight of Archie, who was gazing at the turn-table as though it were some kind of new-fashioned mechanism for execution.

"Come on, you slacker!" roared Handforth, striving to conceal his confusion by shouting. "It's your turn!"

"Absolutely!" said Archie feebly. "Odds-ife! What would Phipps say if he knew about this? Laddies, I go to my jolly old fate! This, in fact, is where Archie breathes his last!"

The audience fairly howled when Archie entered the ring and stood gazing at the turn-table through his monocle. If the genial ass of St. Frank's had only known it, he was a born comedian. It wasn't necessary for him to say a word—his very attitude was funny.

"Go on—don't stare at it!" prompted Handforth viciously.

Archie braced himself up with sudden resolution. He leapt on to the whirling table, flopped on his face at once, swung round twice, and then shot off backwards.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Unfortunately, Handforth had approached rather too close, and Archie's feet took him fairly and squarely in the middle. Edward Oswald pitched over backwards like a nine-pin, and Archie sat neatly on Handy's face.

The audience raised the canvas roof with its yell of appreciation.

"What-ho!" said Archie dazedly. "Not so bad, after all—dash it! I mean, I expected the ground to be somewhat harder— Yarrah! Help! Something, dash it, is biting the old carcase!"

Archie leapt up like a startled mustang.

"Fathead!" howled Handforth. "You nearly suffocated me!"

By this time the crowds were clapping for an encore. But they were disappointed. Archie and Handforth crawled back to their box, firmly convinced that the turn-table trick was much more difficult than it looked. And by this time everything was ready for Johnny's big stunt.

The great cannon was in position, and the audience settled down to watch the thrilling trick. As on previous occasions, the band ceased playing as soon as Johnny had been placed into the breech.

Everything went off perfectly.

And, almost before the crowds could realise it, the daring young acrobat had been shot upwards, and was now calmly sitting on that high trapeze, waving his hand to the craning onlookers—a spotlight full on him.

Simon Snayle, in his box, was flushed with tense excitement. His blood throbbed feverishly through his veins, and his face had taken on a curiously purple complexion. The strain of the tense excitement was affecting him curiously.

But the one great moment had arrived!

Johnny was sitting there carelessly, holding with only one hand. It was the supreme opportunity. With a hand that shook so much that he could hardly control it, Simon Snayle reached down and found the concealed switch.

Click!

He pressed it over, and at the same second there was a blinding flash of bluish light—a flash which seemed to envelop the wretched man from head to foot. He gave an ear-splitting shriek, and hurtled over backwards!

CHAPTER XVI.

THE END OF SIMON SNAYLE.



JOHNNY ONIONS lurched giddily on the trapeze.

Everything happened at the same instant, and Johnny was so occupied that he only had a vague impression that some catastrophe had taken place below. He felt himself tingling from head to foot.

And he knew, from previous experience, that he was suffering from an electric shock. It was quite severe, but not powerful enough to compel him to instantly lose his hold.

He knew, however, that this fierce current would compel him to relax his grip within a few moments. More by instinct than anything else, he swung frantically to and fro—the very activity itself tending to diminish the agonising tingle.

He felt himself losing his grip. And, with a sudden plunge, he dived clean off the

trapeze and shot down just beyond the edge of the ring, where a big water-tank was placed in readiness to be wheeled in for the next turn.

Splash!

Johnny hit the water feet foremost, but his knowledge of swimming and diving enabled him to turn like lightning and escape injury by striking the bottom of the tank. He rose in the water and scrambled out, bewildered and gasping for breath.

Professor Onions breathed a sigh of heart-felt gratitude.

"My boy—my boy!" he muttered. "Thank Heaven you are safe!"

But it was only Johnny's presence of mind that had enabled him to retain his life. The audience was excited—confused. Some thought that this was all part of the show—others were convinced that an accident had taken place.

At all events, the excitement was not yet over.

Handforth and Co. and I were right next to the box where the curious stranger had screamed out in such a remarkable fashion. In less than ten seconds we had leapt into Snayle's box, and found him lying full length on the floor—and ominously still.

Attendants had come, too, and they were picking the stranger up and attempting to revive him. In doing this, the bandage fell loose, and his hat had already gone.

"Great Scott!" shouted Church. "It's old Snayle!"

"So it is, by George!" said Handforth. "And I'll bet a penny to a motor-car he was up to some treacherous business! He's had a fit, or something, hasn't he?"

I was kneeling beside the still form, and I looked up.

"He's dead!" I said grimly.

"Dead!"

"He can't be, Nipper—don't be an ass!"

But my statement, terrible though it was, happened to be the truth. Simon Snayle had come to the end of his career, and I had a suspicion that he had fallen by his own hand.

It seemed to me that he had died through apoplexy. There was every appearance of it. The look of his face, and various other signs, all told the same story. And then I noticed that the fingers of his right hand were badly burned.

"Phew!" I whistled. "This explains that sudden flash of electricity! He's had a terrific shock, and it must have caused instant death. But he must have been pretty ready to go, for a comparatively slight voltage to whip him off like this!"

Fortunately, there was a doctor in the audience, and it wasn't long before he was in the box. The performance, in the meantime, was going on as though nothing had happened—nine-tenths of the audience knowing practically nothing. The other tenth

merely believed that some unfortunate fellow had had a fit.

While the doctor was examining the dead man, I spotted the switch, cunningly hidden behind a wooden support. My first instinct was to touch it, but I drew back. And the switch was turned, after a brief delay, by a short piece of wood.

"H'm!" said the doctor. "There's no doubt that the electric shock finished the job, but after this brief examination, I should judge that the man had a very weak heart—undoubtedly caused through consistently heavy drinking over the course of years."

"But the shock wouldn't have killed him otherwise?" I asked.

"Oh, no!" replied the doctor. "It was severe, but any normal constitution would have stood it without any serious harm. But how on earth did the man get such a shock?"

"Goodness knows!" exclaimed Handforth.

"And so do I," I said grimly. "Remember how Johnny fell off that trapeze into the water-tank? I wouldn't mind guessing that Snayle fixed this switch up here, and connected that trapeze with the main wiring. His idea was to electrify the trapeze."

"Gadzooks!" said Archie, startled.

"But the rotter must have made a mistake in the wiring," I went on. "He wasn't an experienced electrician, and he connected up the wires wrong—and got nine-tenths of the shock himself, whilst Johnny only got the remainder."

And, as events turned out, my surmise proved to be correct. A careful examination resulted in a tracing of the wires, and the electrician reported that the job had been done cleverly, cunningly, but quite wrongly. It was, indeed, a case of poetic justice.

Snayle had pressed that switch to kill Johnny—and had killed himself!

So far as the public was concerned, very little was known. An inquest was held, but it attracted little or no attention. And Simon Snayle was laid to rest—where he would cause no further harm in this world. The affair was a tragic one, but nobody could honestly feel sorry. During the whole of our connection with Snayle, he had never performed the slightest action to win himself an ounce of sympathy.

There was one consequence of his death which had far-reaching effects for a certain person. And this person was Tessa Love, Snayle's niece. His sudden death left the girl without a known relative in the world.

Tessa was no hypocrite, and she did not pretend to be grieved by her uncle's tragic finish. From every point of view, it was a happy release for her—but there remained the problem of her future.

And it was here that Professor Onions came to the rescue.

For a long time he had treated the girl with affectionate care, and now that she was left at the mercy of the world, with no kith or kin to care for her, he took a course that won the approval of all.

In short, he adopted Tessa as his own daughter. And nobody was better pleased than Johnny and Bertie, who had come to look upon Tessa as their own sister.

And a still further piece of news was heard by the St. Frank's fellows with great satisfaction. Professor Onions had decided to provide his adopted daughter with a first-class education. Now that she was legally under his care, he had the right to provide for her as he thought best.

And so he made full plans for Tessa to take her place in the Moor View School.

This establishment, indeed, had been her own choice, for she had made friends of Irene and Co., and was certain of a warm welcome. It would be like going among old chums to join the Moor View School.

And so it was all settled, and when the next term commenced we should still see plenty of Johnny and Bertie Onions and their new sister. Which was regarded as highly satisfactory by all.

And although the new term promised nothing particularly sensational, we had the knowledge that a strange headmaster would preside over St. Frank's. What kind of a man would Dr. Beverley Stokes, M.A., turn out to be?

My word! If we had only guessed the truth!

THE END.

Editorial Announcement

My dear Readers,

I know you will all be exceedingly sorry that the Circus series comes to an end this week. But the most popular of stories cannot go on indefinitely. With the tragic death of Snayle at the moment when he had all but carried out his vile scheme to assassinate Johnny Onions, and the unexpected appearance of Professor Onions on the scene, the grand climax had been reached. Onions' Circus, made more popular than it had ever been before by the Boys of St. Frank's, will pass on to some other part of the country, under the direction of the Professor himself. Everyone will welcome the Onions brothers on their joining the Remove at St. Frank's, and no doubt we shall hear more of them in future stories of the Old School.

"THE SCHOOLBOY HEAD!"

This is the title of next week's story, and is the first of a new series of stories, preceding the Grand Summer Holiday Adventures. As you know, Dr. Stafford will be off to Africa very shortly to join Sir Crawford Grey's expedition. He is accordingly handing over the school to the care of Dr. Beverley Stokes, M.A. This gentleman, who is comparatively young for a Headmaster, is nevertheless well qualified for the great responsibility of looking after St. Frank's. The unusual manner in which Dr. Stokes first makes his acquaintance with the boys of St. Frank's provides a fund of highly amusing situations, which to the discerning reader, the title of the story already suggests.

THE INTRODUCTION OF MORE SPORT.

Several of my chums have written to me,

saying that they think it is about time we introduced more sport into our stories. In this respect, my sporting enthusiasts will be well catered for. Dr. Stokes himself is a keen cricketer, and we may therefore look forward to some exciting events in this department.

THE MAG.

Last week the Mag. entered upon its second volume, and, judging from the present issue, chock full of bright new features, it is going stronger than ever. Owing to limitations of space, many interesting features have had to be held over until a later date. But Nipper will explain all this next week.

PITT'S AFRICAN LETTER.

At the last moment, and too late to mention it in the current issue of the Mag., Pitt has promised to send a weekly account of the adventures of the African party for publication in the Mag., the first letter appearing next week. Everyone is somewhat in the dark as to the exact locality Sir Crawford hopes to explore until Pitt's first dispatch arrives. But you can take it for granted that these letters will be exceedingly interesting, for they will deal with a part of the Dark Continent little visited by white men.

In concluding these few remarks, I should like to remind you, my chums, not to forget to write and let me know what you think of the present stories and the new features in the Mag.

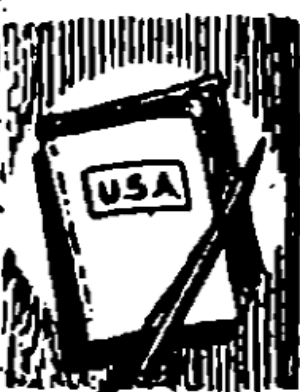
Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.



MY AMERICAN NOTE-BOOK

By the Author of our St. Frank's Stories.



No. 26. NEW YORK TO CHICAGO

IT was shortly after midday on a Saturday when I arrived at the great Pennsylvania Station in New York, to take train for Chicago—this being the first lap of my trip to the West Coast.

If one leaves New York on a Saturday, and travels continuously, one is due to reach California on the following Wednesday. So it will be seen that this continuous railway trip takes five days.

A formidable journey, even for an American! And for a British visitor, such a railway journey seems rather staggering. But I must confess that I entered the train with keen enjoyment, eager and anxious to face the ordeal. For I was now about to see something of the great United States.

People who just travel to New York, and then return across the Atlantic, are in no way fitted to give an impression of America. For New York is probably the most cosmopolitan city in the world, and it is absolutely impossible to form any opinion of America by a sojourn in that noisy, bustling metropolis.

I took my seat in the great steel Pullman coach, and was rather surprised to find that I had only a few fellow-passengers. There are no compartments in the American trains, as in the English. All the coaches are quite open, so that one may look from one end to the other—very similar, indeed, to our own Underground carriages.

The Pullman coaches are only used by passengers who have booked sleeping berths—passengers who are going through to Chicago. For the shorter journeys, day coaches are provided, where there is no sleeping accommodation.

I found myself sitting on a very comfortable lounge seat, capable of accommodating two, with a similar one immediately opposite me. And I soon found that it was my privilege, having a lower berth, to use the seat that faced the engine. The occupant of the upper berth had the less advantageous back-to-the-engine seat.

For these comfortable seats, although built to accommodate two, are generally reserved for one. For it is mostly the case that a passenger books a sleeping berth to

himself. Of course, two people can book a sleeping berth between them, and in this case they share the seat during the day.

There is very little of interest to describe in the opening stages of my journey. The train passed through the Hudson tunnels, and when we saw daylight again we were in the State of New Jersey. And the scenery was so ordinary that it has left no particular impression on my mind—just open country, with occasional towns and villages. I was certainly not enraptured with the scenery at this stage of the journey.

To tell the truth, I was far more interested in the restaurant-car, or, as they call them in America, the Diner. For I had partaken of lunch before entering the train, and tea is not served. So, by six o'clock, I was literally ravenous, and eagerly consumed a hearty meal. I will go into details regarding the Diner at a later stage.

The coaches of the train were, of course, all connected, so that one could walk from end to end. And when I returned to my Pullman car, I found that a transformation had taken place. The coloured porter had been very busy, and in place of the lounge seats sleeping berths were now arrayed in a double row down either side of the long coach, curtained off, and leaving a narrow passage in the centre.

Let me explain that the two wide seats which are used in the day-time—facing one another, as in our ordinary compartments—are converted at night into one sleeping berth—the lower. The upper berth is an ingenious contrivance which is pulled down from the roof, being suspended on strong chains. Metal partitions are placed in position, thus affording a degree of privacy for every sleeping berth.

I was agreeably surprised to discover that the bed was roomy, well sprung, spotlessly clean, and astonishingly comfortable. And now, having come to the end of my space, I must reluctantly leave my further adventures until next week.

NEXT WEEK: "Night on an American Train."

MANY BRIGHT NEW FEATURES THIS WEEK !

No. 28. Vol. 2.

Edited by Nipper.

June 7, 1924.

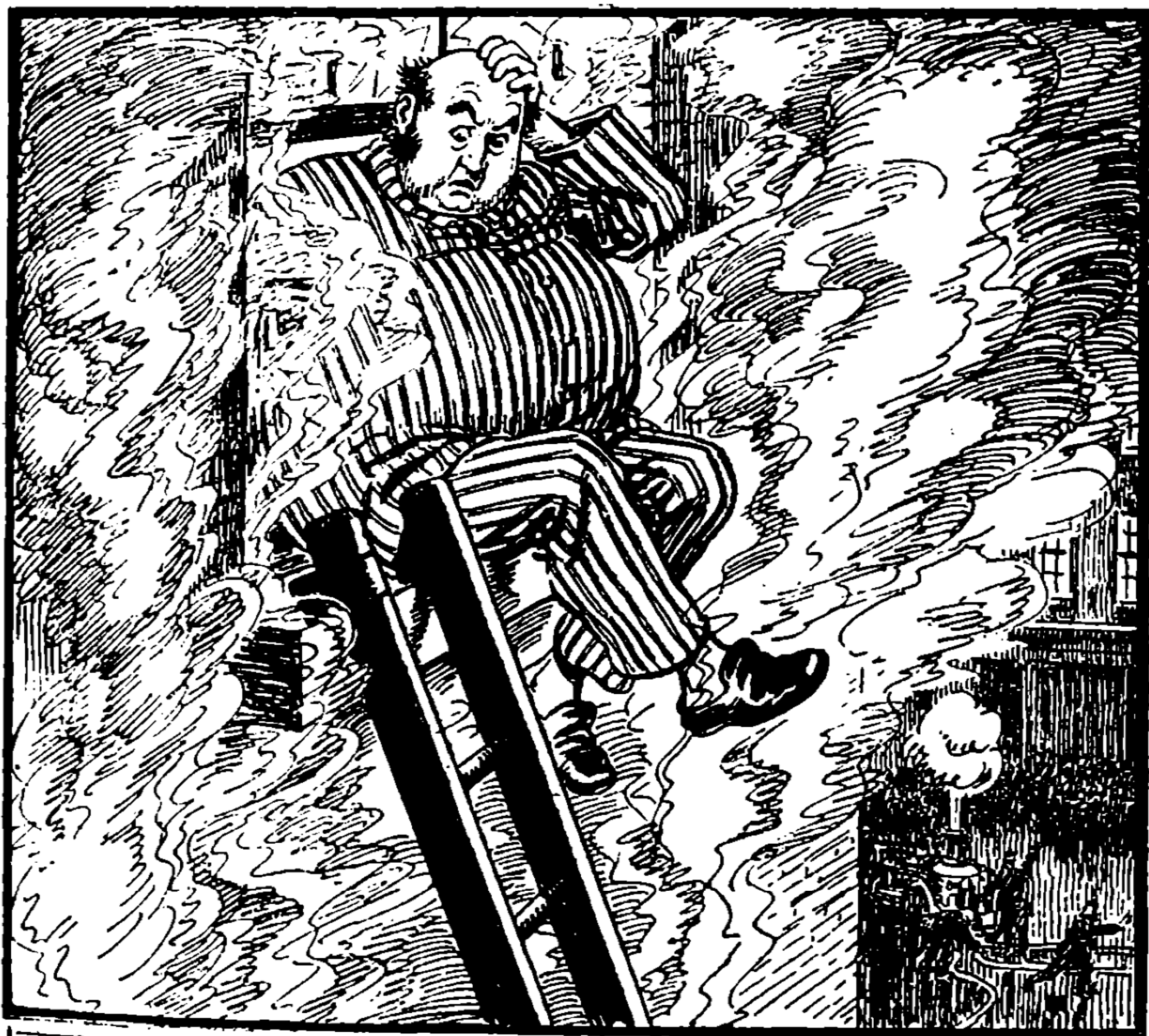


St. Frank's Magazine



FAMILIAR PHRASES FROM FICTION

As Seen By Our Artist

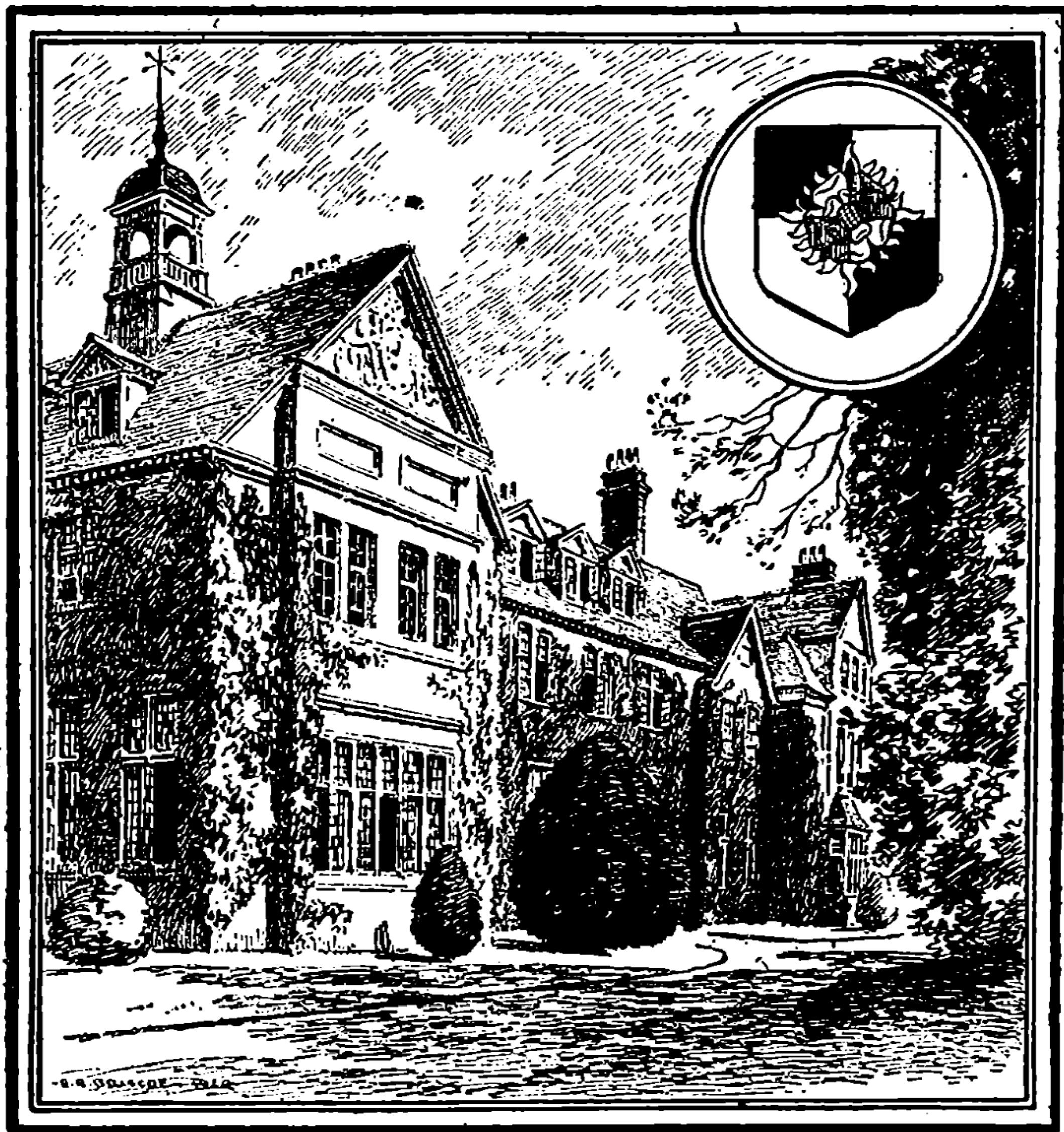


"IT WAS A NARROW ESCAPE !"

OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

SPECIAL SERIES OF ART SKETCHES BY MR. E. E. BRISCOE.

No. 30. THE SCHOOL, WELLINGBORO'.



Until 1921, this school was known as the Grammar School, since when, having been incorporated as a Public School, it is called "The School." Founded as long ago as 1595, Wellingboro' School moved to its present site in 1883. It numbers about 500 boys and is divided into seven houses. The school has a strong O.T.C., comprising three officers, an instructor, and 213 cadets. From this personnel have been formed two companies or seven platoons. Every year a

shooting eight competes at Bisley, and the Corps trains under canvas. This year they go to Strensall, in Yorkshire. The badge is quartered in green and white, and in the centre is a Tudor Rose surrounded by flames. The school colours are claret and white.

The above particulars have been sent me by a reader, to whom I gratefully present the original drawing of the school, duly signed by the artist.



NIPPER'S PAGE

Editorial Office,
Study C,
St. Frank's.

My dear Chums,

I shall be surprised to hear that any one of you does **not** think the Mag. is a decided improvement this week on any previous number. It goes without saying that a great number of you will write appreciating the efforts of my new and brilliant band of contributors. You may find it difficult to say which article you like the best or the least, but if you have any decided opinions don't omit to include them in your letter.

PEPYS' DIARY UP-TO-DATE.

A St. Frank's Diary, describing the many little events that happen day by day at the School, is just what the Mag. wanted. It was a stroke of luck getting a real, live Pepys to do it. And I am sure you will agree that "Peeps into Pepys' Diary," written in the quaint style of the illustrious Pepys, will make a welcome addition to our pages.

SHORTER AND SNAPPIER ARTICLES.

The other new articles I have had to limit to a column in length. They are none the worse for being shorter and snappier, and it does enable me to give a larger variety of contributions.

THE TWO "ISMS."

Many of you who remember "Nipper's Magazine" will recall the amusing articles by Josh Cuttle. We used to allow him a page in those days. But a column of pessimism, I think, is ample for one issue of the Mag. And in case the "Potted Pessimism" should prove too lowering to my chums, I have called in the aid of

Buster Boots to supply a tonic talk as an antidote, and this I am publishing in the adjoining column under the title of "Our Optimistic Oracle."

WORDY WISDOM.

Another old-time contributor, Timothy Tucker, forsooth, whose long-windedness has kept him out of the Mag. for so long, has come forward again, having gained much wisdom in the meantime. I do not refer to the length of his words, which, if anything, are more formidable than ever, but to the length of the number of his words; he has kept them down to the required column's length. It's a good beginning, and I hope he will remember to keep his "Wordy Wisdom" always down to that length.

TUBBS ON THE TUB.

If Tubbs has not had the advantages of the education of the fellows about whom he can so eloquently write in his own unvarnished style, he has had an opportunity of studying them that is granted to few. His articles will, therefore, prove as illuminating as they are undeniably humorous.

TRAVEL TALES.

It may not generally be known that the author of these articles, Lord Dorrimore, is an old St. Frank's boy. His experiences as a big-game hunter should accordingly thrill the stoutest hearts of his many admirers.

ADDLED ANCESTRY.

The author of these entertaining articles for obvious reasons desires to remain incog. I hear that Handy is on the warpath trying to find out the identity of "Historicus."

Ever yours,

NIPPER.



IN REPLY to YOURS

*Correspondence
Answered By
Uncle Edward*

SECTION 1.

REPLIES TO SCHOOL READERS.

DISGUSTED: I regret that I can give no satisfactory answer to your inquiry. I haven't the faintest idea why we have Latin shoved into us. Considering it is a dead language, I'm blessed if I can see any reason for having it in a live school. But why write to me? Take my advice, and go to the head—but remember to have your padding carefully fixed.

COMPETITION FIEND: Your idea for a new competition is as mad as you are. It's perfectly ridiculous to suggest that anybody could guess the solution of a Tractett Grim plot before the last paragraph of the story. Such a competition would be a failure, because it would be humanly impossible to win the prize.

TIMOTHY TUCKER: Why tell your troubles to me? I'm sorry to hear you've had toothache, and you ask if I should advise you to have the troublesome tooth stopped. Certainly. It's a good idea. But while you're about it, why not have your whole jaw stopped?

PACIFIST (College House): I entirely agree with your letter. The best way to settle any argument is to talk things over quietly. I entirely disagree with the brutal habit of using violence. The only excuse for punching a fellow's head is when he gives acute provocation.

J. LITTLE: I think your grumble about grub is justified, and I agree that eggs and bacon ought to be provided every morning for breakfast. But for some fellows fish would be more suitable, as fish is a good brain food. This diet is not necessary in my own case, as I have too much brain already. But it is as well to be careful, because it's a well-known fact that all born idiots have extra large brains.

SECTION 2.

REPLIES TO GENERAL READERS.

(NOTE.—Readers of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY can write to me, and I will reply in this section. Address your letters or post-cards to, **UNCLE EDWARD**, c/o The Editor, The NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.—UNCLE EDWARD.)

THOMAS, D. G. (Gateshead): Your letter, addressed to The Editor, has been handed to me to deal with, and I think you're a bit of a knut, with your swanky notepaper and careful handwriting. But I agree with this care and neatness in correspondence. No well-written letter should contain more than two blots, and yours has only got three, so I'll let it pass. You can look out for some good cricket yarns in the very near future. They would be even better if I had my rights, and was appointed Junior Skipper. But I have long since come to the conclusion that justice in this world is a mere myth. Glad to know your sister likes reading the long stories. I can quite understand it, of course. All girls love to read about strong, manly fellows who are equally good at boxing, writing stories, and even doing detective work. Write again soon, old son.

PHYLLIS GRANT (Manchester): I can't quite understand why you admire Doris Berkeley more than Irene Mauners. You say you like her free and easy speech, and you think she must be very pretty. Of course, she is—but Irene is the most beautiful girl in the world. You are quite right about the Mag. It does require some new life, as I have long contended. But you will now find that your wish has been realised. Hope you will like the new features.

UNCLE EDWARD.



THE CASE OF THE MISSING MILLIONAIRE!

Being the Amazing Adventures of Trackett Grim, the Great Incriminator.

By ED. O. HANDFORTH.

TRACKETT GRIM, the world-famous incriminator, was having his half-holiday. It was Wednesday afternoon, and he was dressed in white flannels. A cricket-bat lay on the table beside him and three stumps were piled neatly on the floor.

He held a new ball in the palm of his right hand, and two bails were grasped tightly in his left hand. He wore a new blazer, and his assistant, Splinter, was busy fixing on a pair of new pads. So far the great detective had not had time to spare for a game of cricket—his favourite pastime.

"Thank you," said the incriminator. "I feel that I shall capture many wickets this afternoon, but—hush!"

Splinter immediately hushed.

"I hear footsteps on the stairs," went on the incriminator, in a disguised voice. "And I deduce that there is someone coming upstairs."

"Wonderful!" gasped Splinter, and began to take off his master's pads.

He had scarcely finished before the door of Grim's private sanctum was hurled violently open and a man dashed in. At first sight Grim took him for a man. But Grim had second sight; that was what had made him famous.

And, adjusting his vision, the incriminator saw that he was a gentleman. He was wearing white spats, and had a monocle in his left eye. Also he wore a top hat. He wore other clothes as well, and they did not escape the sleuth's sharp eyes. But he made no comment.

"Come in, sir!" he said curtly, as the man entered the room.

"I will," replied his visitor.

He did. And Splinter now noticed that he carried a large despatch-case.

"You wish to become one of my clients?" Grim suggested, throwing his cricket-ball and bails into a secret cupboard.

"Quite correct," returned the visitor. "Though I am completely at a loss to know how you discovered that fact."

"A mere nothing," Grim went on. "I can always tell my clients. And I can also tell you something else. You are a millionaire!"

"This is baffling!" cried Grim's client, almost leaping out of his chair. "Are you a wizard, sir? How can you tell such things?"

"It's quite simple," Grim answered modestly. "You see, I noticed that you are carrying a despatch-case, and that on it is written £1,000,000. The rest was a matter of ordinary deduction."

"It is marvellous!" the other continued, when he had collected his breath. "You are right in every particular. Oh, Mr. Grim, will you help me? I am in a terrible predicament."

"I can tell that also," Grim admitted, with his quiet smile. "But at the moment I am thinking of going off to play cricket."

"Oh, sir," pleaded the millionaire, "pray stay at home and help me!"

Grim's stern features twitched. Then a smile came into his eyes. He was always a humane man. And the thought that his client was a millionaire appealed to his softer feelings.

"Very well," he said, grasping the other's hand. "Then I will help you. But first let me change into my ordinary clothes."

As he spoke, he hastily changed, and lit his famous pipe as he did so. Then he brushed his hair with one hand, and became once more the famous incriminator.

"And now, sir," he said, "tell me your trouble or troubles, as the case may be."

"My name," responded the other, "is Cyrus X. Radio. I am the the inventor of broadcasting, of which you may have heard."

I may say I have been very successful, and have made a million pounds. I have brought them with me in this bag, in case you should doubt me."

"Not in the least," Grim said quickly. "But I have no time to count them now. Excuse me," he added. "Let me take your bag and put it in my safe. I can go through the money some other time."

"A good idea," Cyrus X. agreed, handing over the bag, which Grim put safely away.

"A very good idea," Grim commented, with a smile. And now, you were saying—"

"I was about to tell you of a most extraordinary happening," Cyrus X. continued.

He dived into his coat-pocket and produced a newspaper cutting.

"You will scarcely believe me, Mr. Grim," he said; "but I am missing!"

"Nonsense!" gasped the Incriminator, stirred out of his habitual calm by this statement.

"Read this," went on Cyrus X., thrusting the paragraph in front of Grim.

Grim read:

"MISSING MILLIONAIRE."

"We understand on good authority that Cyrus X. Radio, the famous millionaire, is missing from his London home in Park Lane, and no word has been heard of him for the last three weeks. The police have been searching in vain, but are completely baffled, though they have found one or two clues lying about."

Grim read the paragraph twice. Then he looked sharply at the millionaire.

"And is this true?" he asked quietly.

"It must be," Cyrus X. replied, with a catch in his voice. "How could the Press know it if it were false? Mr. Grim, I am at a loss what to make of it. It is terrible to be missing like this! If I am not found before next Thursday I shall be ruined. Can—can you help me?"

"I can," Grim said calmly. "I will find you before you have been missing another two days. But, my dear Radio, I must do something more. I deduce that you have enemies, and it is they who have played this trick. Very likely they have kidnapped you."

"I don't remember it," Cyrus X. said, with a shake of his head.

"Very likely not," Grim went on. "Very possibly you were drugged. But tell me, do you know of any enemies?"

"Now you mention it, I do," said Cyrus X. "There is a fellow called Terrible Tex, a Bowery tough. He has twice poisoned my ginger beer, and once fired a gun at me from behind a pillar-box. But I do not believe he would go as far as this."

Grim was not listening. A wild light of excitement shone in his eyes. He was putting two and two together, and the result filled him with joy.

"I have solved the problem!" he shouted. "All that remains for me to do is to capture Tex. I will go to New York at once. Is Tex living there?"

"He was a month or two ago," Cyrus X. agreed. "But surely you don't believe—"

"I do!" snapped Grim. "It is quite plain to me. This rascal Tex is evidently a rogue; and the fact that you tell me he has tried to kill you convinces me that he is up to no good."

What is more likely than that he should kidnap you and report that you are missing? Very likely he wants to get hold of that million of yours."

"Great pip!" shouted Radio. "And I never thought of that! You are right—I am sure you are! But that money is now safe enough in your safe."

"Exactly!" said Grim. "And I now propose to arrest Terrible Tex. I will run across to America on my private yacht, and you may come with me. Splinter," he added, "dash along and wind up the Skylark. We sail on the ebb tide!"



The Incriminator saw that his visitor was a gentleman, for he was wearing white spats, and had a monocle in his left eye.

Once Grim's mind was made up nothing could deter him. Within less than four days after his interview with Cyrus X. Radio he had run down to the Docks, had commandeered a crew, and a Scotch engineer, had got steam up, had started the yacht's engines, and was racing towards the coast of America, which loomed up dimly across the Atlantic.

And the very next evening they sighted the Statue of Liberty, and landed in New York after a record voyage.

Once landed, Grim wasted no time. He left Splinter and Cyrus X. at a convenient sky-scraper and went off to capture Terrible Tex. He never even worried to ask Cyrus the man's address, for he knew that very likely it would have been false. Grim knew the habits of criminals inside out.

Disguised as a waiter, Grim went to one of New York's most famous restaurants. He guessed that Tex would get hungry about dinner-time and want to find some food. If he did not appear at the first restaurant Grim went to, the incriminator meant to visit all the restaurants in New York.

It was a brilliant scheme, and luck favoured Grim, for at the very first attempt he was successful. As he took up his position at a table near the door Grim sighted the figure of a huge man. He was dressed like a cowboy and had two guns at his belt. It was Terrible Tex!

He sat at Grim's table, and with absolute unconcern Grim took his order, and even flicked the gunman's ear with his serviette.

Tex ordered a huge dinner, and Grim waited on him as though he had been a waiter all his life. There was no hurry. Grim had made his plan. The time would come when Tex ordered a cigar.

At last the gunman finished his dinner and leant back in his chair. Grim thrust forward a box of huge cigars. One of them was twice the size of the others. And all were marked at the same price—fourpence.

Tex's little eyes flashed greedily as he saw the big cigar. He saw there had been a mistake, but as he did not mean to pay his bill, anyway, he thought he might as well take the biggest cigar. He put it in his mouth and lighted it.

Grim watched with pretended unconcern. But all the time his eyes never left the face of Tex.

And as he watched he suddenly saw the gunman's cheeks go white. Then they turned yellow. A moment later they had a tinge of blue. Tex put the cigar on his plate and held his head in his hand.

But through his fingers Grim saw that Tex's face had gone bright green!

A second longer he waited, and, to his joy, he saw that Tex's eyes had shut and he had fallen into a deep sleep. He waited no longer.

Throwing off his waiter's uniform, Grim



Grim sighted the figure of a huge man at his table. He was dressed like a cowboy, and had two guns at his belt. It was Terrible Tex!

hurried out of the restaurant with Terrible Tex on his shoulder. A second later he was in a taxi, driving as hard as he could to the skyscraper where he had left Splinter and Cyrus X.

They met him at the door and helped to carry Tex up to a spare bed-room.

"How have you captured him?" roared the millionaire, scarcely able to believe his eyes.

"I gave him a drugged cigar," Grim explained. "And now you must get a confession from him."

When Terrible Tex woke up, he found himself looking down a revolver held by Grim. The incriminator had him completely at his mercy and he soon made him sign a confession. Tex admitted that he had inserted the paragraph in the paper, and, under threats of penal servitude at Sing-Sing, he also confessed everything else. He had made a false will, presumably written by Cyrus X., and if the millionaire had not reappeared he would have inherited all his money!

But Grim had foiled him at the eleventh hour!

Without waiting to be thanked, the great incriminator and Splinter returned at once to England. And so thankful was Cyrus X. Radio that he cabled to Grim that he might keep the million pounds that were in his safe. Of course, Grim thought nothing of the money. His great pleasure came from the fact that he had been able to solve the most puzzling riddle that had ever been set him.



This Week's
Tonic.
By
**BUSTER
BOOTS**

No. 1.—EVERY SIDE IS A BRIGHT SIDE.

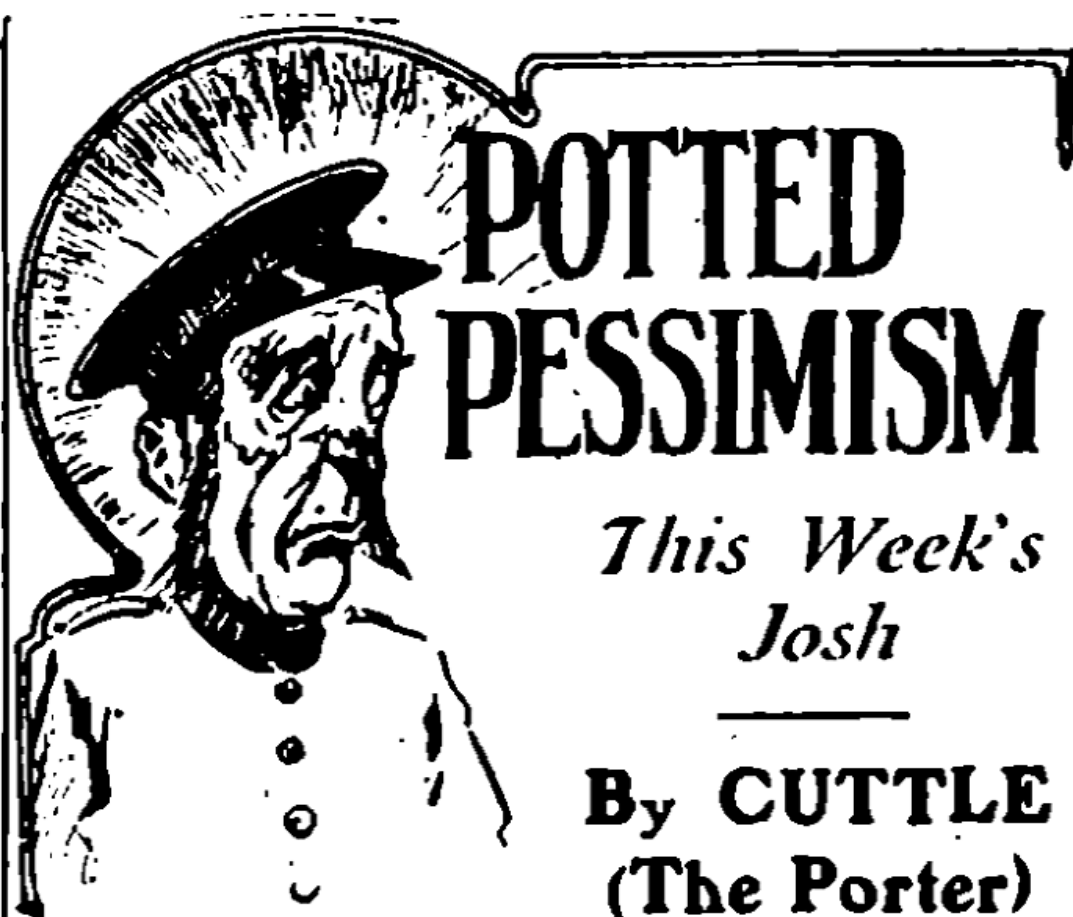
IT'S foolish to be downhearted. Sometimes I meet fellows looking glum and miserable, and they are worried out of their lives just because an expected tip hasn't turned up, or because they've got lines to do, or some trivial thing like that.

It's no good giving way to despair. Life's short. Nowadays we haven't got time to be miserable. And that old saying to the effect that there's a bright side to everything is sheer bunkum. It indicates there's a dark side, which is ridiculous.

There's no such thing. It doesn't matter how serious a fellow's position may be, he's always a lot better off than somebody else. When I've got a hundred lines to do I grin, because some other poor chap has probably got five hundred. I'm better off, and so I smile. And if you've got something unpleasant to do, it's robbed of all its distaste if you grin.

Then again. Take the average chap who's going in for a scholarship. He plugs away at his studies, and if things don't go just right he gets in a black mood, and talks about chucking the whole thing up. Rubbish! There's no such word as "can't." All you want is determination—and plenty of it. Stick to a thing and you'll do it, even if it looks hopelessly impossible at the start. The main thing is to get fairly on the way. And after that it's so easy that you wonder why the dickens you jibbed.

Fellows call me an optimist, but that's all rubbish. I simply take everything with a smile, and do everything with as much ginger and pep as I can manage to produce. It doesn't cost anything to show a little strength of will, and in my future articles I intend to show exactly how this world of ours is a lot more wonderful than most people realise.



No. 1.—WHY BAD WEATHER WAS GOOD!

PEOPLE was full of grumbling about the weather. Why was they? Ask me! They was grumbling because it was cold and wet. But that was just the weather I like, and why? Because it makes folks stick to their work. They wants it fine so's they can gad about and play tennis and golf and cricket, go boating, fishing, and them things.

But what good does them sort of pastimes do? No good. Only take people off their work. They call these games play, and work harder at 'em than they do at their work, and then delude themselves that they're happy. It was good if something makes folk stick to their real work. And bad weather does that.

And look at the way people runs off from their homes when the weather was fine, and rush about in search of happiness. A man would think they was miserable in their homes, as they're so fond of getting away from them. Well, if they was miserable at home, they ought to stay there, same as I do. That's what I says. The more miserable folks was, the better. And why? Ask me! Because they work harder. Look at me. I work hard. To be porter at a school like this here, and have to put up with the pranks of two or three hundred boys was no sinnykewer. Yes, I work hard. And see how miserable I am.

On fine days you see the parks and the commons covered with people, all idling about and doing nothing. Why was they doing nothing? Ask me! They was doing nothing because nothing was easier to do than something. And that was what fine weather does for folks. Well, then, ain't had weather good when it keeps women at home cooking and mending, and men at their jobs, earning money? Ask me! There was nothing like rain to make folks attend to their business, and that's why I says—Hurrah for Bad Weather!



E. SOPP'S FABLES

No. 27. The Fable of the Snob and the Youthful Workers.

Behold, there was among the boys of the Remove at the famous College of St. Frank's, one named Ralph Leslie Fullwood. And the same was a Snob—and even more, since he was a Snob of Snobs. And there was a day when certain members of the Remove took counsel together in that celebrated space known in the land as the Triangle. And these youths were Nipper, Handforth, Glenthorne, and others of Like Character. And while taking counsel in this way, it chanced that the Snob approached, with his chin in the air, his Nose Uprturned, and

A SNEER ON HIS LIPS.

And lo, as he passed them by, he did make some scornful reference, inquiring where the Unsavoury Brothers might be. Then he would have Passed On, whereupon Handforth sprang after him, and did Seize Him right heftily by the Collar. And thus was Fullwood forced into the centre of the Company, and called upon to Cough Up an explanation. And it was Made Clear that if he did not answer voluntarily, such an answer would be

SQUEEZED OUT OF HIM.

And then Fullwood did use Enigmatical Words, making a reference to a certain Succulent Vegetable known as the Onion. And thus it was clear that he had made a gibe at those two Worthy and Commendable youths, Johnny and Bertie Onions. Pressed thus on All Sides, he even became reckless, and did Jeeringly Remark that dirty Circus Performers were not fit to associate with the Sons of Gentlemen. And, behold, the juniors arose in their wrath, and laid violent and ready hands upon this wretch, Glenthorne declaring to all and sundry that Fullwood was nothing more nor less than

A BALLY CRAWLING WORM.

And Handforth, with much unnecessary

Loudness of Voice did proclaim that Circus Performers were Human Beings, and that only a Confounded Snob would use Insulting words against two such Rippling Sportsmen as the Onions Brothers. And Fullwood was ordered to withdraw his gibe in full, or suffer certain unnamed, but suggested punishments. And it came to pass that Fullwood failed to see the Red Light, and scornfully declared that he would Withdraw Nothing. And it was said by Archie, with Much Truth, that this foul toad was suffering from

A DASHED SWELLED HEAD.

And it seemed, after much discussion, that placing the feet in cold water was an Excellent Remedy for this distressing complaint. And it was added that an even better remedy was to place the Whole Body in cold water. And there were Many Smiles. For it was clear that Fullwood was doomed to a Much Needed Dip in the fountain. His person was clean, but his Spirit was dirty, and needed

A WASH AND BRUSH UP.

And so it came to pass that this Snob was whirled with much Speed and Expedition to the fountain. And it is to be recorded that he was immersed not once, but twice—and, indeed, thrice. And it was declared that this treatment was a most Excellent Remedy for swelled head. And lo, it proved that such was the case. For the Snob, with shrieks of protest, no longer delayed in admitting that he was a Worm and a Toad, and, indeed, several other things that Habitually Crawl. And thus did this foolish snob learn, to his cost that it is Costly Indeed to utter words of Insult in the hearing of Decent Citizens.

MORAL: A SNOB MAY THINK HIMSELF HIGH. BUT HE IS LOWER THAN THE LOWEST.

TRAVEL TALES.



By An Old
Boy

(Lord Dorrimore's
Weekly Trifle)

No. 1.—A BRUSH
WITH A BISON.

IT was in India—in the jungles of Bengal, to be exact. I was after bison, a beast one does not generally associate with Bengal, but which exists there, nevertheless. A most formidable beggar, too.

I caught sight of my quarry across a little valley, and he was a veritable king of the forest—six feet high, if an inch, with magnificent curving horns. Unfortunately, he was out of range.

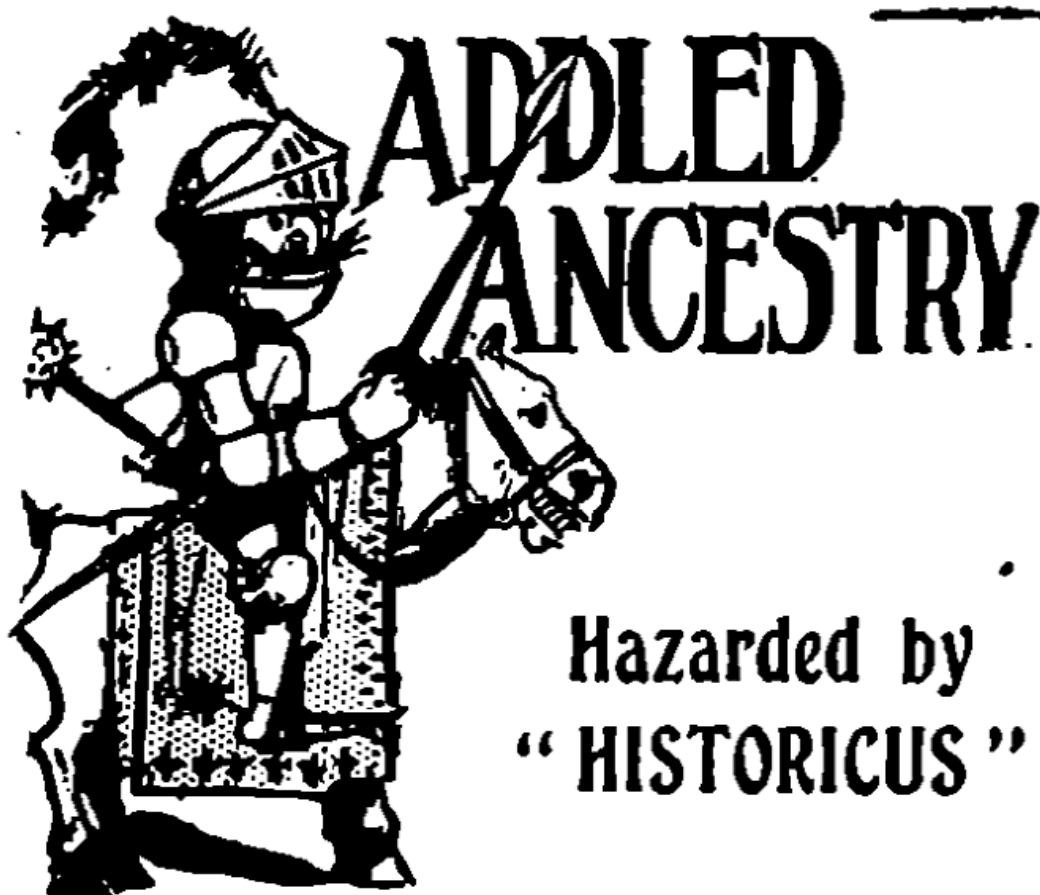
It wasn't until the next day, after a gruelling period of trailing, assisted by my diminutive, inky-black native tracker, that I came within shooting distance of Mr. Bison.

He was feeding at the time, and I got in a first-class shot low in the shoulder. But instead of dropping, he gave a bellow, and stood there, lashing his tail and pawing at the ground. I was quite cool until I took careful aim and had another pot-shot. But as I pulled the trigger there was just a click, and the bison charged at the same moment. The infernal cartridge had failed to explode. And there was no time to reload.

I don't think I ever climbed a tree so quickly in all my life. And even as it was I only just pulled myself on to a branch in the nick of time, the bison thundering by underneath.

Finding that I was beyond his reach, the bison actually commenced butting at the tree with all his enormous weight and strength, and every moment I expected to be hurled from my perch. And I think I owe my life to the fact that one of my trackers fired a spare rifle. It was an atrocious shot, and went miles wide, but the bison got scared and bolted.

After that, of course, I had time to be prepared when he returned, and dispatched him neatly. But it was exciting while it lasted.



ADDLED ANCESTRY.

Hazarded by
"HISTORICUS"

No. 1.—Ye Feudal Lord of Ye Handforthe
Castle.

IN ye goode dayes of olde, there lived a mighty baron, who ruled over his serfs with ye rodde of iron, to saye nothing of ye mayled siste. And ye name of this baron was ye Marquis of Handforthe, of Handforthe Castle, in ye section of ye lande knowne as Biffshire.

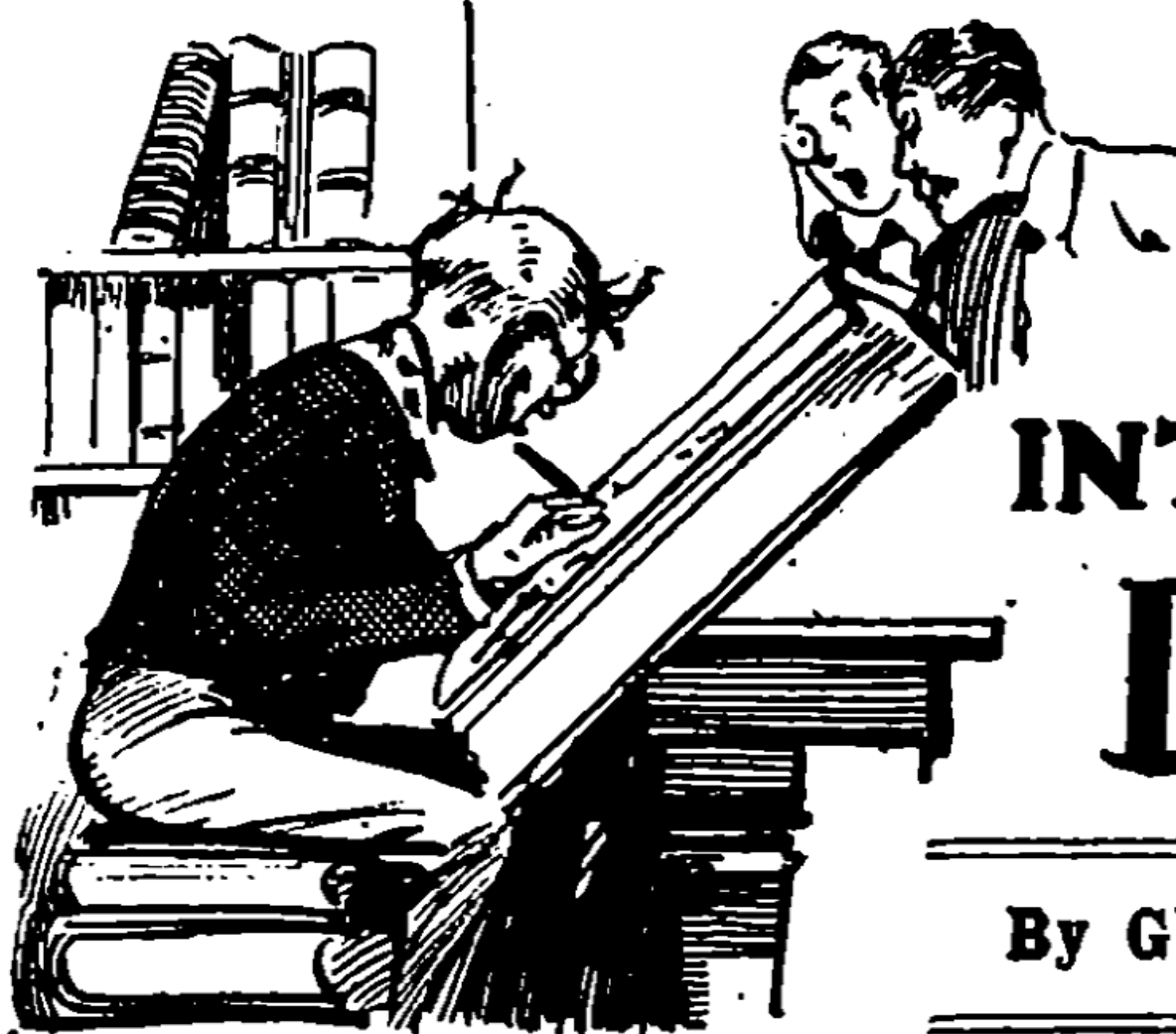
Now, ye Baron Handforthe was a man of goodlie strengthe, and it was his dailie pleasure to go rounde among his serfs, giving them ye treatment which he was wont to calle ye ginger. And if these unfortunate slaves failed to please ye muscular overlorde their fate was swifte and sudden.

For not only didde Baron Handforthe possess a formidable punche, but he also used this punche right mightilie, with ye sad consequences. And he was feared in ye lande.

But ye Baron Handforthe was also a man of much kindliness, having ye hearte of golde. Perchance he would stoppe by ye roadside and sling ye handfulle of groats to ye needy ones. It oft-times befel that ye greate overlorde woulde retorne ye nexte daye, and have some of these same serfs flunge to ye lions for a trivial offence. For ye baron was of hastie temper, and it were considered best to dodge righte speedilie on his approache, and so gette out of sighte of this feudal monarch.

And he waged war upon all his neighbours—not because ye neighbours cared for this uncertain life, but because ye baron was a man who could not be happie or merrie unlesse he was waging gory and grizzlie warfare againste ye peacefulle people arounde him. And so, in ye days of olde, life was uncertain and precarious, and there is no recorde of what ye baron's fate might have been, although doubtlesse it were violentte and messie.

And alonge throughe ye ages ye famous Handforthe bloode hath continued to flowe throughe ye veins of ye righte noble familie, as alle will testifie.



PEEPS INTO PEPYS' DIARY.

By GUY PEPYS of the Remove.

MONDAY.—This morning, just after lessons, to the Triangle to partake of fresh air. Did see Fatty Little emerging from Mrs. Hake's tuck shop, chewing and munching and wiping his lips. 'Tis a constant marvel to me how the fellow eats, and the greater marvel is that he seems to thrive thereon. He did lament that he could buy nothing more, as his money was all gone, and did hint that a small loan would please him; but to this I turned a deaf ear.

TUESDAY.—Handforth in high feather this morning by reason of a five-pound note sent by Sir Edward, and he very free with it to his chums. 'Tis to them as balm for their wounds, and also a sort of cement that holds them together. Willy Handforth not pleased: for him no remittance. When he does get one, 'tis but what he terms a beggarly ten shillings, though to me it seems ample enough. I do think it a mistake in parents to give their children the use of too much money. Handforth's soon melts away, I note, as he is free-handed with Church and McClure, and for the rest Willy bleeds him freely, so that he is for the most part in a chronic state of being stony.

WEDNESDAY.—To-day, being a half-holiday and fine, I to the woods, where I did take much delight in the glories of summer, and in the beauties of the foliage and wild flowers. Did much enjoy the reading of this week's Magazine, whereat I laughed immoderately in some places. Disturbed in my reading by some rough village youths, led by a rude fellow called Lumpy Bill. They did assail me with foul language, and as one can do nothing against many I retreated, and to the school. Found there a great commotion, as Chambers, of the Fifth, had been struck on the head by a cricket-ball, and was attended by Dr. Brett. Of this I thought

little, knowing that Chambers' head is as hard as a nigger's, and that he will be quite all right in a day or two.

THURSDAY.—To the river, there to enjoy much leisure in a punt. Did feast upon a cold luncheon, prepared by my own hands. But unfortunate, for I am interrupted by River House boys, who seize my luncheon, and make off with it. It seems I am very unlucky in my little excursions. Home, and there I find a letter come, at which I am greatly pleased. But upon opening it, a great disappointment.

FRIDAY.—A red letter day. For Nelson Lee did engage me in conversation for a full ten minutes, having perhaps liked my company yesternight, at which I am overjoyed. He did treat me as if I were his equal. I think him a mighty nice gentleman, though a little over-stern. But to-day he did unbend, and I marvel that he should remain here, considering he is a detective of such wondrous powers. To Study C for tea, having been invited by Nipper. And here I submit some of my writings, and am gratified by the general expressions of approval. Nipper did commission me to continue, and it seems I am like to be a regular contributor.

SATURDAY.—With schoolboys, as with others, this seems to be a sort of settling-up day. During the week they do borrow and lend in the most bewildering fashion, and at the end they repay, clear up, and start afresh. This evening to the big circus, to watch my fellow-pupils in the ring. A diverting period, indeed, and all in gay mood, and home by bicycle in the moonlight. And so another week gone, and my health splendid, except for the slight effects of a bruised ear, which I obtained in a manner that need not be set down.

WORDY WISDOM



Tangled Tosh - By Timothy Tucker

No. 1.—THE STUPENDOUS INFINITY OF LIMITLESS SPACE.

HAVE you ever paused to consider the marvellous wonder of the hemispherical magnitude of the earth, and the limitless stupendousness of Outer Space? Have you ever halted in your everyday peregrinations to ponder over the potentiality of astronomical science?

No, you have not! Without any desire to be circumlocutory or periphrastic, I declare that you have not! Nowadays, the popular characteristic of the rising generation is to exterminate time by playing cricket, visiting cinemas, reading lamentably trashy stories, and wasting time in other respects. I say this with conviction, and proportionally express the comparative relation of the proposition.

But, think! Heed my words, and think! Remember that we are but mere, insignificant atoms, walking on the face of another atom! For what is the earth but a paltry, infinitesimal speck in the phantasmagoria of the immeasurably illimitable universe?

I repeat—a speck! An atom! We, on this earth, are no more than spots of dust, compared to the marvellously elaborate comprehensiveness of the astronomical firmament.

At night you see the stars, and you think nothing of them. You observe the moon, and never attempt to consider the stunning nature of these wondrous phenomena of the outer ether. And remember this! Remember that for every star we see there are millions of stars unseen. For Space and the universe goes on beyond all the scope of electromagnetics, and the power of the human organisation. I must say a few words about the neolithic epoch—

(Thanks all the same, but one column is quite enough, old man! By the way, how many dictionaries have you swallowed?—ED., "St. Frank's Magazine.")



TUBBS ON THE TUB.

Our Weekly Speech

By TUBBS, the Page-boy.

No. 1.—DOWN WITH "SUMMER-TIME"!

I AIN'T the kind of feller to make a fuss over nothink, but this 'ere new-fangled "summer-time" ain't wot it's cracked up to be. You can take it from me that it's a blinkin' fraud—not' arf it ain't! An' I'll jest show you 'ow. Or I want you to do is to lend me yore ears for a minnit, an' I'll fill 'em so full you'll think they was stopped up.

Now, this 'ere summer-time. Why, blow me, if you ask me, it's messin' about with Nature, an' I don't reckon folks 'as got a rite to do that. No, nor Governints, neither. Look at me, for instance! I got to git up at six o'clock, seein' as 'ow there's umpteen boots an' shoes to klean every mornin', to say nothink of orl kinds of hodd jobs them lazy 'ousemaids shove on to me, blow 'em! Girls ain't got no 'cart nowadays, to put on a pore bloke like me.

As I wos sayin', I got to git up at six, an' off goes me klock to the tick, 'cos if I'm late it means the sack. But do yer think I'm fooled? That there klock may say it's six, but I know bloomin' well it's only five! An', wots more, I feels it in me very bones. An' the chickens outside won't be fooled, neither—they've got more sense, bless 'em. You can't meddle about with Nature, though you can kid yourself with a klock. Not that I'm kiddin', mind yer! A bloke who 'as to git up in the hearly howers knows orl about it, I give you my word!

An' wot's the good of a hextra hower to me of a hevenin'? These 'ere blighters wot brings in these 'ere laws may be as full of knowldge as a haddick is full o' bones, but the rummy thing is they don't use none of it! I s'pose that's why they're allus so full!

Anyhow, I says down with this 'ere summer-time, an' let's 'ave the rite time when we looks on the klocks, an' not some-think wot we knows is wrong, but pretends it ain't!

DON'T GO HOME

to-night

without your copy of the Biggest and Best Boys' Paper. You'll find in this week's number no less than seven story features—the most wonderful twopennyworth of real-life yarns now on sale. If you want the best stories by the best authors you can't do better than buy

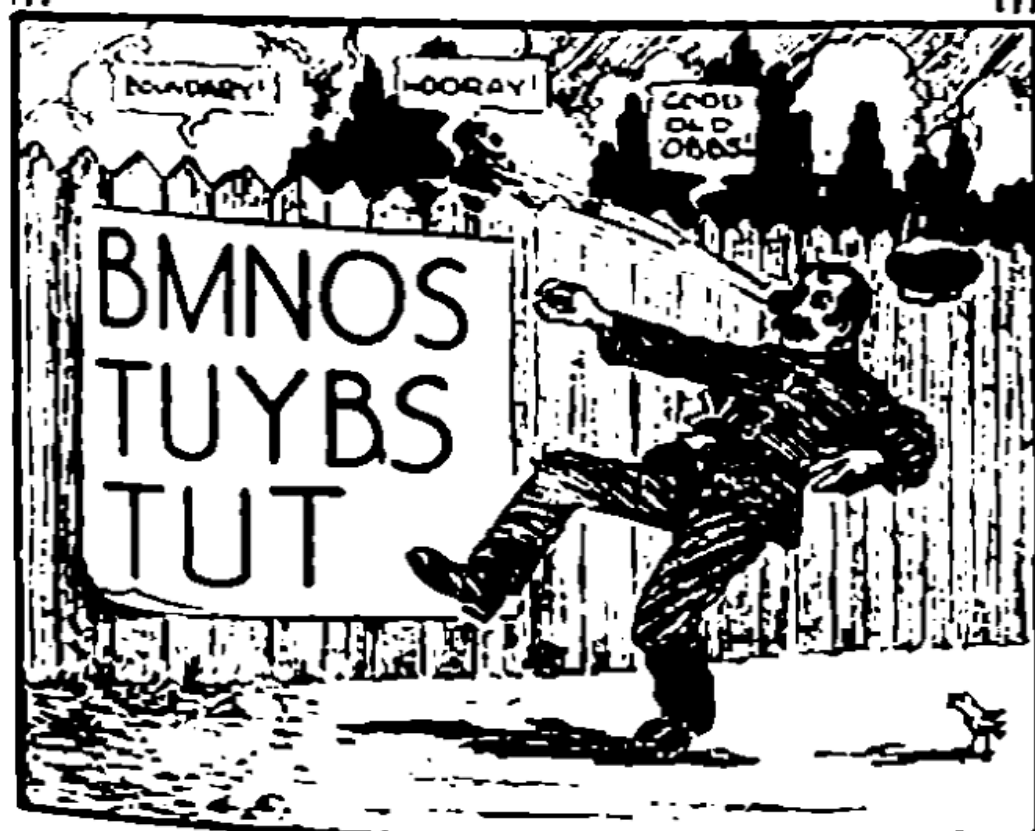
the BOYS' REALM

OVER 100 PRIZES!

What Did Robert Say?

Simple Competition in
This Week's

YOUNG BRITAIN



FUN AND THRILLS

PLUCK



BUSTER BROWN-BOLSHIE!

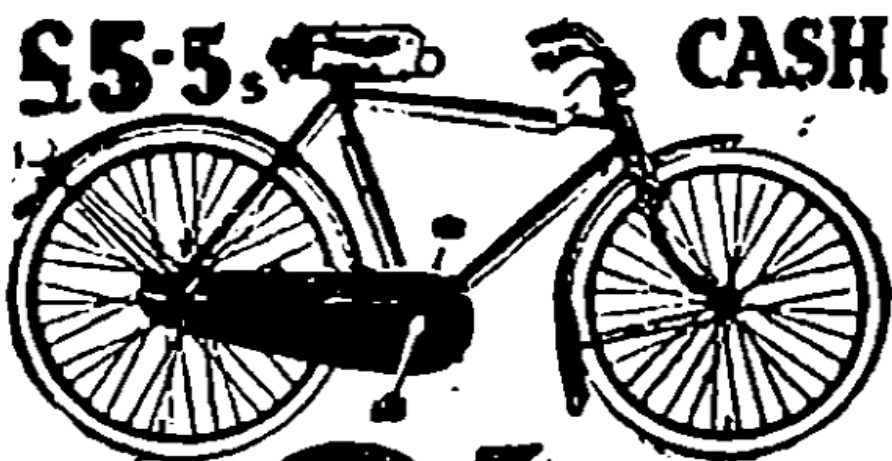
Here is a small reproduction of the fine cover on this week's issue of the great Sport and Adventure Paper—PLUCK. It contains yarns of School, Sport, Railways, Radio, and the Open Air, also a Special Story of the World in 1950 A.D.—

"THE FANGS of the UNKNOWN!"
Every Tuesday——2d.

YOU'RE DEAD

certain to enjoy this week's Special Bumper Number of the Rocket, our great adventure companion paper. Packed with full-o'-pep stories, and containing a gorgeous free Comic Supplement. It is a paper you really must not miss. Price 2d, obtainable everywhere. Go out and buy a copy

NOW!



2/6 Weekly

Is all you pay for our No. 400A Mead "Marvel"—the finest cycle ever offered on such exceptionally easy terms. Brilliantly plated; richly enamelled, lined in colours. Sent packed free carriage paid on

15 DAYS' FREE TRIAL.

Fully warranted. Money refunded if dissatisfied. Old machines exchanged. Big bargains in factory soiled mounts. Tyres and accessories 33 1/3 percent below shop prices. Write TO-DAY for testimonials and illustrated art catalogue.

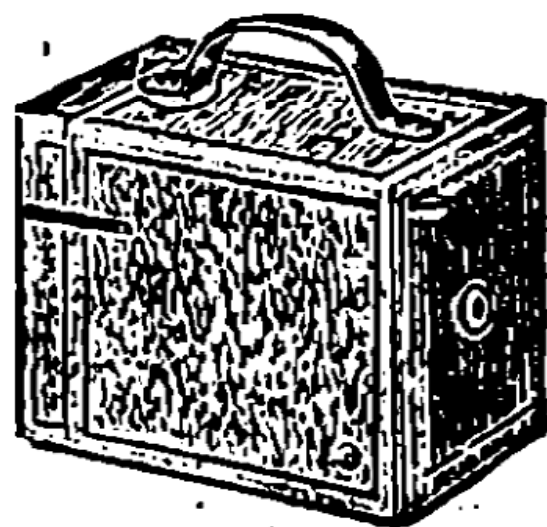
Mead

Cycle Company (Inc.),
(Dept. B797) Birmingham



HEIGHT COUNTS

In winning success. Let the Girvan System increase your height. Send P.C. for particulars of our £100 guarantee to Enquiry Dept. A.M.P., 17, Stroud Green Road, London, N.4.

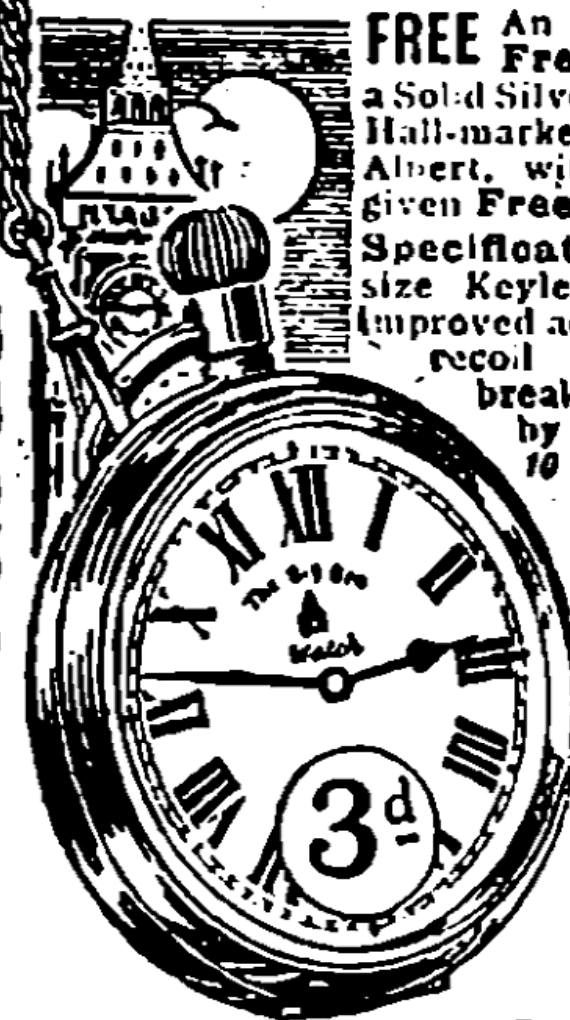


CHEAP CAMERAS

SCOUT takes photographs 2 1/2 ins. by 2 ins., 2/6. EMPIRE takes photographs 3 ins. by 2 1/2 ins., 3/6. SUNBEAM, 4-plate size, 4/3. All post free. Complete in box with plates and chemicals and instructions for use. 50-Shot Automatic repeating Pea Pistol, 2/9. L. MANN & CO., 13, Red Lion Sq., High Holborn W.C.1.

Yours for 3d deposit.

The "Big Ben" Keyless Lever Watch on THE GREATEST BARGAIN TERMS ever put before the British Public by one of London's Oldest-Established Mail Order Houses.



FREE An absolutely Free Gift of a Solid Silver English Hall-marked Double Curb Albert, with Seal attached, given Free with every Watch. Specification: Gent's Full-size Keyless Lever Watch, Improved action; fitted patent recoil click, preventing breakage of mainspring by overwinding.

10 Years' Warranty.

Sent on receipt of 3d. deposit; after approval, send 1/9 more. The balance may then be paid by 9 monthly payments of 2/- each. Cash refunded in full if dissatisfied. Send 3d. now to

J. A. DAVIS & Co.
(Dept. 87).
26 Denmark Hill,
London, S.E. 5.

All Free.—100 War & Armistice, 50 China Junks, Pkt. Stamp Mounts. Ask for Blue Label Approx. 609 & send 2d. post.—B. L. Coryn, 10, Wave Crest, Whitstable. Collections bought.

MY GREAT OFFER

I supply the finest Coventry-built cycles from £5-5-0 cash or 2/- weekly. Any cycle sent on 14 days' approval, packed free and carriage paid, on receipt of small deposit. Write for free bargain lists now.

The **O'Brien** World's Largest Cycle Dealer, Dept. 24, COVENTRY



Height Increased 5/- Complete In 30 Days.

No Appliances. No Drugs. No Dieting. The Melvin Strong System NEVER FAILS. Send stamp for particulars and testimonials.—Melvin Strong, Ltd. (Dept. S), 10 Ludgate Hill, London, Eng.



Be sure and mention "The Nelson Lee Library" when communicating with advertisers.