

CONTAINS TWO FINE LONG STORIES & THE
MAG.

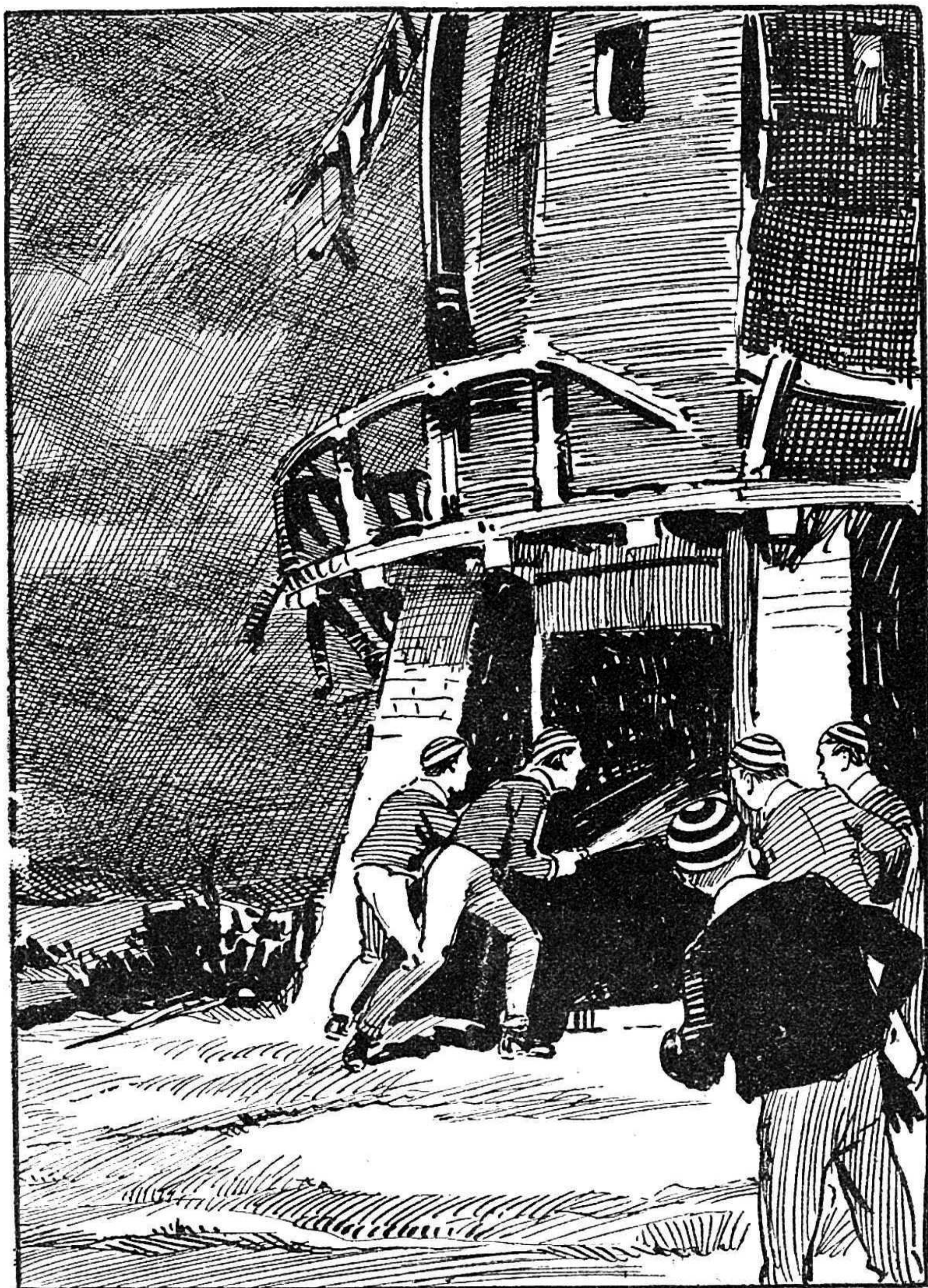
THE NELSON LEE

LIBRARY *And St. Frank's Magazine*

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*The Secret of
the Old Mill.*

From the
black opening
above, something had
appeared—a hairy arm
and a clutching hand.
(See This Week's Grand
Long Story of the Boys
of St. Frank's.)



In spite of himself, Pitt was feeling a little nervous as he led the way into the mill. He couldn't believe that it was the influence of Willy's story.



THE SECRET OF THE OLD MILL !

AN AMUSING AND ENGROSSING LONG COMPLETE STORY OF THE BOYS OF ST. FRANK'S.

This week, Mr. Brooks introduces to St. Frank's a laughable new character in the person of Professor Sylvester Tucker. Needless to say, the professor is a near relative of a well-known member of the Fourth, known as Timothy Tucker, sometimes called the Cheerful Lunatic. There is much in common between the two Tuckers, and the professor, if anything, is even more absent-minded than his nephew. He comes to St. Frank's as the new science master, but his abstraction in philosophy leads him to some strange places before he eventually arrives at his destination. It is a screamingly funny yarn with an ingenious plot and an absorbing mystery.

THE EDITOR.

By E. SEARLES BROOKS

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCING SEPTIMUS AND CO.

MR. BEVERLEY STOKES paused in the doorway.

Before him lay Handforth minor's cosy little study in the Third-Form passage of the Ancient House. The door stood ajar, and Willy Handforth himself was seated at the table.

The Housemaster had no intention of eavesdropping, but he couldn't very well help himself. A glance at the tiny room was sufficient to show him that Handforth minor was the sole occupant.

Strangely enough, however, Willy was talking. So far the fag was quite unaware of Mr. Stokes' proximity. And Willy seemed to be enjoying his solitude.

"Now then, Septimus, old man," he was saying, apparently addressing the thin air. "You've got to improve! Your manners ain't exactly refined as yet, and you're not quite obedient, either. Unless you buck up I shall give you a good swishing."

Mr. Stokes peered forward curiously. As far as he could see, there was no living thing within sight except Willy. The fag

sat at the table, and the table was clear, except for some littered papers and a few school-books. Willy was sitting back in his chair in a careless attitude. To be exact, he wasn't sitting on the chair at all, but on one of his own feet—which was mysteriously tucked under him, and must have provided a hard and merciless substitute for a cushion.

"You'd better buck up and do something, my lad, or I'll tickle you up a bit," said Willy firmly. "I'm supposed to go to old Stokes this afternoon—but he doesn't matter. He can wait! After all, he's only a giddy master!"

"Ahem!" coughed Mr. Stokes discreetly.

He walked in, and Willy turned a somewhat scared face in his direction. The fag even had the decency to blush slightly. But he recovered himself with remarkable speed.

"Good afternoon, sir!" he said cheerfully, as he leapt to his feet. "A bit untidy in here, but that doesn't matter, does it? Take a chair, sir. No, not that one—it's got a squiffy leg!"

"Well, it's just as well to be warned in time," smiled Mr. Stokes. "Not that I really came here to sit down——"

"Oh, that's all right, sir—make yourself at home," invited Willy. "I don't mind a bit. Anybody's welcome in this study—even a master. I'm not proud, sir."

"I am overwhelmed by your hospitality, Handforth minor," said Mr. Stokes drily. "I really looked in to ask you a pointed question about a certain small imposition—"

"Oh, that, sir?" interrupted Willy briskly. "To tell the truth— My hat! Did you see that bird fly by the window, sir? I'm rather interested in birds—especially pigeons. Do you think I could keep pigeons if I made a proper cote, sir?"

"We are not talking about cotes, Handforth minor, and you needn't think you can change the subject so adroitly," said Mr. Stokes. "I think I told you to write me five hundred lines?"

"Yes, sir."

"I also required them by dinner-time."

"Yes, sir."

"My instructions were precise."

"Yes, sir."

"And are the lines done?"

"Yes, sir—that is to say, no, sir," said Willy neatly.

"And what is the reason for this disobedience?"

"Yes, sir, I—I mean, the fact is, I've been too busy!" replied Willy, suddenly brightening up. "That's it, sir. You wouldn't believe how busy I've been. I didn't have time to do those rotten lines—I mean, those lines, sir."

Mr. Stokes tried hard not to smile.

"This is quite interesting," he said smoothly. "And so, Handforth minor, you have been altogether too busy to obey my instructions?"

"That's the idea, sir," said Willy cheerfully.

"And what is the nature of this urgent business which has kept you so employed?" asked the Housemaster. "We might as well know all about it, eh? There's nothing like having all the facts, is there?"

"I've been busy with Septimus, sir," replied Willy. "You wouldn't believe what a little terror he is. Then, of course, there's Ferdinand—"

"One moment—one moment," interrupted Mr. Stokes. "First of all, I should like a closer introduction to Septimus. We can leave Ferdinand until later. I imagine that you were having a little chat with Septimus when I arrived?"

"Yes, sir," replied Willy. "You weren't supposed to hear, really. How was I to know that somebody would come sneaking up—I mean, how was I to know that you would arrive so quietly, sir?"

"A very thoughtless proceeding on my part, my boy," said Mr. Stokes. "Be good enough to show me this mysterious Septimus. Am I right in assuming that he is a

beetle? Or is it possible that he is a tortoise?"

Willy sniffed.

"I've finished with those rotten things, sir," he said. "Insects are too much trouble. Besides, they're always escaping. I don't mind so much, but some of the other chaps make an awful fuss. You ought to have heard Chubby Heath going on when he found a couple of spiders in his tea!"

"Really?" said Mr. Stokes mildly.

"Yes, sir," said Willy. "And Lemon kicked up a terrible shindy just because he found one of my centipedes in a ham sandwich. He killed the little beggar, too—bit it clean in half!"

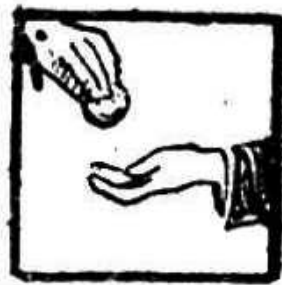
"That was indeed disastrous," said Mr. Stokes, with an ominous twitching of the mouth. "But we are still waiting for this introduction to Septimus."

"He's my squirrel, sir," said Willy proudly. "I'm just teaching him a few tricks. I suppose you haven't got a few nuts on you, sir? He's a bit peckish—he hasn't had his dinner yet."

Willy pulled open the table drawer, and Septimus was revealed. He proved to be a pert little squirrel, with unusually bright eyes. He cocked his head on one side, and inspected Mr. Stokes critically.

CHAPTER II.

THE ART OF TOUCHING TED.



MR. STOKES shook his head.

"This won't do, Handforth minor," he said severely. "I can't allow you to keep this animal in your study. You

know as well as I do that all pets must be accommodated at the back of the House."

"Yes, sir," said Willy promptly. "I'll take him out as soon as you've gone, sir. As for those lines, I'll get busy on 'em before long, and let you have 'em before the end of the week."

"We will discuss the lines later," said Mr. Stokes. "We don't wish to change the subject just yet, my lad. Have you any other pets in this room, may I ask?"

"No, sir," said Willy. "Well, not exactly. You can't call them pets until I've trained them thoroughly."

"Them?" repeated Mr. Stokes. "Good gracious! Is this apartment a miniature menagerie? What other animals have you got secreted about the place?"

Mr. Stokes looked round suspiciously.

"There's Ferdinand the ferret, sir," said Willy, going over to a hat-box and lifting the lid. "He's all right—quite harmless, unless you happen to put your hand in there by mistake. That's what Owen minor did, and the fathead simply yelled at me for half

an hour. It wasn't my fault that he got bitten."

"Not at all," said Mr. Stokes. "And the rest?"

"There's only Rupert the rat, sir."

The Housemaster, while attempting to remain stern, found it quite impossible to do so. The names of Willy's pets were enough in themselves to make him smile.

"Oh, indeed," said Mr. Stokes. "Rupert the rat, eh? And where does he happen to reside?"

"Oh, in that biscuit tin, sir," replied Willy, nodding towards a shelf in the corner. "He's a bit peevish to-day. That's because Chubby Heath accidentally sat on him at breakfast-time. But Septimus is the pick of the bunch—he's already learnt how to shake hands?"

"I am rather glad I looked in this afternoon, Handforth minor," said Mr. Stokes. "I shall come again this evening, and if these animals are still present, I shall take severe measures. They must be removed before tea-time. And you had better bring me those lines before calling over."

"Impossible, sir," said Willy.

"Eh?"

"Well, not impossible, sir," added Willy hastily. "Of course, I'll do 'em if necessary—but what does it matter? When you get 'em you'll only chuck 'em in the fire. Such a waste of time and labour, sir. And think of the paper, too!"

"I have given you my orders, Handforth minor."

"Oh, well, of course, if you insist," growled Willy. "But I'll tell you what, sir—suppose we say half to-day and half to-morrow? I shall have more time to-morrow. I've got to shift these animals—and I can't do two things at once, can I?"

Mr. Stokes chuckled.

"You young rascal!" he grinned. "I wonder I don't cane you on the spot for your impertinence. All right—I'll leave the imposition until to-morrow. But, mind you—no later!"

Mr. Stokes departed, and Willy performed a brief, triumphant war-dance in the middle of the study. Then he sat down before the table, and gravely saluted Septimus.

"That's the way to do it, my son," he said calmly. "You've got to treat these masters tactfully—and then they'll eat out of your giddy hand! Poor old Stokey! Will he get those lines to-morrow? The answer, Septimus, old scout, is like my photograph—in the negative!"

Willy's next proceeding was a curious one. He turned out his pockets, and placed on the table an extraordinary assortment. There were one or two bicycle nuts, a broken pocket-knife, two caramels, three or four brace-buttons, a shoe-lace, and a whole collection of minor odds and ends. Willy regarded the pile disgustedly.

"And I thought there was a sixpence

somewhere," he growled. "I know it was a bit bent, with a hole in it; but Mrs. Hake's practically blind without her giddy glasses. I could easily have made her take 'em off for some reason. I'll bet you've eaten that tanner, you glutton."

Septimus, peeping out of the drawer, blinked in a knowing kind of way. And Willy rose to his feet with a determined look in his eye.

"I didn't want to do it, but it's got to be done," he said firmly. "Come on, Septimus, my lad. I'll just show you the way to touch Ted!"

Willy slipped the squirrel into his side pocket, and sallied forth. He made his way to the Ancient House lobby, and for once in a while progressed in a manner that was almost human. As a rule, he either walked sideways, or on his hands, or on all fours, like a spider. But with Septimus in his pocket, he had to be careful.

In the lobby he met Reggie Pitt and Jack Grey. They were both in football attire, and were evidently bound for Little Side.

"Seen my major about?" asked Willy carelessly.

"He's in Study D," replied Pitt. "But he's just coming out, so if you wait a minute——"

Reggie broke off as Handforth & Co. appeared. Edward Oswald frowned as he caught sight of his minor. He always frowned when he saw Willy. The fag lounged up, and held out a grubby hand.

"Five bob!" he said briefly.

"Eh?"

"Five bob!" repeated Willy. "Look here, Ted, you're not going to jib, I suppose? Don't make a fuss, for goodness' sake. Buck up—I'm in a hurry! Five bob!"

"Will, I'm blowed!" said Handforth blankly.

CHAPTER III.

MORE TROUBLE.



WILLY'S system of borrowing money from his major was invariably the same.

He generally required five shillings, and he never asked for it. He just held out his hand and demanded it. There was no beating about the bush with Willy.

"Well, I'm blowed!" repeated Handforth. "Take that horrible looking hand away, you beastly young rotter! I'll bet you haven't washed for a week! And if you think you'll get five bob out of me——"

"I don't think anything about it—I know it!" interrupted Willy impatiently. "What's the good of wasting time? My hat, what a long-winded chap you are, Ted!"

"Look here, you little fathead——"

"You're in a hurry—I'm in a hurry!" said

Willy. "Five bob! The sooner you hand it over, the sooner you'll get rid of me. I need it urgently for food. I've got to buy grub for my pets."

"I can't help your rotten pets——"

"Five bob!" said Willy relentlessly.

"Oh, my only hat!" groaned Handforth. "It's a wonder I'm not grey! Here you are—take it and clear off! Let me have some peace!"

Handforth pulled out some silver, but it was all composed of two-shilling pieces. He handed over three of them with a grunt, and glared at his minor ferociously.

"I shall want a bob change!" he said gruffly.

"Try and get it!" said Willy, tucking the money into his waistcoat-pocket. "Thanks awfully, old son! You're a good chap at heart, although your face has slipped a bit. Going to play football? One of these days I'll come along and give you a few tips on goalkeeping!"

Having made this patronising remark, Willy sauntered off, leaving Edward Oswald speechless. But he wasn't speechless for long. A curious sensation on his left side made him look down; and he was startled to find a furry little animal diving into the side-pocket of his overcoat.

"What's this?" he roared. "Hi! You've left something behind, you young fathead!"

"Rats!" said Willy, turning.

"Rats!" howled Handforth, horrified. "Help! I'm smothered in rats! I'll jolly well—— Yaroooooh! I'm bitten!"

Handforth had dived his hand into his pocket with such violence that Septimus promptly bit him. The next moment the squirrel was yanked out, and he dropped to the floor with a plop! He set off across the lobby, and whisked out into the Triangle like a streak.

"My squirrel!" yelled Willy, in alarm.

He felt his own pocket desperately, but it was empty. Septimus had slipped out while his master was intent upon the five shillings. And now he was making tracks for liberty.

As a rule, Septimus was an intelligent little fellow; but just now he was confused. Instead of making for the nearest tree, he leapt at Timothy Tucker. Tucker was certainly standing quite still, and his mop of hair resembled a bush. Possibly Septimus had made a natural mistake.

At all events, he ran swiftly up Tucker's left leg, dived beneath his jacket, and wriggled out at T. T.'s collar.

"Dear me!" gasped Tucker. "I fear that some disaster has happened! My dear sir, what—— Good gracious! Help! I am beset by wild animals!"

The squirrel had perched itself on Tucker's shoulder, and the lunatic of the Fourth was more startled than he could say. And it was certainly an uncomfortable experience.

Tucker was with his study-mate, Clarence Fellowe, and he had been in the midst of a deep discourse on the subject of prehistoric mammals. Septimus could not have arrived at a more inopportune moment.

"This is quite distressing," said Clarence. "In fact, it's got me guessing. What can the object be? It's got some fur, I see."

"Dear, dear, dear!" exclaimed Tucker. "How dare you? Get off my shoulder at once! How dare you? I will not allow——"

"Got you!" said Willy, grabbing Septimus, and pushing him into his pocket. "It's a lucky thing you were there, Tucker! I might have lost him for good!"

"I fail to see the necessity for this performing menagerie," said Tucker severely. "Do you realise, my dear sir, that I might have been bitten? Do you appreciate the fact that such animals as these are deadly poisonous? One bite, my dear sir, and I might have departed from this world for ever! Let me impress upon you the fatal misapprehension——"

"Sorry—can't stop!" said Willy. "Put it on a postcard and send it to me on my birthday."

He marched off, leaving Tucker staring.

"Remarkable!" said T. T., blinking. "Is it possible that he expects me to write my remarks down on a postcard?"

Clarence Fellowe grinned.

"The lad was only jesting—he's fond of such suggesting," he exclaimed. "There is no need to worry—he's gone in quite a hurry. Continue your discussion, of things and objects Russian."

While this learned conversation proceeded, Willy Handforth was marching out of the gateway. He had collected Chubby Heath on the way, and the pair of them passed out into the lane. Chubby didn't actually want to come, but Willy had given his orders—and Willy was lord and master of the Third. Woe betide any fag who failed to obey him!

"Going to the village?" asked Chubby.

"Yes, later on," replied Willy. "But just at the moment we're bound for the moor."

"The moor?"

"A wide place, like a heath," said Willy.

"Fathead! Do you think I don't know what the moor is?"

"I thought you might think I meant an Arab, or something," said Handforth minor. "We're buzzing on Bannington Moor to give young Septimus a good old run. I can keep my eye on him there, and I'm going to teach him a few tricks, too. He's a bit slow, but all we need is patience."

Chubby Heath sighed, and sadly regretted that he had been in the Triangle at such an inopportune moment. But it was no good backing out now. Willy had passed the decree, and his word was law.

CHAPTER IV.

THE THING IN THE MILL.



BANNINGTON MOOR was looking bleak and grey on this dull November afternoon. A cold wind was blowing over from the sea, and the two fags had the entire expanse of country to themselves. There wasn't another soul in sight.

"This is a dotty idea," growled Chubby. "Fancy coming all this way just to give that rotten squirrel a run! It'll serve you right if he bunks, and gets lost."

enough to go on until to-morrow. Now you watch Septimus. If he doesn't surprise you, he ought to."

Septimus was placed on the ground, and Willy let him run about quite freely. Yet there were plenty of patches of gorse and heather in which the squirrel could have easily escaped.

Willy had tamed the little creature so thoroughly that he had no fear of it deserting him. And his confidence was fully justified.

"Come on, Septimus—back you come!" said Willy sharply. "Septimus! This way—this way, Septimus!"

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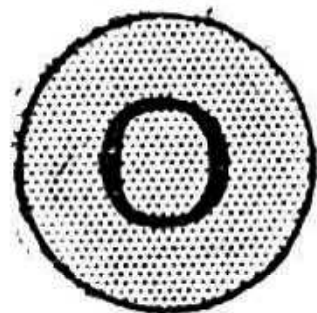
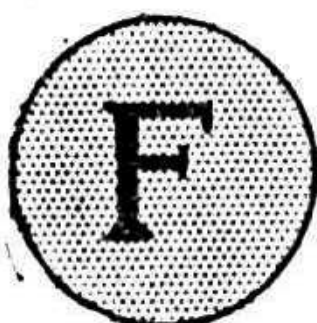
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"He won't bunk," said Willy confidently. "He knows my voice, and the way he obeys me is startling. He'll even come when I whistle him! We shan't stay here long—we'll go home by the village, and buy some nuts and things. And while we're there we might as well have a feed at the tuck shop."

Chubby Heath brightened up.

"Jolly good!" he said approvingly. "I didn't know you had that scheme in mind. Oh, but wait a minute! I'm broke!"

"That doesn't matter."

"But you're broke, too," said Heath.

"Don't worry—I've wangled six bob out of Ted," said Willy. "We shall have quite

Extraordinarily enough, the squirrel turned its head and looked at Willy. Then, running nimbly, he came over the moor, gave one leap, and perched himself on his master's shoulder.

"Well, I'm blessed!" said Chubby, staring.

"And it's all done by kindness!" grinned Willy. "By the time I've finished Septimus' education he'll be worth quids! You watch him now!"

The squirrel was again allowed to go, and Willy waited until he had wandered fully twenty yards off. Then the fag gave two or three sharp whistles.

Septimus responded on the instant, running

up and leaping on to Willy's shoulder as before.

"It's marvellous!" said Chubby. "I never knew a squirrel could be trained like that! Isn't it time we were going?" he added carelessly. "It'll soon be tea-time, you know—"

"Don't you be in such a hurry!" interrupted Willy. "I want to teach Septimus to jump up from the ground, and walk into my pocket at the word. It won't take him long to learn."

Considering Willy's energetic nature, he was surprisingly patient. Again and again he picked the squirrel up, and placed it in his pocket—uttering the one word, "Pocket," time after time.

And Septimus almost seemed to understand. The lesson lasted about twenty minutes, and then Willy allowed his little pet to wander off. But the squirrel had hardly taken ten yards when it suddenly leapt sideways. A big rabbit had appeared from a burrow, and it streaked away over the moor like a flash.

Septimus was probably plucky enough; but for some reason he took fright on this occasion. He raced off like the wind, and all Willy's whistles and shouts were of no avail.

"Quick—we'll lose him!" gasped Willy desperately.

They hurried off in chase; but Septimus practically left them standing. The squirrel was making a bee-line for the gaunt, sombre bulk of the old ruined mill, which stood near by.

Most of the St. Frank's juniors knew the old mill well. It was one of the local landmarks, and the fellows had had more than one adventure in connection with it.

Septimus leapt at the rotting woodwork, and streaked upwards with astonishing speed. And he didn't stop until he had reached the very top. There he sat, perched on a little ledge, at the highest possible point.

"Come down, you little beggar!" yelled Willy.

But Septimus commenced cleaning himself with perfect composure. He was safely out of reach, and he meant to take full advantage of his superior position.

"What did I tell you?" grunted Chubby. "You've lost him now! We might have to wait hours before he comes down. What the dickens are you going to do?"

"I'll soon show you," said Willy grimly. "I'm going up to capture the little rotter! I've a good mind to make him go without his tea for this."

Handforth minor entered the mill, and climbed up the rotting ladder to the first floor. He knew that there were similar ladders leading upwards from floor to floor—right to the very summit of the ruin. Once at the top, he would easily be able to get outside on to the ledge, and entice Septimus to his hand. Willy thought nothing of the

possible danger. He was one of the most reckless youngsters in the school.

But Handforth minor didn't reach the top.

He mounted from floor to floor, and at last only the topmost compartment was above him. The last ladder to climb was in a bad state of decay, and Willy mounted cautiously.

He had nearly reached the top, when he came to a dead halt. He felt chilled to the marrow. His colour fled, and he was absolutely stricken stiff with abrupt fear.

For, from the black opening above, something had appeared—a hairy arm and a clutching hand, with long, hairy fingers!

CHAPTER V.

THE MYSTERIOUS HAND.



WILLY HANDFORTH dropped with a thud.

Without knowing it, his fingers had lost their grip. He struck the rotted boards, and nearly went clean through the floor. One glance upwards he took, but no more.

The hand was still there—reaching even lower, with the fingers moving about in a horrifying way.

"Oh, my goodness!" breathed Willy hoarsely.

Fear seized him—blind, unreasoning terror. Willy was one of the pluckiest juniors imaginable, and he would face any danger of a tangible kind without flinching. But there was something ghastly about this mysterious, hairy hand—something weird and uncanny.

Willy couldn't have stayed in that place if he had wanted to. His own will-power had gone. Terror possessed him, and he literally tumbled down from floor to floor as though demons were chasing him.

It was a wonder he reached the ground in safety. Half a dozen times during that headlong descent he was within an inch of grave injury. But somehow he got to the bottom fairly whole. He was panting hard from his exertions, but the exercise had caused no flush upon his cheeks.

He was as pale as a ghost, and there were beads of cold perspiration on his forehead. The fag simply reeled out of the doorway, and clung there, endeavouring to regain his composure.

He had entered the mill without a thought of danger—taking it for granted that the old place was empty and deserted. But that mysterious arm on the top floor, reaching downwards so suggestively, struck a chill into him.

Chubby Heath came up curiously.

"What's the idea?" he asked. "Septimus

is still up there. I've been watching for you— Hallo! What the—"

Chubby stared at Willy with sudden apprehension. There was no mistaking the signs on Willy's face. The other fag felt his heart beating more rapidly, and he caught his breath in.

"What's wrong?" he gasped.

"Let's—let's get away from here!" muttered Willy huskily.

He dragged Chubby Heath with him, and they raced into the open until they were fully two hundred yards away from the mill. Willy breathed more freely now, and some of his composure returned. Chubby was looking at him with mingled fear and astonishment.

"You're scared!" said Heath, with slight disdain.

"Scared?" repeated Willy. "Yes, by jingo, I was! Scared stiff! Scared into a jelly! It takes a lot to frighten me, old son, but I had the wind up properly five minutes ago."

"But what the dickens—"

"I'd got as far as the top ladder, and I climbed it," exclaimed Handforth minor, with a slight shudder. "There's only that one floor above, as you know. I was just on the point of going through the trap-door when a hand came down—"

"A hand?" gasped Chubby.

"A horrible-looking arm," said Willy. "All covered with hair, and with crooked, clutching fingers!"

"Great Scott!"

"It took me all of a heap—I was just frozen stiff for a tick," muttered Willy. "I'm not a funk, Chubby—you know that. I'll fight a dozen if necessary, but this thing—this—"

He broke off, and gave a slight shiver.

Chubby Heath was looking at him nervously. Chubby had seen nothing. But Willy's condition, and his graphic words, almost caused the other fag to lose his own nerve. But he soon pulled himself together.

"You've been dreaming!" he said at length.

"Look here—"

"You must have imagined it," went on Chubby. "This mill isn't haunted! How could there be a hairy hand up there? Didn't you see a face, or anything?"

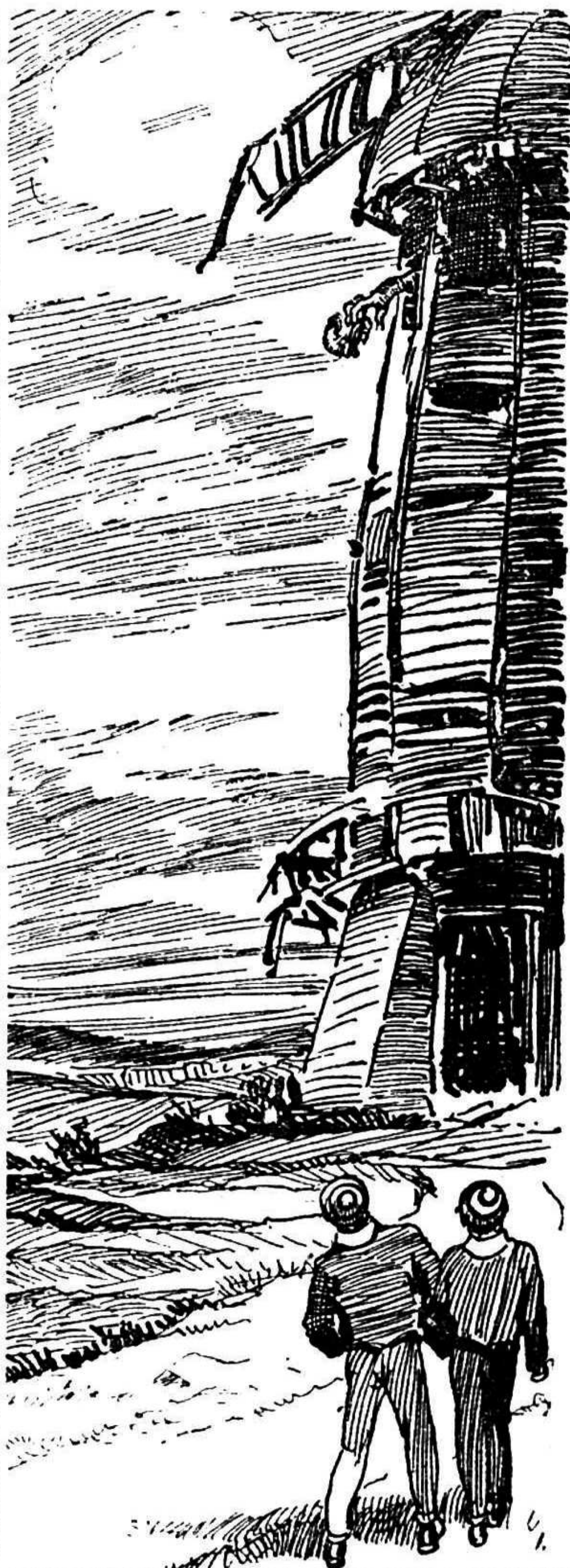
Willy made no reply for the moment. He suddenly clutched at Chubby's arm, and pointed upwards.

"Look!" he muttered tensely.

Septimus was making a few investigations. He had left his topmost perch, and had come down to the little window-sill of that top storey. There was no window now—only an opening.

And as the two fags looked upwards, something came outwards—something long, hairy, and mysterious. It seized Septimus, and pulled him inside.

Willy blinked. The thing had gone.



And as the two fags looked upwards something came outwards—something long, hairy and mysterious. It seized Septimus, and pulled him inside.

"Did you see that?" he asked steadily. Chubby Heath seemed to swallow something.

"Let's—let's get away!" he muttered, his voice rising slightly with terror. "There's something awful up there—something absolutely unearthly. It—it might come down if we stay here—"

"Keep your hair on!" interrupted Willy. "No need to get into a panic. The best thing we can do is to shoot back to the school, and tell somebody. I'm feeling queer, I can give you my word!"

As the two fags hurried towards the road, they found it quite impossible to refrain from glancing over their shoulders every now and again. They had a dread that some ghastly, misshapen monster would pounce down upon them and capture them. Their one thought was to get as far away as they could, as quickly as possible.

Even Septimus was forgotten in the gravity of the situation. Willy hated a mystery, and he was determined to find out what that thing was at the top of the mill.

The two fags arrived at St. Frank's breathless. Football practice was over, and most of the juniors had changed into their ordinary Etons. Handforth and Co. and Pitt and Grey were talking in a group.

"Better tell these chaps first," said Willy grimly.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MYSTERY OF THE OLD MILL.



REGGIE PITT looked at the two fags keenly.

"Why this thushness, O youthful ones?" he asked. "I may be wrong, but you both look as though you've seen a few

apparitions. There's a scared look on both your faces."

"Don't talk too loud," said Willy. "I want your advice, Pitt. No, it's not a joke—I'm in earnest."

Pitt became grave.

"Let's have it!" he said briefly.

"Look here, Willy, my lad, if you're trying to spoof us—" began Handforth.

"Hold on a minute, old man," interrupted Willy. "I'm serious—deadly serious. I thought about going straight to Mr. Stokes, but I'll tell Pitt first, and get his advice."

In a few brief, concise sentences, Willy explained all the circumstances. The Fourth-Formers listened to him with open scepticism. Their very expressions proved that they discredited the story.

"What rot!" growled Handforth. "A hairy arm? A clutching hand? You've been seeing visions, or something! I always thought you were a level-headed chap—"

"So he is," broke in Chubby Heath. "I didn't believe him, either—at first. But I

saw the thing with my own eyes. We couldn't both be mistaken, could we?"

"I expect you saw something; but it was probably the arm of a tramp, or some such gentleman," said Jack Grey. "Anyhow, there's no need to tell Mr. Stokes. What do you say, Reggie?"

"Not a bit; but I don't mind admitting I'm keen," replied the Fourth skipper. "I think we'd better go along and have a look for ourselves. We'll take a few sticks with us, in case of trouble."

Willy looked doubtful.

"I think we'd better tell Mr. Stokes," he said dubiously.

"Wait until we know something more definite," replied Pitt. "I shouldn't think much harm could come to us—there's safety in numbers. There's plenty of daylight left yet."

Without any further delay, the juniors hurried off to the moor. Willy and Chubby Heath were feeling much more comfortable in the presence of the five Fourth-Formers. For even Willy, for all his coolness and pluck, felt a bit shaky at the prospect of entering the old mill again.

The sky was so overcast that a premature gloom had descended over the moor by the time the juniors arrived. The ruined mill, gaunt and forlorn, stood out sharply against the sky-line. During the summer months the old place was singularly picturesque. But, amid the drabness of approaching winter, the ruin was positively repellant and ugly.

"Not a very cheerful sight," said Pitt. "Who's going in first?"

There were no volunteers.

"All right—leave it to me," said Reggie. "You fellows had better come in—no lagging behind. We can't come to any harm—there are seven of us. Might as well get this mystery settled at once."

In spite of himself, Pitt was feeling a little nervous as he led the way into the mill. He couldn't believe that it was the influence of Willy's story.

There seemed to be something in the mill itself—something in the atmosphere—which struck a chill into these juniors.

At last they reached the second floor from the top. It was here that Willy had come into close contact with the mysterious hand. The usually plucky fag was looking quite pale.

"Don't go up!" he muttered huskily.

"We're not backing out now!" replied Pitt, between his teeth.

He certainly felt like doing so. But such a course would have been weak. With a sudden resolve he leapt at the ladder, and forced his way through the opening on to the upper floor.

He vanished, there was a scuffle, and then dead silence.

"Reggie!" muttered Jack Grey.

A soft laugh sounded above.

"It's all right, you chaps—come up!" called Pitt. "There's nothing here—except dust and rubbish. I slipped just now. Hope I didn't scare you! Come on—all clear!"

Pitt's confident tone gave the others courage. One by one, they mounted the ladder and found themselves on the top floor. Willy Handforth was among the first, and his major was close behind.

"Well, where's your hairy hand?" grinned Reggie.

Willy looked round, and compressed his lips. There was nothing whatever uncanny or mysterious about this top floor. A fair amount of light came in through the window, revealing an untidy litter of old rubbish in the corners. But there wasn't an inch of space where an intruder could be hidden.

"There's Septimus!" said Chubby Heath suddenly.

"Who?" asked Grey.

"My squirrel!" exclaimed Willy. "Well, I'm blessed!"

Septimus the squirrel was calmly taking his rest in a corner, and he eyed the invaders without any particular interest. Willy picked the little animal up and caressed it.

"Queer!" he muttered.

"Rot!" said Handforth. "There's nothing queer about it. You kids must have got a fit of the nerves, and you saw things that didn't really exist. It just shows what the imagination can do when you let it run loose!"

Reggie Pitt chuckled.

"I'm not sure that we haven't been spoofed," he said drily. "Look here, you fags, did you do this on purpose to fool us? Did you lure us out here just to have the laugh—"

"Not likely!" snorted Willy. "If we want to jape the Fourth we'll get up a better wheeze than this. No, we saw that hairy arm—honour bright! I don't pretend to understand it, but—"

"Rats!" growled his major. "You think you saw an arm—that's all. I always thought you were a level-headed kid. I'm surprised at you. Getting funky, and imagining—"

"It wasn't imagination!" roared Willy. "Chubby can prove it! He saw that arm just as plainly as I did. Didn't you, Chubby?"

Willy turned fiercely upon the other fag. But Chubby Heath, to his dismay, looked rather shamefaced.

"Blessed if I know," he said awkwardly. "I thought I saw something, but I must have been mistaken. You were so jolly white about the gills that you put the wind up me. It was just your nerves!"

CHAPTER VII.
WILLY'S CHALLENGE.



REGINALD PITT coughed.

"Ahem! Suppose we drop the subject?" he suggested discreetly. "We'll buzz off back to the school. If we hurry we

shall—"

"Wait a minute!" interrupted Willy grimly. "You needn't think you're going to drop the thing like this. Why, you're accusing me of getting scared over shadows like a giddy infant!"

"Exactly!" said his major, with relish.

"Then you're wrong!" roared Willy. "Chubby didn't come in here with me; he stayed outside all the time. You—you rotter!" he added, turning on Chubby Heath indignantly. "You know as well as I do that we both saw that hand come out through the window and grab Septimus!"

The other fag backed away.

"It—it may have been a bird, or something," he said feebly.

"It may have been an elephant—but it wasn't!" snorted Willy. "It was a hand—a beastly-looking, hairy hand. And I saw it at close quarters as I was trying to get up into this attic. You other fellows can scoff all you like, but I'll stick to my story."

"And we'll stick to our opinion!" grinned Jack Grey.

"Don't you believe me?" hooted Willy, quivering with indignation.

"We believe that you think you saw something, but that's all it amounts to," said Reggie Pitt gently. "Don't get so touchy, my lad. Anybody's liable to imagine things. The loneliness of the mill, the silence, the dismal surroundings—all these things combined put you into a nervous condition. And when you were climbing up that ladder—"

"When I was climbing up that ladder I saw a hairy arm that didn't exist?" sneered Willy. "I saw a hand that wasn't there! What's the good of fooling yourselves like this? That hand was only a foot from my head, and I saw it as plainly as I can see your faces!"

But his listeners were still sceptical.

"What's the good of keeping up this piffle?" growled Edward Oswald. "I'm surprised at you, Willy. In fact, I'm disappointed. I never knew you were such a frightened young ass—"

"Frightened!" snorted Willy.

"Yes, frightened!" repeated his major. "Fancy being such a baby as to imagine—"

"Baby!" gasped Willy, horrified.

"That's what I said—baby!" said Handforth firmly. "Nobody but a baby would get scared over their own giddy imaginations. It's about time you went back into the infants!"

Willy tried hard to speak, but failed. His face went red, his mouth worked, but only a few gurgles escaped him. He stood there, fighting to control himself. The others watched, grinning.

"Well, let's get back to tea," suggested Church casually.

"Tea!" choked Willy, with an effort. "Who cares about tea? I've been accused of being a baby—a funk! You chaps are jolly brave, ain't you? I'll bet you wouldn't dare to come back here after dark, and climb up into this attic!"

"We've got something better to do!" sneered Handforth.

"Yah! Funk!" said his minor contemptuously.

Handforth started.

"Look here, you little rotter—" he began.

"Peace, children—peace!" interrupted Reggie soothingly. "There's no need to make a mountain out of a mole-hill. As for coming back here after dark, there's no object in it—"

"Of course not!" interrupted Willy bitterly. "I knew you'd back out of it. I knew you wouldn't dare to accept the challenge. You're all as bold as brass now, and ready enough to accuse me of being a baby. But you wouldn't dare to enter this place after dark."

"Wouldn't dare?" roared Church hotly.

"No, you wouldn't!"

"Look here, Handy, why don't you keep your mincr in order?" demanded McClure fiercely. "We're not going to stand this—"

"Leave him to me!" interrupted Handforth curtly. "We'll show him whether we're afraid of his fatheaded challenge or not! We'll all come back here at eight o'clock—when it's pitch-dark. And I'll be the first one to climb up into this haunted attic!"

"Well said, Horatius!" grinned Pitt. "But, my dear ass, can't you see that you've bitten the bait? You can come up here with pleasure, but Jack and I have got an appointment in the laboratory—"

"Appointments are easy!" sneered Willy, with heavy sarcasm.

Pitt grinned good-naturedly.

"Oh, all right!" he said resignedly. "Life's too short for these arguments. Eight o'clock, then—I'll be ready. But when we get back, my son, I shall expect you to keep quiet. No more taunts, and no more challenges!"

Somehow Willy was strangely dissatisfied. Now that he had goaded the Fourth-Formers to accept the challenge, he realised that the whole affair was somewhat childish. He was actually forcing the juniors to pay a second visit to the mill, although they didn't really want to come. However, it was too late to back out, and the arrangement stood.

Willy felt uncomfortable about the whole business. But, as events were destined to turn out, he needn't have been so concerned. That second visit was going to be very interesting indeed.

CHAPTER VIII.

T.T.'S BOMBHELL.



BY the time the little party came in sight of the Triangle gates the incident of the "hairy arm" had become a kind of joke, and Willy Handforth was chipped un-

mercifully.

He even began to ask himself if he hadn't after all allowed his imagination to run riot? But when he remembered that arm reaching down at him, he shook his head firmly. He was a level-headed youngster, and he knew perfectly well that that arm had been tangible.

He was keen, too, upon solving the little problem. Not that a second visit to the mill, after dark, would have much effect in this direction. Willy badly wanted to think of some reasonable solution.

The little group reached the gates, and found Timothy Tucker peering searchingly down the lane. It was nearly tea-time now, and the short November afternoon was drawing in. Dusk was upon the countryside, with a drab, chilly mist spreading over the meadows.

"Looking for somebody?" asked Handforth bluntly.

"Precisely, my dear sir—precisely!" replied T.T., blinking. "I am in momentary hope of welcoming the arrival of a relative."

"He has my sympathy," remarked Pitt.

"Dear me! I trust you are not attempting to be facetious at my expense?" said Tucker severely. "Let me inform you, my dear sir, that my relative is a most distinguished member of society. Quite so! A most distinguished member of society!"

"Is he coming by train?" asked Grey.

"That is so!" replied T.T. "My uncle is a prominent scientist, my dear sir. A prominent scientist. Have you not heard of Professor Sylvester Tucker? Have you not read his wonderful volumes on the solar system, and the constellations of Outer Space?"

Handforth grunted.

"We've got this giddy lunatic here, and now it seems that we've got to have his uncle," he said indignantly. "Look here, Tucker my son—as soon as your uncle comes you'd better hide him away somewhere until it's time for his exit. I suppose he's going back by the last train?"

Timothy Tucker put his head on one side and blinked.

"Not at all!" he replied amiably. "You

are suffering from a misapprehension, my dear Handforth. Did you not know that Professor Sylvester Tucker has accepted an appointment in this vast seat of learning as a master of science?"

Reginald Pitt tottered slightly.

"A master?" he repeated faintly.

"Your uncle?"

"Absolutely, my dear sir!" beamed Tucker.

"Is—is he anything like you?" asked Handforth hoarsely.

"It has been said that my Uncle Sylvester is a striking personality," replied T.T. "My own father has frequently noted that I take after my uncle in very many respects. To-day, comrades, is a great and glorious landmark in the history of St. Frank's——"

"Rats!" interrupted Church. "You can't fool us like this, you ass! St. Frank's isn't an asylum! They wouldn't have your potty uncle here as a Science master. Tell us something else!"

"Do you doubt me?" demanded Tucker, frigidly. "Good gracious! Is it possible that my word is flouted? How dare you! Dear, dear, dear! This is most distressing—most lamentable! Quite so—most lamentable! Do you realise that——"

"We realise that one Tucker is quite enough," interrupted Pitt grimly. "With all due respect to your uncle, old man, I don't think we could stand him at St. Frank's. If there are any more at home like you, they'd better stay there!"

Timothy Tucker looked aggrieved.

"I detect a certain uncomplimentary element in this discourse," he said stiffly. "Allow me to inform you, my dear Pitt, that Professor Sylvester Tucker is one of the world's greatest men. He will reside in the Modern House, thereby enhancing that section of the school——"

"Who's talking about the Modern House?" demanded John Busterfield Boots, striding up out of the gloom. "Hallo! What's this? Is Tucker giving one of his open-air lectures?"

T.T. turned, and regarded the newcomer severely.

"I was just saying, my dear sir, that my uncle is due to arrive," he explained. "My uncle is expected at any moment——"

"And he's going into the Modern House," grinned Pitt. "That's one consolation, anyhow. According to T.T., his giddy uncle has been appointed science master——"

"Tucker's uncle!" roared Boots indignantly. "We won't have him!"

"Never!" agreed Bob Christine, from the background.

Within two minutes a regular indignation meeting was in progress. This was the first news that had leaked out concerning Timothy Tucker's uncle. And scarcely any of the juniors would believe the story.

"It's all rot!" said Tommy Watson.

"Tucker's only trying to be funny. I don't even believe he's got an uncle! You can't fool me with a fatheaded story like that!"

"Begad! I'm inclined to agree, dear old fellow!" said Tregellis-West, adjusting his pincenez and nodding. "It would be frightfully horrid to have a second Tucker in the place—it would, really! I expect the dear old boy is sufferin' from delusions."

A slim figure came across the Triangle from the direction of the Modern House, and the juniors fell into respectful silence as they recognised the new arrival as Mr. Stockdale, the housemaster.

"Have any of you juniors seen a strange gentleman within the last hour?" he asked anxiously. "Our new science master should have arrived by the late afternoon train, and his non-appearance is most disturbing. His telegram was quite explicit."

"New science master, sir?" asked Handforth tensely.

"Yes—Professor Sylvester Tucker," replied Mr. Stockdale.

The juniors looked at one another blankly. Then it was true! The new science master was, indeed, an uncle of the one and only T. T.!

CHAPTER IX.

THE MYSTERY SOLVED.



"BLESSED if I know what things are coming to now-a-days."

Handforth spoke grumbly, as he helped himself to some strawberry jam. Tea was in full swing in Study D, and the little apartment was quite warm and cosy and bright. For once the celebrated chums were at peace.

"Anything particularly wrong?" asked Church, looking up.

"Well, it's a bit thick about this uncle of Tucker's, isn't it?" growled Handforth. "By George! If Professor Tucker is anything like his nephew he'll be scragged up hill and down dale! We can't stand two of 'em about the place!"

McClure grinned.

"There's no need to get excited about it," he said. "For all we know, Professor Tucker may be quite a decent sort of chap——"

"Who's getting excited?" demanded Handforth, glaring.

"All right—keep your hair on!" interrupted McClure. "We won't argue. But wouldn't it be better to wait until we see the merchant? After all, he's a distinguished professor, and he's one of the most enthusiastic astronomers in the country."

"Who told you that?" asked Handy.

"Nobody."

"Then how the dickens do you know?"

"I looked him up in one of the reference books in the library," replied McClure.

"Professor Tucker has got about ten letters after his name, and he seems to be a terribly clever old chap. And if he's anything like T. T., all the better."

"All the better?" repeated Handforth, staring.

"We can rag him to our hearts' content," said McClure. "It'll give the science lesson a bit of an interest. Just think how we can pull the professor's giddy leg! It'll be great fun!"

Handforth stirred his tea thoughtfully.

"Rubbish!" he said gruffly. "It's a pity you haven't got room in your head for more serious thought, my lad! But it's no good saying anything further until the professor arrives. If he's anything like T. T., all the better. We can pull his leg!"

Church and McClure stared.

"But didn't you just say—" began Church.

"We shall be able to have some sport with the old boy," went on Handforth calmly. "But let's change the subject. Who's seen the 'Gazette'? I want to look up the League fixtures. I only bought the paper this afternoon, and it's gone already! If I leave anything about in this study for two minutes you idiots throw it away, or burn it, or—"

"What's that sticking out of your pocket?" asked Church tartly.

"My pocket?" repeated Handforth. "Oh, yes! It's a good thing I kept it there, or goodness knows what would have happened to it!"

He pulled the "Bannington Gazette" out of his pocket, and spread the newspaper on the table, and, regardless of the fact that it enveloped the jam, the butter, and various other dishes.

"It'll be rather a good idea to see the League match on Saturday," went on Handforth. "We haven't got a fixture ourselves, worse luck, so— Hallo! What's this?"

He suddenly bent over the paper, and his attention became fixed. He read for a few moments and then looked up.

"There's a lunatic escaped from the Helmsford Asylum," he announced. "Listen to this: 'Lunatic At large!—We learn that one of the inmates of the Helmsford Asylum escaped from custody last night, and is now roaming in the neighbourhood. No nervousness need be entertained, however, for the unfortunate man is quite inoffensive. He is elderly, bearded, and remarkably hairy. While being quite rational at most times, he suffers from the delusion that he is an inmate of the Zoo, and will occasionally walk on all fours. It is hoped that the lunatic will be recaptured very shortly. It has been reported that the man was seen on Bannington Moor, but this report has not yet been confirmed—'"

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Church excitedly.

"Don't interrupt!" exclaimed Handforth,

frowning. "This old chap comes of a good family, and they're pretty anxious about him. In fact, they've offered ten pounds reward for any information."

"Ten quid!" yelled Church. "Then it's ours!"

"Ours!" repeated Handforth and McClure.

"Don't you understand?" asked Church keenly. "What about the old mill? Didn't Willy get a scare this afternoon? He said he saw a hairy arm—"

"Great pip!" ejaculated Handforth, sitting up in his chair. "You—you mean that the lunatic was hiding in the mill, and my minor accidentally stumbled upon him?"

"Yes, of course," said Church. "And while Willy and Chubby came to fetch us, the lunatic bunked. He's in the old mill still, I expect—he was probably watching us all the time. We've only got to capture him, and we'll get that tenner!"

Handforth looked rather flushed.

"It's a jolly good thing I'm a bit of a detective!" he said firmly. "This only shows what a trained mind can do! As soon as I saw this report I jumped to the one inevitable conclusion."

"Why, you rotter, I did the jumping!" roared Church.

"Just a coincidence!" said Handforth calmly. "The same idea leapt into my own head at the exact same second! Look here, we'd better tell the other chaps, and we'll rush off at once."

And, without any loss of time, Pitt and Grey were fetched in—to say nothing of Willy Handforth and Chubby Heath. They heard about the escaped lunatic, and were duly impressed.

"Looks significant, anyway," said Pitt thoughtfully.

"What did I tell you?" demanded Willy. "Perhaps you'll beg my pardon now, you rotters! It wasn't my imagination at all—that lunatic was in the mill all the time!"

"He's there still!" declared Handforth.

"That doesn't follow in the least," said Pitt, shaking his head. "It's possible, of course, but the man may be miles away by this time. Still, we'll go along and have a look."

"Good!" said Edward Oswald. "Come on!"

"No need for such hurry," declared Reggie. "What a chap you are for headlong action, Handy! If this lunatic has made the mill his headquarters, he'll be there all the evening. Let's give him time to settle down for the night. We'll go along after prep."

"But he may not be there at all," argued Chubby Heath.

"In that case, it's no good going," replied Pitt. "We can't do better than wait a bit. More haste, less speed, you know. Learn to take things quietly, and you'll live to be a hundred!"

CHAPTER X.

THE ABSENT-MINDED PROFESSOR.



BANNINGTON STATION was all bustle and hurry as the early evening express from

London pulled up with a clatter of brakes against the platform. On the other side

stood the local train, which branched off to Bellton and Caistowe, and a few unimportant places beyond.

The guard came along the express, and briskly opened the door of a first-class compartment.

"Here we are, sir!" he announced, in crisp tones. "Bannington—change here for the branch line. You'll find the train waiting on the other platform."

The compartment had one solitary occupant, and this individual looked at the guard in a vacant, uncomprehending kind of way. He was quite a distinguished-looking gentleman.

Not more than fifty years of age, he, nevertheless, carried himself as a much more elderly man. He was tall, thin, with stooping shoulders. His clean-shaven face was rather sallow, and he was unfortunate enough to possess prominent teeth. But the dome of his forehead amply compensated for the shortcomings of his other features. It was the forehead of a thinker—a man of unusual brain capacity. Huge horn-rimmed spectacles were perched upon his nose, and the lenses were almost like plate-glass.

This remarkable gentleman was attired in a somewhat seedy frock-coat and decidedly baggy trousers. His tie was large and untidily fastened, and his handkerchief was drooping out of one of his pockets.

"Go away!" he said testily.

"This is Bannington, sir——"

"Good gracious! Am I to be bothered and interrupted in this way?" demanded the old gentleman, speaking in a curiously high tone of voice. "How dare you, sir? Who are you, anyway?"

"I'm the guard, sir."

"The guard? What guard?"

"The guard of the train, sir!"

"Train?" said the traveller. "The train? What in the name of wonder—— Upon my soul! To be sure! The train? I had quite forgotten! Most remarkable, but I had quite forgotten! So you, sir, are the guard? Very interesting—very illuminating."

He beamed upon the guard with great amiability. The far-away expression had left his eyes, and he had come to earth. Professor Sylvester Tucker was a singularly absent-minded gentleman, as the guard had been informed at Victoria—where one of the professor's servants had whispered a few private words into the official's ear.

"This is where you change, sir," hinted the guard.

"Good Heavens!" ejaculated the professor. "Change? But, my good man, I cannot

possibly change in a railway carriage! Moreover, my wardrobe is not at hand——"

"You change trains, sir," said the guard patiently.

"Trains? Ah, to be sure!" beamed Professor Tucker. "Good gracious me, why didn't you say so before? Splendid—splendid! I am greatly in your debt, my good fellow."

The professor bustled out of the compartment with alacrity, and was duly marshalled across the platform by the guard, and safely deposited into the local train. The guard closed the door, and stood there expectantly.

"All right, now, sir," he said, touching his cap. "You get out at the next station—the first stop. I've asked the local guard to give you a little reminder."

"Splendid!" said Professor Tucker. "Very thoughtful of you, my friend—very thoughtful, indeed! Now, let me see. There was something I had to do. I distinctly remember there was something I had to do."

The professor puckered his learned brow, and cocked his head on one side thoughtfully. But it was the guard who gave him the necessary reminder. The official unobtrusively scratched one of his palms.

"Good gracious, of course!" gasped the professor. "A tip! How ridiculous! I declare I am getting quite absent-minded!"

He pulled a handful of silver out of his pocket, and was on the point of giving the guard the whole pile, when he recalled himself with a start. He picked out two half-crowns, and delivered them into the itching palm of the gratified guard, who thereupon sped back to his own charge.

"Now, where did I leave my book?" muttered the professor anxiously. "Good gracious! Without that book I am lost—absolutely lost! This is most lamentable—Ah! Splendid!"

He discovered that the book was on his lap all the time. He adjusted his spectacles, and became immersed once again—entirely oblivious to all his surroundings. The book was an absorbing treatise on astronomy, the professor's pet hobby.

In the meantime, various languid railway officials thought it about time to couple the engine on to the local train, and they set about this task with a free-and-easy listlessness which was educating to watch.

The engine-driver, however, apparently forgot himself, for he backed the iron steed so energetically into the train that the latter gave a sickly, convulsive jolt along its entire length.

Professor Sylvester Tucker, calmly sitting in his first-class compartment, was nearly knocked out of his seat. His book went flying, his hand-valise came tumbling from the rack, and the professor himself started up with a little gasp.

"Upon my soul!" he ejaculated. "These trains are remarkably fast! Where's the porter? Where's the guard! This is outrageous! Not a soul here to assist me?"

The professor, labouring under the sad

delusion that he had reached Bellton, bustled out of the train and alighted on the platform. Unfortunately the guard was not at hand, being, in fact, at the other end of the train engaged in a little chat with the signalman on the subject of broccoli and various other winter greens.

And Professor Tucker, toddling to the exit, passed out unchallenged, the ticket-collector having sauntered into the parcels office to indulge in a few whiffs of his pipe. This was just as well, for the absent-minded professor had left his ticket within the pages of his book, which he had completely forgotten in the bustle of alighting from the train.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LOST SHEEP.



PROFESSOR SYLVESTER TUCKER looked round him abstractedly.

He was in Bannington High Street, having wandered into this thoroughfare from the station so absent-mindedly that he hadn't the faintest idea where he was, or why he was there.

But with a start he suddenly realised that he was in a perfectly strange street, unaccompanied, and carrying a small leather valise in one hand and an overcoat on his other arm.

"Extraordinary!" muttered the professor, frowning deeply. "What on earth am I doing here? What is this place? Good gracious! Why doesn't somebody come to my assistance?"

He spoke rather indignantly, and raised a peremptory hand to a perfect stranger who happened to be passing.

"One moment, sir!" exclaimed the professor. "One moment! Be good enough to tell me where I am!"

The other stopped and regarded the professor curiously.

"Why, you be in Bannington High Street, sir," he replied.

"Bannington High Street!" repeated the scientist. "Ridiculous! Why should I be in Bannington High Street? And, if it comes to that, what is Bannington High Street?"

The other man was a youthful rustic, and he scratched his head.

"I'm sure I dunno, sir," he replied vaguely. "Maybe you'll be wantin' to go

somewhere? Like as not I can set ye on the right road."

Professor Tucker beamed.

"A splendid idea!" he replied affably. "Yes, to be sure, a remarkably fine suggestion. I shall be greatly obliged if you will assist me."

"Where'll you be wantin' to go, sir?" asked the youth.

"Go?" repeated the professor, a startled expression creeping into his face. "Good Heavens! That's awkward—that's decidedly awkward! Now where do I want to go?"

He looked at the other in consternation.

"Naturally I desire to go somewhere," he went on, adjusting his spectacles. "When I left home to-day I undoubtedly intended reaching some positive destination. But for the life of me I can't remember where it is! This is most lamentable!"

The rustic stood looking on while Professor Tucker paced up and down, thoughtfully rubbing his chin. The situation was awkward. Professor Sylvester Tucker was in Bannington, and he had no recollection as to why he should be in this district at all.

"Let me think—let me think!" he murmured, pausing and pressing his forehead. "I distinctly remember sending a telegram. Yes, I certainly sent a telegram—Why, yes! To a school! Yes, it was to a school! Now, why did I send a telegram to a school?"

"Tain't no good askin' me, sir," said the rustic. "The only big school round these parts be the grammar school—unless you be thinkin' of St. Frank's College, over at Bellton way—"

"Ah! St. Frank's College!" interrupted the professor triumphantly. "How ridiculous! Of course—of course! St. Frank's College is undoubtedly my destination! And this, of course, is Bellton?"

"No, sir—this be Bannington," said the other. "Bellton be straight along this road; you can't go wrong if you keep straight. And when you get there anybody'll tell ye where the big school is."

Professor Tucker beamed again.

"My gratitude is overwhelming," he declared. "Thank you, my dear sir—thank you exceedingly for your good offices! Straight along, eh? Splendid! No instructions could possibly be simpler!"

He toddled off contentedly, and the rustic went on his way, still greatly puzzled. If the youth had had his wits about him, he would have advised the professor to hire a taxicab. But this obvious thought didn't occur to him.

And thus the absent-minded professor wandered through Bannington like a lost sheep and naturally took the wrong road. His informer had told him to keep straight, and he kept straight.

And as a direct result of this the professor found himself making for the moor.

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He had taken the moorland road instead of the direct highway to Bell-ton. But he didn't seem to mind in the least. He walked on briskly, his thoughts entirely in the air.

The evening had turned out quite fine, after all. Except for the low-lying mist, the air was clear, and the stars were shining with unusual brilliance. Once or twice a November comet blazed across the sky, and on these occasions the professor became strangely excited.

In fact, by the time he was fairly on the moor he was lost entirely amid the stars, and St. Frank's meant nothing to him. It didn't matter to him in the slightest where he walked or which direction he took.

Indeed, but for the fact that he caught sight of the old ruined mill, he might have walked right across the moor and on to the far-flung downs beyond. Professor Tucker had been known to wander about for eight hours at a stretch, and on more than one occasion he had been taken into custody by the police for having lost his memory.

He saw the mill sub-consciously at first, but as he grew nearer to it the old ruin took on a certain significance. Bell-ton Wood was looming near, and the high trees were obscuring a few of the professor's choicest stars.

A few comets came in quick succession and the professor was not only annoyed, but positively infuriated. For these comets dropped behind Bellton Wood before he could fully observe them.

"Ridiculous!" he muttered irritably. "What are all these trees doing about here? Why on earth do they plant trees in such a preposterous spot! Ah! This—this building! Most favourable! I have no doubt that I shall be able to obtain an excellent observation-post at the summit!"



Professor Sylvester Tucker is under the impression that he has arrived at Bellton.

Filled with this great idea, he trotted contentedly towards the mill, and entered. It had occurred to him, with a sudden start, that he carried a powerful telescope in his valise. Until this moment he had quite overlooked the fact, and the prospect of studying the stars from a lofty perch thrilled him to the core.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CHEERFUL LUNATIC.



DIFFICULTIES beset the professor at once.

Inside the mill all was dark, and a pause was necessary in order to find some matches. The professor knew he had some,

but after searching his pockets three times he found they were in his hand all the time.

He struck two, and gave a chirrup of delight when he observed the ladder leading upwards. He mounted from floor to floor with ease, overjoyed at the prospect of reaching the high elevation.

It was a remarkable fact that a light was gleaming in the topmost floor, and this rather upset Professor Tucker at first. He stood on the floor below, staring up through the open trapdoor, frowning.

"Absurd!" he muttered. "How on earth can I observe the stars satisfactorily with this ridiculous light? I cannot understand why people are so absurdly thoughtless!"

He climbed the last ladder and entered the tiny space above, a little circular loft with the rafters reaching low down, and with one window to relieve the monotony.

The candle was burning on the floor, and on the other side of it squatted a disreputable-looking individual of unkempt appearance. He was hatless, his clothing was muddy, and he had a wild look about him that anybody but the professor would have instantly noted.

The man was elderly, shaggy with hair, and decidedly grimy. He stood there in a crouching attitude, regarding the new arrival with considerable interest.

"I trust," said the professor, "that I do not intrude? You will permit me to extinguish this light, I have no doubt. I cannot possibly make my observations unless complete darkness prevails."

"Come in, sir—make yourself at home!" said the shaggy individual cheerfully. "You are now in the drawing-room, but if you will allow me I will conduct you at once to the library."

Professor Tucker adjusted his glasses.

"Pray do not trouble," he said impatiently. "I am quite content to stay here—quite content. I have not the honour of your acquaintance, sir, but no matter. There are comets in the sky, and comets will not wait. Under no circumstances can I miss this opportunity."

The professor scarcely troubled to give a second glance at the other man. His thoughts were confined to astronomy, and his immediate surroundings were of little or no importance. He didn't even know that this place was a ruin.

And he certainly had no suspicion that his companion was an escaped lunatic.

For McClure's deduction was perfectly correct. The demented man had adopted the mill as a home, and had been preparing for sleep at the moment of the professor's arrival.

"You don't happen to have a couple of fried eggs about you?" asked the lunatic anxiously. "Fried eggs are my favourite dish, and I am quite famished. If you search your pockets, perhaps——"

"Of course, comets are peculiar phenomena," said the professor. "Occasionally they will blaze across the sky in countless profusion, marking a peculiar disturbance in outer space——"

The professor paused, for his companion was standing directly in front of him and grinning into his face.

"One fried egg would be better than nothing," he said hopefully.

"Fried egg?" repeated Professor Tucker, frowning. "My good sir, I never eat fried eggs! Why do you bother me like this? Cannot you understand that these comets will not wait?"

The lunatic laughed loudly.

"Who are you?" he asked, with the air of a child.

"Who am I?" repeated Professor Tucker. "Who am I? Why, let me see——" He suddenly started. "Good gracious! How extraordinary! Who am I? For the life of me I cannot remember!"

The professor stared at his companion blankly.

"Why, yes, to be sure!" he said testily. "I am Professor Sylvester Tucker, and this is St. Frank's College. I am the new science master. You, no doubt, sir, are the headmaster? Splendid! How are you? Please go away and don't bother me!"

The lunatic chuckled to himself, and a crafty look came into his eyes.

"Professor Sylvester Tucker!" he repeated again and again. "St. Frank's College—science master! Professor Sylvester Tucker!"

He gave one bound to the trapdoor and vanished down the ladder like a monkey. Considering his age he was extraordinarily agile. The professor didn't even know that his late companion had gone.

He was busily taking out his telescope, and in a very short time he had it propped up against the window-sill, and he was soon lost amid the wonders of the night sky.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE NIGHT EXPEDITION.



READY?" asked Willy Handforth crisply.

He bustled into Study D in the Fourth Form passage, and found Handforth and Co. just finishing their prep. Church, to be exact, had finished his completely, and

was doing his best to stay a flow of blood from his nose. Handforth was rubbing his knuckles tenderly.

"Trouble?" asked Willy, grinning.

"Mind your own business!" growled Handforth. "It's like your cheek, coming here and asking questions! You needn't wait—I shan't tell you a word!"

"You needn't—I know!" said Willy. "You've just punched Church on the nose, and you've hurt your giddy knuckles! I expect you caught his teeth first, or had a go at his napper!"

"Then you're wrong!" sneered Handforth. "I didn't touch the fathead! I missed him! It was his silly fault for dodging, so instead of hitting his ear, I bashed my hand against the table!"

"Good!" said Willy. "And I suppose Church's nose started bleeding in sympathy?"

"I slipped, and came a cropper," growled Church. "We're always having trouble in this study. I just happened to mention that it was time we were off, and your major got on the high horse! And only a minute before he was telling me to buck up!"

Willy nodded.

"Yes, I know," he said sympathetically. "The fact is, you chaps don't know how to handle Ted. You're too easy with him. Whenever he gets frisky you ought to push his head straight into a pail of cold water. It's the only way to keep him calm. I suppose it's because the blood rushes straight into his head and finds too much room there."

Handforth slowly turned up his sleeves.

"I don't mind standing a bit of rot from Church and McClure, but I'm blessed if I'm going to be checked by you!" he said fiercely. "Will you go out of this study quietly, or shall I chuck you through the window?"

But the arrival of Reggie Pitt and Jack Grey put a stop to any further violence. Matters were smoothed over, and five minutes later the little party set off on their night expedition.

"I don't suppose it's any good going, but we might as well satisfy ourselves," said Pitt. "And, after all, if there's ten quid to be picked up we'll have a shot at it."

"You'd better leave this entirely to me," said Handforth. "An investigation of this sort ought to be conducted scientifically. All you've got to do is to follow my lead, and the lunatic is bound to be captured. It's purely a matter of deduction and astute investigation."

Reggie Pitt shook his head.

"There's one flaw in the arrangement," he declared. "We can't very well set one lunatic to catch another lunatic. If once you get mixed up with this dotty chap we shan't be able to tell you apart!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Look here——" began Handforth wrathfully.

"So you'd better leave the leadership to me, and peace will be preserved," went on Reggie, quite unmoved. "But we mustn't count our chickens before they're hatched. It's certainly no good having a squabble over a lunatic who might be twenty miles away!"

"The lunatic's nearer than that!" said Church significantly.

It was just as well, perhaps, that Handforth missed the point of the remark. And by the time the moor was reached the juniors were inwardly preparing themselves for the coming ordeal.

They maintained a bold front, but the mill looked very gaunt and forbidding as it stood there, outlined like some ghostly spectre against the night sky. Even if the place proved to be empty, there was something eerie in the investigation.

And although the local newspaper had made it quite clear that the lunatic was harmless, a lunatic is, after all, a person to regard with respect. One never knows when such a gentleman is actually safe. He is always liable to break out in a fresh place, so to speak.

The project, therefore, was not quite so simple and slight as the juniors made themselves believe. And in spite of their laughing tones, they were individually in a rather high state of tension. Their hearts were beating rapidly as they entered the mill.

And even Reggie Pitt felt a curious tingling down his spine as he mounted the rotting ladders, one after the other. As he passed through the trapdoors he could not help picturing a hairy hand coming out at him from the upper blackness.

But all the juniors had prepared themselves with electric torches, and these were kept flashed on to their fullest extent—so there was no shortage of light. Pitt himself, in the lead, flashed his own torch swiftly round each floor as he mounted.

And at last they came to the mysterious attic. Pitt didn't hesitate. It wasn't his nature to hold back at the critical moment. With a quick run, he mounted the ladder, pushed his way through the trapdoor, and flashed the light round. The beam became fixed, and Reggie stared with startled eyes.

"Well, I'm blessed!" he ejaculated softly.

There, sitting at the window on an up-turned attache-case, was a strange-looking old fellow in baggy trousers and seedy frock-coat. Except for the fact that he wasn't very hairy, he undoubtedly answered the description of the missing lunatic.

"What's wrong?" came Gray's voice from below.

"He's here!" said Pitt tensely. "Come on—up you come!"

Pitt leapt into the attic and advanced across the floor. The other juniors swarmed up, joining him. And Professor Sylvester Tucker laid his telescope aside and blinked into the winking torchlights.

"Go away!" he said testily. "I won't be

disturbed now! How dare you interrupt me now? I won't be disturbed? Who are you? What is the meaning of all this ridiculous torchlight display?"

"It's all right, sir—we're friends!" said Pitt soothingly. "We've come here to help you——"

"Indeed!" snapped the professor. "I don't want to be helped! In fact, I absolutely refuse to be helped! Do you understand me? I have never heard of such a thing! Am I to be allowed no peace?"

The juniors exchanged significant glances. The quaint old stranger's aspect was completely matched to his manner. Without the shadow of a doubt, he was the missing lunatic!

CHAPTER XIV.

THE NEW ARRIVAL.



DR. STAFFORD looked up as Phipps discreetly entered his study.

"A gentleman to see you, sir," said Phipps. "Unfortunately, he has no card, but begs me to announce him as Professor Sylvester Tucker."

The headmaster of St. Frank's nodded.

"Show the professor in at once, Phipps," he exclaimed. "I am expecting the gentleman—he is, in fact, somewhat overdue. Bring him straight into my presence."

"Very good, sir!" said Phipps hesitatingly.

Phipps was a perfect servant. As Archie Glenthorne's valet, he was the most tactful individual in the whole school. But in order to serve his young master Phipps was obliged to undertake certain light duties in the Head's household, and the Head himself had come to regard Phipps as an institution.

"Begging your pardon, sir, but might I venture to make a comment?" asked Phipps respectfully.

"By all means. What is it, Phipps?"

"The gentleman is rather peculiar in his manner, sir," replied Phipps, sinking his voice. "Indeed, sir, Professor Tucker is in scarcely a fit condition to be escorted into your presence——"

"Good gracious!" gasped Dr. Stafford. "What do you mean?"

There was such horror in the Head's tone that Phipps almost became hasty.

"I do not mean to imply, sir, that Professor Tucker is an anti-Prohibitionist," he said discreetly. "Not at all, sir. But he has apparently met with some misadventure. He is appallingly muddy, and his general condition of untidiness can only be described as acutely distressing."

The Head smiled slightly.

"Your own views on dress are somewhat exacting, Phipps," he replied. "Professor Tucker is a man of science, and untidiness,

I fear, is one of his weaknesses. And mud in November is difficult to avoid. There is nothing to alarm you, Phipps. Pray escort the professor into my presence at once."

"Very good, sir!" said Phipps evenly.

He vanished, and returned to the hall, expecting to find the visitor still sitting on the chair where he had left him. But even the imperturbable Phipps was startled when he beheld the new arrival calmly and contentedly squatting on the post at the bottom of the balustrade.

"I'm a chimpanzee," he announced cheerfully.

Phipps started back like a roped steer.

"You will have your little joke, sir," he said, retaining his perfect calm with difficulty. "The headmaster awaits you."

The stranger leapt to the floor with a chuckle, and for a few moments wandered round on all-fours, making remarkable sounds from the back of his throat. Then he suddenly seemed to recollect himself, and assumed an upright position.

"Yes, I am Professor Sylvester Tucker," he said, with exaggerated dignity and importance. "I am the new science master. This is St. Frank's College, and I desire to see the headmaster."

Phipps found it increasingly difficult to maintain his dignity. He had met scientific gentleman before, and he had occasionally found them trying, but this specimen was a novelty.

He was greatly relieved when Professor Tucker followed him sedately into the Head's study. Dr. Stafford had risen to greet the new arrival, and he advanced with outstretched hand.

"My dear professor——" he began.

At this point the Head not only halted, but words failed to come. He had expected to see an eccentric individual after Phipps' word of warning. But Professor Tucker, in the reality, proved to be a veritable scarecrow. He was indescribably dirty, and so unkempt that any self-respecting tramp would have pitied him.

And yet, at the same time, the professor bore the unmistakable stamp of the gentleman.

"I am delighted to meet you, sir," he exclaimed, in cultured tones. "So you're the headmaster? I am Professor Sylvester Tucker. I shall take it as a personal favour if you will supply me with a bag of monkey nuts and a couple of buns."

The Head recovered himself with an effort.

"My dear professor, you're not yourself!" he exclaimed hastily. "Good gracious! I fear you have met with some disaster on the road. You are in an appalling condition, sir!"

"They failed to clean my cage out this morning," replied the cheerful lunatic, with a lofty wave of his hand. "A trifle, sir—a mere detail. I would remind you that I have been grossly neglected. All the other

animals have been fed, and I am left to starve."

Dr. Stafford felt singularly helpless. He could scarcely be blamed for taking it for granted that his visitor was the genuine Professor Tucker. He only knew the professor by repute, and he was fully aware that the famous scientist was eccentric.

And when this extraordinary scarecrow arrived, announcing himself as the professor, it was scarcely possible for the Head to realise the truth. He certainly concluded that Professor Tucker was under the influence of drink, and he was duly shocked.

"I think, sir, that it will be as well for me to escort you personally to your own quarters," said the Head nervously. "A little wash, professor—indeed, a refreshing bath—will doubtless work wonders. If you will follow me, my dear sir—"

"Yes, of course," said the other. "But I make one condition. I will not be submitted to the indignity of a bath in the grizzly bear's grotto. I insist upon my own pool. And be good enough to remember the monkey-nuts."

"You shall have them, professor," panted the Head huskily.

He was only too pleased that his companion followed him meekly out of the study. They went upstairs, and then along the corridor. True, Dr. Stafford was startled to observe that Professor Tucker was walking on his hands as well as his feet, but the Head had seen men intoxicated before. This hand-walking symptom was an alarming one.

At last the supposed professor was placed safely in a bed-room, and the Head thought it advisable to lock the door on the outside. Then he returned to his sanctum, feeling weak and exhausted.

In the hall he met Mr. Beverley Stokes.

"Mr. Stokes, pray give me your advice," panted the Head hoarsely. "Professor Tucker has arrived, and he's not only intoxicated, but I fear he is absolutely demented."

CHAPTER XV.

A BIT OF A SHOCK.



REGINALD PITT was very tactful.

He had come to the conclusion that the old fellow in the mill was the missing lunatic—and all the other juniors

were of the same opinion. The unfortunate man was obviously as harmless as the reports stated. But the difficulty was to get him safely away.

"Just observing the stars, eh?" said Pitt genially. "But why not leave them for a bit, sir? If you'll come with us, we'll take you to our school, and give you a ripping time."

Professor Tucker frowned.

"The time?" he said absently. "I do not know! Why should I bother about the time? Haven't I already told you that I won't be disturbed? Where's that telescope? Upon my soul! Who has taken my telescope?"

He looked round anxiously, overlooking the fact that he had swung round and was now facing in the opposite direction. A light of consternation crept into the professor's eyes.

"Good gracious me!" he ejaculated. "This is most remarkable! A moment ago I had a telescope with me. And there was a window here! What has become of the window?"

"Do you mean that one behind you?" asked Handforth bluntly.

Professor Tucker swung round, and sighed with relief.

"Ah, yes, to be sure!" he exclaimed. "Stupid of me! But you boys are to blame! Haven't you anything better to do than to interrupt me in this ill-mannered fashion? Who are you? What are you doing here? Who told you to interfere with me?"

"Mad as a hatter!" muttered Willy, shaking his head.

"We're from St. Frank's, sir," explained Pitt gently. "If you'll just come with us to the school we'll soon put you in touch with your friends—"

"School?" interrupted the professor vacantly. "St. Frank's? Where have I heard that name before? Let me see—let me see! I have a distinct recollection of having hear—"

The professor paused, and started visibly.

"Good heavens!" he ejaculated. "St. Frank's College! Of course! They are expecting me there! I telegraphed! How ridiculous of me! I must confess I completely overlooked the entire matter!"

The juniors grinned at one another.

"Better humour him!" murmured Handforth. "Yes, sir, of course," he went on loudly. "I expect you're Professor Sylvester Tucker, eh? You're our new science master—"

"Precisely!" beamed the professor. "Splendid! So you are some of my new companions? I am delighted to meet you, boys. Let us hope we shall be excellent friends!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The juniors couldn't contain themselves. The joke was too good. The smooth manner in which the lunatic had accepted the identity of Professor Tucker was most amusing.

"If you'll come with us, sir, we'll take you straight to St. Frank's at once," chuckled Pitt. "I'm not sure that they're expecting you—although Professor Tucker certainly did send a telegram."

"The station," said the professor, "is an absurdly long distance from the school."

Good gracious! Now I come to think of it, I left all my baggage on the platform!"

"That's all right, sir—no need to worry over a trifle like that," said Willy soothingly. "It's getting a bit late, so we'd better shift ourselves. Let's be going."

The professor rose to his feet.

"An excellent suggestion, young man," he replied promptly. "Where is the door?" He blinked round in astonishment. "Good gracious! There is no door to this singular apartment! Most remarkable! What on earth has become of the door?"

The professor walked about curiously, peering at the rough old walls. He was only saved in the nick of time from falling headlong through the trap-door. The juniors were not to know that the celebrated scientist generally forgot a thing two minutes after it had happened. He had certainly no recollection of entering this mill, or climbing up the steps. He didn't even know that the place was a mill.

Considering his behaviour — perfectly rational to those who knew him, but decidedly eccentric to those who didn't—the juniors could hardly be blamed for jumping to the one obvious conclusion.

Somehow or other they got their charge down to the ground, and they took care that he didn't escape. They fondly imagined that he was worth ten pounds, and they kept a sharp eye on him.

To their relief, the professor was perfectly tractable, and set out for St. Frank's in a brisk, energetic walk. He babbled on happily about comets and constellations and other heavenly bodies.

"It wouldn't be a bad idea if you slipped on in advance, Willy," murmured Pitt, as they approached the school. "Find Mr. Stokes if you can, and give him the tip. He'll know what to do with the old buffer."

"Right you are!" agreed Willy readily.

He sped on, and entered the Triangle at such a speed that he ran full tilt into Timothy Tucker, who was hovering in the gateway.

"Ouch!" gasped Willy. "What the dickens—?"

"Pray be careful, my dear sir!" said Tucker breathlessly. "This dashing about is not only unnecessary, but positively dangerous! I must protest against—"

"Better pull yourself together, T. T.," grinned Willy, recovering himself. "Your uncle's just coming."

"Is that so?" blinked Tucker. "Dear me, how gratifying! I have been worrying, my dear sir—I have, in fact, been not a little distressed."

"At least, he says he's your uncle," chuckled the fag. "As a matter of fact, he's an escaped lunatic. Keep your hair on! I'm not insulting your uncle! We've been out on a man hunt, and we've rounded up the lost sheep. It means ten quid reward, and I'm just off to fetch Mr. Stokes."

The news soon spread round the Triangle, and quite a crowd of fellows awaited the arrival of the recaptured lunatic. He came in, surrounded by his youthful guards, and Timothy Tucker gave a glad cry of recognition.

"Uncle!" he exclaimed, running forward. "This is most gratifying! Welcome to St. Frank's, Uncle Sylvester!"

Reginald Pitt gave a kind of gulp.

"Uncle Sylvester!" he repeated faintly. "You're mad! You—you don't know who this old chap is, do you?"

T. T. blinked indignantly.

"Know who he is?" he repeated. "My dear sir, this gentleman is my uncle—Professor Sylvester Tucker!"

CHAPTER XVI.

SORTING THEM OUT.



CONSTERNATION broke loose among the professor's captors.

"Your—your uncle!" spluttered Handforth incredulously. "Why, you fat-head, this old fellow's an escaped lunatic. We've just recaptured him. We found him up in the old mill—"

"How dare you?" interrupted Tucker indignantly. "How dare you characterise my uncle as an escaped lunatic? Kindly take no notice of these rude fellows, Uncle Sylvester. Their manners, I fear, are atrocious."

The professor peered closely at T. T.

"And who, sir, are you?" he asked impatiently. "I have seen you before, but I confess that—"

"I'm your nephew, Timothy," interrupted T. T. indignantly.

"Timothy?" mused the professor. "Why, yes, yes! My brother's child, I believe? How do you do, Timothy? I must confess that my memory of you is indifferent, but we will let that pass."

At this moment Mr. Beverley Stokes came striding across the Triangle, accompanied by Willy. And Mr. Stokes, expecting to take charge of a lunatic, was rather startled when he learned the true identity of the newcomer. Willy Handforth nearly had a fit on the spot.

"You are quite sure that there is no mistake?" asked Mr. Stokes keenly. "I take it that you are Professor Sylvester Tucker, late of the Central City University."

"Exactly!" said the professor, beaming.

"There's been an unfortunate error, I fear," said Mr. Stokes. "A gentleman has already arrived, announcing himself as Mr. Tucker, so you will pardon me if I appear inquisitive."

As a matter of fact, Mr. Stokes had a shrewd suspicion of the truth, and T. T.'s unqualified recognition of his uncle was con-

vincing enough. This gentleman, without doubt, was the genuine article.

The housemaster lost no time in escorting him to Dr. Stafford's presence; and the Head, who had been worrying enormously, was gratified beyond measure. The professor, although eccentric, was precisely the type of man he had been expecting.

At the first opportunity he excused himself, and joined Mr. Stokes in the hall.

"A very singular affair, Mr. Stoke," said the Head breathlessly. "I am thankful that the real Professor Tucker coincides with my mental picture of him. But what of the other? What of the impudent impostor upstairs?"

"He is an impostor, sir, but scarcely im-

keepers, whom Mr. Stokes had already 'phoned for.

Professor Sylvester Tucker soon made himself acquainted with a number of the juniors, and it was universally acknowledged that he was a "cough drop." For sheer absent-mindedness the professor was the limit.

Later that evening, the Head had a few words with Mr. Stokes.

"Upon my soul, Mr. Stokes, I'm not at all sure that the professor himself is much better than that lunatic!" confided Dr. Stafford. "A most remarkable man—a singular personality. Twice during our interview he forgot who I was, and I was obliged to re-introduce myself!"

Mr. Stokes chuckled.

Except for the fact that he wasn't very hairy, the old fellow undoubtedly answered the description of the missing lunatic.



udent," replied Mr. Beverley Stokes. "Indeed, there can be no doubt that he is an unfortunate lunatic. We may congratulate ourselves upon having sheltered the unhappy man. It will be better, I think, to transfer him into more fitting quarters. I think the punishment-room will serve admirably."

"An excellent suggestion, Mr. Stokes," said the Head gravely.

They lost no time in hastening upstairs, but when they entered the bed-room the lunatic had apparently vanished. But after a few moments he was discovered fast asleep on the top of the wardrobe.

The Head felt relieved when the poor old fellow was safely bestowed in the punishment-room, there to await the arrival of his

"He will probably get better after a little close contact with the juniors," he said drily. "Even the professor, for all his absent-mindedness will not be allowed many opportunities for lapsing in the midst of these boys!"

Dr. Stafford nodded and smiled.

"Yes, there is some comfort to be derived from that thought, Mr. Stokes," he agreed. "Nevertheless, I am doubtful—very doubtful!"

THE END.

By Your Editor:



My dear Readers,

Professor Sylvester Tucker makes a welcome addition to the ranks of unconscious humorists who week by week bring laughter to the old school. We shall certainly hear more of him in future stories.

*** WILLY HANDFORTH'S WINDFALL! ***

In our next complete story, the title of which heads this paragraph, the central character will be the younger and scarcely less famous of the Handforth brothers. Like the last two stories, it will be full of schoolboy humour and action. Willy does not exactly come into a fortune, though he wins a useful cash prize in a magazine competition, and naturally becomes the hero of the Third. How Willy provides a spread for his chums in honour of the occasion, and disappoints them at the last moment, how he is misunderstood, tried by a tribunal of his chums, and sentenced to Coventry, are some of the main incidents in this lively story.

ANOTHER STORY OF JIM THE PENMAN.

In next week's Nelson Lee story, "JIM THE PENMAN'S GREAT COUP!" the astute forger once again shows his love for scoring over his opponents in a daring and theatrical fashion. In this story he is triumphant, but Nelson Lee vows to get even with the forger before long.

HOW TO DO IT!

All boys who are interested in how to make things will find just what they want in the new series of articles by Dick Goodwin next week in the "Mag." Not only will you be told how to make simple and inexpensive articles of general utility, but there will be special hints on how to handle correctly the various tools, such as the saw, the chisel, and the hammer, required in the making of these articles. Further details about this forthcoming feature are given in the "Mag" in the Notes of the Week.

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CHAPTER I.

NELSON LEE'S PLAN.

LOOK out, guv'nor—you'll ruin the giddy lot, if you're not careful!" Nipper spoke just in time to prevent his master from absent-mindedly scattering pepper upon his plate of peaches and cream, and Nelson Lee smiled quietly as he replaced the pepper-dredger in the cruet-stand.

"A near thing, my lad!" he murmured. "If you hadn't spoken, I should undoubtedly have spoiled these peaches. I'm afraid I must have been wool-gathering!"

"Wool-gathering isn't the word, guv'nor!" declared Nipper candidly. "You were dreaming! Your thoughts were miles and miles away—as they seem to have been a good deal lately. What's the matter, sir? You seem to be worried and uneasy."

The famous detective and his assistant were seated in their cosy dining-room at Gray's Inn Road, and they were partaking of lunch. For the last couple of days Nipper had noticed that Lee was preoccupied and thoughtful, and the lad rightly came to the conclusion that the criminologist had something on his mind.

Nelson Lee nodded in reply to Nipper's remarks.

"I am uneasy, young 'un," he confessed. "I am uneasy regarding the disappearance and silence of our friend Jim the Penman. He is keeping remarkably quiet since that affair at Mr. Justice Dorrington's house at Romford—and when Sutcliffe remains inactive it usually means that he's planning another of his amazingly clever coups."

Nipper agreed.

"That's true enough, sir," he said. "Jim is a slippery customer if ever there was one, and I can't make out how he managed to make his escape the other night. Miss Dor-

rington bashed him on the head with a heavy inflator, and sent him reeling out of a motor-car—and yet when we made a search for his remains there was nothing doing! He's a marvel!"

Nipper was referring to an incident which occurred shortly before—when Jim the Penman had managed to get Mr. Justice Dorrington—the judge who had sent him to Portmoor—away from his London house, together with his daughter. Sutcliffe had worked the trick by posing as a Scotland Yard detective, and had so played upon the fears of the judge that he had forthwith departed for his country house at Romford—taking the "man from Headquarters" along with him as a protection!

Upon arrival, Jim had revealed his true identity, and had demanded a sum of £20,000 from Dorrington. But before he received it Nelson Lee, Nipper and Chief Detective-Inspector Lennard had arrived, and Jim the Penman had made his escape, taking Sybil Dorrington with him, intending to use her as a lever to force money from her father.

But the girl had turned the tables upon Sutcliffe by freeing herself from her bonds, and knocking Jim the Penman headlong out of the motor-car he was driving. Fortunately, no accident had resulted; but from that moment there had been no sign of the master-forgery.

Nelson Lee suspected that Jim was up to some new move in his campaign of revenge—for it was now known that Sutcliffe had sworn to "get even" with all those who had assisted in his imprisonment.

But the detective was helpless; he had no starting-point from which to carry on his investigations. Although Nelson Lee was quite convinced in his own mind that Jim was busily planning more villainies, he could take no really active step to foil the criminal's activities.

And such a state of affairs was distinctly galling to the famous investigator.

"There's only one possible step to take, Nipper," he declared, when lunch was over. "I'll admit that it savours of a forlorn hope; but it might be worth while for us to devote our attention to one or two of the men who were associated with Sutcliffe before he was sent to Portmoor. Jim usually works alone; but now and again he finds it necessary to enlist the services of his colleagues. A man named Thornton, I remember, was one of them—and Galloway was another."

Nipper nodded.

"That's right, sir; but how the dickens are you going to locate them now, after all this time?" he asked. "They may be dead, or abroad, or anywhere! And you can't tell whether Jim is associated with them now, even if he was in the past."

"Quite true, my lad," agreed the detective. "But the probability is that Jim still makes use of his old pals, for he knows they are men he can trust. At all events, I intend to make an effort to trace these men, and I think I'll begin with Thornton. He used to live, I believe, in Brixton, and I'll take a run down there at once."

Nelson Lee was as good as his word, and he started off at once—leaving Nipper to do several jobs upon the files of criminal records in the consulting-room—a task which the youngster by no means relished.

The detective, meanwhile, spent a considerable amount of time in the Brixton neighbourhood, visiting estate agents' offices, conferring with tradesmen, and even seeking the assistance of the police on more than one occasion. The task he had set himself was really formidable, for the man Thornton had not been heard of since the arrest of Jim the Penman five years previously. During that time, as Nipper had said, he might have gone to the other end of the earth; but, on the other hand, he might still be living somewhere quite close to his old residence.

It was early evening when Nelson Lee returned to Gray's Inn Road, and Nipper was getting "fed up" with waiting—to make use of his own term. But he could see by Lee's face that something had resulted from his outing, and the lad was not mistaken.

"You've clicked, guv'nor!" exclaimed Nipper, as Lee walked into the consulting-room. "I can see it in your eye. You've struck oil!"

The detective nodded.

"Yes, young 'un—as you so elegantly term it, I have certainly 'clicked,'" he exclaimed, in a tone of satisfaction. "After a tremendous amount of trouble, I at last managed to locate Thornton at his present address, and I think it will be worth while to keep a watch upon his movements. There's nothing known against him at present, but I fancy that Jim will make use

of him sooner or later. If he does, we shall get the chance we're waiting for."

Nipper was keen.

"That's a terrific wheeze, guv'nor!" he said. "But it'll probably mean keeping a watch on this chap for weeks!"

"Not necessarily," returned the detective. "Something might result from the watching almost at once. But even if we have to keep it up for a day or two I shan't mind—for the game will be worth it. You had better take the first spell, my lad, and I'll come and relieve you later. Fortunately, Thornton lives quite close to us—at 78, Musgrave Square, Bloomsbury, to be exact."

Nipper started off to keep his vigil almost at once, and—as events were to turn out—his presence outside Thornton's house was to be highly beneficial to a certain individual who was well acquainted with Lee and Nipper.

CHAPTER II.

JIM THE PENMAN'S FATE!



CHIEF DETECTIVE-INSPECTOR LENNARD looked up from his desk at Scotland Yard as a constable entered the room.

"What is it, Perkins?" he said irritably. "I'm busy, and I don't want to be disturbed—"

"There's a man named Bill Nixon outside, sir," said Perkins. "Says he's a Thames-side watchman, and wants to see you about Jim the Penman—"

"Jim the Penman!" repeated Lennard quickly. "Right, Perkins! Send the man in at once! By thunder! I'll see anybody at any time who can tell me anything about Sutcliffe!"

A few minutes later Perkins returned with an unkempt individual, attired in the usual dress of a working-man, and ushered him into the Chief Inspector's office. Nixon touched his forelock respectfully to Lennard, and then fidgeted with his cap—seeming to be somewhat overawed by Lennard's imposing presence.

"Evenin', sir!" he muttered. "I've been sent 'ere to see you by Inspector Reed, o' the River Police—"

"Oh! Reed sent you, eh?" cut in Lennard, looking at Nixon with renewed interest. "Inspector Reed is a friend of mine, my man, and if he sent you, I expect you've got something worth while to tell me."

Nixon nodded.

"Quite right, sir, I 'ave!" he returned. "But afore I explain I'd just like to know if I'm right in thinkin' that there's been a reward offered for Jim the Penman—dead or alive?"

The chief inspector looked at Nixon sharply.

"Yes," he said. "There's a reward of two hundred pounds—"

"Lummy!" ejaculated the watchman, in a satisfied tone. "That's all right, ain't it? I reckon that money is as good as mine already, sir—'cos I've found Jim the Penman!"

Lennard stared.

"You've found him?" he repeated incredulously.

"Yes, sir! But he ain't alive!" said Nixon. "It was like this 'ere. I 'appened to be standin' on Easton's Wharf this evenin', when I saw a body floatin' in the water. It gave me a bit of a turn at fust, but I fished it out with a boat-ock, and then I saw that the dead man looked jest like somebody I'd seen, or somebody whose picture I'd seen. I couldn't think who it could be for a bit, but then I recollected seein' Jim the Penman's picture in the papers, an' I knew that I'd got 'im! Inspector Reed thinks the same—"

"So Inspector Reed has seen the body, too?" queried Lennard keenly.

"Oh, yes, sir—to be sure!" said Nixon. "I went an' fetched the inspector at once, an' 'e thinks the same as wot I do. He ain't 'zactly sure, but 'e agrees that I'm entitled to the reward if the bloke is really Jim the Penman! Me an' the inspector took 'im to a shed near Easton's Wharf, an' then 'e sent me up 'ere to see you. 'E gave me a note, too, sir! I've got it 'ere!"

Nixon produced a crumpled note as he spoke, and the chief inspector unfolded it at once. Reed was an old acquaintance of his, and Lennard knew that he was a man to be trusted.

The note was short, and ran:

"Dear Mr. Lennard,

"The bearer of this—Bill Nixon—seems to have discovered the body of Sutcliffe floating in the river. I have examined him, and he certainly bears a remarkable resemblance to Jim the Penman. In order to make sure, I'd like you to see the body, as you are in a position to state positively whether I'm mistaken or not. Nixon is anxious regarding the reward, so I've sent him to see you personally.

"Yours very faithfully,

"WILLIAM REED, Inspector, R.P."

Lennard finished reading the note, and re-folded it. The news was extremely gratifying to him, for he had been "up against" Jim the Penman on more occasions than he cared to remember. Now—if Nixon's story was to be credited—Sutcliffe was dead.

The chief inspector frankly admitted to himself that he would have been sceptical regarding the watchman's discovery if it had not been confirmed by Inspector Reed; but in view of the official's letter, Lennard was bound to investigate the affair.

"Was there anything else, besides the resemblance, which led you to think that the body was that of Jim the Penman?" he asked, turning to Nixon again.

"Well, sir, I found a few old cards in 'is pockets," said the watchman. "I don't s'pose they're any use to you—but I thought I'd better bring 'em along to you. 'Ere they are, sir—but you needn't think that the bloke ain't Jim the Penman, 'cos o' these 'ere names bein' different! I'd know Jim's face among a thousand!"

Nixon dragged four or five soiled and damp visiting-cards from his pocket, and handed them to the chief inspector. Lennard took them without much interest—but the first name he saw caused him to examine a'l the cards in rapid succession.

Here was positive confirmation of Nixon's story, for the cards bore the names of the various aliases which Sutcliffe had used during his criminal career—names which Lennard had good cause to remember! The first was inscribed "Bernard Lyle," the second "Geoffrey Brandon," and the third "John Reginald Logan," while a fourth and fifth were printed with names with which Lennard was unfamiliar.

The chief inspector nodded to himself as he looked at the cards again, and there could be no doubt that he was greatly impressed.

"So Jim is dead at last, eh?" he muttered. "Well, I'm hanged! I never expected to learn that Sutcliffe had made his exit in this unromantic fashion! I can scarcely believe it, even now!"

Lennard remained thoughtful for a few moments, and then he turned to Nixon, and rose to his feet.

"You certainly seem to have got hold of the right man, Nixon," he commented. But I'll not raise your hopes further about the reward until I've seen the body for myself. Come along! We'll go to Easton's Wharf at once!"

"Right, sir!" said the watchman eagerly. "You'll find that I'm right about the bloke bein' Jim the Penman—leastways, I 'ope so, 'cos I can do with that two 'undred quid!"

The pair left the office, and made their way to Whitehall. Lennard was feeling distinctly elated, but he repeatedly told himself that the news was too good to be true.

It seemed incredible that Douglas James Sutcliffe, the notorious forger, was at this moment lying dead in a shed by the river-side, but the chief inspector would soon know.

CHAPTER III.

THE DEAD MAN IN THE SHED.



EASTON'S WHARF was a dismal place.

Situated within a stone's-throw from Westminster Bridge, it was really surprising how lonely and isolated it appeared to be. At this time in the late evening—when

all the riverside activities had ceased for the day—the wharf might have been located in a Thames backwater, for all the signs of life there were in its vicinity.

Bill Nixon, however, was evidently used to his surroundings, and he led Lennard along the river bank towards the shed he had mentioned without any hesitation—picking his way among the litter of boxes and barrels as if they had never existed.

After a while the watchman pointed to a dimly outlined building ahead of them.

"There's the shed, sir," he exclaimed. "We ain't got much further to go, as you can see—"

"Who is there now—with the body?" asked Lennard.

"I don't know, sir," said Nixon. "Inspector Reed was there when I left—but I don't reckon he'd stop there till now. If he's gorn, we can easily find 'im afterward."

The chief inspector grunted, and continued to follow the watchman towards the shed. As they drew nearer, Lennard could see that it was a dilapidated shack, which was apparently falling to pieces from sheer decay. The whole of Easton's Wharf, in fact, seemed to be in a similar condition, and it was quite evident that the premises were untenanted and deserted.

The pair soon reached their destination, and Nixon pulled open the creaking door of the shed, and entered. Just inside he paused for a moment, and Lennard heard the scraping of a match, followed immediately by a burst of flame.

"Arf a minute, sir, while I light the candle," said Nixon, suiting the action to the word, and holding the match to the wick of the candle. "This 'ere place 'as got a 'orrible uneven floor, and if you ain't careful you're liable to trip up. 'Ere you are, sir—you take the candle an' 'ave a look at the bloke over there!"

Nixon thrust the candle into Lennard's hand, and jerked his thumb in the direction of a bench which stood in one corner. Upon the bench, covered by a dirty sheet, could be seen the outline of a man's figure, and the chief inspector approached the spot with anything but a pleasant feeling. The flickering candle-light, with its eerily cast shadows, made the experience extremely gruesome, and Lennard told himself that he would be heartily glad to get out of the shack.

But he was bound to go through with it now he had come so far, and with a firm step he crossed over to the bier, and pulled back the sheet. As he did so, the chief inspector felt a little thrill of nausea pass through him, for the ghastly pallor of the man's features was truly appalling. The face was of a chalky whiteness, and seemed to be sunken and emaciated.

"Good heavens!" muttered Lennard to self. "This—this can't be Jim the Penman!"

But a second glance convinced the chief inspector that the man was, in very truth, none other than Douglas James Sutcliffe, the greatest forger the world had ever known. There was no mistaking that firm, deter-

mined jaw, or those sensitive, amazingly dexterous fingers—the fingers that had been responsible for more forgeries than would probably ever be executed by another criminal.

Lennard, now that he had got over the first shock of viewing the gruesome remains, devoted his close attention to an examination of the features. They were, without the slightest doubt, the well-known features of Jim the Penman, and the chief inspector was forced to the inevitable conclusion that Sutcliffe, in very truth, was dead.

This, of course, should have afforded the Scotland Yard man the greatest satisfaction; but for some reason Lennard almost found himself experiencing sorrow for the departed forger. Such an end as this seemed to be hardly a fitting one for such an amazingly clever crook; he had deserved something more in keeping with his activities during life.

The chief inspector turned and spoke to Nixon.

"You have made no mistake, my man," he said. "This is Jim the Penman right enough! We'll go and find Inspector Reed, I think, and make arrangements to have the body removed from this shed without delay."

It was at that moment that Chief Inspector-Detective Lennard received the shock of his life. For, without the slightest warning, the "dead body" suddenly sat bolt upright upon the bench, and emitted a curiously amused chuckle.

"Those arrangements will be quite unnecessary, Lennard—because the body is perfectly capable of removing itself!" said the corpse, in a genial tone. "I'm sorry if my appearance gave you an unnecessary shock, but, as you see, the deathly pallor is very easily removed!"

As he spoke, Jim the Penman coolly wiped his features with a corner of the sheet, and his face immediately assumed its natural, healthy glow. The make-up had been wonderfully done, but it was a make-up, as Lennard now realised.

"Jim!" he gasped incredulously. "Jim the Penman—re!"

"Very much so!" agreed Sutcliffe, jumping from the bench as he spoke. "It is really extremely obliging of you to walk into my little trap so innocently, Lennard, and I'm duly grateful! You have saved me an immense amount of trouble by coming here to view my remains, and I cannot thank you sufficiently!"

CHAPTER IV.

A TERRIBLE PREDICAMENT.



"**T**RAP!" roared the chief inspector, all his anger coming to the surface with a rush. "What do you mean, you scoundrel?"

Lennard was staring at Sutcliffe with wrath and amazement de-

dicted upon his ruddy countenance—which had taken on an almost purple hue. His surprise had been genuine and sincere, for he had had not the slightest inkling that Jim the Penman was in reality “acting dead.” The absolute exactness with which death had been simulated was startling, and more observant men than Lennard would have been just as completely deceived.

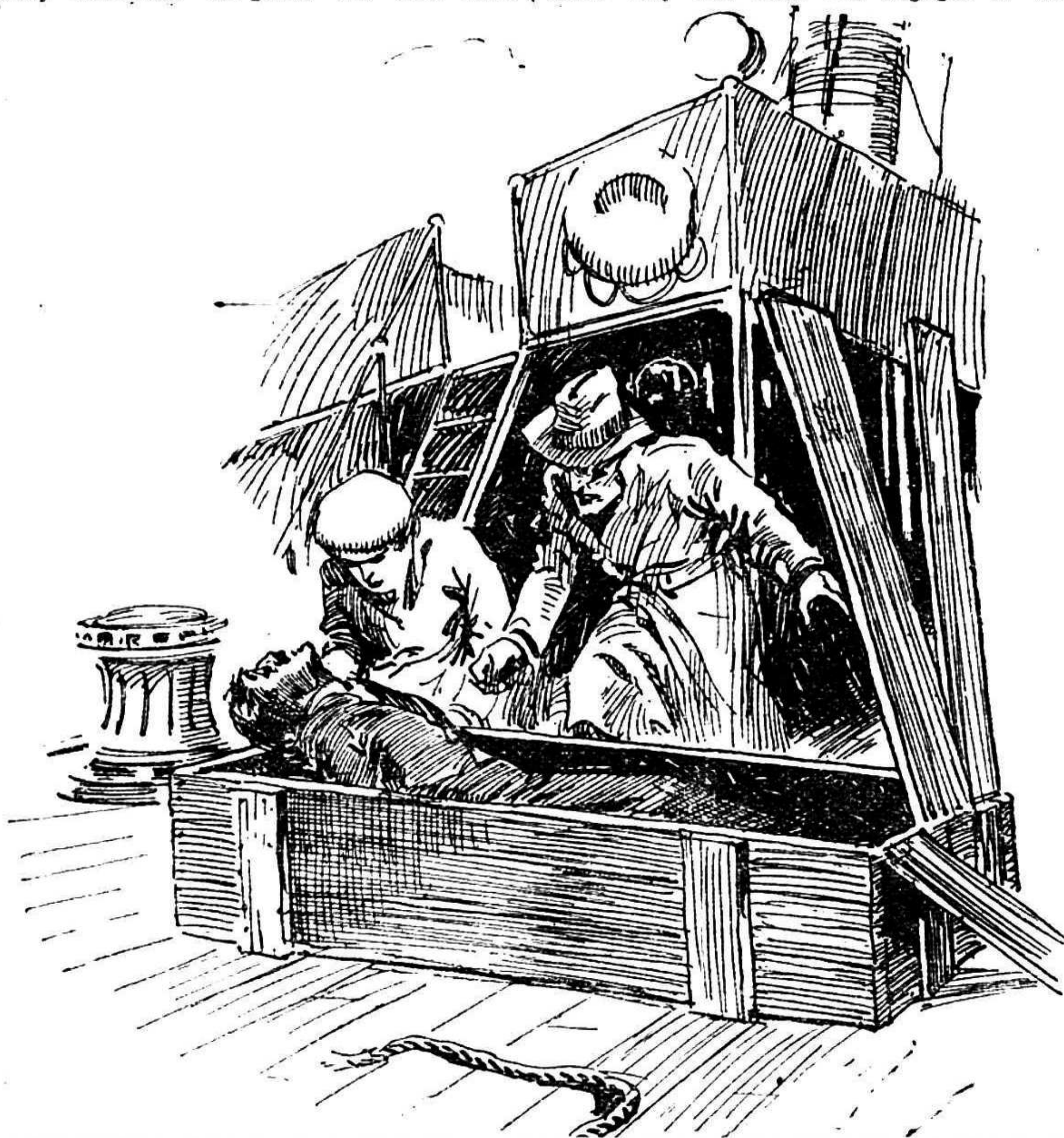
“I mean exactly what I say!” replied Jim the Penman coolly. “I’ve got you in a trap, Lennard—and you ought to have realised by this time that my little tableau was designed solely to entice you to this delightful spot! We are two to one, you see, for our mutual friend Bill Nixon has kindly consented to guard the door until

we have had a little chat. Probably you didn’t suspect it, but he is in possession of a really serviceable revolver!”

“Bill Nixon”—who in reality was Thornton—grinned amiably, and tapped his coat as Lennard glanced in his direction. The chief inspector could now see plainly enough that he had been trapped with extraordinary neatness, and the knowledge did not serve to improve his ruffled temper. He turned to Sutcliffe again.

“What’s your game, Jim?” he asked, striving to keep control of his feelings. “You haven’t brought me here just to enjoy the pleasure of a chat, I suppose?”

“Not exactly,” returned Sutcliffe. “You know very well that I’m engaged in what



And when the lid of the box was removed, Lee bent over the figure of his official friend, Chief Inspector Lennard.

I call a campaign of revenge, and it oughtn't to surprise you when I tell you that you're included. You've been up against me ever since I commenced operations—"

"And I'll continue to be up against you until you're safe in Portmoor again!" interrupted Lennard angrily. "You're too dashed dangerous to remain at large, Jim, and you won't be kicking your heels much longer!"

Sutcliffe smiled.

"That remains to be seen," he returned. "So far I've dealt with Nelson Lee, Sir Rodney Marshall, and Mr. Justice Dorrington—but I haven't been very successful owing to Lee's confounded interference. He's got to go through it again later on—and next time I'll take good care that he doesn't get off so lightly!"

The chief inspector grinned.

"You'll never get the better of Nelson Lee, you idiot!" he said. "He's more than a match for you—even when he's asleep! But what's the idea of roping me into your net like this—that's what I want to know? If you expect to make a haul out of my banking account, Jim, I can tell you straight that you're on a bad egg! Chief inspectors at the Yard don't possess fortunes—"

"Exactly!" said Jim. "Therefore, as I can't rob you of anything worth while, Lennard, I've devised another little scheme to suit your case! It is extremely simple, and merely consists of putting you out of the way for a time—while I carry out other plans which I have in mind."

The chief inspector stared.

"Put me out of the way?" he repeated.

"Yes."

"In other words, you mean to murder me, eh?" asked Lennard.

"Oh, dear no!" returned Jim the Penman. "Nothing so unpleasant as that, Lennard! I have mapped out a little programme for you, and its most interesting item is the fact that you're booked to go for a little voyage! The trip, I am afraid, will not be exactly a comfortable one—but you can't have everything. If you will glance into the corner opposite the bench you will observe a somewhat overgrown box."

The chief inspector looked in the direction indicated, and saw the box—a huge packing-case, constructed of strong timber, and bound with strips of iron.

"Well, what about it?" he asked.

"You are shortly starting on a sea-trip aboard a vessel named the Night Hawk, Lennard, and you will go inside that box!" explained Jim the Penman venomously. "I cannot say exactly how long the voyage will take, but you can rest assured that you will be away from England for several months. Have you any objections to make to the arrangements—"

"You—you murderous hound!" exclaimed the chief inspector, losing his temper at last, and flinging himself at Sutcliffe like a charging bull. "By thunder! You've got enough nerve to stock an army—but I'm just about fed up with you! I'll show you whether you can play about with me in this way with impunity, you skunk! Take that—"

But Jim the Penman did not "take that."

Instead, he sprang nimbly aside, and made a signal to Thornton, who at once charged at Lennard, and commenced hammering away at him fiercely. Jim, meanwhile, grasped a pad which he had previously saturated with a drug, and awaited his opportunity to clap it over the chief inspector's mouth and nostrils. His chance came within a minute, and Lennard was soon reduced to an unconscious and inert figure—totally incapable of defending himself.

"Good!" said Jim, with a chuckle of amusement. "Quite an easy matter, you see, Thornton. No matter how mighty one's opponents are, it is really simple to dispose of them if you only go the right way to work! I scarcely expected the chief inspector to fall for the bait so readily, but it's usually the unexpected that happens. Come, we'd better get the job finished!"

Thornton nodded, and helped Sutcliffe lift Lennard's massive form into the packing-case. Once he was safely inside, the lid was replaced and secured, and then—between them—the two crooks proceeded to haul the case out of the shed towards the boat which was hitched to one of the posts supporting the rotting wharf.

Five minutes later the boat was gliding over the water towards a rusty tramp steamer which was anchored in mid-stream.

Upon arrival under the ship's stern, Jim the Penman gave a soft whistle, and three men at once made their appearance upon the deck. Rapidly they commenced to make preparations for hauling the box aboard, busying themselves with ropes and tackle.

These men were members of the ship's crew, and they had agreed to carry out Jim's instructions in return for a few pounds apiece—without even knowing his identity. Their orders were simply to get the box aboard, and to take it to sea with them.

They had no idea what the case contained—and it is doubtful if they would have undertaken their task if they had had the slightest notion that Chief Detective-Inspector Lennard, of Scotland Yard, was lying unconscious within the box.

Jim and Thornton were very pleased with their evening's work. Everything had gone without a hitch, and Sutcliffe felt satisfied that he had at last "got even" with the Yard man.

But, although Jim did not know it, his revenge was not quite so complete as he imagined.

CHAPTER V.

THE RESCUE OF LENNARD.



NELSON LEE started up in his chair with a little exclamation.

"What on earth—" he began. "Good gracious, Nipper! What is the matter?"

Nipper, after pelting up the stairs like a young tornado, burst into the consulting-room, and stood panting in front of his master. Obviously, he had been running hard, and his eyes were filled with excitement which Lee knew portended some startling news.

"Quick, guv'nor—we haven't a moment to lose!" gasped Nipper frantically. "Jim the Penman, with the help of Thornton, is working some sort of ghastly stunt against old Lennard—"

"Against Lennard?" cut in Lee keenly.

"Yes, sir," said Nipper, recovering his breath a trifle. "I was watching outside Thornton's house, as you told me, when I saw him emerge—disguised as a workman. He went straight from his home to Scotland Yard, and after a bit he came out again, accompanied by the chief inspector. I wondered what the deuce the game could be, and I shadowed them to a rotten old wharf at Westminster, where they disappeared into an ancient shed. I crept up, and what I saw and heard was just like a slice out of a play! Jim the Penman was in that shed, guv'nor—dead!"

"Dead!" repeated the detective.

"To all appearances—yes!" said Nipper. "But it was only a wheeze, of course! Listen, guv'nor, and I'll explain everything!"

He did so—telling Nelson Lee exactly what had occurred within the shed by the wharf. Nipper, from his position outside, had seen and heard everything, and he was in full possession of all the facts connected with Sutcliffe's dastardly scheme.

The lad related everything to his master in as few words as possible, and Nelson Lee listened with tightened lips.

"I heard Jim say that he was going to shove Lennard in a box and ship him aboard the Night Hawk," concluded Nipper angrily. "But as soon as the scrap started I left, and streaked home to you, guv'nor! At first I thought of butting in, and sticking up Jim and Thornton with my revolver, but I daren't risk it. If anything had happened to me, nothing on earth could have saved Lennard; but if we get a move on now, sir, we shall probably be in time to prevent him from being suffocated! We'll probably be too late to collar Jim; but it's more important to rescue the chief inspector than to bother about Sutcliffe!"

Nelson Lee patted Nipper on the back.

"You have acted very wisely, young 'un," he exclaimed, in an approving tone. "It would have been foolhardy for you to have

tackled Jim and Thornton single-handed, and it was far better for you to do as you did. We will hurry off at once and get Lennard out of his predicament, and I hope to Heaven that we shall be in time!"

The pair left the house immediately, and returned to Westminster in the taxi which Nipper had employed to bring him to Gray's Inn Road. The vehicle did the journey in record time, and Lee and Nipper raced upon the wharf, and looked round for a boat. There was no such thing available on Easton's Wharf, but Nipper espied one tied up to the adjoining premises.

The detective took it without compunction, and he and Nipper commenced rowing towards the tramp steamer. When they had covered about half the distance they saw Jim the Penman and Thornton leaving the Night Hawk, but Lee ignored them entirely.

It was galling to have to see the master forger calmly rowing shorewards without making some attempt to capture him—but it was imperative to hurry to Lennard's rescue. Even as it was, they might be too late, for the chief inspector could not last long in the confined space of the massive packing-case.

The instant the nose of their boat bumped against the rusty plates of the tramp steamer, Nelson Lee and Nipper commenced climbing to the deck by means of the various tackle which was hanging overside. And as soon as they reached the deck, they raced for the big box which contained the unconscious form of Lennard.

A glance was sufficient to tell the detective that the packing-case was practically airtight, and his anxiety grew. He yelled to some of the ship's crew to bring tools, and when they arrived he feverishly commenced levering up the lid of the box. This operation only took a few moments, and when the cover was removed Lee bent over the figure of his official friend.

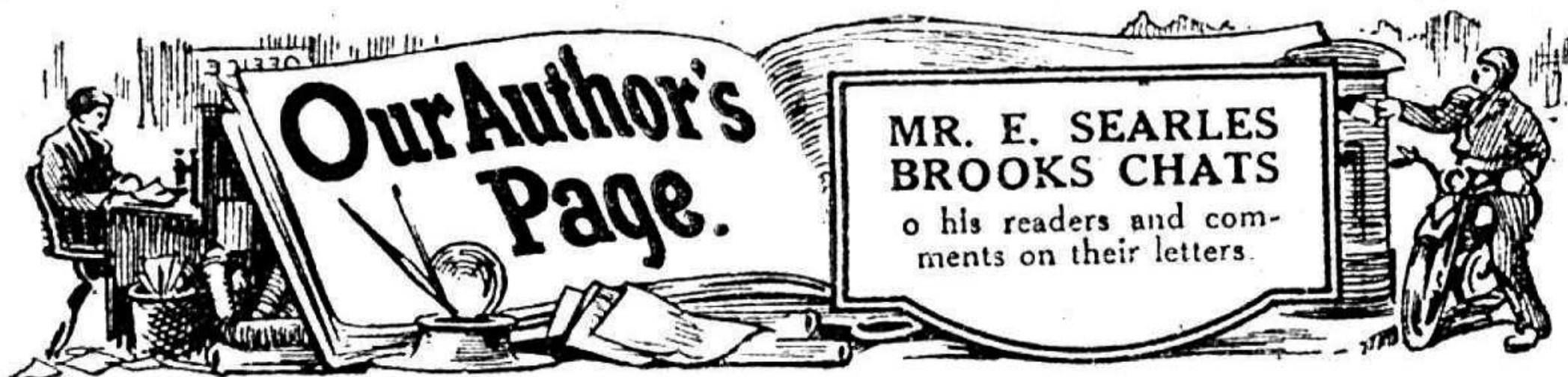
"We are just in time, Nipper!" he said thankfully. "Five minutes longer in this thing would have been the death of Lennard!"

It was almost half an hour later when the chief inspector recovered consciousness—and during that interval Nelson Lee had worked like a trojan to restore animation to the almost asphyxiated Lennard. He was tremendously grateful, but he was furious with Jim the Penman for attempting to murder him in such a cold-blooded manner.

By the time that Lennard had recovered sufficiently to leave the steamer, it was useless to make a search for Sutcliffe. He had gone again—but his diabolical scheme had been completely frustrated.

And Nelson Lee vowed that Jim the Penman should pay—and pay dearly—for his latest outrage.

THE END.



[NOTE.—If any readers care to write to me, I shall be pleased to comment upon any remarks that are likely to interest the majority. If you have any grumbles—make them to me! If you have any suggestions—send them along! Remember, my aim is to please as many of you as I possibly can. All letters should be addressed to me personally, c/o The Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.—E.S.B.]

The first thing I must do this week is to thank Milton Cronenberg, of Toronto, Canada, for his nice letter. By the way, this is the first letter addressed to me personally to arrive from the Colonies. Congratulations, Milton, on your suggestions. I have made a note of them, and will keep them by me.

Letters from E. G. S., Walworth, A. B. of London, Bluebell of Bradford, Boy Reader, Luton, are all interesting and welcome. Although they contain nothing of interest to general readers, I feel that I must mention them and thank their writers.

And this brings me to a point I'd like to raise. Naturally, I enjoy reading all letters, but it would be a lot better for me if you asked my advice on given subjects. This would give me something to write about—something likely to interest a large circle of readers. I've got heaps of letters which are simply full of opinions—and which offer me little or no opportunity of replying. So you'll see to this, won't you?

You might misunderstand what I've just said unless I add a bit to it. I still want your opinions, and I shall gladly welcome your grumbles and suggestions. But try to include something that requires an answer. Not an answer, mind you, that affects only yourself, but one that will probably be attractive to others.

I strongly disagree with T. E. Pattinson, who sends me a five-page letter from

Walthamstow. He firmly maintains that the introduction of Irene and Co. into the stories has given the Old Paper a "girlish taste," as he puts it. He rather selfishly goes on to say that girls ought to read books which are specially published for girls, and leave THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY alone.

If you are a fair-minded boy, Master Pattinson, you will admit that the St. Frank's stories are just as full of schoolboy interest as they always were. Irene and Co. only appear occasionally, and even during these brief spells they detract in no way from the manly tone which you admire so much.

But I needn't be concerned. Nearly all the letters I receive endorse Irene and Co. in unqualified terms. So I'm afraid your voice, T. E., is like one crying in the wilderness. And even though your brothers both agree with you that Irene and Co. should be banished, I'm afraid it "can't be did." Don't you ever meet any young ladies? Isn't it more true to life that a girls' school should be situated in the district, and that some of them should make friends with the boys of St. Frank's? Come along—be perfectly frank about it. Don't you think your view is a little unfair?

B. W. Messen, of Forest Gate, urges me to introduce more and more football into the stories. What about it?

I hardly know what to say to "A Reader for Ever," of Southport. You certainly are loyal to the core! You prove it by having several hundreds of the Old Paper bound in volumes of nine—but the greatest evidence lies in the fact that you have lent these volumes to so many "chaps and girls, to let them see what the N.L.L. really is" (your own words) that they are now shabby. But you don't mind, because they all buy the paper for themselves now! That's great! You've set an example that would greatly increase our circle if others would follow it.



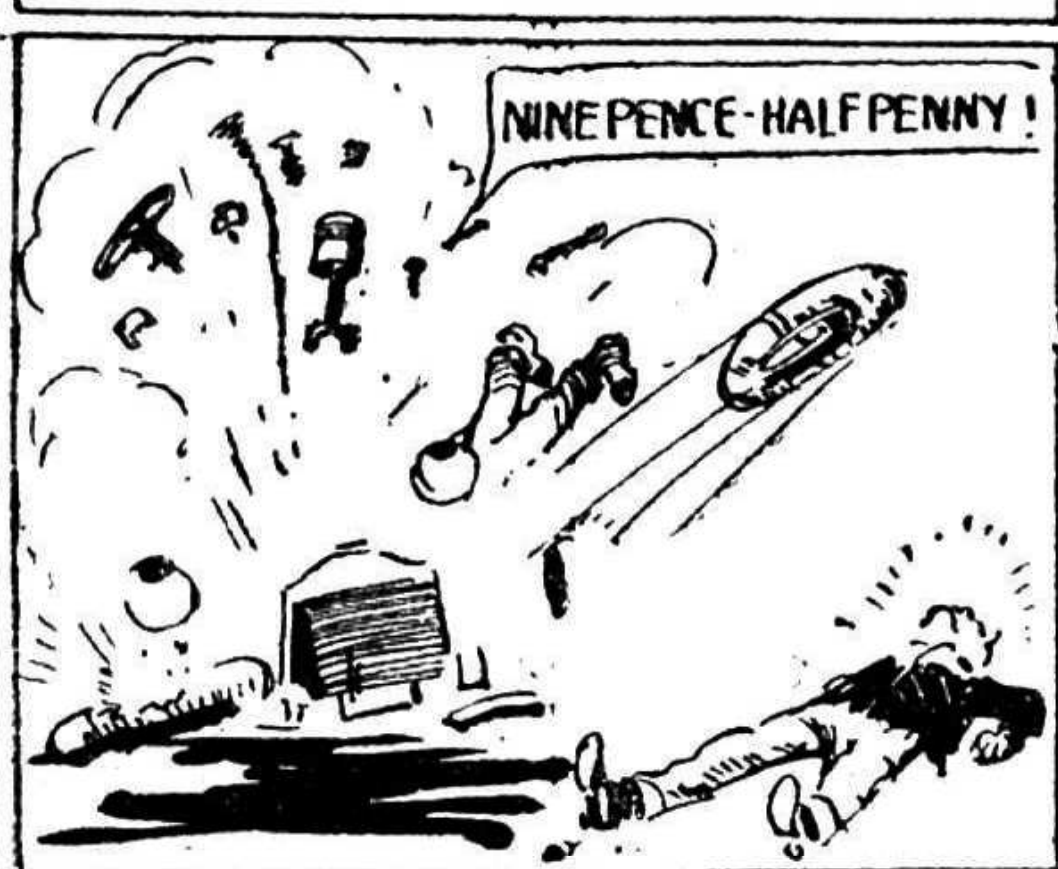
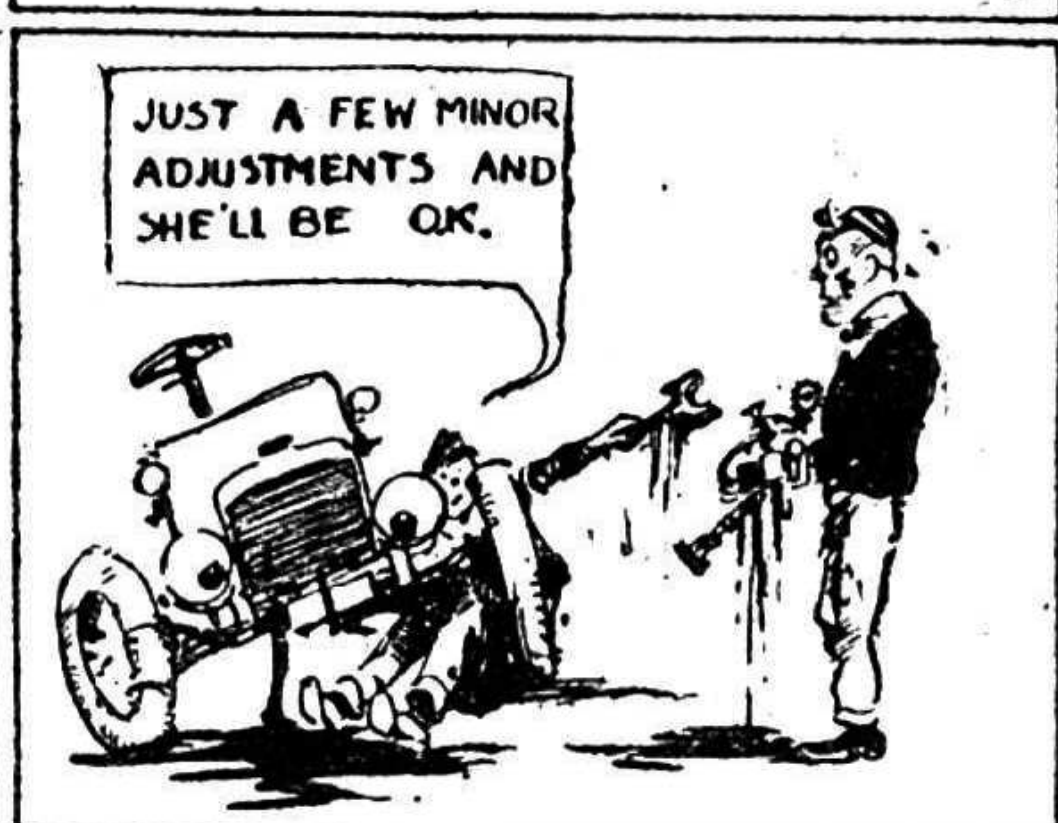
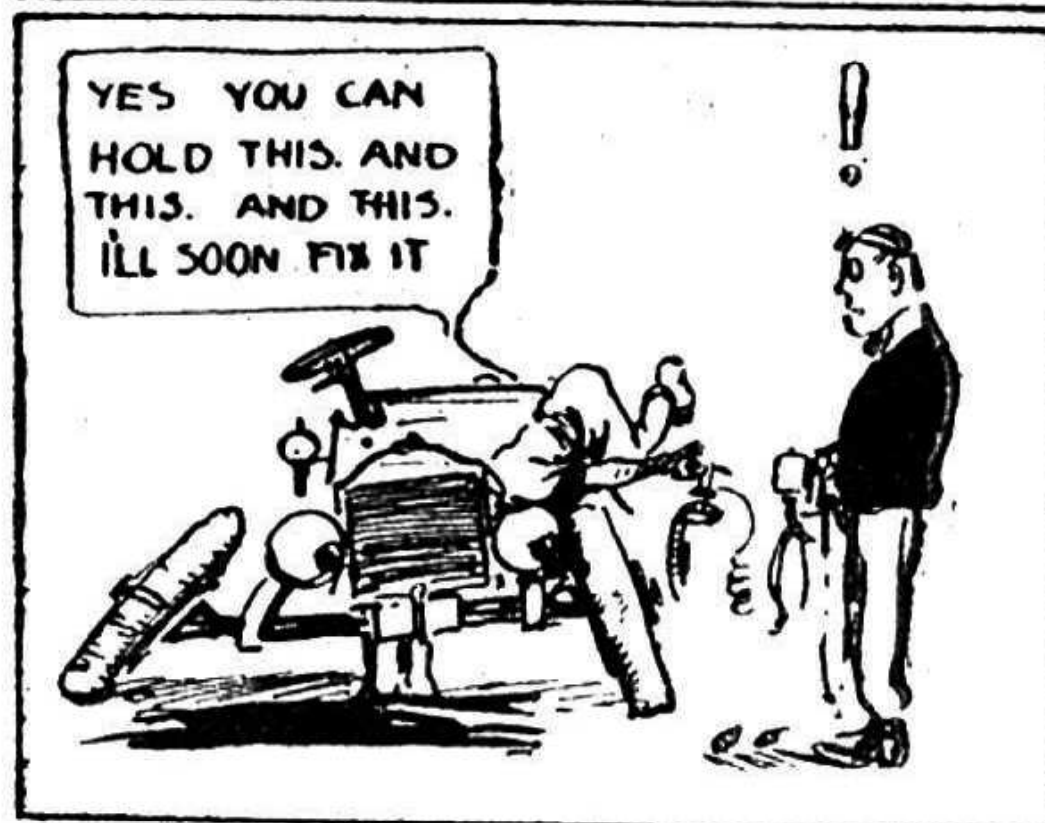
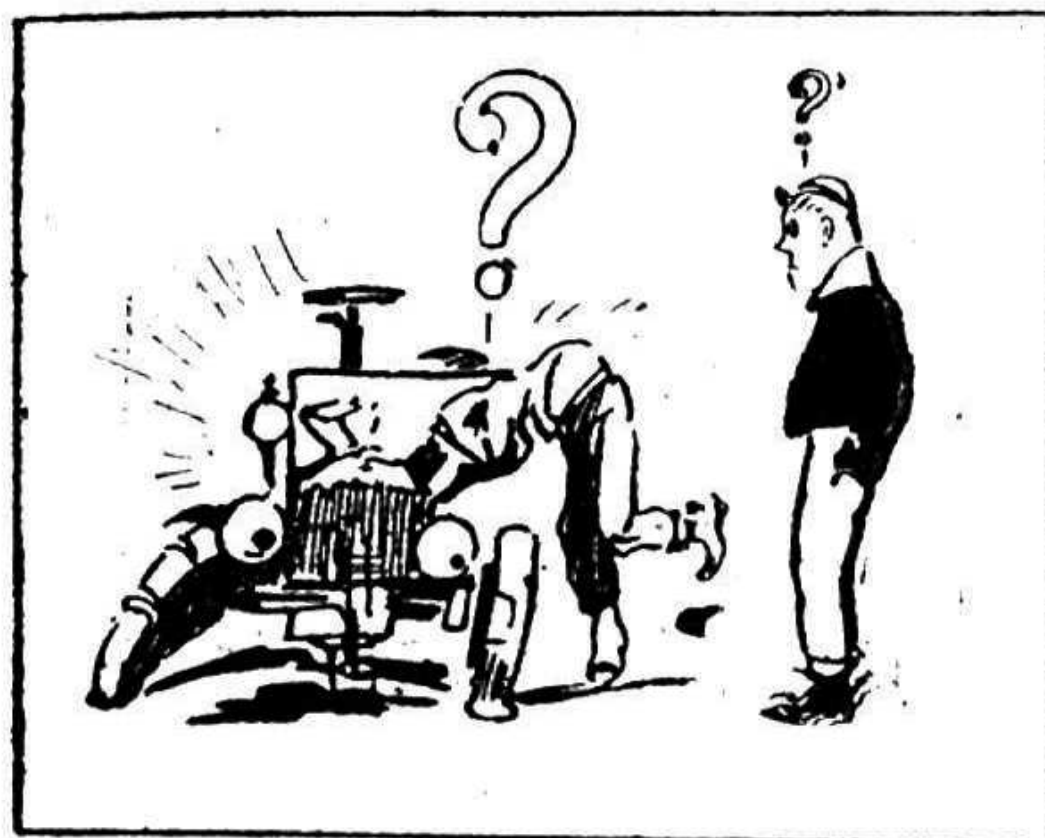
St. Frank's Magazine.

No. 52. Vol. 2.

Edited by Pitt.

November 22, 1924.

ADVENTURES OF THE HANDFORTH BROTHERS THE DANGERS OF MOTORING



OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

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

No. 54. ST. JOHN'S SCHOOL, LEATHERHEAD.



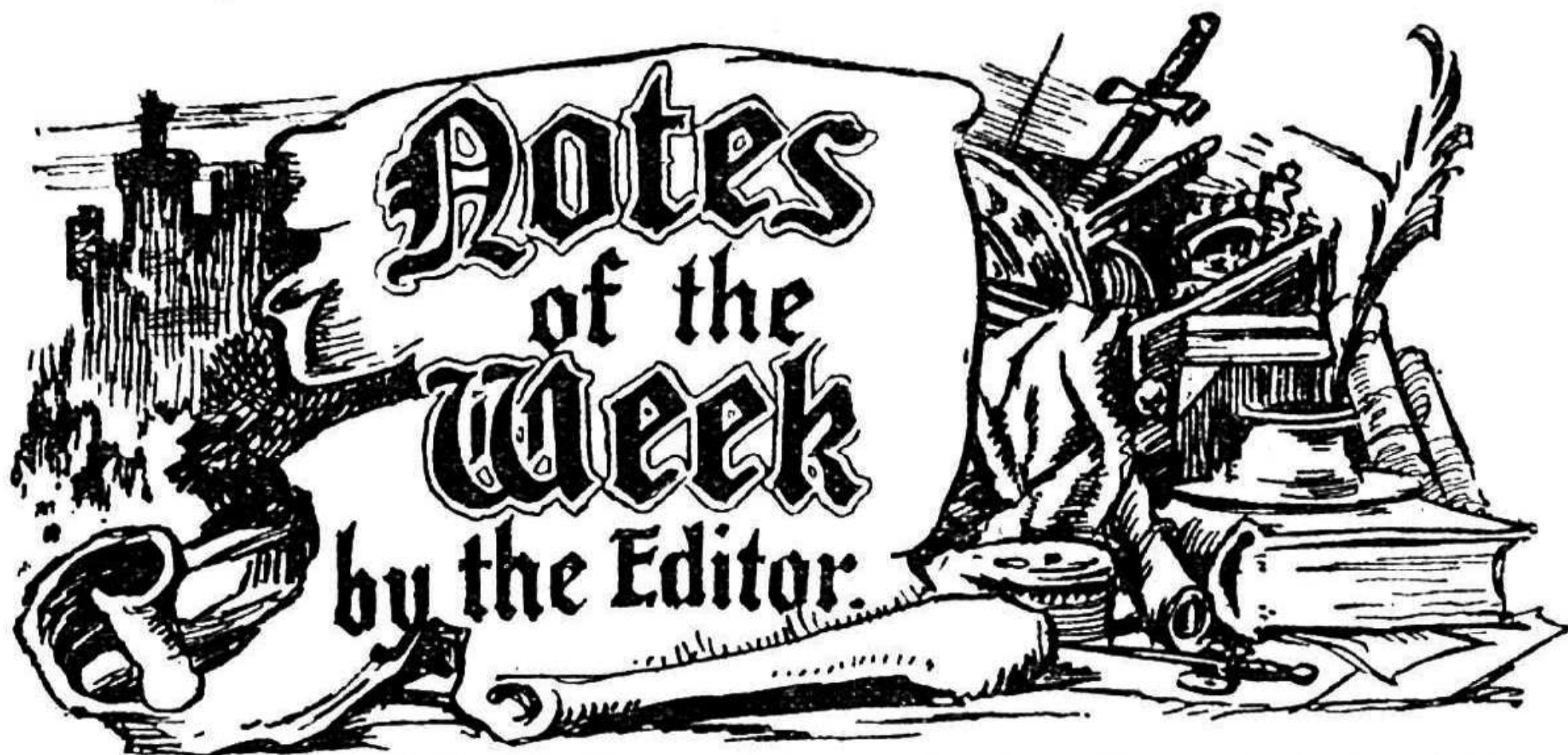
St. John's School was founded in 1851, and was removed to its present site at Leatherhead in 1872. It was incorporated by Royal Charter in 1922. The school stands in thirty acres of ground, and the buildings include a large School Room, sixteen classrooms, library, science laboratories, dormitories accommodating 235 boarders, dining-hall, chapel and infirmary.

Cricket, Rugby and fives are played at the school. There is a contingent of the O.T.C. supplied by the school, which is com-

pulsory for all boys when they are old enough and provided they pass the medical authorities.

Pupils are received either as Foundationers or Non-Foundationers. The former must be the sons of living clergymen, and the latter must be members of the Church of England.

The school is divided into Classical and Modern sides. Latin is taught throughout the school, but on the Modern side, extra French is given in lieu of Greek.



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

My dear Chums,

The great event of the week was the arrival at St. Frank's of our new science-master, Professor Sylvester Tucker. The name of Tucker is not new to St. Frank's, for in the Fourth we have a junior, Timothy Tucker, forsooth, whose resemblance to the new science-master is very marked indeed. Had we not already known that the learned professor was an uncle of our young friend T. T., we should most surely have guessed some near family kinship between the two. It was unfortunate that the professor should have lost his way from the station, and, wandering into the Old Mill, get mistaken for an escaped lunatic. And I cannot help remarking that Timothy should be severely reprimanded for not meeting his uncle at the station, as any dutiful nephew would have done.

HANDY'S COMING NEW SERIAL.

"THE SIGN OF THE SCARLET SHADOW" comes to a sudden end with this week's instalment. I hope that Handy's admirers will not suffer any bad effects from shock at this startling news. The end had to come sooner or later, and as most of Handy's readers were expecting every week some dreadful catastrophe to happen, it would only be prolonging the agony to keep them in suspense any longer. But Handy is not deserting us yet, for next week the first instalment of a new serial from his pen will appear in the Mag. It will not be a story of Trackett Grim and Splinter, as these two worthies need a rest after their recent strenuous escapades. Handy's coming serial, entitled "IN QUEST OF GOLD," will be a tale of the wonderful exploits of two new characters, Claude Courage and Bob Brave.

HOW TO DO IT.

The Fourth has now a workshop of its own, thanks to the enterprise of Dick Good-

win and a few other enthusiasts. Dick, as you know, is a genius at making and inventing all kinds of useful articles, and the new workshop has been erected from his own plans by himself and his friends. The Head is very pleased with it, and declares it to be quite as good for practical purposes as the more costly and elaborate school workshops. The other day, out of curiosity, I looked in at the new workshop and found Goodwin putting the final touches to a model locomotive engine, which he had designed from tin cans and odd scraps of metal. I could hardly believe that this realistic model engine could have been constructed from such ordinary materials. He there and then explained to me how simple this engine was to make if only one set to work in the right way. All one wanted to know was "how to do it." That phrase set me thinking. Why not a "How to do it" series of articles for the Mag. by Dick Goodwin? To cut a long story short, for I have not much space left, Dick readily consented to my proposition, and offered to let me have the first article in time for next week's issue. To begin at the very beginning, he will tell you how to fit up a workshop. In the same article he will explain how to use the hand-saw, and how to bind the numbers of this paper into neat and handy volumes at very little cost. He is illustrating these articles with diagrams and plans, so that you cannot go wrong.

OTHER ARTICLES BY GOODWIN.

The week after next, Goodwin will describe how to make an inexpensive bookshelf for your volumes, and the following week he will write an article on how to frame your pictures. After that we come to the special Christmas numbers, when Goodwin will devote his articles to the construction of simple tricks and puzzles.

Your sincere chum,
REGGIE PITT.



OUR PORTRAIT GALLERY. *And WHO'S WHO.*



JOHNNY ONIONS

No. 33.—JOHNNY ONIONS.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Tall, slim, and soundly built, with rippling muscles and perfect poise of figure. Cheerful, freckled countenance. Well-formed, even features, with infectious smile. Eyes, deep brown. Hair, inclined to be auburn and curly. Height, 5 ft. 3 ins. Weight, 9 st. 1 lb. Birthday, October 10th.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

Good-natured and jovial. A born acrobat and as agile as a monkey. Apparently made of rubber—but really trained to the pitch of perfection. A trick-cyclist and tight-rope walker.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

Interested in running, jumping, swimming and wrestling. A perfect terror in the gymnasium, where he spends most of his spare time. Hobby: Inventing and practising novel gymnastic feats.

No. 34.—FREDERICK MARRIOTT.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Medium figure, with slightly drooping shoulders. Long neck and head. Characterless features, receding chin, uninteresting face and small, shifty eyes. Wears his hair greased and brushed straight back. Eyes, grey. Hair, dark. Height, 5 ft. 1 in. Weight, 8 st. 10 lb. Birthday, February 3rd.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

Weak-willed and easily led—especially into shady paths. A follower of Fullwood and Co. A pronounced snob, toadying to titles and wealth, and despising the humble and the honest. An unpleasant fellow.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

Only participates in sports by compulsion. Makes a pastime of terrorising younger and weaker boys. Hobbies: Smoking on the sly, playing cards, and reading forbidden literature.



FREDERICK MARRIOTT

THE FOURTH At ST. FRANK'S.



No. 35.—BERTIE ONIONS.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

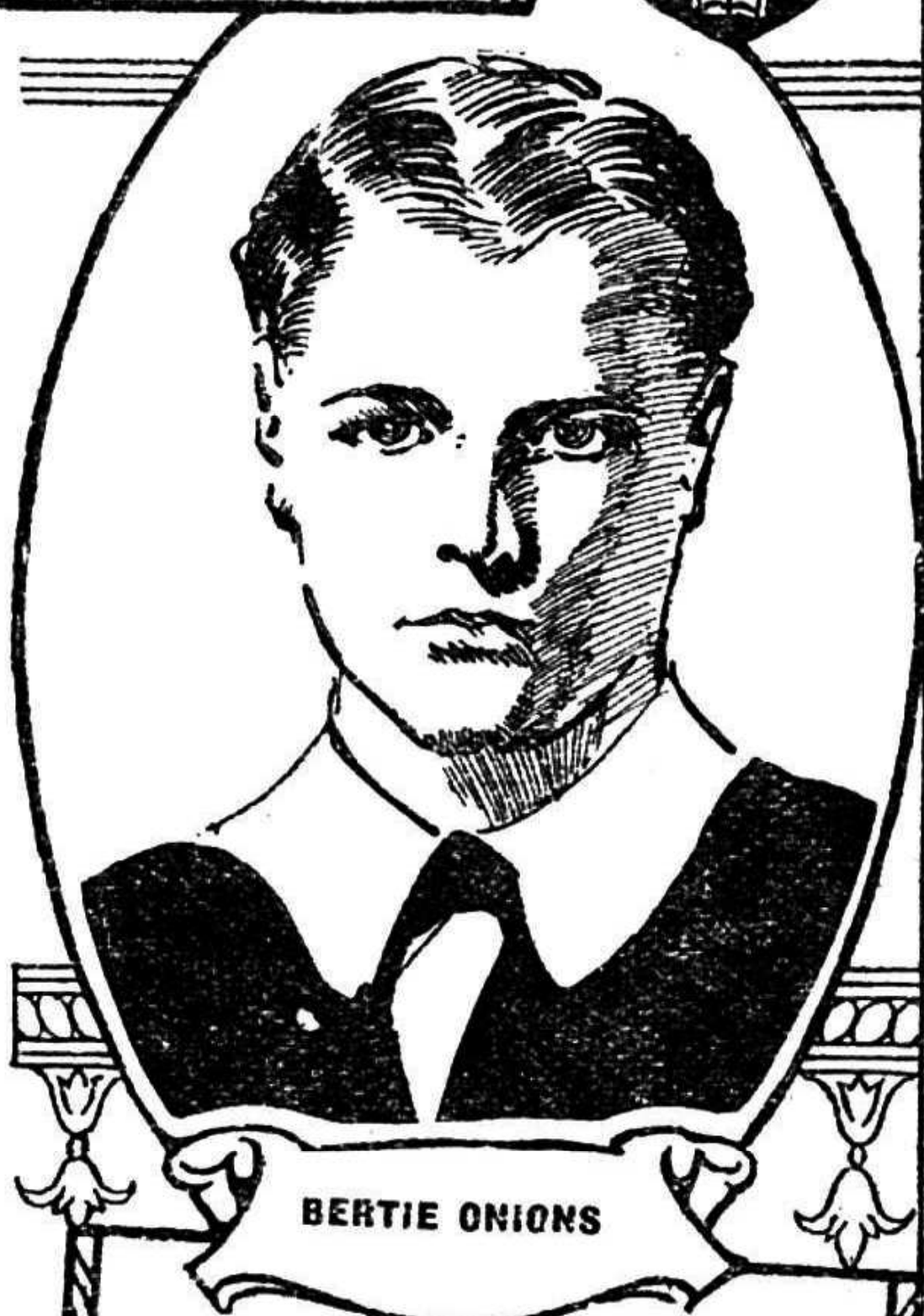
Soundly built, like his major, but slightly smaller—being a year younger. An extraordinarily gloomy-looking youngster, his face always wearing an expression of intense melancholy. He never smiles. Good-looking features, but lugubrious. Eyes, brown. Hair, fair. Height, 5 ft 1 in. Weight, 8 st. 12 lb. Birthday, October 2nd.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

An excellent scholar, being far keener at lessons than his elder brother. Kindly and generous by nature, possessing a keen sense of humour. Has great ability as a comedian, his gloomy expression assisting him. Has a trick of transforming his words or sentences, with comical results.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

Greatly interested in watching football and cricket and other games, although no champion himself. Hobbies: Cycling, reading, amateur performing, inventing jokes.



BERTIE ONIONS

No. 36.—ROBERT CANHAM.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Neat, well-proportioned figure. Sensitive, refined features, clear-cut and delicate. Pale complexion and thoughtful expression. Eyes, soft grey. Hair, brown. Height, 5 ft. Weight, 8 st. 9 lb. Birthday, May 8th.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

Quiet and reserved. Inclined to be shy except when excited. Neat and tidy in appearance and in all his habits. Courteous and obliging. A peaceful, likeable junior.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

A good reserve footballer and cricketer. Fond of the cinema and such-like quiet pastimes. Attends all school lectures, and loves scientific reading.



ROBERT CANHAM

NOTE—The ages of Fourth Form boys vary between fourteen and sixteen, but for obvious reasons no more definite information on this point can be given.

NEXT WEEK: Cecil de Valerie, David Merrell, Guy Pepys, John Holroyd.

HOW TO MAKE A GRAMOPHONE

By Hubert Jarrow

NOW, these gramophones are not half so intricate as they seem. Strictly speaking, all you need is an old clock-spring, and some works, and a tin trumpet, and there you are. You can easily make a sound-box out of an ointment tin, or something like that. Any fellow with a little ingenuity, and some glue, and a small soldering set, can do wonders.

Then, of course, there's the question of records. I don't advise anybody to make their own records—although, if it comes to that, we all make them. Take Fullwood's record, for example. He hasn't got much to boast of, has he?

Boasting is a bad habit, and I'm inclined to think that Handforth is very much of a culprit in that respect. But I can forgive him, because he boasts unconsciously. He doesn't mean to, but he's doing it all the time.

And this messing about with time. I mean, putting the clock back, and all that sort of nonsense. Mind you, I rather like the idea of having an extra hour of daylight in the summer time. But why stop there? Why not take it all through the year? I mean, we need an extra hour of daylight a lot more during the winter evenings than we do during the summer.

Of course, summer is something like a myth. Our fathers can remember summer time, but during my lifetime I've never actually seen one. The weather just gets a bit fine towards May, and before June is fairly on the go we're beginning to get the first taste of winter again.

And winter seems to have gone out of fashion, too. The pater talks about skating, and snow on the ground, and so forth. But how often do we see snow? And when can we enjoy three or four weeks' hard frost?

I mean, that's just the very word for it. Not only is summer-time a frost, but in winter-time there isn't any!

(All right, Hubert—don't worry! This article of yours is the biggest frost we shall see this winter. If anybody wants to construct a home-made gramophone, he'd better apply elsewhere.—ED.)

TRAVEL TALES.



By An Old Boy

(Lord Dorrimore's Weekly Trifle)

No. 23.—IN A HOLE—AND OUT.

AS a youth, I was afraid of nothing, and was ready for any adventure, however hazardous. So when a friend asked me if I would accompany him into the Morjave Desert, in California, for the purpose of laying out a course for a motor-cycle race—an "endurance run," as they call it—I at once consented.

The Morjave Desert is bigger than Great Britain and Ireland put together, and in the summer it is a veritable inferno, with a temperature of up to between 120 and 130 degrees. Just to exist there each man requires five or six gallons of water a day.

Our route lay through the loneliest and most terrible part of the desert, trackless and waterless—west of Death Valley. We travelled on a motor-cycle with side-car, and carried provisions and water for five days. On the fourth day out, when the sun was nearly down, we were going along gaily at over thirty miles an hour, when the machine dropped from under us, and we were both sent hurtling through space, and knocked unconscious. When we came to, we found that no bones were broken, though we were both bruised and sore. We managed to make a fire, and get some supper and some sleep.

In the morning, we found that the machine had plunged seventy-five feet over the face of a cliff, and if it hadn't landed in a dense undergrowth we should have been killed outright. We found there was no way out.

(Continued on page 10.)



THE SIGN OF THE SCARLET SHADOW!

*A Startling New Serial
of Mystery and Thrilling
Adventure, introducing
Trackett Grim and Splinter.*

By
EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH

DON'T TROUBLE TO READ THIS.

As this is the last instalment of this extraordinary serial, you don't need to know anything about the opening chapters. As a matter of fact, I can't be bothered to boil the whole thing down for the sake of one instalment. All you need to know is that Trackett Grim and Splinter have gone whizzing over a cliff in a motor-car. They've just rescued Sir Makeham Quiver from his villainous nephew. NOW YOU CAN GO AHEAD.

CHAPTER X.

TRACKETT GRIM'S TRIUMPH.

CRASH!

The hurtling motor-car met with a surprising fate. Instead of dashing itself to pieces on the cruel rocks, it landed on the quarter-deck of a tramp steamer that was just passing by at the time.

Trackett Grim shot out, and was on his feet in a trice. Splinter lay on the deck, a battered wreck. Both his legs were broken, and the poor youngster was nearly at his last gasp.

"Arrest that man!" roared Trackett Grim.

He pointed a steady finger at Standon Quiver—the arch-villain who had been trying to murder his uncle. And the captain of the steamer whipped out a pair of irons, and clapped them round the rotter's wrists.

"Good!" panted Trackett Grim. "We've won!"

He helped Sir Makeham out of the wreckage, and in a few moments the baronet was himself again. With Trackett Grim on one side, and with Splinter on the other, Sir Makeham was assisted to the cabin.

"Run and fetch some water!" commanded Grim.

Splinter dashed off, his nimble legs as

active as ever. He had come through the ordeal without a scratch. And in next to no time he was back with a big bucket of water. Without waiting for orders, he dashed the whole bucket of water over Sir Makeham's face.

"Mr. Grim, how can I thank you for all you have done?" murmured the master of Quiver Castle. "Needless to say, I shall give you a cheque for any sum you care to mention; but that is a mere trifle!"

"A trifle!" echoed Trackett Grim. "I don't call twenty quid a trifle! I shall want five pounds extra for Splinter, too. How's that, Sir Makeham?"

"You are too modest, Mr. Grim!" said the baronet. "You must allow me to make it guineas! But there is one thing I should like to know. There is one point which is worrying me intensely."

"Let's hear it—I'll soon put you right," declared Grim.

"How the dickens did my shadow turn red?" asked Sir Makeham tensely.

"Oh, that?" laughed Trackett Grim. "That's nothing! I don't know exactly, but I'll bet your beastly nephew had an electric torch with a red bulb. All he did was to flash it on, and give you a scare. As for the ghostly manifestations, he was responsible for the lot!"

At this moment a great splash sounded outside, and the captain came rushing down, with his bronzed, sunburnt features as pale as chalk.

"The prisoner has jumped overboard!" he gasped.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Grim. "He's escaped me!"

But there was no need for him to worry. Standon Quiver had taken care to tie a couple of anchors round him before leaping overboard. So he was still anchored there when Trackett Grim dashed to the rescue. And the rotter was taken ashore, tried for all his misdeeds, and sentenced to two months' hard labour on the spot.

The great case was ended, and Trackett Grim and Splinter had triumphed!

IN REPLY to YOURS



(NOTE.—Readers of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY can write to me and I will reply on this page. But don't expect an answer for several weeks—perhaps five or six. Address your letters or postcards to E. O. HANDFORTH, c/o The Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. —E.O.H.

ALFRED LIPSCHITZ (Baden-by-Wein, Vienna): I'm not replying to you in Austrian, because the other chaps wouldn't understand. Your postcard surprised me tremendously. Write a letter next time, won't you? Best wishes.

HANDFORTH'S REFORMER (Maida Vale): If you try to reform me, my lad, you'll get biffed! Besides, I don't need reforming, you chump! Your letter is a mere waste of jolly fine paper.

S. SIRRAH (Nottingham): Yes, two of our chaps come from Nottingham. No, you rotter, it isn't true that I take girls to the pictures. We go with Irene and Co. sometimes, but that's different. Satisfied?

FRANK ELMS (E.C.2.): St. Frank's is situated on the Sussex coast. It's about three miles from the sea, and not on the coast at all. Send me a telegram before you come down to see me or I might be out.

ONE OF TED'S ADMIRERS (Newark): Why should anybody lump my replies? Everybody ought to like 'em. I'll try and get Irene to write something for the Mag., but I can't promise. My portrait has appeared long ago.

BLACK CAT (Forest Gate): Got your postcard. I don't like that query on the third line—after you say that my Trackett Grim stories are wonderful. There's no doubt about the matter at all. They are!

Correspondence Answered by Edward Oswald Handforth

JUPPY (Wisbech): You're a queer sort. First you say the Old Paper ought to come out twice a week, and then you threaten to chuck it up! I haven't got much fear of your threats. You're just trying to be funny.

BIMBO (Hull): Am I interested in fishing? I should think I am! You ought to have seen the wonderful haddocks I caught in the Stowe the other day. Church says they were tiddlers, but don't you believe it!

JOHN BULL (Bootle): If you think the T.G. serial is daft, you needn't read it. I don't want to force you. But high-class literature is always difficult to read to a chap with few brains. That's one for you, Johnny!

A.B. (London): That ink of yours was a bit watered, but not half as bad as ours in Study D. Willy came in here an hour ago and got up to his usual mischief. When he escaped he was blue-black in the face.

GRGEEO O'GUARD (Jagersfontein, South Africa): I can't answer your letter, George, because it's spelt so badly. And I can't answer your cousin's because his name is a mere jumble. Even Trackett Grim couldn't unravel it.

LOUWRENS PRINSLOO (Witbank, Transvaal): Thanks for your chatty letter. Yes, of course I've got a bike, but it isn't a Falcon. You're quite right about Irene. She's a real sport, and so are her chums.

ALICK S. (Capetown): Sorry to hear about your toe. I've never had mine busted, but I expect it must be painful. It's no good me telling you a remedy, because your toe will be well before this letter arrives.

A COLONIAL (Knights, South Africa): So you live on the Rand? It must be funny living on a place like that. I suppose it's a hill of some kind? Are lessons a nuisance? What a question to ask! There's only one reply.

WILLIAM A. HARPER (San Francisco, Cal.): Yes, I was certainly surprised to get your letter. I've been in California, you know—Los Angeles and San Diego

St Frank's Magazine

and San Bernardino, etc. I'm awfully sorry I didn't visit 'Frisco, too.

JACK. BETTENS (Toronto, Canada): There's a nice way to start your letter—Dear Chump! At first I decided not to answer you, then I changed my mind. But I've changed it again now, so I shan't reply at all!

J. SOUTHWELL (Hull): My dear ass, I've had dozens of letters from Hull! And you claim to be the first. I'm glad you like Irene, but if you think she's coming to Hull to see you, you've made a mistake. I've given your note to Willy.

IRENE BERMAN (Bow): How can my Trackett Grim stories be wonderful upside down? You can't read them at all like that. I'm awfully sorry I can't send you those back numbers. They've been out of print for years.

DORRIE (Newcastle-upon-Tyne): Thanks for passing the Old Paper on to a friend every week. That idea of yours about an Annual is terrific, but I'm afraid you'll have to wait until next year before you see anything like it.

A. S. CLUB (Worthing): I agree with you that my T.G. stories are a good remedy for sleep. Once a chap starts reading about Trackett Grim his tiredness is all cured, and he's injected with pep and alertness.

LEEKY (Staines): Is Willy such a goody-goody as he used to be? Who told you that fairy-tale? He never has been goody-goody. As far as I can remember the young bouncer has always been baddy-baddy!

CURIOUS (Manchester): If you want to know what's happened at St. Frank's while you've been in Canada you'd better buy the back numbers and read them up. Sorry I can't fill fifty-two numbers of the Old Paper with your reply.

SIDNEY FOX (Clapton): You don't hear much of Fatty Little because he's always eating. His mouth is too full for him to speak. And even when it's empty he only yells for it to be filled up again. So what's the use?

R.J.W. (Rossendale): Considering that you've called me a fatheaded chunk of refuse, I'm a softhearted idiot for replying at all. My hat! I've just seen that you called me a Borneo gorilla! Fathead! I've never been in Borneo!

C. A. BARRETT (Walthamstow): Church and McClure have been cackling at the last reply so much that I've forgotten what I was going to say to you. So you can just thank that funny lunatic who calls me a gorilla.

B.C. (Brighton): I suppose you think you're a Bright 'un, just because you send me a jumble of letters you call a code? I can't waste my time puzzling

over your piffle. Even Church and McClure jib at it.

DUMKINS (Brockley): What's the idea? You don't live in Brockley any more than B.C. lives in Brighton. You both live in Northants, or I'm a Dutchman. And if it comes to that, so does the chap I'm going to reply to next!

LUFFEY (Brockley): You three are trying to have a game with me I can see! You all live in Brockley, and you think you can pull my leg. You seem to forget that I'm the living personification of Trackett Grim.

GRACIE (Kennington): When did I first come to St. Frank's? Goodness knows! I've forgotten the date long ago; but if you want to know when I first appeared in the stories, well, I've been in 'em all the time!

DORIS (Forest Gate): Here, steady! Not so many "darlings" and "dearests" and "sweethearts." When the other chaps read your letter they nearly chipped me silly. And now Willy's pinched it to show to Irene.

GWEN FARRAR (Huddersfield): Trackett Grim's motor-car is a marvellous racer of seven hundred horse-power. Don't you worry about being a girl. It's all very well to be a boy, but girls have the best time of it, especially tomboys.

SMITH THOMPSON (Bradford): Thanks for those sketches of yours. It's like your nerve to picture me as a kid about seven; but the drawings are so good that I forgive you. You'll be a great artist one day.

TED.

NEXT WEEK.

DICK GOODWIN begins a special series of articles entitled :

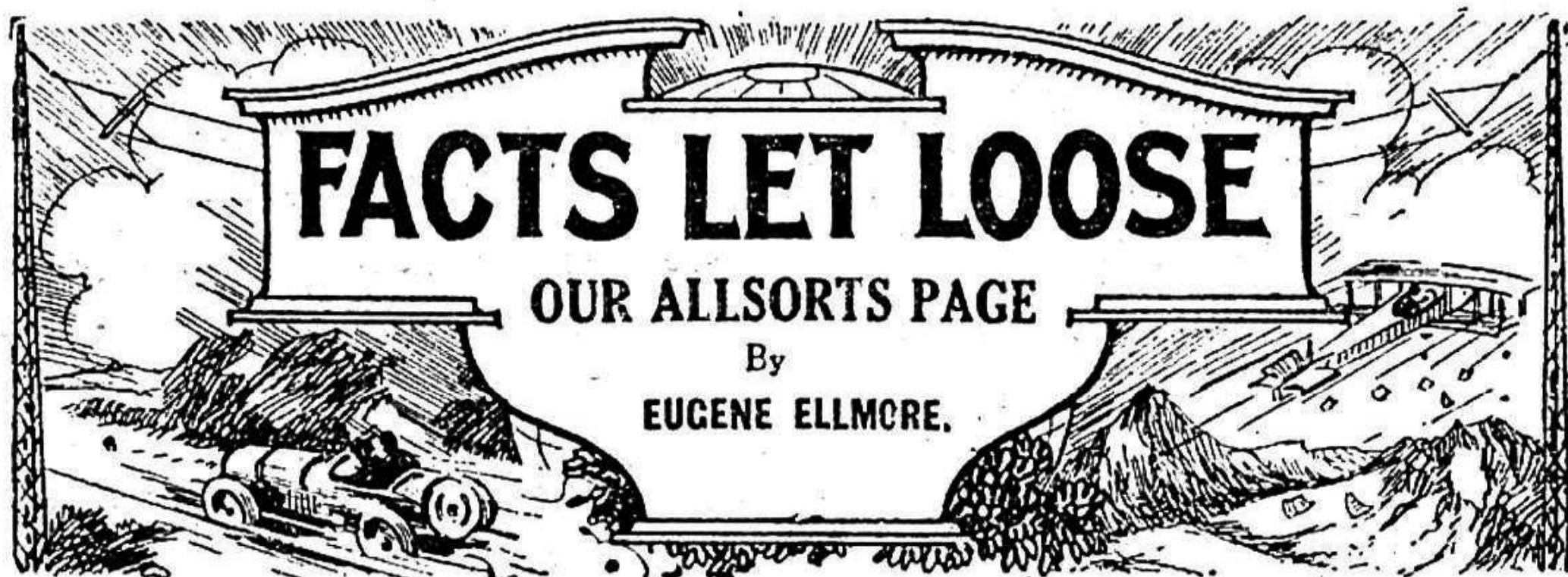
HOW TO DO IT!

In his first article he will tell you

**HOW TO FIT UP A
WORKSHOP,**

**HOW TO USE THE HAND-
SAW,**

**and a simple method of binding
the numbers of this paper.**



A LIVELY SQUIRREL.

A Plaintain squirrel has just been presented to the Zoo. Its fur is brindled greyish black and chestnut, and its tail is very fluffy—quite a brush. Its eyes are very large, bright black, and its face has a perky expression, while its nose is very sensitive. But its chief characteristic is that it is a marvellous acrobat. It will take a flying leap from the floor to the top of its house, describe a series of complete circles in the air, turn back somersaults, and so on. And it will keep up these antics all the livelong day, except when it is eating. It is quite docile and friendly, and accepts nuts, sweets, and other dainties through the bars, and then it starts its antics and stunts all over again. Evidently it enjoys life.

EMIGRANTS.

During the last three years the number of emigrants from the British Isles has been as follows: In 1921 the male emigrants were 79,462; in 1922, 77,073; in 1923, 141,027 (note the increase). The female emigrants were: in 1921, 87,554; in 1922, 70,816; in 1923, 89,884.

Agriculturists formed the largest percentage, being 18.4 of the total males in 1921 and 1922, and 20.1 in 1923.

More miners, engineers, builders, and quarrymen are emigrating. In the metal workers and engineering groups the percentage rose from 11.0 in 1921 to 15.0 in 1922, and to 19.0 in 1923.

Skilled workers whose trades are not specified increased from 11.1 per cent. of the total in 1921 and 1922, to 13 per cent. in 1923.

Labourers and professional men are not emigrating to the same extent as the other classes. Some of the professional groups showed a falling off from 17.0 in 1921 to 10.0 in 1923; others a decrease from 7.6 to 3.4.

Labourers other than agricultural or transport were 13.2 per cent. of the total

emigrants in 1921, 10.0 per cent. in 1922, and 14.6 in 1923.

Among the female emigrants nearly half are described as wives or housewives. The percentage of women employed in domestic and hotel service, and similar occupations, was 27.0 per cent. in 1921; 27.4 in 1922; and 28.5 in 1923.

If capable men and women are the highest and most valuable form of a nation's capital, then Great Britain is losing its most precious assets at a tremendously rapid rate. Where the emigrants become Empire settlers, the loss is not so serious.

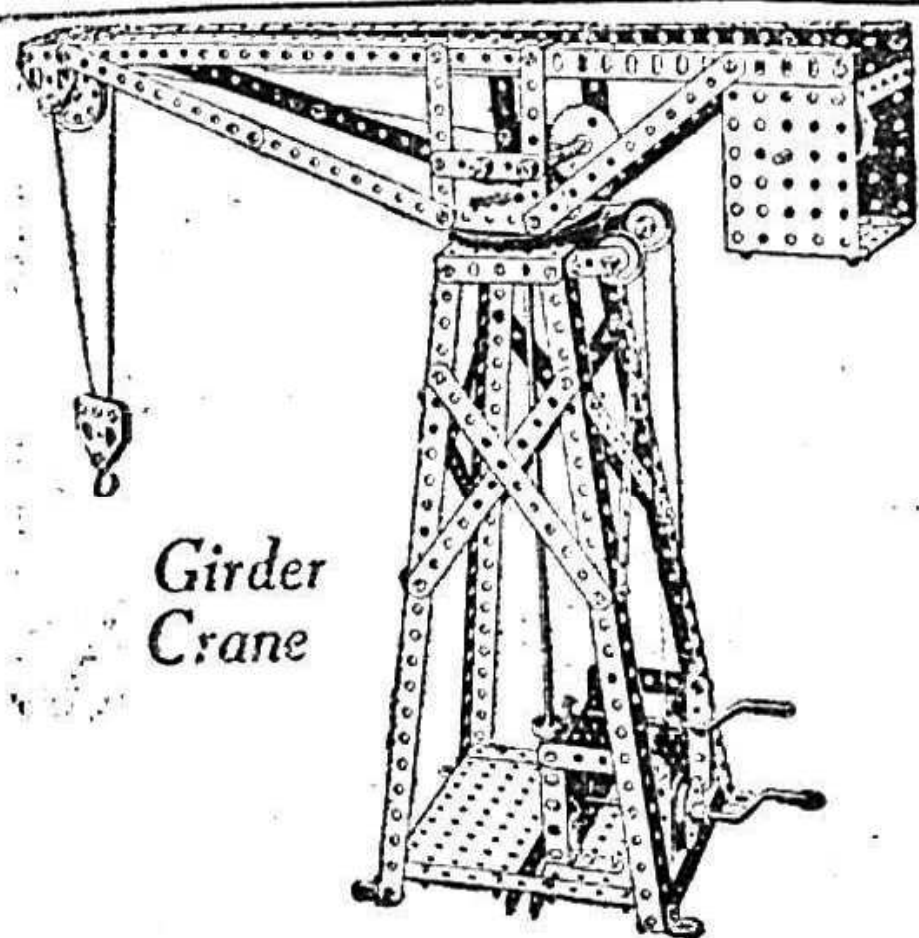
TRAVEL TALES

(Continued from page 6.)

We could walk miles in any direction, but we always came to frowning rock walls, almost perpendicular. To add to our miseries, there seemed to be no water, and we had only about nine gallons left. What a prospect! To die of thirst in that fearful chasm!

However, we decided that there was just a chance of surviving if we could take the machine to pieces and reassemble it. By great good fortune, it had not suffered serious injury. But how were we to haul the parts, some of them heavy, up those cliff walls, in that fearful heat, and with scarcely any water to drink? We managed it, though, by chewing cactus pith to moisten our parched throats. The machine, when put together, was found to work perfectly. And, late one afternoon, we started back for civilisation, my friend driving at an alarming pace.

Next day we reached a well-known centre a hundred and fifty miles away, and came upon a party of friends, who had searched the desert for us, and given us up! We read in the Los Angeles papers an account of the way in which we had perished in the desert!



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Crane

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REAL ENGINEERING

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D/R

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