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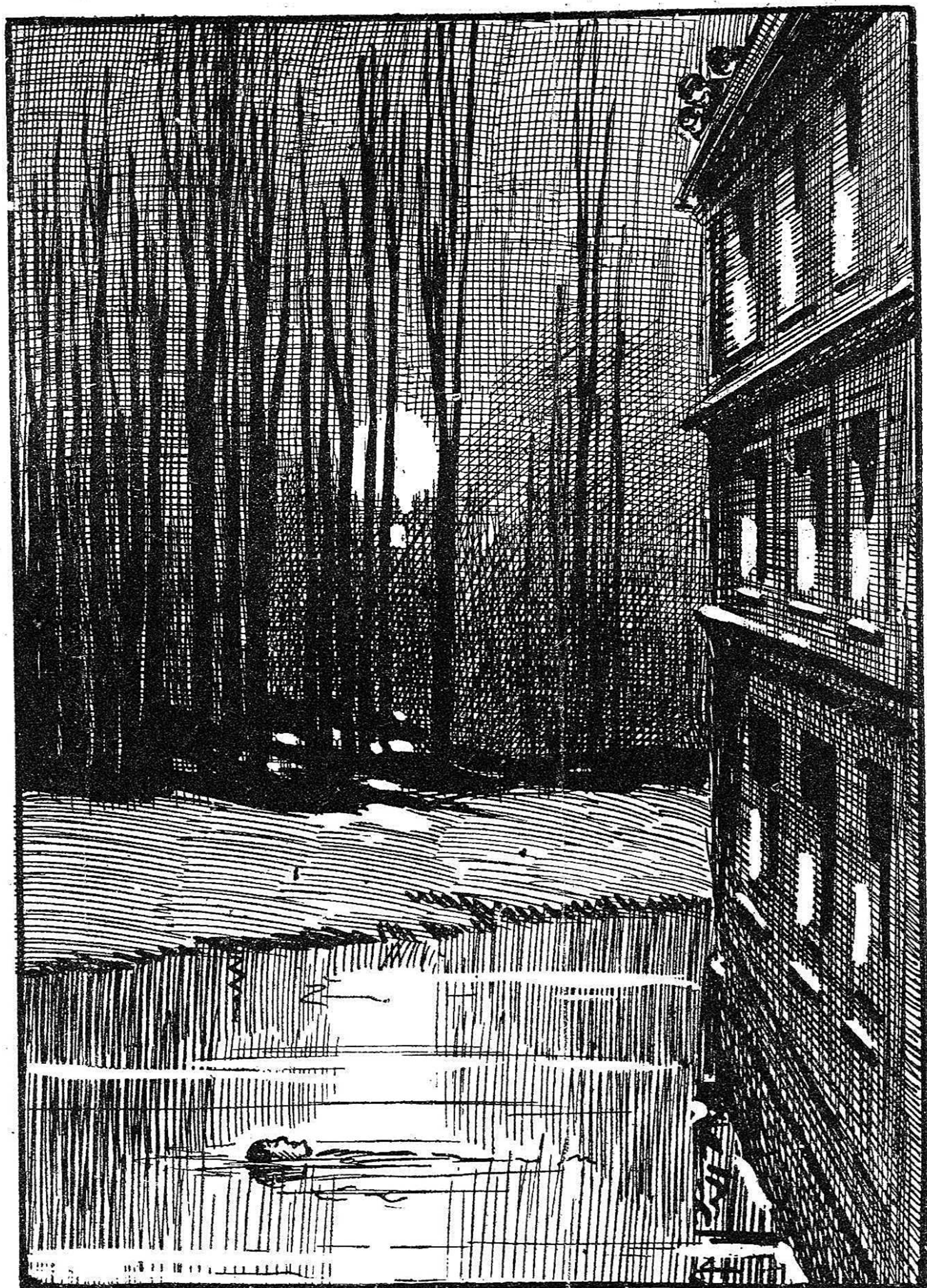
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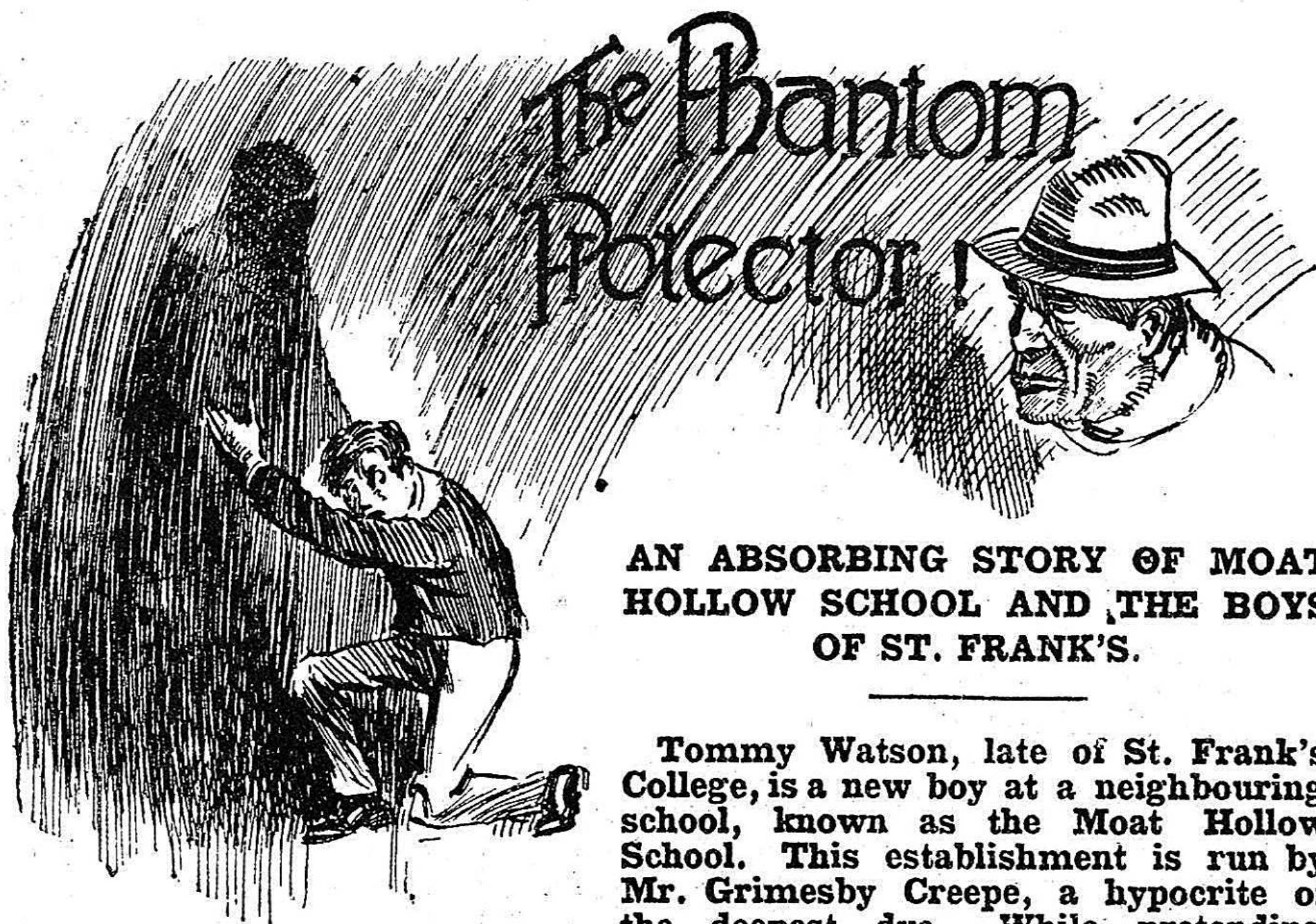
The PHANTOM PROTECTOR!

"KEEP BACK!" SHOUTED
WATSON FIERCELY, "I
WON'T BE TAKEN."

A Thrilling Situation from This
Week's Grand Long Story of
the Moat Hollow School and
the Boys of ST. FRANK'S.



They saw their victim floating there—a ghastly figure in the calm moonlight.



AN ABSORBING STORY OF MOAT HOLLOW SCHOOL AND THE BOYS OF ST. FRANK'S.

Tommy Watson, late of St. Frank's College, is a new boy at a neighbouring school, known as the Moat Hollow School. This establishment is run by Mr. Grimesby Creepe, a hypocrite of the deepest dye. While pretending to the parents and guardians of his victims that the boys are well cared for, he actually treats them like convicts. Once a boy arrives at the school he remains a prisoner under the watchful eye of Creepe and his monitors. The boys are half-starved, and live under terribly hard conditions, doing more manual work for Creepe's benefit than ordinary school work. Watson's old chums at St. Frank's get to hear that things are pretty bad at Moat Hollow, and are determined to help him. How Watson is protected from his persecutors by an unknown friend is described in the story you are about to read.

THE EDITOR.

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

CHAPTER I.

THE WORRIES OF SIR MONTIE.

SIR MONTIE TREGELLIS-WEST, of the Fourth Form at St. Frank's, paced slowly up and down Study P, in the Ancient House. There was a worried expression on his usually urbane countenance.

It was getting on for supper-time, and Montie had already finished his prep. Occasionally, he glanced at the handsome green marble clock on the mantelpiece, as though anxious for the time to speed away.

A cheerful fire burned in the grate, and the luxurious lounge was occupied by the reclining figure of Archie Glenthorne. Archie, in fact, was just dozing off into peaceful slumber.

Crash!

A small occasional table overturned nosily as Tregellis-West bumped against it in turning. He had been so deep in thought that he had actually become clumsy—an unheard of thing for Sir Montie.

"Sorry, dear fellow," he said, as he noticed Archie opening his eyes. "Very clumsy of me—it was, really. But these little things will happen, you know. Life's full of worries."

Archie yawned.

"Oh, rather!" he agreed sleepily. "I mean to say, don't mind me a bit, laddie! Carry on with the good work! The idea, I gather, is to wreck the happy home, what?"

"I am worried, Archie—that's what's the matter with me," said Tregellis-West, picking the table up and then seating himself.

"I can't keep still, you know. I want bed-time to come—an' the clock seems to tick away with dreadful slowness."

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "Laddie, you've hit it. Clocks have a frightfully queer habit like that. When you want the good old time to flow away on wings, the clock simply staggers along its old course like a dashed snail. But if you've only got five minutes to catch a train, the same bally clock whizzes forward like the good old dickens. Dashed rummy, what?"

Archie closed his eyes wearily. Such a long speech had practically exhausted him. And Tregellis-West managed to smile. Since he had shared Study P with Archie and Alf Brent he had often had occasion to be amused at Archie's quaintness.

The arrangement was a new one. Montie's bosom chum, Tommy Watson, was not at St. Frank's this term, and so that celebrated apartment, Study C, was now bare and empty. At Archie's invitation, Tregellis-West had brought his goods and chattels into Glenthorne's comfortable sanctum.

"You're too much of a slacker, Archie," declared Tregellis-West. "Why don't you come with me after lights out to-night? The run would do you good—it would, really."

Archie sat up, and looked pained.

"Come with you—after lights out?" he repeated vaguely.

"Yes."

"Who, me?"

"Of course, dear boy."

"Good gad!" said Archie. "What an absolutely poisonous suggestion! Why, dash it, once I creep into the old cot, and Phipps has tucked me away for the night, I haven't got energy enough to shift the good old pillow! Sorry, old chestnut, but it can't be done! Absolutely not! In fact, positively not, with considerable emphasis!"

Tregellis-West shrugged his shoulders.

"I didn't expect you would take it on," he replied calmly. "You're getting lazier every day, dear old man. It's frightfully worryin', an' I don't wonder at your people bein' windy. I don't, really."

"Windy?" repeated Archie. "Oddslife! What a foul thought! Nothing of the kind, old cabbage! Last week I was dashed rocky—in fact, at one time I really thought the old heart was about to cease functioning. But all's well, laddie. Archie may be slightly washed out, but he's on the good old spot. But what's this about getting up after light's out? What's this fruity scheme concerning a run, and all that sort of stuff?"

"I'm thinkin' about Tommy Watson," replied Sir Montie thoughtfully.

"Oh, rather! Good old Tommy, what?" murmured Archie. "Poor old chappie! Down at Moat Hollow, isn't he? And he hasn't been up to St. Frank's once

since he first arrived? Somewhat thoughtless of him—"

"He came once, Archie, but that's all," interrupted Tregellis-West. "That was on the evening of his arrival. Since then he hasn't been near us—an' somehow I can't get near him. It's a frightful position—it is, really. I'm beginnin' to get concerned. There must be somethin' the matter. An' it's so strange, because Tommy told us that Moat Hollow is a rippin' place."

Archie nodded sympathetically.

"You mustn't worry, laddie," he said. "I mean to say, worrying is a dashed exhausting kind of business. All sorts of chappies have staggered into an early grave through worrying."

"Well, I can't help it," said Montie firmly. "I've got a feelin' that poor old Tommy is in trouble. I wrote to him this mornin', an' the letter's delivered by this time. I've told him to sneak out after goin' to bed an' meet me at the corner of the garden wall at exactly eleven o'clock. I'm hopin' he'll be there."

"Over the garden wall, what?" murmured Archie. "A juicy proposition, laddie, but I'm afraid it doesn't appeal. I mean to say, at the unearthly hour of eleven I shall be far away in the hands of Mr. Morpheus. A dashed bright lad, that Morpheus chappie! As a matter of fact, he and I are frightfully thick with one another!"

"Begad, I've noticed it!" chuckled Sir Montie. "All right, Archie—don't bother. Perhaps it'll be better if I go alone. I wouldn't dream of disturbin' your beauty sleep. You need it badly."

Tregellis-West passed out of the study, and Archie pondered.

"A somewhat foul remark!" he murmured drowsily. "I mean, beauty sleep, what? And the old horse absolutely says I need it. When I can gather enough energy, I shall have to tick him off, dash him!"

And Archie Glenthorne dozed gracefully away.

CHAPTER II.

THE GENEROSITY OF FULLWOOD.



"PLEASE, Fullwood—"
"Get out of here!"

"Oh, but, really—"

"I won't tell you a second time!" said Ralph Leslie Fullwood, half rising to his feet. "I don't allow worms in this study! Buzz off before I chuck somethin' at you! I'm busy!"

The leader of the Nuts was lounging in the easy-chair in Study A, with his feet on the fender, and with a pink newspaper in his hand. He didn't look busy, in spite of what he said, but he probably knew best.

A cringing figure stood in the study doorway—a thin, weedy junior with a bit of a hunched back, and sharp and foxy features. Enoch Snipe was by no means a handsome fellow.

"I—I'm sorry, Fullwood—I didn't mean to bother you," he said meekly. "I came here for some advice. I was hoping that you would be able to give it to me, as you are so clever."

Fullwood looked at his visitor suspiciously. "If you're tryin' to be funny—" he began.

"Oh, no, no!" interrupted Snipe hastily. "Not at all, Fullwood! Please, I want you to help me in a financial matter. No, I don't want to borrow anything!" he went on, edging into the room. "I—I've had a fiver from home, and I want you to help me."

Fullwood laid his paper aside and sat up. "Come in!" he said cordially. "A fiver, eh? Well, I don't mind, old man! I'm always ready to give advice to a pal!"

Enoch Snipe closed the door of Study A, and advanced into the room with that peculiar cringing walk of his. There was a trace of a smirk on his face, but Fullwood affected not to notice it.

He regarded Snipe with interest. The visitor was no oil-painting—as Handforth had once put it. His foxy expression, his shifty, watery eyes with their red rims, and his abject attitude were certainly no recommendation. It was hardly surprising that he was known in the Fourth as the Worm.

Snipe had been away for some time, and he hadn't been missed much. Nobody took any particular interest in him. Even Timothy Tucker and Clarence Fellowe—who shared Study I with him—hardly took any notice of his existence. Snipe always effaced himself—he seemed to have an idea that he was unfit to be on earth.

And any fellow who was too spineless to stand up for himself was certain of a rough time in the Fourth. But Enoch Snipe with a fiver was quite a novel proposition to Fullwood.

"Let's have a look at that money of yours!" said the leader of Study A. "You're several kinds of a liar—"

"Oh, please, Fullwood!" said Snipe cringing. "I've really got a fiver—my uncle sent it to me. I know you're wonderful at playing cards, so I thought you'd help me to increase the—"

"Let's have a look at that money!" interrupted Fullwood grimly.

Enoch Snipe fumbled in his pocket, and produced a carefully folded piece of crisp white paper. Fullwood seized it and smoothed it out. It was certainly a genuine five-pound Bank of England note.

"By gad I thought you were tryin' to pull my leg!" exclaimed Fullwood, frankly astonished. "Well, what do you want me

to do with this? An' what's happened to your uncle all of a sudden? Come into a fortune, or somethin'?"

Snipe wriggled.

"I think my uncle had a big deal on the Stock Exchange," he replied. "Please be quick, Fullwood. Gulliver and Bell will be here soon, and I don't want them to know about this. They might try to borrow a pound or two."

Fullwood fingered the fiver lovingly. Snipe's last words made him pause. He had been about to suggest a loan on his own account, but reconsidered the matter. For once he was nearly penniless, and he would have cheerfully descended to the indignity of borrowing money from Snipe.

But Snipe, apparently, was in no lending mood.

"Well, I'm not a magician," said Fullwood gruffly. "I can't roll this thing up and turn it into two! What's this advice you want?"

Snipe smirked again.

"You always were so clever with your jokes, Fullwood!" he said, with intense admiration. "I know you can't turn it into two by rolling it up, but I've heard that you know some men in Bannington—at the Wheatsheaf, I believe—and if you play cards with them for money you win an awful lot. I—I thought—"

"Oh, so that's the game?" interrupted Fullwood slowly. "You want me to take this fiver and play poker with it? I might lose it, of course, but that's a very remote possibility. With any ordinary luck, I'll double this cash—"

"Oh, but please, Fullwood!" interrupted Snipe. "Please, I don't want you to take the money! I want to go with you, so that I can play poker. Can't we slip away to Bannington after lights out?"

Fullwood stared.

"You silly ass!" he said witheringly. "If you play poker, you'll lose that note in less than five minutes—an' that'll be expensive pleasure, my gay young buck! A quid a minute, remember!"

"Oh, really!" protested Snipe. "I shan't lose, Fullwood, and I promise to give you a quarter of my winnings—"

"You young idiot!" snapped Fullwood. "If I take you with me on those terms I shan't see a cent! We'll go to Bannington after lights out if you like, but we'll divide this fiver up, and start equally. At the end of the game I'll hand you your two-pound-ten back, and half of everything I win. That's fair enough, isn't it?"

"Thank you, Fullwood—I couldn't want anything better," said Snipe, his eyes almost gleaming. "I want to win a lot of money if I can, because I'd like to buy a bicycle."

Fullwood grinned, and felt good-tempered.

And he arranged that the pair of them should set out at about eleven o'clock. Everything would be quiet by then, and

the sportsmen at the Wheatsheaf were always easier to handle at about midnight.

Fullwood regarded the prospect as favourable. He would have fifty shillings to play with—and if he couldn't trust himself to keep his capital and his winnings for himself at the end of the game he wouldn't be worth calling a player!

Snipe's fiver, in fact, was beginning to look a bit sick already.

CHAPTER III.

MR. GRIMESBY CREEPE IS AMUSED.



MOAT HOLLOW lay in dense shadow.

The winter's evening was growing late, and the half moon was nearly concealed behind a bank of high clouds. The night was frosty, and the few visible stars were glittering with a hard and brilliant light. The whole countryside was gripped by the cold.

And Moat Hollow, standing behind its grim, ten-foot walls, was a place of gloom and darkness. Mr. Grimesby Creepe had sent his pupils to bed long since, and he was in his own cosy living-room, which, in contrast to the rest of the strange school, lacked no comforts.

Mr. Creepe sat in an easy-chair before the fire. He had taken his collar off, and he was wearing a rusty old dressing-gown. His feet were encased in thick felt slippers, and near his elbow, on the table, stood a glass of hot toddy.

Mr. Creepe was no beauty, with his short, thick-set figure, and his heavy-jowled features. He needed a shave, too, and his bushy eyebrows gave him an appearance of general hairiness.

"A most interesting letter—indeed, quite an attractive communication," he murmured. "Somehow, I don't think Master Watson will keep the appointment. A pity—a thousand pities! But what the eye doesn't see the heart doesn't grieve about—and, certainly, Watson's eye will never see this!"

He chuckled heavily, and lay back in his chair. A minute later the door opened, and a burly, brutal-looking youth entered. He found Mr. Creepe industriously plying his quill between his teeth. Mr. Creepe and his toothpick were inseparable.

"Ah, Kirby, finished?" asked the schoolmaster. "Everything locked up? Everything tight for the night? Good! Come inside and sit down. Cold, eh? There's a sharp frost to-night, Kirby!"

Mr. Creepe's chief monitor came into the room and closed the door. He was grinning slightly. Apparently, his chief had performed, or was contemplating, some spiteful action. Mr. Creepe was always good-tempered on such occasions.

"Everything's locked up, sir," said Kirby. "The boys are in bed, and asleep."

"Splendid!" said Mr. Creepe. "What about the kitchen fire?"

"I've attended to it."

"You removed all the half-burnt embers, and laid them in the fender?" asked the schoolmaster keenly. "We can't have any waste, Kirby. Waste is a sin! And how about Watson?" he went on. "How is our awkward pupil getting on?"

"Oh, he's as obstinate as ever," growled Kirby. "We've got to use force all the time. But he'll soon get better, sir—another two or three weeks, and he'll eat out of my hand!"

Mr. Grimesby Creepe nodded thoughtfully.

"I'm afraid we were rather unwise in accepting Watson as a pupil," he mused. "Yes, Kirby, unwise. But it's no good complaining now—we can't send him back. When I interviewed the boy's father I had no idea that Watson had previously been at St. Frank's. It's awkward, Kirby."

"Because these St. Frank's boys keep bothering, sir?" asked Kirby.

"Exactly."

"Well, it doesn't make much difference," said the monitor. "As far as I can see, these St. Frank's kids are a lot of spying busybodies, and they'd have been curious about us, Watson or no Watson."

"Yes, I dare say you're right," agreed Mr. Creepe. "And it's no good worrying about it. I have a letter here, Kirby—a most interesting document, which arrived by the evening post."

"I thought you were looking pleased, sir," said Kirby.

"No, hardly pleased—you are wrong there!" said the schoolmaster. "I am merely entertained, Kirby. One of the St. Frank's boys—an impudent fellow, named Tregellis-West—has actually written to Watson, urging him to insubordination. I have a mind to take this letter to the Headmaster of St. Frank's."

"Is it as bad as all that, sir?"

"It is dreadful!" said Mr. Creepe, shocked. "It is a direct incitement to mutiny. Tregellis-West is breaking bounds after lights out to-night, and he is actually coming to this school at eleven o'clock."

"Coming here, sir?" repeated Kirby, staring.

"Yes, coming here! He says so in the letter!" exclaimed Mr. Creepe. "And he urges Watson to sneak out of the house just before eleven, and to climb the wall. The idea, apparently, is a simple one. Tregellis-West merely desires a quiet chat with his former school chum."

Kirby grinned.

"Somehow, I don't think Watson will get out, sir," he chuckled.

"Hardly," agreed Mr. Creepe. "In the first place, he will have to dodge the monitor in the dormitory, then he will find it necessary to force one of the windows, after which the unfortunate Watson will

have to swim the moat. A sad case, Kirby—a very lamentable case. I am afraid Tregellis-West fails to appreciate the exact nature of our precautions.”

“Yes, sir—he thinks that this is just an ordinary school, and that any of the kids can sneak out just as they like,” said the monitor. “Of course, you won’t fail to be on the alert at eleven o’clock, will you?”

Mr. Creepe rose to his feet.

“I shall not fail!” he replied, a hard note creeping into his voice. “Watson, of course, is in ignorance of this affair, and will be sleeping peacefully. But I shall certainly attend to Tregellis-West. A pity, Kirby—a thousand pities! But we cannot allow this sort of thing to develop!”

The dormitory at Moat Hollow was a wretched place.

The walls were bare and ugly, the ceiling was cracked and broken in more places than one. Underfoot there were the bare boards, and both the big windows were draughty and treacherous.

Both sides of the room were lined with tiny, ramshackle beds—cheap, ancient articles devoid of springs and decent mattresses. The keynote of Mr. Creepe’s policy was—economy. Furthermore, he held the view that boys should not be too comfortable in bed.

“Give boys a lot of comfort,” said Mr. Creepe, “and the young cubs will never

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CHAPTER IV.

THE UNFORTUNATES.



TOMMY WATSON stirred uneasily, and attempted to gather the miserable blankets closer round him.

The long, draughty room was freezingly cold, and only a single night-light burned at the far end. Here, well wrapped up and protected from the cold, sat one of Mr. Grimesby Creepe's monitors.

want to get up at all! If they work hard they'll sleep on a board! After my training they'll be fit for any hard knocks in later life! There's nothing like Spartan discipline."

Mr. Creepe made a virtue of his criminal meanness. By giving his boys hard beds and insufficient blankets he consoled himself by the thought that he was doing them good. Mr. Creepe was a humbug—a despicable rascal, who performed his acts of tyranny under a cloak.

Tommy Watson wasn't asleep. He turned over in bed, and lay there, cold and miser-

able. He hadn't been in this school a week yet, and he was still unbroken.

He felt that he had been swindled—as, indeed, he had. But the thought which hurt him most was connected with his father. He knew well enough that Sir Vivian Watson had acted in good faith. His father believed him to be happy and content. And, somehow, Watson felt as helpless as a prisoner in the confines of a barred dungeon.

There was no escape at Moat Hollow.

The vigilance was too strict, the wretched pupils were watched day and night, with never the slightest opportunity of making a bid for liberty. Only the monitors were allowed out of the school grounds. And these fellows, enjoying certain pronounced privileges, could safely be trusted. For their own sakes, they would not divulge the grim truths of Moat Hollow to any outsider.

The other boys, Tommy Watson included, were kept like convicts during the day. They were marched from class-room to dining-hall, and from dining-hall to class-room under the eyes of the monitors. The boys were never allowed a single minute of liberty.

Even during their brief spells of recreation in the grounds they were hemmed in by the high walls, and were constantly watched by their guards. Any sudden dash was out of the question.

It was the same at night. Mr. Creepe had instituted a system of watches. A monitor was always on duty in the dormitory—wakeful and watchful. And even this obvious indignity—this final humiliation—was masked by the cunning Mr. Creepe. He blandly declared that he was so concerned for his pupils' safety and comfort that he even posted a monitor on duty in case a boy should be taken ill!

But none of the unfortunates were deceived. They knew well enough that the night monitor was there to prevent any possible escapes.

Tommy Watson was feeling desperate. A few days earlier he had been compelled to write to his father a lying, deceptive letter at Mr. Creepe's dictation. At first Tommy had refused—only to receive a thrashing which well-nigh stunned him into submission.

There had been no reply to that letter. At least, Watson had seen none. But this was nothing to go by—since Mr. Creepe opened all letters that came for his pupils. As a matter of fact, Watson's father had replied by return of post, and his letter had given Mr. Creepe complete satisfaction.

Watson was rather stunned by his new life. He had come to this school expecting to be near St. Frank's—happy in the knowledge that he would be able to enjoy the companionship of his old chums. But since entering this house of dread, he had been cut off completely from the rest of the world. And he was feeling wretched, indeed. Healthy sleep refused to come to his relief. He could only toss uneasily from side to side.

The dormitory door opened, and Kirby entered. The other monitor rose, yawning, from his seat.

"Two minutes late!" he grumbled. "I'm just about fed up. This room's as cold as a refrigerator!"

"All right—get off to bed," said Kirby. "I'm in for my two hours now, and—Hullo! What are you awake for, Watson? You ought to have been asleep hours ago."

Kirby walked up the dormitory and stood looking down at the wakeful junior.

"I've got some news for you!" he went on, grinning. "It ought to send you to sleep in a peaceful state of mind. The Head's had a letter from one of your famous chums—a kid named West—"

"Montie!" muttered Watson, sitting up. "A letter? For me? Where is it? I want to see—"

"Steady on—steady on!" interrupted Kirby sourly. "You won't see the letter, my lad! Mr. Creepe's got it. But it might interest you to know that your precious pal is breaking bounds to-night—especially to see you!"

Tommy Watson flushed with eagerness.

"He's coming to see me!" he repeated huskily.

"Yes, he's coming—but he won't see you!" said Kirby. "He'll see Mr. Creepe instead! The young idiot is going to be outside the school wall at eleven o'clock! He wanted you to meet him, but I'm afraid the night's too cold. We can't allow you to risk a chill, you know!" he added.

Watson's eyes blazed.

"You taunting rotter!" he panted. "Why can't you let me out? Why can't you let me have a word with Montie? What's the time now?"

"Don't worry—it's not much after nine," interrupted Kirby. "But it would be all the same if it was eleven. You'd better get to sleep as soon as you can. Your pal won't see you, but Mr. Creepe has kindly consented to act as a deputy."

And Kirby walked up the dormitory, chuckling.

Watson sat in bed, staring straight before him. His mind was in a turmoil, but of all his emotions one stood out beyond the others. It was hatred—intense, burning hatred against Mr. Grimesby Creepe, his monitors, and his whole disgraceful establishment.

CHAPTER V.

AT THE HOUR OF ELEVEN.



TEN-THIRTY chimed solemnly and sedately from the school clock at St. Frank's. In the Fourth Form dormitory in the Ancient House, a movement from one of the beds was noticeable. Sir Lancelot Mont-

gomery Tregellis-West slid silently out of bed.

He hadn't slept. Since lights out he had just dozed once or twice, but nothing more. And now he was alert and wakeful—intent upon being down at Moat Hollow by eleven o'clock.

He dressed silently and swiftly, for he had placed his clothing in such a way that he could slip into it in the dark. And Montie was capable of being very active when he liked.

Fortunately, both Fullwood and Snipe were asleep, and so Montie's movements were not witnessed by these two busybodies. It was rather doubtful if the young "blades" would arouse themselves in time to carry out their choice little programme.

Sir Montie crept downstairs like a shadow. The junior quarters were silent and still, but the whole of St. Frank's was by no means asleep. Many seniors were still in their studies—for the Sixth were allowed a certain amount of latitude regarding bedtime. And none of the masters were yet in bed.

So it behoved Tregellis-West to move with caution.

He succeeded in reaching the ground floor without causing an alarm, and he deemed it the safer course to slip out into the Triangle via the window of Archie's study. The shadows were deep against the wall of the Ancient House, and Sir Montie remained invisible as he crept across the Triangle.

"Good!" he murmured, as he reached the school wall. "All serene, begad! I hope Tommy boy will be waitin' for me by the garden wall—I do, really! I'm longin' to have a private chat with the dear old fellow."

Montie felt easy now, for there was not much chance of meeting anybody out in the lane. It was getting on for eleven o'clock, and at this hour the countryside was quiet and asleep.

It was still five minutes to eleven when Sir Montie reached the wall of Moat Hollow. He didn't go up to the main gates, but scouted near the corner—for it was at this spot that he had arranged to climb up.

And he had not come unprepared.

He had brought with him a coil of rope with a grappling-iron affixed to it. It was a little arrangement of his own. There were spikes at the top of the high wall, and it would be easy enough to toss the grappling-hook up, and secure it round one of the spikes. A little agility would then carry him to the top of the wall with ease.

Moat Hollow was looking more sinister than ever in the faint moonlight. The high wall completely shut off the house from the road, and when Sir Montie fixed his hook, and climbed to the top of the wall, he saw that the building itself was black.

Not a light showed anywhere. A glint of moonlight was reflected in the black waters of the moat, and there was something eerie



A cringing figure stood in the study doorway—a thin, weedy junior with a bit of a hunched back and sharp and foxy features.

and mysterious about the whole scene. There was no sign of Tommy Watson. The village church clock solemnly chimed the hour of eleven.

Slash!

Without warning, something hissed through the air and struck Sir Montie across the legs. It was a stinging blow, and the elegant Fourth-Former dropped to the ground in a heap—as much startled as he was hurt. He had had no idea that any other human being was near him.

"Begad! What the——" he began.

"So I've caught you red-handed, eh?" interrupted a tense voice. "Get up, you marauding young reprobate! Get up at once!"

A brilliant beam of light shot out from an electric torch. It was dazzling in its whiteness, and Tregellis-West scrambled to his feet, still half dazed. He knew that

he was facing Mr. Grimesby Creepe, but he was bewildered. He had not heard the schoolmaster's approach, and even now he couldn't see the man. That dazzling light half blinded him.

"Get up, I tell you!" repeated Mr. Creepe softly. "What do you mean by spying? How dare you come here, climbing my wall, and attempting to trespass upon my property? I have a mind to give you in charge for attempted housebreaking!"

Sir Montie scrambled up, quickly recovering.

"Nothin' of the sort!" he panted. "I only came here to have a word with Tommy Watson. I can't see him in the day-time—because you keep him locked up like a prisoner. A fellow is compelled to steal here at night——"

"To steal, eh?" interrupted Mr. Creepe, deliberately misunderstanding. "I have no doubt that you have used the right word! At all events, people who steal generally climb over walls at dead of night. I have a good mind to take you straight up to your headmaster!"

"All right—just as you like!" said Sir Montie tensely. "Dr. Stafford will be frightfully interested, Mr. Creepe! I shall probably get into hot water, but you won't show up in a good light, begad! Why are you keepin' poor old Tommy Watson a prisoner——"

"You infernal young dolt!" snapped Mr. Creepe. "You don't know what you're saying! I'll take this affair into my own hands—I'll deal with you on the spot, as you deserve!"

Slash! Slash!

The whip hissed cruelly through the air, and the lash caused Sir Montie to draw his breath in sharply with pain. Mr. Creepe's whip was a long one, and it was supple with much usage.

Slash! Slash!

The schoolmaster used the weapon fiercely—cruelly. Sir Montie was no coward, but that stinging lash was beyond endurance. He backed away blindly, bewildered by the shower of blows.

He had been struck on the legs, across his shoulders, and on his arms. He was confused by the shower of terrible cuts. It was an overpowering onslaught, and Sir Montie broke before it.

He fled, smarting in every limb, and Mr. Grimesby Creepe followed him up for a few yards. The schoolmaster stood there, brandishing the whip and breathing hard.

"Now, perhaps, you'll learn to keep away from this place!" he snarled. "If you dare to interfere with my boys again, or if you come prowling round these premises, I'll take the skin off your back!"

Tregellis-West was in too much pain to make any reply. But he knew that his attempt to see Tommy Watson had failed. He disappeared into the darkness—sick at heart, and filled with vague fears.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FIGURE ON THE ROAD.



"FIVE pounds! And it's gone! Oh, why was I such a fool? Why did I come to you——"

"Stop that snivellin', confound you!" snapped Fullwood harshly. "It's no good wailing now. The money's gone—an' it serves you right for bein' such a reckless idiot!"

"But, please, Fullwood, I only did as you told me——"

"Oh, shut up!"

Ralph Leslie Fullwood and Enoch Snipe were cycling home along the dark Bannington road towards St. Frank's. A more miserable pair could scarcely be imagined. It was getting on for one o'clock, and the entire countryside was dark and still.

The two precious young sportsmen had carried out their programme. Unfortunately, it hadn't panned out exactly as they had anticipated. Fullwood had awakened just before eleven, and he and Snipe had stolen off on their gambling errand.

But the select circle at the Wheatsheaf had had their own ideas concerning Snipe's fiver. And although Fullwood had used all his wiles, the money had lasted a very short time. Snipe had had high hopes at the beginning of the game, but they had soon been dashed. In his greedy attempt to increase his capital, he had ended up by losing the lot.

It was more Fullwood's fault than Snipe's. For the latter knew very little about the game of poker, and had relied on Ralph Leslie's advice.

Fullwood himself had been tempted by what he had called a "cast iron" hand. He had, in fact, held four queens—and deemed this good enough to bet on until the other fellow got tired.

As a matter of fact, Fullwood had got tired first—or, to be more exact, his cash had run out, and he had been obliged to "call" his opponent. This tricky gentleman, whom Fullwood had suspected of bluffing, calmly laid down four aces. And that was that.

Fullwood had been staggered, and Snipe, in a panic at the disaster, rashly betted heavily on a hand consisting of four hearts and a diamond—which Snipe had sadly mistaken for a full heart flush.

As far as the Fourth-Formers were concerned, the game was over. They departed in misery and despair. And now Enoch Snipe was wailing and moaning, and Fullwood was becoming more and more exasperated.

"All my money gone!" said Snipe, with a snivel. "I've never had five pounds like that before——"

"Shut up, confound you!" interrupted Fullwood thickly.

"That's all you can say—after you've lost all my money for me!" wailed Snipe. "I'll never trust you again, Fullwood! I thought you were clever, but you're a baby at these card games—"

"Another word from you, an' I'll pitch you in the ditch!" snarled Ralph Leslie. "By gad! This affair's taught me a lesson, anyhow! Never again will I offer to help a chap!"

"Do you call it helping to throw away my five pounds?" asked Snipe shrilly.

They cycled on savagely, even Snipe revealing some spirit in the heat of his anger. The Worm was sick with disappointment.

Had the circumstances been different, the two juniors might have enjoyed their ride. The night was almost perfect—keen, clear, frosty, and with a brilliant moon shining serenely down from a cloudless sky.

The road was hard and smooth, the cycle wheels moving crisply over the frosty surface. Both Fullwood and Snipe were well wrapped up, and the exercise helped to keep them warm.

For some time they cycled on without speaking. They entered a section of the road where tall trees and hedges overshadowed the highway on both sides. This stretch was quite a mile in length, and Enoch Snipe cast a nervous glance over his shoulder. He was not renowned for his courage.

"Scared now, I suppose," sneered Fullwood. "Afraid of the dark, eh? You're a fine kind of rabbit to bring out! I think I'll drop behind and let you go on alone—I'm sick of your company!"

Snipe gasped.

"Please, Fullwood, don't do that!" he said, in a frightened voice. "I—I'm not scared—but we might as well keep together. I—I won't say anything more about the fiver."

"Mind you don't!" growled Fullwood sourly.

They cycled on in silence again. Fullwood, glancing ahead along the road, gave a slight start. It was a trick of the imagination, of course, but it seemed to him that something white and shadowy was preceding them along the road.

The object could scarcely be seen in the deep gloom, for just here the shadows were thick. It seemed to Fullwood that the phantom figure kept in the centre of the road, and maintained the same distance ahead.

"Jolly queer!" muttered Fullwood, frowning.

"Eh? Please, Fullwood, I didn't hear—"

"What's that thing ahead?" interrupted Ralph Leslie. "See it? That grey-lookin' shadow. It looks like a ghost of some kind—probably the gory spectre of some poor wretch who was murdered in the woods

a few centuries ago!" he added with sarcasm.

Enoch Snipe nearly fell off his bicycle as he stared ahead. He, too, could see the mysterious thing. It was vague and intangible, and Snipe was nearly frightened out of his wits.

Even Fullwood became affected at last. For the ghostly figure kept in just the same position. And the two cyclists found it impossible to overtake that flitting, will-o'-the-wisp object.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MYSTERY OF THE NIGHT.



"**M**UST be an illusion!" muttered Fullwood at length. "A shadow, or somethin', caused by the trees—"

"It isn't—it isn't!" panted Snipe. "It's a ghost—it's a spirit! Let's—let's turn round and go back, Fullwood!"

The frightened junior was so unnerved that he could scarcely keep going. His bicycle wobbled perilously, and Fullwood was obliged to swerve in order to avert a collision.

"Pull yourself together, you funk!" he snapped. "If we turn round an' go back, that confounded thing will chase us! How would you like that? How would you like to feel a bony hand grab you by the shoulder—"

"Don't!" gasped Enoch Snipe. "Look! It's still there—it doesn't seem to get any further away, or any nearer!"

"Yes, it's uncanny!" muttered Fullwood, frowning. "It can't be a shadow, because it's white—or grey, anyhow. Come on—let's do a spurt! We'll try an' overtake the spectre an' lay it!"

Fullwood exerted himself strenuously, and his bicycle sped along the frosty road. Snipe had no courage for such an enterprise. Indeed, most of the strength had gone out of his limbs, and he was like a quivering jelly. Terror had taken possession of him.

But as he saw Fullwood forging ahead, he gave a yelp of sheer fright, and tried to follow. Anything was better than being left alone! Snipe thought he would faint on the spot. But he didn't. He pedalled on after Fullwood with the strength of desperation.

The leader of Study A wasn't feeling exactly enthusiastic himself. But it was necessary to appear indifferent in the presence of this cowering funk. He had to show Snipe an example.

The ghostly object was still there—running on ahead in the centre of the road like some phantom luring its victims on to destruction. Fullwood vaguely wondered if a trap of some kind lay ahead. He had

read of ghosts luring people on to disaster and death.

He glanced up again, some of his determination evaporating. He stared. The road ahead of him was clear and deserted. Two or three hundred yards distant the trees diminished, and the hedges were lower. The moonlight streamed over the surface of the frosty road. And there was not the slightest sign of the recent apparition.

"By gad!" muttered Fullwood shakily.

His emotions were mixed. In one way he was relieved, but in another he had a vague fear that the phantom would suddenly spring out of the shadows and assail him. Involuntarily, he slackened his speed. And a moment later something touched his rear wheel, and he swerved giddily.

Crash!

Enoch Snipe was the culprit. His machine had touched Fullwood's and now the pair of them sprawled on the road, grazed and bruised. Their bicycles were lying in a tangled heap.

"What's the— You—you infernal fool!" snapped Fullwood, struggling to his feet. "What the thunder—"

"Oh, please, I couldn't help it!" sobbed Snipe. "I—I didn't know you were going to stop like that! Where's—where's the ghost? It—it may pounce on us, Fullwood—"

"I'd give that ghost my best thanks if it pounced on you!" interrupted Fullwood savagely. "By Jupiter! Of all the snivellin' young funks! Get up, confound you! Get up, or I'll kick you!"

Enoch Snipe scrambled to his feet, and he stood there shaking and trembling. Fullwood himself was feeling somewhat nervous, but he resolved not to show it. He sorted out his bicycle, and found that it was unhurt. He jumped into the saddle and rode on.

Snipe followed his example—too scared to remain behind. And it wasn't until the hapless pair were in Bellton that they recovered their courage. Even now Snipe was in a fever of dread.

"This is the last time I'll come out with you!" said Fullwood sourly, as they laboured up the rise towards St. Frank's. "As for your rotten fiver, I'm glad you've lost it! It'll teach you a lesson not to gamble! Only brainy chaps can afford to play poker for high stakes!"

Snipe had no strength to reply.

"Still in a funk about that thing we saw?" went on Fullwood impatiently. "My hat! You'll keep the whole dormitory awake with nightmares! One sound from you after I'm in bed, my lad, an' I'll gag you with your own blessed shirt!"

"Please, Fullwood, I can't help having nightmares," faltered Snipe. "I—I know I shall have one after this! That—that thing may follow us right into the school—"

"Shut up!" snapped Fullwood harshly.

They managed to sneak into the Triangle and were soon indoors. There wasn't much chance of being caught at this time of night, for the whole school was asleep. Nevertheless, the two juniors were extremely cautious. For discovery would have had serious consequences—a public flogging, at least, and probably expulsion.

Enoch Snipe was still pale and shaky when he got into bed. The experience on the Bannington road had unnerved him, and he was a rank coward at the best of times. More than once he had disturbed the entire dormitory at dead of night by wailing in his sleep.

Fullwood was made of sterner stuff, and in less than two minutes after getting into bed he was soundly off. He was certainly puzzled about the phantom, but he lost no sleep on account of it.

On the other hand, Snipe lay in bed nervous and tense. When sleep came to him, it was fitful and restless.

A mile distant, another schoolboy was equally disturbed.

CHAPTER VIII.

DESPERATE MEASURES.



TOMMY WATSON tossed about uneasily in bed.

He was half-asleep and half-awake, and had just been dreaming about Sir Montie Tregellis-West. The long, draughty dormitory at Moat Hollow was silent except for the sounds of many sleepers, the rattling of a loose window, and the steady dripping of a leaky tap.

Tarkington, the monitor, was on duty near the door. He was well wrapped up, and inclined to be sleepy. It would soon be time for another monitor to relieve him, and he was by no means sorry.

"If old Creepe thinks we're going to stick this much longer, he's made a bloomer!" muttered Tarkington irritably. "Next week we'll have a heating stove in here, or I'm a Dutchman!"

It was a sore point with the monitors—this nightly vigil over the wretched boys. True, they were furnished with heavy blankets to keep them warm, but there was no fun in sitting muffled up for two hours, trying to keep awake. It was dangerous to doze.

Mr. Grimesby Creepe had an unpleasant habit of prowling round in the night watches. And if a monitor was caught asleep at his post, he stood in grave danger of being reduced to the rank of his underlings. And the monitors were too well cared for to invite any such disaster.

Tarkington half-roused himself, and went for one of his walks up and down the

dormitory. Night monitors were supposed to walk round at intervals, to see that everything was in order.

"There's no earthly reason why we shouldn't have an oil-stove," Tarkington told himself. "We can keep it up in the corner, and screen it off, and a little more light wouldn't be amiss. How the dickens can we read with only this rotten flicker?"

He paused, and gazed down at Tommy Watson. He was about to pass on when Watson turned over and opened his eyes.

"Is—is it time to get up?" asked the junior sleepily.

"Time to get up—no!" growled Tarkington. "You young ass, it isn't eleven yet! You've got the whole night in front of you."

"Eleven!" muttered Watson, sitting up.

"Five minutes to!" said Tarkington calmly, glancing at his watch.

As a matter of fact, the time was nearly one o'clock, but it pleased Tarkington to tease the new boy at Moat Hollow. Kirby had told him about the pleasing incident of Mr. Creepe and Tregellis-West, and Tarkington knew that the unfortunate Sir Montie had been horsewhipped, and—in the words of Mr. Creepe—sent off home with a flea in his ear.

Tarkington grinned as he observed that Watson accepted the false information without question. The monitor had only told Watson the wrong time in a spirit of malicious perversity. He did not realise that startling consequences might result.

"It's no good you looking like that, my lad!" said the monitor gruffly. "You won't see your pal—Mr. Creepe's attending to him. At least, he will attend to him in a few minutes!" he added, keeping up the deception. "Go to sleep, and forget all about it."

"Look here, Tarkington, couldn't you let me slip out—" began Watson eagerly.

"No, I couldn't!" snapped the monitor. "Get to sleep before I lose my temper. You'll stay in bed, or I'll know the reason why! One movement from you, my son, and I'll take your blankets away!"

He moved on, and soon settled himself down again in his chair. Watson turned over in bed and pretended to go to sleep. But he was very wakeful. He was picturing the scene outside. Sir Montie was there—outside the school wall. Sir Montie was waiting—waiting for his old chum to slip out and have a few words with him!

And yet Tommy was here, a prisoner. He couldn't give Sir Montie any indication that he knew of the appointment. And Tregellis-West would be compelled to go away, disappointed and grieved. Tommy was taking it for granted that the time was approaching eleven o'clock. He had no means of knowing the truth.

And he was feeling desperate. What could he do? How could he send out a word to his waiting chum? He couldn't

even make a dash for one of the windows, and shout out a warning. For the windows were high, and before Tommy could reach one the monitor would be upon him.

It was equally impossible to dash out through the doorway, for Tarkington barred the path. And even supposing he got out, he couldn't reach the grounds, for every door and window was barred like a prison.

There only remained the roof. The roof!

Tommy Watson felt himself start. The roof! He remembered that a narrow staircase led upwards from the top landing to a small door. And this small door, although bolted, could easily be opened. Beyond lay a flat section of the roof—with leads underfoot, and a narrow parapet at the edge. If only he could reach this roof!

A chat with Montie would, of course, be out of the question. But even if he had only had a clear minute of liberty, he could shout at the top of his voice, and inform his chum of the true nature of his position! It was a rather desperate idea, but Tommy Watson grimly resolved to adopt it.

One rush would be enough—one swift, decisive dash. He turned over cautiously, and his heart gave a throb when he observed that Tarkington was hunched up in his chair with his eyes closed. The monitor, in fact, was dozing at his duty.

It was a chance!

And Tommy Watson was rather a blunt, ram-headed fellow. It wasn't his way to think out subterfuges and stratagems. He generally took the bold course. With one movement, he slid out of bed, and sped towards the door. Even in his present state of excitement, he remembered the frost outside—and he had dragged two of his blankets off the bed. He would be able to wrap these round him when he was out on the roof.

But it seemed that failure was to dog his enterprise.

Tarkington roused himself before Watson was half-way down the dormitory. The prefect started, rose to his feet, and his face lost its sleepy expression.

"What the thunder are you out of bed for?" he growled harshly.

Watson paused, taking a deep breath. An intense rage filled him. He wasn't going to be foiled now! With a growl of desperation, he rushed forward, and fairly hurled himself at the startled monitor.

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE ROOF.



TARKINGTON was unprepared.

He had never dreamed it possible that the junior would dare to attack him. Consequently, he met Watson's rush awkwardly. His defence was totally inadequate.

Crash!

Watson's right landed on Tarkington's jaw, and the monitor reeled sideways and backwards, and fell heavily. Tommy sped on, in a fever of excitement. In another moment he was out on the dark landing. He almost dropped his blankets in his haste.

"Help! Hi, Kirby!" bellowed Tarkington, leaping to his feet, alarmed and enraged. "Quick! Help!"

The whole dormitory was aroused, and Tarkington's shouts echoed down the corridors. Moat Hollow resounded with the monitor's shouts. But Watson was taking advantage of his opportunity.

He knew exactly where the attic stairs were situated, and he dashed for them at full speed. Racing up, he reached the top landing, and then paused for a moment to take a breath. He had one great advantage. Neither Tarkington nor anybody else knew his programme, and a few precious minutes would necessarily elapse before the chase could come in this direction.

Tarkington would naturally assume that the escaped junior had gone downstairs. In fact, Tarkington rushed down at full speed, without waiting for assistance to come.

And Watson, all a-quiver, felt his way up the narrow stairs to the roof door. He was calmer now—but every bit as determined. With shaking fingers, he felt for the bolts, and shot them back.

The door swung open with a rusty creak, and a flood of moonlight came in. The keen night air struck Watson with a dread chill. He was thankful that he had brought the blankets, and he wrapped them round him closely. His feet were already encased in his rough day-time socks—for the dormitory beds were so scantily furnished that no other method of keeping warm was feasible.

Below, sounds of commotion came up in increasing volume. Mr. Creepe's voice had added itself to the other sounds. Lights were beginning to appear, and the excitement was gathering.

Tommy Watson walked out swiftly on to the roof. He stood there for a moment, gazing eagerly down at the school grounds, and the high, protecting wall. He was trying to catch a glimpse of Sir Montie. He didn't realise how completely he was fooled! He hadn't the faintest idea that the hour was long after midnight!

"Montie!" he shouted huskily.

He waited, expecting an eager reply. But no sound came, excepting the call of a night creature in the neighbouring woods, and the echo of his own voice from the school buildings.

"Montie!" he shouted again.

Still there was no response. And this was not to be wondered at, considering that Sir Montie Tregellis-West was at that moment in bed in the Fourth Form dormitory in the Ancient House at St. Frank's.

But the unhappy Watson was still hopeful. Perhaps his chum was a few minutes

late—or, perhaps, he refrained from answering because he wished to keep his presence a secret.

"Montie!" shouted Watson desperately. "You're there—I know you're there! You must be! Why don't you answer? Help—help! They're keeping me a prisoner in this ghastly place! We're all prisoners! Tell the police—tell the Fourth!"

Watson paused breathlessly.

But still there came no heartening answer. He was simply shouting to the thin air—but was he? Perhaps it was a mere shadow, but a dim, greyish form seemed to lurk near one of the walls. Even Watson caught sight of it, and his heart leapt.

"Montie!" he panted. "Can't you hear me?"

Only the echo of his own voice came back to him, and he groaned within him. It had been his fancy, after all! There was nothing there—nothing but the cold shrubs and the unfriendly walls. Tregellis-West had failed to keep his promise!

"Help!" shouted Watson desperately. "Can't you hear me, Montie? Mr. Creepe's a brute—a tyrant! Help me to get out of his clutches—"

"Stop that row, you infernal young toad!"

Watson broke off and turned. Kirby had just appeared on the roof, and behind him came Tarkington. They had found the fugitive at last! And they were angered and alarmed at his shouts.

"Don't come near me!" panted Watson thickly. "I'm going to tell Montie everything—"

"You fool—it's past one!" snarled Kirby. "Your confounded pal was horse-whipped and sent off two hours ago!"

Watson fell back as though he had been struck.

"One o'clock!" he repeated dazedly. "It's a lie! It's only just eleven!"

But, at the same time, the conviction was forced upon him that Kirby was right. He had been fooled! And this was why Tregellis-West had not answered!

Watson nearly choked. His great effort had been for nothing—he had broken out of the dormitory, and had brought inevitable punishment upon himself for no purpose! It was a bitter, galling thought.

And all his natural obstinacy came to the fore. He glared defiance at his enemies. Never for a moment did he think of surrendering. For the first time since entering Moat Hollow, he was himself.

"Come on—no more of this idiocy!" snapped Tarkington. "You've got me into enough trouble as it is, hang you! Come back into the dormitory before Mr. Creepe—"

"I won't!" interrupted Watson passionately. "I won't move a step! You're all brutes—"

"You won't, eh?" exclaimed Kirby thickly. "By gad!"

He moved forward grimly.

"Stop!" shouted Watson, his voice shrill with excitement and tension. "If you come another step nearer to me, I'll throw myself over this parapet!"

CHAPTER X.

THE PHANTOM PROTECTOR.



MR. GRIMESBY CREEPE appeared on the roof like a whirlwind. He

bounced out of the doorway and came to a sudden stop, breathing hard and glaring.

His flabby, heavy-jowled features were flushed with anger and anxiety.

And he arrived just as Tommy Watson uttered his startling threat. The junior, in fact, had not only backed towards the parapet, but was actually standing close against it. Further retreat was impossible.

"You're mad!" shouted Kirby. "Calm yourself, you young fool! You'll do yourself no good by this insane defiance——"

"I mean what I say!" declared Tommy, his voice becoming steady. "If you come near me, I'll throw myself over! I've had enough of this tyranny! I'm sick of this rotten place! And I won't be tortured any longer!"

The unfortunate junior was almost beside himself, in spite of his assumed calmness. His threat was probably an idle one, and the monitors guessed it. Nevertheless, they hesitated.

"Well?" rapped out Mr. Creepe. "Why don't you take the boy? I am waiting, Kirby! I am waiting, Tarkington! Perhaps you think you can keep me waiting all night?"

The monitors recognised Mr. Creepe's tone. He was in one of his most dangerous moods when he spoke like that.

"We can't go near the fool, sir!" muttered Kirby. "He threatens to throw himself over——"

"Bah! Mere heroics!" interrupted the schoolmaster. "Idle threats! Take no notice of the young whelp! Seize him, and take him straight down to the cellars! I intend to give him a taste of solitary confinement! Do you hear that, Watson? Solitary confinement, and starvation diet!"

Tommy Watson laughed unnaturally.

"You can say what you like—I defy you!" he replied fiercely. "It's a pity Tregellis-West isn't outside the wall to hear you! No, don't come near me! Keep back! I won't be taken——"

Watson's voice rose as Mr. Creepe deliberately edged towards him. The junior was so excited that he hardly knew what he was doing. He certainly did not realise the madness of his threat.

He jumped on to the parapet, and stood there with his back to the sheer drop. And even Mr. Creepe hesitated.

"Dear, dear! This is most distressing!" exclaimed the schoolmaster, adopting fresh tactics. "You are distraught, boy! Have done with this foolish nonsense! Come down from that dangerous position, and I will excuse you from all punishment."

Watson laughed scornfully.

"Do you think I believe you?" he asked. "Never! You're just trying to trick me——"

"This—this is most distressing!" interrupted Mr. Creepe, in a pained voice. "My boy! My dear lad! How can you have such harsh and unjust thoughts? I am anxious only for your safety. Come, come! Surrender at once, and you shall have no punishment. Indeed, I promise you that your friends of St. Frank's shall have every facility to come and visit you. Now, Watson, won't you be reasonable?"

Mr. Creepe spoke so engagingly, and there was such an air of injured pain in his tone, that Watson half hesitated. Then he laughed again—with greater scorn than before.

"I don't believe you!" he retorted simply.

"Mr. Grimesby Creepe scowled with ferocious anger. His manner changed with lightning-like rapidity.

"Very well!" he snarled. "Oh, very well! We will soon deal with you, my young mutineer! Kirby! Tarkington! Be ready to seize this boy, and hold him!"

While speaking, Mr. Creepe suddenly made a dash forward. His object was to catch Watson unawares—to grab the loose blankets, and to pull the junior headlong off the parapet before he could have time to attempt any resistance.

Watson saw the danger, and all common-sense and reason left him. He only wanted to avoid this torturer. The danger to himself from other quarters seemed as nothing.

"Keep back!" he shouted fiercely. "I won't be taken——"

Unconsciously, he had taken half a step backwards. His foot slipped off the edge of the parapet, and his balance was destroyed. For one dreadful second, Tommy Watson hovered.

And during that second his reason returned. With a powerful shock he saw the position in its true perspective. He was filled with horror and alarm as the dire peril of his position came to him.

But it was too late!

He found it impossible to recover his balance. A wild, despairing cry escaped him as he lost his balance and plunged headlong off the parapet. He dropped like a stone. And Mr. Grimesby Creepe and his myrmidons stood there aghast with horror.

Crash!

Tommy Watson reached the ground, but instead of shattering his bones on the solid, frozen earth, he plunged into the moat. But even this fall was disastrous enough.

For the junior struck flat, so that most of the breath was knocked out of his lungs.

and he descended into the icy depths in a stunned condition. Moreover, he had struck the side of his head against a piece of broken ice, and he was practically unconscious.

He sank into the moat, and came to the surface a floating object without animation. Just a spasmodic jerk or two, but nothing more. The hapless junior was in sore straits.

Above, Mr. Creepe and his monitors rushed to the parapet, and gazed down. They saw their victim floating there—a ghastly figure in the calm moonlight. Then, with one accord, they turned and raced for the stairs.

Watson was apparently doomed. Long before Creepe and his monitors could come he would be below the surface—as good as dead.

But then something flitted out from the dense shadows near the building. A greyish, phantom-like object took shape, and without hesitation this uncanny newcomer slipped noiselessly into the moat.

CHAPTER XI.

UNACCOUNTABLE.



WATSON opened his eyes.

He was numb from head to foot, and the icy coldness of the water had penetrated to his very marrow. But his wits had returned. He dimly knew that someone had assisted him. He had been hauled to the side of the moat, and had been dragged out. But not a word had his rescuer uttered.

Tommy could see through a kind of blur. His vision was uncertain. But it seemed to him that he saw a dim shape. It was bending over him, and water dripped from every portion of it.

"Courage!" came a soft whisper. "I heard all! Have no fear in future—you shall be protected."

Watson heard the voice uncertainly and dimly.

"Thanks!" he breathed. "I—I don't know—"

His vision grew better, and he looked round with a start of dazed surprise. He was alone. He thought he caught a glimpse of something moving near one of the walls, but he couldn't be sure. Then he heard the bolts of a door being shot violently back.

A moment later Mr. Grimesby Creepe came rushing out. There had been a short

delay while the miniature drawbridge was being lowered. Mr. Creepe was followed by Kirby and Tarkington and Fryer and two other monitors. Moat Hollow was fully awake, and buzzing with excitement.

"He's all right, sir!" panted Kirby, with relief. "He must have crawled out—"

"He didn't crawl out!" interrupted Mr. Creepe hoarsely. "I saw a figure bending over him—when I looked out of the window just now I distinctly saw a figure—"

"But it's impossible, sir!" interrupted Tarkington hoarsely. "There's nobody here! There couldn't be anybody here!"

"Bring that boy indoors!" commanded the schoolmaster. "It's a wonder he wasn't killed! Good heavens! What a scandal in the place if he were to die! I should be ruined! Take him indoors, rub him down, and put him between blankets!"

The monitors gingerly lifted Watson from the ground.

"He's as cold as ice, sir!" muttered Fryer. "I—I believe he's dead—"

"Tut, tut! Did you expect the boy to be hot—after plunging into this icy water?" interrupted Mr. Creepe harshly. "Take him indoors and carry out my orders! I'll come in presently and examine him. Wait! Confound you, wait! There's plenty of hot water left, so you'd better give him a hot bath before rubbing him down. Then put him in the special bed-room."

Apparently, Watson was booked for some special privileges. But Mr. Creepe was not actuated by any kindly motives. He was in a blue funk lest the junior should develop pneumonia and die. At all costs a tragedy was to be avoided. Mr. Creepe would be ruined if one of his scholars perished under such circumstances as these.

"Kirby, you needn't go indoors, they can manage without you!" went on Mr. Creepe curtly. "Come with me! I intend to search the grounds from end to end. There's something queer about this whole affair!"

While Watson was being carried indoors, Mr. Creepe and Kirby made a thorough examination of the grounds. But although they searched diligently for nearly twenty minutes, they discovered nothing.

Kirby was quite convinced that his chief had been mistaken. Watson had obviously crawled out of the moat unassisted. But Mr. Creepe persisted in his statement that he had seen a shadowy figure.

"What was it like, sir?" asked Kirby, at last.

"What was it like?" repeated the schoolmaster irritably. "How do I know what it was like? I just caught a glimpse of something grey—something indistinct."

"Like a ghost, sir?" asked Kirby, with thinly veiled sarcasm.

"Yes, by Heaven, like a ghost!" retorted Mr. Creepe. "You've got it exactly, Kirby! It's uncanny—it's unaccountable! But, thank goodness, the whole affair is over! I'll make that boy smart for this later! I'll make him suffer to the fullest extent!"

ANSWERS
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They went indoors, and found Tommy Watson in bed. He had been dumped into a hot bath, rubbed down, and generally treated as though he were an honoured guest. And now he reclined in a comfortable bed, away from the draughty dormitory. The apartment, in fact, was a special bed-room which Mr. Creepe kept for show purposes.

Watson was almost himself again.

The prompt measures had had their due

quire you to answer for your insubordinate behaviour. You need not imagine that you will go unpunished."

"You can't kill me, anyhow!" said Watson defiantly.

"Dear me! A pity—a thousand pities!" said Mr. Grimesby Creepe. "The boy is still as insubordinate as ever! Kirby, you will remain here by Watson's bedside. Watch him throughout the night, and see



The Schoolmaster used the weapon fiercely, cruelly. Sir Montie was no coward, but that stinging lash was beyond endurance. He backed away blindly, bewildered by the shower of blows.

effect. There was little danger of a chill, and although his head ached dreadfully from the effects of the fall, he would probably be himself again by to-morrow.

Mr. Creepe examined the junior critically, and then grunted.

"H'm! No bones broken—not even a scratch!" he said grimly. "Very well, Watson—very well! For to-night you will remain here. But in the morning I shall re-

that no harm comes to him. We cannot be harsh with an invalid."

Watson understood that well enough. He was to be guarded closely—to avoid any repetition of what had already occurred. But as he lay back amid the blankets, in such unaccustomed luxury, his thoughts were busy. He was trying to obtain a mental picture of the strange rescuer who had come to his aid.

But Watson failed.

He only knew that a kindly hand had dragged him out of the moat—and that his life had probably been saved by this timely assistance. He remembered the soft, whispered voice, but could not connect it with anybody he knew. His kindly protector remained a mystery—a mere phantom of the moonlit night.

CHAPTER XII.

MORE MYSTERY.



EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH sat up in bed with a start.

The Fourth-Form dormitory was dark, and under ordinary circumstances all the juniors would have been sleeping peacefully. But on this particular night it seemed that disturbances were inevitable.

Handforth had no idea what the time was, but the moonlight was streaming in through the windows, and an extraordinary wailing sound arose from one of the near by beds.

"What the dickens——" began Handforth.

"Save me—save me!" moaned a voice. "Oh, quick, Fullwood! It's coming for me! It's grabbed me by the shoulder! Help—help——"

"Great pip!" ejaculated Handforth blankly.

He was thoroughly awake now, and he wondered why everybody else in the dormitory wasn't aroused. Two or three juniors were stirring, certainly, but they were all healthy youngsters, and it took a good deal to awaken them.

Handforth leapt out of bed, and acted with his usual drastic directness. Enoch Snipe was the culprit—and Enoch Snipe was very obviously in the throes of a bad nightmare. The unhappy junior was tossing in his bed, and clutching feverishly at the pillow.

"Now then—that's about enough!" snorted Handforth.

He seized Snipe and yanked him into a sitting position with one movement. Snipe awoke with a violent start, and his wailing faded away into a sobbing whisper. He sat there, shivering and shaking, and blinking at Edward Oswald.

"The ghost," he breathed. "I can see it——"

"Rats!" interrupted Handforth, giving Snipe another shake. "You've been dreaming, you fathead! There's no ghost here! What's the idea of kicking up all this disturbance?"

Snipe shuddered.

"We saw it—Fullwood and I saw it!" he muttered. A grey, ghostly figure, going along the Bannington road——"

"Don't talk rot!" snapped Handforth. "You haven't been on the Bannington Road—you're in bed! You woke me up in the

middle of a lovely, peaceful sleep! I've a jolly good mind to biff you!"

Snipe recovered himself somewhat, relieved to find himself safely in the dormitory, with the very material figure of Handforth beside him. The leader of Study D was a bit irritable, but that was only to be expected under the circumstances. Indeed, it was rather a wonder that he had awakened at all—he usually slept heavily.

"Please, Handforth, I—I haven't done anything wrong!" bleated Snipe. "It was all Fullwood's fault—he led me away! My fiver has all gone—every penny of it!"

"Your fiver? What fiver?"

"I had one, and Fullwood lost it, gambling——"

"Piffle!" interrupted Handforth gruffly. "You're still dreaming, you ass. You've never had a fiver in your life! I can quite believe that Fullwood lost——"

"But—but it's true!" interrupted Snipe, now thoroughly awake. "We haven't been back long. We went to Bannington, you know—to the Wheatsheaf! And we saw an awful ghost on the road."

Handforth looked grim.

"Oh, you went to the Wheatsheaf?" he asked curtly.

"Yes, please, Handforth——"

"And you saw a ghost on the way back?"

"Yes, it was——"

"What you need, my lad, is some fresh air!" interrupted Handforth tersely. "I thought you were awake, but you're still in a nightmare! The Wheatsheaf, eh? Ghosts, eh? Huh! We'll soon knock those fat-headed ideas out of your dotty head! Come on—out of it!"

Snipe had no alternative. With one heave, Handforth lifted the wretched junior completely out of bed. Struggling limply, Snipe was dragged to the window, and Handforth flung up the lower sash. Then he hung Snipe over the sill like a wet rag.

"Breathe some of the night air into you!" he panted. "If you go on like this, you'll end up in the asylum! You're ready for it now, and I'm blessed if I can understand why they allow you to——"

"Oh! Oh!" sobbed Snipe feverishly. "I—I can see——"

His tone was so terrified that Handforth was startled. He could feel Snipe's body become rigid with fear, and there was something in the junior's tone that made Handforth stare.

"What the——"

"Look—out there!" breathed Enoch Snipe. "It's the phantom again—it's coming after me! I knew it would! I told Fullwood so! Look! Can't you see——"

"By George!" muttered Handforth huskily.

Amazingly enough, something dim and mysterious was stirring out in the silent Triangle. The night was freezingly cold and moonlit. Gazing down, Handforth could see all the familiar objects in the Triangle—the stone-paved pathways—the fountain—the

old gables of the Head's house—the leafless chestnuts.

In places, the picture was clear-cut and well-defined. But where the shadows fell, the darkness was dense. And in one of these black patches a whitish blur was moving.

Handforth was no imaginative fellow. He scoffed at the idea of ghosts, and his nerves were in fine condition. Yet he could swear that something uncannily ghost-like was moving down there in the shadows.

It flitted along silently, and suddenly vanished into nothingness near the gymnasium. And as the thing disappeared, so the spell seemed to be broken. Handforth took a deep breath.

"My only hat!" he murmured. "There was something there, sure as a gun!"

CHAPTER XIII.

SUSPICIONS.



ENOCH SNIPE shivered violently.

"Of course there was something there," he muttered hoarsely. "It was the same ghost that Fullwood and I saw in the lane. Oh, it's coming up here! I know it is! Quick! Put the lights on—"

"Steady on, fathead!" growled Handforth. "It wasn't a ghost—you can't fool me like that! Some silly ass is playing a jape! Buster Boots, or another of the Modern House chaps—"

"Who's talking about ghosts?" asked a sleepy voice.

Fatty Little sat up in bed, and the springs creaked despairingly. The fat junior looked across the moonlit dormitory with hungry eyes.

"By pancakes!" he yawned. "What's the time? I'm starving! It must be nearly breakfast-time—"

"Go to sleep, glutton!" interrupted Handforth, frowning. "It isn't morning yet—it's the middle of the night! There's nothing to eat here—unless you have a go at somebody's boots!"

"We—we've just seen a ghost!" said Snipe falteringly.

"A ghost!" echoed Fatty. "What rot! It's like you chaps to disturb me and wake me up! I was dreaming that I was at a banquet, and I hadn't even started eating. At least, I'd only polished off a few pheasants and turkeys' eggs and mince-pies and steak-and-kidney puddings—"

"My hat! What a mixture!" interrupted Handforth. "It was about time you woke up, my lad!"

"Oh, don't be silly!" growled Fatty. "A waiter had just brought in a tremendous tray filled with ostrich eggs. They were

poached, you know, and each egg was on a piece of toast as big as a dining-table! I never saw anything so gorgeous in all my life—"

"You'd better go to sleep again, and dream a bit more!" remarked Reginald Pitt, who was also sitting up in bed. "Anyhow, you'll get no poached ostrich eggs in real life! What's all the excitement about?" he added, looking across the dormitory. "Why this nocturnal disturbance? Some fellows may rejoice in paddling about the room in the moonlight—but others prefer to sleep during sleeping-hours!"

Handforth grunted.

"Don't blame me!" he retorted. "It's this dreamy fathead! He woke me up with his howling—had an awful nightmare, you know. The chump dreamt he was being chased by a green-and-yellow spectre—"

"Please, Handforth, it wasn't green-and-yellow," interrupted Snipe. "I—I think it's very nice of you to take all this interest in me, and I appreciate it—"

"Then don't!" interrupted Handforth. "I'm not taking any interest in you at all—I want to get back to bed! What's that you were saying about a ghost on the Bannington road?"

"We saw it—Fullwood and I—"

"In your dream, you mean?"

"No; we really saw it!" persisted Snipe nervously.

"Oh, ho!" said Reggie Pitt, slipping out of bed. "What's this we hear? What's this wicked revelation? Snipe, my lad, you've been breaking bounds!" he added sternly.

"Please, Pitt, it was Fullwood's fault!" whispered Snipe meekly.

"We won't go into any inquiry as to the blame," said Pitt, with a judicial air. "As skipper of the Fourth, I've got to probe this to the roots. What did you go out with Fullwood for?"

Enoch Snipe blurted out the story. And Handforth and Reggie Pitt listened with grim expressions but without any surprise. It was quite characteristic of Ralph Leslie Fullwood to play poker at the Wheatsheaf with another fellow's money.

"I'll have a word with that bright young gentleman to-morrow!" said Pitt, with a frown. "I won't wake him up now—he needs all the beauty sleep he can get. But what's this about a ghost?"

Snipe related the adventure on the Bannington road.

"I told Fullwood the ghost would follow us—and it did!" he concluded shakily. "Handforth saw it, too! A dim, grey figure, shapeless and horrible—"

"Rats!" interrupted Handforth. "That's where your imagination runs away with you, my son. There was nothing horrible about it. The thing was just a moving figure, and I don't believe it was a ghost at all. More likely one of the fellows having a lark."

Reggie Pitt shook his head.

"Larks don't happen at half-past one in the morning!" he said slowly. "Even the most enthusiastic japer trots into bed before this hour. Perhaps the thing you saw was a white cat, or——"

"Where's Montie?" asked Fatty Little abruptly.

"Montie?" said Handforth. "In bed, of course! Didn't I tell you to go to sleep, you greedy ass? Montie hasn't got any grub under his pillow, if that's what you're thinking about."

"He isn't in bed!" said Fatty. "He isn't here at all. I just noticed that his bed's empty."

Handforth and Pitt turned to Tregellis-West's bed and walked nearer. It was in deep shadow, and its empty condition had not been noticed hitherto. Sir Montie's absence was rather strange.

"I wonder if he's been down to Moat Hollow?" asked Pitt thoughtfully. "He's worried about Watson, you know, and it's just possible that he's roaming about in the moonlight——"

"Perhaps it was Montie we saw just now—in the Triangle?" suggested Handforth. "It isn't like him to break bounds——"

"Look!" interrupted Snipe tensely.

The dormitory door was slowly opening. Enoch Snipe stood rooted to the spot, newly terrified. A dim, ghostly figure flitted into the dormitory.

"Begad!" it murmured. "What are you dein' out of bed, dear fellows?"

CHAPTER XIV.

SIR MONTIE'S SILENCE.



NOBODY spoke for a few moments, and Sir Montie Tregellis-West advanced into the dormitory with his usual elegant gait. He was attired in a flowered dressing-gown and soft slippers.

"I—I thought it was the ghost!" faltered Snipe.

"You'll jump at your own shadow next!" growled Handforth. "Look here, Montie, where have you been?" he added. "What's the idea of roaming about the House at nearly two o'clock in the morning?"

Tregellis-West shrugged his shoulders.

"It's all right, dear old fellow," he replied. "I couldn't sleep, you know. I was frightfully restless, an'-I went to the bath-room to have a wash—I did, really."

"To have a wash—at two o'clock in the morning?" asked Pitt curiously.

"Precisely, dear boy."

Montie was aware that the other wakeful juniors were regarding him with a certain amount of suspicion. Certainly his account of his movements sounded somewhat tall.

Was he the figure that Snipe and Full-

wood had seen on the Bannington road? If so, then there could be little doubt that Montie was the mysterious protector who had come to Tommy Watson's aid so opportunely at Moat Hollow.

Montie's very manner was unusual, and it was obvious to the other juniors that he was nonplussed. They had taken him by surprise. He had come to the dormitory, expecting to find it quiet, with all its members asleep. His manner was serene, as usual—but that was nothing to go by. Montie was habitually urbane.

"Look here, you can't kid us with a yarn like that!" said Handforth gruffly. "You can't spoof us into believing that you've been to the bath-room to have a wash at two o'clock in the morning!"

Sir Montie shrugged his shoulders.

"All right, Handy, old boy—I'm not askin' you to believe anythin'," he said calmly. "Believe it or disbelieve it—I'm not frightfully interested, anyhow."

He yawned carelessly, and moved towards his bed.

"It won't do, old man," said Pitt, taking Montie's arm. "We don't want to be inquisitive, but—— Hallo! What did you jump for?"

"Jump?"

"Yes, when I touched your arm."

"I wasn't aware that I jumped, dear boy," said Sir Montie. "A little bruise—nothing more. Kindly allow me to get back into bed. I think I can sleep now—I do, really!"

The others regarded him curiously as he removed his dressing-gown and climbed into bed. As a general rule, Montie was the most open and frank of mortals. His present behaviour was very strange.

"I say, you fellows, what about some grub?" asked Fatty Little, getting out of bed and feeling for his clothes. "I'm famished! Let's buzz down and raid somebody's cupboard——"

"My hat! He wants to eat in the middle of the night!" snorted Handforth. "Get back to bed, you hungry porpoise! As for you, Montie, I want to know if you were out in the Triangle ten minutes ago?"

"The Triangle?" yawned Sir Montie. "I'm afraid I wasn't, old boy."

"That's not a direct answer," said Handforth suspiciously.

Montie turned over and closed his eyes—clearly indicating that he didn't wish to continue the conversation. Handforth took a stride towards his bed, but Reggie Pitt checked him.

"Don't!" he said. "If Montie wants to remain silent, let him. It's not our business, Handy. The best thing we can do is to get back into bed. We shall all be sleepy to-morrow if we don't."

"I'm not going back to bed!" said Fatty Little firmly. "I couldn't sleep if I did go back! I'm so jolly hungry that my sides

feel like caving in! I'm all hollow! I'm as empty as a barrel!"

"Then go and fill yourself up!" snorted Handforth. "Don't bother us! By George! Have we got to be pestered by this starving whale? There's some intricate detective work got to be performed here——"

"Well, I'm off!" interrupted Fatty briskly.

He marched out of the dormitory with an eager stride. As a matter of fact, he had half hoped that one of the others would offer to accompany him, but he was disappointed.

Fatty wasn't exactly a nervous junior, but at dead of night he preferred a companion. However, the lure of food was so great that he was ready to brave any amount of dark staircases and gloomy corridors.

By the time he got down to the hall he was a little less enthusiastic—but the remembrance of a full cupboard in Study F spurred him on. Tom Burton and Jerry Dodd had laid in a good stock, and Fatty knew all about it. Nobody could ever keep any food information away from Fatty.

The passages were dim and ghostly, but the stout junior concentrated his mind upon grub, and didn't give himself time to imagine lurking figures and spectral apparitions. Nevertheless, he couldn't help remembering all the talk of a phantom figure in the Triangle. That thought was somewhat disturbing.

He was glad when he reached Study F.

Creeping in, he made for the cupboard, and to his great joy it was unlocked. A shaft of moonlight slanting in through the window served him well, for it revealed any amount of good things on the shelf. There was a huge cherry-cake only a quarter used, a bag of doughnuts, a tin of mixed biscuits, and a pot of raspberry-jam, and many other dainties.

"By pancakes!" breathed Fatty. "What a feast!"

All thoughts of spooks passed out of his mind now. He fairly gloated over this feed. And within a couple of seconds he was making deep inroads into the cherry-cake. He cut two big slices, and held one in each hand, and leaned back in perfect bliss.

A shadow fell across the window, and for a second Fatty Little caught a glimpse of a silent, mysterious figure flitting past the panes. Two pieces of cherry-cake dropped from his listless fingers, and he felt his hair tingling on his scalp.

CHAPTER XV.

WHAT FATTY SAW.



FATTY LITTLE nearly choked.

A whole mouthful of cake went the wrong way, and it was as much as he could do to recover himself. Even the food was distasteful to him now. There had been

something sinister about that figure passing the window.

He struggled to his feet, and staggered towards the door. But just when he reached the portal he paused, and recovered some of his courage. The thought of deserting such a feed was agonising to him.

He looked out into the Triangle. The moonlight was placid, and although everything had an eerie aspect, there was nothing really to be scared about. Fatty dashed back to the cupboard, and seized the rest of the cake.

"Might as well take this, anyhow!" he mumbled.

Hugging the cake, he reached the door again, and passed through into the corridor. Somehow, everything seemed different. The Fourth Form passage was not itself. Moonlight streamed in through the window at the end, but between Fatty and this spot lay many feet of blackness.

He took a grip on himself, and moved forward.

Something caused him to turn and glance backwards. Possibly it was only nervousness—the instinct which causes most of us to glance over our shoulders when our nerves are on the stretch. Certainly, Fatty had heard no sound.

At the other end of the corridor another window admitted some moonlight. And as Fatty turned his head, he saw something move across the moonbeam and enter the dark passage.

"Great cokenuts!" gasped Fatty frantically.

He didn't know what he had seen—he didn't look long enough. Something was there—something was actually coming down the passage towards him! And the fear of the Unknown gripped him.

His cake went flying towards the ceiling, and he took to his heels with a gulp of fright, and raced like mad towards the lobby. Considering his bulk, he moved with extraordinary speed.

Not once did he glance behind him now.

He rushed up the stairs three at a time, and fairly burst into the dormitory. His entry was dramatic. He rushed in, slammed the door, and put his back to it.

"What the dickens——" began Handforth.

"There's—there's a ghost!" gasped Fatty breathlessly.

"A ghost!"

"Yes! It—it followed me along the corridor——"

"It must have been your imagination," interrupted Pitt sharply. "You were an ass to go down, Fatty. We shall have about four prefects on the spot in a minute—judging by the way you slammed that door."

"I—I forgot!" breathed Fatty, recovering himself by degrees. "I was coming down the

corridor, you know, and that—that thing appeared—”

“What thing?”

“I don’t know!”

“If you don’t know, how can you be sure it was a thing?” demanded Handforth. “I expect you saw a shadow—”

“I didn’t!” interrupted Fatty firmly. “It—it was something that turned into the corridor, and started chasing me! I believe it was trying to get hold of my cherry-cake—”

“Blow your cherry-cake!” snorted Edward Oswald. “You’ve just been imagining things—that’s all. You’d better go back to bed as soon as you can. We’ve had enough disturbances to-night, without you making things worse.”

Fatty got into bed and drew the sheets and blankets over himself. His hunger had entirely vanished. He wouldn’t have gone downstairs again just now for the most sumptuous banquet.

The others believed that he had been a prey to his own imagination. But this was unfair towards Fatty. Undoubtedly he had seen something. In fact, he had seen the same object that Enoch Snipe and Handforth had glimpsed from the dormitory window. Just as Snipe had said, the thing had come right into the school!

But what was it? Who could be responsible for this ghostly appearance? There was now no possibility of naming Sir Montie Tregellis-West as the “apparition,” for Sir Montie was in bed, and his alibi was perfect.

“Everything seems at sixes-and-sevens to-night,” growled Handforth. “We’ve been trying to make Montie speak for the last ten minutes, and he won’t say a thing. It’s my belief he’s been to Moat Hollow.”

“Perhaps so,” agreed Pitt. “Well, it’s no good guessing things. We’ll go to sleep again—”

“Not me!” said Handforth. “I’m going to wake Church and McClure up, and we’ll investigate this affair. We’ll go down to Moat Hollow and do some scouting work—”

“Begad! Don’t do that!” interrupted Montie, sitting up.

“Hallo! I thought you were asleep,” said Handforth. “Why shouldn’t I do it? You won’t tell us where you’ve been, so I’ve got to go out on an investigation tour—”

“Don’t go out to Moat Hollow!” put in Montie urgently. “My dear old chap, Grimesby Creepe will be waiting for you with a horsewhip. He’s a perfect beast, begad!”

“A horsewhip!” echoed Reggie Pitt slowly. “What’s this? What’s this? A horsewhip? And you winced when I touched your arm a little time ago! Have you had a taste of that lash?”

Sir Montie sighed.

“It’s no good—you’re too frightfully cute for me, old boy,” he said regretfully. “As you’ve guessed so much, I suppose I’d better tell you everything!”

CHAPTER XVI.

REGGIE PITT’S RESOLVE.



“HORSEWHIPPED, eh?” said Handforth, staring. “My hat! Do you mean to say that old Grimesby Creepe dared to slish you with a horsewhip?”

Sir Montie got out of bed, and went across to the window. He stood there in the moonlight, and Pitt and Handforth approached him. There was something significant about his silence. The elegant junior unbuttoned the jacket of his pyjamas, and removed it.

“Just have a look, dear old boys,” he said quietly.

He stood there, bared to the waist, and although the light was pale, it was sufficient for Pitt and Handforth to see the livid, ugly weals across Sir Montie’s back. They were even on his arms, and the unfortunate junior must have been in considerable pain.

“Poor old chap!” said Reggie softly.

“By George!” gasped Handforth. “You’ve been half-murdered! The beast—the brute! How did he do this? Why didn’t you tell us before? We’ll go down there and—”

“Hold on—hold on!” interrupted Pitt. “Don’t get excited, old man—you’ll wake all the others.”

“But Montie’s been horribly lashed—”

“I know it, but it won’t improve matters to make a song!” said Pitt quietly. “Come on, Montie—let’s have the yarn. Tell us how this happened—and tell us why it happened.”

Tregellis-West donned his jacket again, and went to his bed and sat on the edge of it.

“It properly bowled me over when I found you fellows awake,” he confessed. “I hadn’t just come in, you know—I’d been back an hour or two. But I couldn’t sleep, an’ I’d been to the bath-room for some ointment. These weals smart frightfully—they do, really!”

“But why didn’t you want to tell us?” asked Handforth curiously.

“Oh, well, a fellow doesn’t like to make a fuss over such a thing,” replied Montie. “I wouldn’t care for the whole Fourth to know that I’d been horsewhipped, begad! It’s a deucedly humiliatin’ piece of work.”

Tregellis-West explained to his interested listeners exactly what had taken place. He described his encounter with Mr. Grimesby Creepe, and all that had transpired.

“The man’s a brute—a fearful brute!” said Montie fiercely. “I only went there to have a few words with poor old Tommy. But Creepe was waitin’ for me—lurkin’ there with that horsewhip!”

“But how did he know?” asked Pitt. “You didn’t make your appointment on a postcard, did you?”

“No—in a letter.”

“Then Creepe must have opened Tommy’s letter!” said Pitt, taking a deep breath. “I say, what a beast! There’s something



A shadow fell across the window, and for a second Fatty Little caught a glimpse of a silent, mysterious figure flitting past the panes.

rummy about Moat Hollow! We haven't seen Tommy Watson since the first day he arrived! Just that once, and never again! Old Creepe must keep his pupils within those walls like prisoners in a convict settlement!"

"Dear old boy, you've used exactly the right words," agreed Montie quietly. "Moat Hollow isn't a school at all. In fact, I'm beginnin' to have the most frightful misgivin's—I am, really. I think somethin' ought to be done."

"You think?" growled Handforth. "I know! And something is going to be done, too—pretty quick! I shan't forget the way old Creepe treated me the other day! I've got an idea——"

"Look here, Handy——"

"An idea!" repeated Edward Oswald firmly. "To-morrow we'll get the Fourth together, and raid Moat Hollow in force! How's that? We'll storm the giddy place, and rescue old Watson by sheer force! If that isn't a good idea, what is?"

"I wouldn't like to say!" replied Pitt calmly.

"Look here——"

"It's no good, Handy—we can't adopt those 'direct action' methods of yours," interrupted Pitt. "We should gain our object, of course, but what would happen afterwards? The Head would intervene, we should all get flogged, and Tommy Watson would be

taken back by Creepe. Drastic action is all right in its place—but this isn't one of its places."

Handforth grunted.

"Then what do you suggest?" he demanded gruffly.

"I suggest going to bed, and sleeping on it!" replied Reggie Pitt, with his usual practical manner. "We can't do anything now; but to-morrow—well, let's wait until to-morrow before we decide. But be quite certain that we'll investigate this mystery at Moat Hollow, and find out what's happened to Tommy Watson."

Pitt's decision was a wise one. And even Handforth had to admit the truth of this after he had calmed down. And he and the others got back into bed and were soon fast asleep.

The mysterious incident of the ghostly figure was forgotten. But it was still a mystery. Sir Montie Tregellis-West was not the "phantom." And it seemed out of the question that any Fourth-Former could be associated with the mysterious visitant.

Who was he?

Who was the timely friend who had come to Tommy Watson's assistance, and who had since appeared in the Triangle, and in the very Ancient House itself? In the very near future the problem was to become even more interesting and mysterious!

THE END.

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CHAPTER I.

A MYSTERIOUS VISITANT!

BEN LOGAN gave a disdainful grunt as he laid down his newspaper and rammed the ashes hard into the bowl of his pipe.

"Bah! There ain't no such things as spirits an' spooks—whatever these writer chaps may say!" he muttered to himself. "I ought to know, seein' as it's my business to be up an' doin' every night from one year's end to another! Why don't these 'ere apparitions appear to the likes o' me, eh? Why? 'Cos they don't exist!"

With this comforting thought in his mind, Ben Logan applied a match to the tobacco in his pipe, and recommenced his perusal of the paper—avoiding the column devoted to "spirits and spooks," and interesting himself in the general news which the paper contained.

Ben Logan, in his capacity of night-watchman, was on duty at the Cannon Street establishment of Messrs. Samuel Barlow & Co., the well-known firm of silk merchants, and he was seated in a small apartment on the ground floor which was exclusively devoted to his use.

At regular hourly intervals it was Logan's custom to leave this little snugery, and to make a complete tour of the premises—a process which took a good twenty minutes. The remainder of his time he was at liberty to spend as he wished, and he usually managed to while away the minutes pleasantly enough by dipping deeply into the contents of his evening paper.

Ben Logan was an elderly man, and was not hard to please in the matter of literature. Anything and everything which his favourite paper contained was habitually

scrutinised—but the watchman's disgusted remarks concerning matters occult showed that he did not believe in everything he read.

Never having encountered anything in the ghost line during his extensive career as a night-watchman, Logan could afford to scoff at the alleged "true stories of haunted houses" which the newspaper article contained; but his scepticism was very shortly to be put to a very severe test indeed, although he was quite in ignorance of what was about to transpire.

For the next quarter of an hour nothing could be heard in the watchman's room but the occasional rustle of his paper, with, perhaps, a muttered grunt now and again to vary the monotony. At the end of that time Logan's clock commenced to boom cut the hour of midnight, and the old man instantly rose to his feet.

"Twelve o'clock!" he murmured to himself, with a little grin. "Just the time for them 'ere spooks to start their prancin'—accordin' to that writer chap!"

It was obvious that Ben Logan—despite his disbelief in the supernatural—had allowed the article which he had just read to obtain a certain amount of grip upon him, and this—in view of subsequent events—was a most unfortunate occurrence.

After rising to his feet, the watchman buttoned his thick coat, and then walked towards the door, intending to start upon his rounds in the usual manner.

But just as he was about to grasp the handle, he heard a curious noise outside the apartment—a shuffling and swishing sound, as if a heavily-clothed woman was hurrying past the room.

The rustling was accompanied by the unmistakable padding of moving feet, and for

a few seconds Ben Logan was too astonished to move a muscle. He had never experienced anything of this nature before, but he was not the sort of man to shirk his duty.

With a queer feeling of mixed curiosity and apprehension, he flung open the door of his little den, and peered out into the semi-darkness of the great general office—a large apartment which was dimly lit by a single electric bulb which glowed high up near the ceiling.

As the watchman stepped out into this barn-like place, he gave a gasp of surprise and consternation—for he found himself confronted by an apparition much worse than anything he could possibly have imagined.

Not more than three yards away from him there stood the most grotesque being imaginable—a figure attired in a huge scarlet cloak, with staring red features, from which a pair of baleful eyes glinted and glittered. Over the eyes a pair of curved horns stood out from the creature's forehead, which gave him the appearance of a veritable demon from the pit.

This strange visitant seemed to be surrounded in a fiery glow, and he stood staring at the watchman balefully and malevolently—uttering no sound, and making no sign. Then, with great abruptness, he commenced moving off in the direction of a closed door at the far end of the room, leaving Ben Logan staring after him with the blood almost drained from his features.

"What the— I must be dreamin'!" he muttered to himself, rubbing his eyes wonderingly. "Either dreamin' or else seein' things which couldn't possibly exist—"

The details of the newspaper article dealing with ghosts and spirits came back to him with redoubled force, and he peered at the retreating figure of the demoniacal intruder with something like fright in his eyes. The author of the stories he had just read had certainly not mentioned anything like this, but if it was not a spook, what was it?

Logan's very excusable fear did not last more than a few seconds, for he could distinctly hear the sound of the stranger's footfalls as he strode along. And the watchman, inexperienced as he was in such things, did not need to be told that it is a very material "ghost" who finds himself unable to move without audible footsteps.

"By Jimmy!" said Logan, between his clenched teeth. "This chap ain't no ghost! 'E's a burglar—dressed up like the devil! But he can't take me in with 'is trickery an' humbug—not likely!"

Ben Logan's practical handling of the situation was very commendable, and he started forward across the office in the wake of his quarry—all his initial fear now set at rest. His one thought now was to ascertain the intruder's identity and intentions, and to do his utmost to safeguard his employers' property. That was his

duty—and Ben Logan had never been known to fail in the execution of it.

With rapid strides the watchman hurried across the office, and saw the red-cloaked figure disappear through the distant doorway before he had traversed half the length of the room. Logan heard the door slam gently while he was yet several yards from it, and his greatest fear was that he would find the portal locked against him.

But in this supposition he was mistaken, for when he reached the door a moment later he discovered that it yielded to his touch without difficulty. Evidently the stranger did not anticipate that the guardian of the building would have sufficient nerve to follow him so closely—or else he was indifferent to the watchman's presence.

Logan pushed open the door noiselessly and peered into the room—which he knew to be the private office of the head of the firm. And as he did so he observed the Mephistophelian visitor striding towards the heavily-barred window. The next second the watchman heard the catch pushed back, and saw the lower sash being flung up to its fullest extent.

Ben Logan wondered what these queer tactics could mean—but he had no intention of allowing this extraordinary individual to have everything his own way. So far, the red-cloaked man appeared to be oblivious of the watchman's presence at the door, and without even glancing in his direction, he abruptly ducked down below the level of the window-ledge, and lay perfectly still.

Logan blinked, and racked his brain for an explanation of such queer antics on the part of the intruder.

"Lummy! This bloke must 'ave excaped from a lunatic asylum!" he muttered to himself. "But whether 'e's barmy or not, 'e's got to be copped an' handed over to the police!"

There was certainly plenty of cause for the watchman's conclusions concerning the sanity of the stranger—for no burglar in his right senses would act in such a fashion as this. What possible reason could he have for opening the window, and then ducking down so close to it?

Logan had no idea—but he certainly knew what his own intentions were. It was imperative that this grotesquely clothed intruder should be captured at once, and the watchman strode forward with his mind made up.

He was now feeling somewhat angered at the cool audacity of the other, and with a grim look in his eyes, he hurried towards the window, keeping a wary eye on his quarry meanwhile. But the red-cloaked man crouched upon the floor perfectly motionless.

"Now, then—what's your game—"

began Logan sternly, but he got no further. For, even as the last word left his lips, an appalling change came over him, and he

seemed to become rigid and stiff—as if suddenly turned into stone. It was as if the watchman had been gripped by the force of some invisible power, and changed from a human being into a statue.

With a sickening thud he crashed to the floor, and lay upon his side with limbs outstretched—just as a wooden doll might lay. His appearance was uncanny in its ghastly unnaturalness, and it was obvious that Ben Logan had been made the victim of some appalling and diabolical agency.

What was it which had caused his sudden and dramatic collapse?

CHAPTER II.

A QUEER PROCEEDING.



"SPLENDID!" murmured the red-cloaked man, in a tone of exultation.

"Splendid! It worked like a charm! The watchman has been disposed of with the

greatest of ease, and we can now proceed without further interruption."

He rose to his feet as he spoke, and walked over to the prostrate figure of Ben Logan. A brief examination was sufficient to assure him that the watchman was completely unconscious—but this amazing stranger lingered for quite a while over his scrutiny of the unfortunate Logan, seeming to be greatly interested in the man's condition.

He noted the rigidity of the outstretched limbs, and the fixed, wax-like expression on the set features. Clearly, he was marveling at the havoc which had been wrought with such astounding rapidity, and he nodded his head slowly as he regarded the silent figure upon the floor.

"Extraordinary!" he muttered to himself. "The invisible grip is a far more effective weapon than I had imagined possible! Equipped with power such as this, it should not prove a difficult matter to achieve any desired result, and to make me invincible! Upon my soul! The possibilities are endless!"

He chuckled to himself with evident satisfaction, and then walked over to the spot where an immensely strong and massive steel safe was situated. The structure was a huge affair of the most modern manufacture, and had only recently been installed in the building.

It looked strong enough to withstand the effects of shell-fire, but it was evidently the intention of this up-to-date Mephistopheles to commence operations upon it.

And yet such a thing seemed to be impossible—for he had not come equipped with the usual kit of scientific burglar's tools. He was not encumbered with so much as

a bag, but from the voluminous folds of his cloak he drew forth a bottle containing a liquid, together with a small cloth pad.

And with these apparently simple implements he proceeded to get to work.

First moistening the pad with a liberal dose of the liquid from the bottle, he commenced to smear the door of the safe with the solution—repeating the operation several times until he had thoroughly covered the centre of the door with the compound.

The liquid seemed to dry almost as it was applied to the painted surface of the metal work, but it was so thin and colourless that its presence was barely perceptible.

In a few minutes the work was accomplished to the complete satisfaction of this amazing stranger, and, after stowing the bottle and the pad away once more, he left the safe, and walked over to the window.

Drawing an electric torch from another pocket, he raised it until its lens was pointing towards the open air. Then he pressed the switch twice in quick succession, and withdrew into the room, backing towards the wall, but taking care to keep the safe under close observation.

Then he waited with every appearance of expectant curiosity—and he did not wait in vain.

With a suddenness which was almost startling—although he had been quite prepared for it—a blinding flash of fire sizzled upon the door of the safe, and illuminated the interior of the office with tremendous brilliance. It was over in a moment, however, and once more the room resumed its normal appearance.

Within a very few seconds of the flash the purple-masked individual became extremely active, and for the next seven or eight minutes he was busily engaged upon the task which he had set himself.

At the end of that time—with his cloak reversed, and his mask removed—he made his way out of the offices of Messrs. Samuel Barlow & Co., and entered the open street. A close observer might have noticed that his pockets were bulging almost to bursting point—but there were very few observers about at that hour of the morning.

He found himself in a side-street at the rear of the premises, and he walked rapidly towards a closed motor-car which was drawn up against the kerb a short distance away. Into this vehicle the stranger vanished, took his seat with the utmost calmness, and proceeded to light a cigarette.

After smoking this for a short period he was joined by a companion—a man who carried a large and heavy suit-case, which was quickly placed aboard the car.

The new-comer took his place at the driving-wheel without wasting any time in conversation, placed his foot upon the self-starter, and drove off—both he and his passenger being obviously well satisfied with themselves.

Who were the mysterious pair?
And what diabolical power was it which
they had made to serve them so faithfully?

CHAPTER III.

NELSON LEE IS INTERESTED.



CHIEF DETECTIVE-INSPECTOR LENNARD, of Scotland Yard, burst into Nelson Lee's consulting-room at Gray's Inn Road with all the familiarity of long-standing

friendship, and flopped himself into a chair. "This is the limit, Lee!" he exclaimed, in a disgusted tone. "The Yard is always doing its best to keep pace with the modern criminal—but we're up against something of a pretty stiff nature this time! You've seen the morning papers, I suppose?"

Nelson Lee and Nipper looked at their official colleague with curious glances, and it was amply apparent to them that Lennard was very much more concerned than usual. As a general rule the Scotland Yard man was a particularly level-headed individual, and it was evident that something very much out of the ordinary must have taken place to cause him to display such agitation.

The famous detective and his assistant had just finished their breakfast, and in reply to Lennard's query, Lee nodded.

"Yes, I've certainly glanced through the papers, old man," he said. "So far as I can see, the only item of interest appears to be a somewhat curious robbery at the establishment of Messrs. Samuel Barlow & Co——"

"Somewhat curious!" echoed Lennard, with a hard smile. "Why, man, it's amazing—extraordinary—astounding! Just wait until you've had a look round for yourself, Lee! You'll open your eyes in wonder when you see the condition of the safe and the state of the back door!"

Nipper stared at the chief inspector curiously.

"What's the big idea?" he demanded. "The papers said nothing about all this miracle business, Mr. Lennard! They just referred to the burglary in the usual manner——"

"They're just the preliminary reports," interjected Lennard. "By the time the evening editions appear they'll have headlines in inch-thick type, unless I'm a Dutchman! This affair is going to make the biggest sensation we've had for years—and the worst of it is that the police are completely baffled! We can't make head or tail of the business, and we're in a proper fog!"

Nelson Lee knew that the chief inspector would not speak in this way without good cause, and he at once became interested.

"I should like to hear a little more about this robbery, Lennard," he said briskly.

"Your words indicate that it is quite a new departure——"

"It is!" said Lennard grimly. "The crooks who are responsible for it must be something more than up-to-date, for they've made use of methods which have never previously been heard of. The Yard knew nothing about it until the early hours of the morning—and we were called in by the City Police. I was one of the first to visit Barlow's, and I tell you frankly, Lee, that I was simply staggered by what I saw!"

The chief inspector paused for a moment, and then went on.

"It appears that a City policeman was the first to make the discovery that anything was wrong," he continued. "He was on his usual beat, when he noticed that an iron door at the rear of Barlow's showed unmistakable signs of having been tampered with. He reported the matter at once, saying that the door had been pierced by some peculiar agency. A hole had been made completely through the ironwork by the application of heat in some form——"

"Oxy-acetylene blow-lamp, of course," began Nipper, when Lennard interrupted him brusquely.

"That's just where you're wrong, young 'un!" he exclaimed. "The iron door was pierced by terrific heat, but it wasn't an ordinary clean-cut hole such as an oxy-acetylene blow-lamp would make. I've seen it, and I know what I'm talking about!"

Nelson Lee looked up quickly.

"Then how was the hole made?" he queried.

"That's just what I want to know, old man!" said the chief inspector, with a little grunt. "I've never seen anything so curious in my life! The ironwork of the door looks as if it had been turned into putty, and then pierced with a man's fist or elbow! The thing is so dashed curious that I don't know what to think about it. But that's not all I've got to tell you, by long chalks!"

Lennard helped himself to one of Lee's cigarettes, lit it, and then resumed his story.

"The policeman, after making his initial discovery, opened the damaged door, and entered the premises," he continued, puffing at his cigarette jerkily. "In one of the private offices he discovered the unconscious body of Ben Logan, the watchman—huddled up upon the floor in the most grotesque position, with his legs and arms as stiff as piston-rods! He was paralysed, Lee—completely paralysed and immovable!"

The chief inspector paused dramatically, and looked at the detective intently. Nelson Lee was visibly impressed by what he had heard, and he nodded again very thoughtfully.

"H'm!" he murmured. "This seems to be very extraordinary, Lennard. You say that the watchman was completely para-

lysed, and unable to move hand or foot? Is he in the same condition now?"

"Hanged if I know!" said Lennard, with a shake of his head. "When I left the place he was being attended to by a doctor. Heaven knows what caused the man to become paralysed, but his condition was obviously brought about by the crooks. He was found quite close to the window, and the safe in the same room had been opened in precisely the same way as the iron door. A huge hole in the centre of the door told its own tale plainly enough, and there's no doubt that the thieves got away with a pretty considerable haul. We don't know yet exactly what has been taken from the safe, but I've seen enough to assure me that we're up against the cleverest set of crooks who have ever operated in this country! How they managed to melt iron and steel, and paralyse the watchman is absolutely beyond me!"

"How do you know that it's the work of a 'set' or gang?" asked Nelson Lee keenly.

"We don't!" confessed Lennard. "I only assumed that on account of this piece of paper which was found in the safe. Here—have a look at it, Lee, and tell me what you make of it!"

The chief inspector fumbled in his breast-pocket as he spoke, and withdrew a bulky wallet. From this he extracted a small piece of white paper, upon which were inscribed two brief words.

Nelson Lee took the paper, and looked at it keenly, Nipper meanwhile glancing over his shoulder. The two words seemed to stare at them menacingly, and in some subtle manner they appeared to impart a sinister warning.



A City policeman was the first to make a discovery that anything was wrong.

"'Satan's Fang!'" quoted Nelson Lee, reading the words aloud. "Very interesting and melodramatic, my dear Lennard—but I fail to see why this paper should give you the impression that a gang has been at work. To my mind, the words seem to be more in the nature of a personal warning rather than the trade mark of a criminal

gang; but, of course, we cannot be sure. But is this the only discovery you made? Have you no clues of any sort to go upon?"

The chief inspector shook his head.

"Not a blessed thing!" he declared. "There are no footprints, finger-prints, or anything else! The window of the office where the safe stood was unsecured, but for what reason it was unlatched seems to be obscure. The thieves got into the building by means of the iron door, and seem to have used skeleton keys to open the doors of the private office and passage—"

"I'll come with you to Barlow's, and have a look round, if you don't mind," cut in Nelson Lee briskly. "This case has all the characteristics of an unusually interesting problem, and I'm rather keen to see the melted door of the safe."

"Good!" exclaimed Lennard. "I was hoping you'd say that, old man! The car's outside now, and we can get to Cannon Street in no time!"

A few moments later the trio left the detective's house in Gray's Inn Road in the official police car, en route for the scene of the burglary.

CHAPTER IV.

A STARTLING DEDUCTION!



NELSON LEE stood in the private office of Mr. Samuel Barlow, and regarded the mutilated safe-door meditatively.

"Extraordinary!" he murmured, looking at Lennard thoughtfully. "You're quite right in saying that the methods used here are unique. I have never seen anything quite like it. Both the back door and this safe have been pierced by the application of some form of tremendous heat—heat which was so terrific that it caused the metal to lose its toughness and to become, as you said, little more than putty."

The chief inspector nodded.

"Yes; but how the deuce did the crooks apply such intense heat?" he asked. "How, if it comes to that, could they have carried an apparatus capable of generating it? And then there's the watchman—what about his paralysis?"

"We'll have a few words with him in a moment," said the detective. "It's extremely fortunate that he has recovered the full use of his muscles and limbs. The doctor, strangely enough, says that Logan is practically none the worse for his curious experience."

This was true, for Ben Logan, after lying unconscious for several hours, had recovered with truly astonishing rapidity. He was now sitting in his own little room, waiting to be questioned.

Nelson Lee had already examined the outer iron door, and was now engaged in the task of subjecting the safe to a minute scrutiny.

He was frankly puzzled, and for the life of him he could not understand how the criminals had achieved their results.

Through his magnifying-glass the detective examined the battered door of the safe, and it soon became obvious to him that some sort of preparation had been applied to the outer surface; but beyond that one discovery there seemed to be very little to go upon.

The metal of the safe had been, literally, fused into a paste—this much was apparent by the soft, jagged edges of the hole in the door. Obviously, the steel had been rendered into a putty-like substance by some unknown agency, with the result that the metal could no longer withstand the slightest pressure. A man's fist would be sufficient to pierce it easily under such conditions.

The very fact that crooks were abroad armed with implements capable of causing such havoc was distinctly alarming, and Mr. Samuel Barlow, the head of the firm, was in a tremendous state of agitation. No man's property would be safe from such criminals, he declared—and he was undoubtedly right.

Nelson Lee, for some little time, was absolutely absorbed in his examination of the safe and the room, and the very novelty of the situation interested him immensely. His keenness was a thing to marvel at, and he darted about the office with amazing alacrity. But he could find no finger-prints, and no footprints anywhere in the room.

There appeared to be no clues of any sort, and it was evident that the thieves had exercised the greatest caution. Nelson Lee knew of no instrument which was capable of executing such tremendous damage to the tough steelwork of the safe—but the facts spoke for themselves.

The detective finally walked over to the window, and his eyes gleamed strangely after he had subjected the iron bars which guarded it to a brief examination. His quick glance observed very evident signs of scorching upon them, and he gazed out of the window with a thoughtful expression for some few seconds.

Then he abruptly turned, and intimated his readiness to interview the watchman.

But Ben Logan could tell him very little which would help. He described, in detail, exactly what had occurred the previous night, and gave an accurate description of the red-cloaked man—as he had appeared in his disguise. The watchman, of course, could tell Lee nothing of what had taken place in the office after he had been rendered unconscious by the mysterious invisible grip, and the interview with Logan was singularly barren of results.

At its conclusion Nelson Lee took Lennard aside, and looked at him keenly and squarely.

"Look here, Lennard, I want you to answer a question for me," he said in his quiet voice. "Where is Professor Cyrus Zingrave?"

The chief inspector started.

"What the deuce is the good of trying to keep anything from you, Lee?" he grunted. "As a matter of fact, the professor escaped from prison a couple of months ago; but the authorities decided to keep it dark in order not to alarm the general public!"

Nelson Lee nodded his head significantly.

"Ah! Just as I suspected!" he muttered. "Unless I'm very much mistaken, Lennard, we have Professor Zingrave to thank for this affair at Barlow's! The whole atmosphere of the case seems to reek of his subtle methods, and I shall be quite content to engage in another battle of wits with him! But tell me—what has become of the League of the Green Triangle? Are its members still associated with the professor?"

"No," said Lennard. "Every blessed one of them is safely locked up in Portmoor Prison, and the professor is the only one who managed to escape. If you're right, Lee, it'll be him—and him alone—whom we're up against!"

The detective smiled.

"Naturally, I cannot be positive that I'm right," he said. "But I shall be greatly astonished if the opposite proves to be the case. You mark my words, Lennard—Professor Cyrus Zingrave is the man responsible for this robbery!"

Two minutes later Nelson Lee and Nipper left Barlow's establishment—the latter considerably puzzled as to his master's reasons for making such an abrupt departure.

CHAPTER V.

THE FIRST CLUE!



NIPPER looked at Nelson Lee blankly. "What's the idea, guv'nor?" he asked in surprise. "You don't mean to say that you've finished here—already?"

"For the time being, I don't think there is anything else we can do within Mr. Barlow's office, young 'un," returned the detective. "We have discovered very little indeed—but I have great hopes of being a little more successful upon our next quest."

"Next quest?" repeated Nipper. "Where the dickens are we bound for now, guv'nor?"

"To the vacant office which directly faces the barred window of Mr. Samuel Barlow's private office!" said Nelson Lee. "I have an idea that an examination of the place may prove to be considerably enlightening!"

Nipper grunted.

"I'm hanged if I can see what the game is, sir; but I suppose you know what you're doing!" he commented. "What on earth do you expect to find there?"

"I haven't the faintest notion!" confessed the detective. "But I am quite convinced in my own mind that Professor Zingrave—if it is he whom we are pitted against—used that empty office for the carrying out of his plans of last night. By some means or other he caused the door of Barlow's safe

to practically melt—and the machine which caused that phenomenon to take place was situated outside the building! That much is proved by the scorched bars of Barlow's office window!"

"Good heavens!" said Nipper. "Do you mean to say that there is a machine in existence capable of doing that, guv'nor—and of causing the watchman to become paralysed?"

"Obviously," said the detective. "There is no other explanation of the facts. You will remember that Ben Logan, in his statement said that he saw the red-cloaked man open the window, and then immediately duck down. What happened directly afterwards? Logan was unable to tell us, for the simple reason that he was stricken down by some unseen force—the very force which the red-cloaked man ducked to avoid meeting!"

"Well, I'm dashed!" ejaculated Nipper. "That unseen force must be horribly powerful—Oh, is this the place?"

The pair had by this time reached the side street which lay behind Barlow's premises, and the detective at once entered. Very shortly he was in conversation with the man in charge, and learned that the vacant office which faced the burgled premises had been hired by an elderly man, who paid the rent in advance. The detective had no difficulty in obtaining permission to examine the room, and he and Nipper were shortly closeted together within the bare apartment.

It contained but a few articles of furniture, which comprised a battered desk, two chairs, and a wastepaper-basket. The floorboards were bare and dirty—but the detective lost no time in commencing upon his examination of the room.

Almost the first discovery which Nelson Lee made was a series of marks upon the floor, near the window. They consisted of three scarcely perceptible indentations in the wood; but the detective appeared to regard them with a great amount of importance.

"Look, Nipper—marks made by the feet of an iron tripod!" he exclaimed. "We are getting nearer, young 'un, and I fancy we shall find ourselves up against something of a unique nature!"

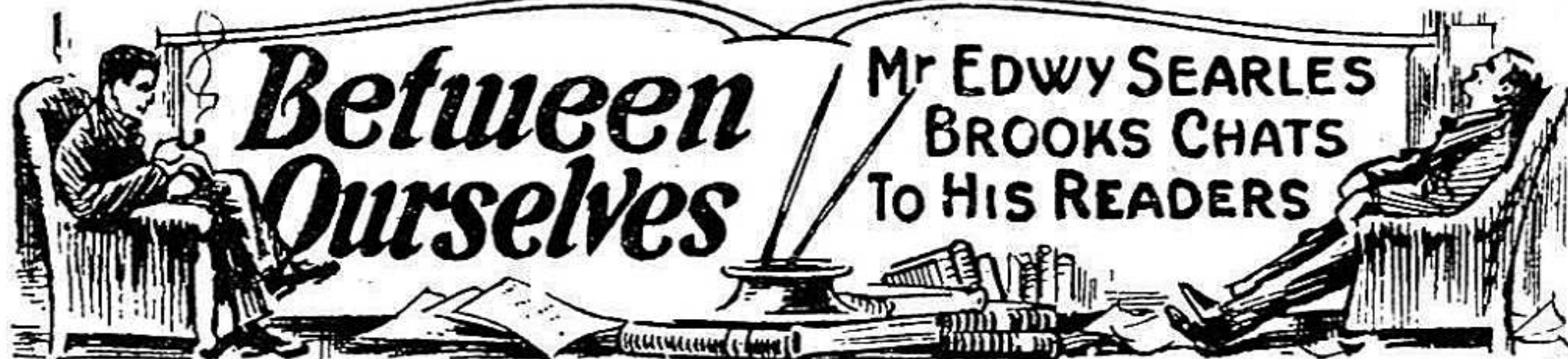
It was at this moment that Lee caught sight of the wastepaper-basket, and he moved towards it at once, bending down and commencing to rummage amongst the contents.

"The absence of clues is strikingly apparent in this case, and is a great tribute to the astuteness of the crooks—Ah, what is this, Nipper? What is this?"

In order to make his task easier, Lee had turned the basket upside-down, and he suddenly broke off, and pounced upon a minute object which had become wedged in the wickerwork.

The object was about half an inch long, and was obviously a piece of human skin!

END OF FIRST INSTALMENT.



[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.]

Letters received: N. Scharenguivel (Singapore), Reginald Salter (Durban, S.A.), "An Enthusiastic Reader" (Rye, New York), C. McClellan* (Tottenham), George Dawson* (Cardiff), Leonard Ostoad* (Walthamstow), John Hasney* (Islington), E. W. Kembury* (Swaffham), C. Leverton* (Plymouth), S. C. Phillips* (Edinburgh), R. Rushworth* (Gateshead), C. Tonge (Bolton), Robert Postill* (Worcester), Wm. Pluck* (Letchworth), Frank Taylor* (Oldham), E. R. Inge* (Walthamstow), W. Osborne* (Isleworth), Harold Doughty* (Chesterfield), Frank E. Jones (Kidderminster), "Concordia Crescimus"* (Plymouth), "A Lover of the Nelson Lee Library," G. Watson* (Basingstoke), R. Bayliss* (Oxford), Brian A. Sadlier (Gillingham), Wm. Burton* (Hackney), "An Interested Reader" (Clayton-le-Moors), Arthur Mallett (Toronto), Gordon Smith (Orillia, Canada), Charles Price* (Leeds), R. J. Kaufman* (Canning Town), John Franklin* (Manchester), George Daffern* (Warwick), Matthew Anderson* (Glasgow), Albert E. Forse* (Camberwell), J. Hearne* (Bath), Harold Coulson (Bradford), J. Miller* (Darwen), Leslie Martin* (Earlsfield), J. Smytt* (Belfast), Percy J. Pecry (Canterbury), J. Southwell* (Hull), N. Jackson (Oxford), Joseph J. Frankenhal (Chester), H. Mason* (Leytonstone), R. W. Hoyle* (Walmer), Frank Hollingworth* (Oldham), W. Fidler (Razmak, India), Norman Vale (Montreal), Cyril Monckton (Finsbury Park), "Old Reader" (Catford), Frank W. Rimmer* (Wallasey), Dora Marshall (Hull).

It's a good thing I've got two pages at my disposal, or I shouldn't have much

space left for my comments. But you mustn't judge from this week's postbag—I don't think it will be as heavy as this always. The majority of you fellows mentioned above have sportingly offered your services as Chief Organising Officers for The St. Frank's League in your respective districts. You'll notice that I've distinguished you by an asterisk after your names.

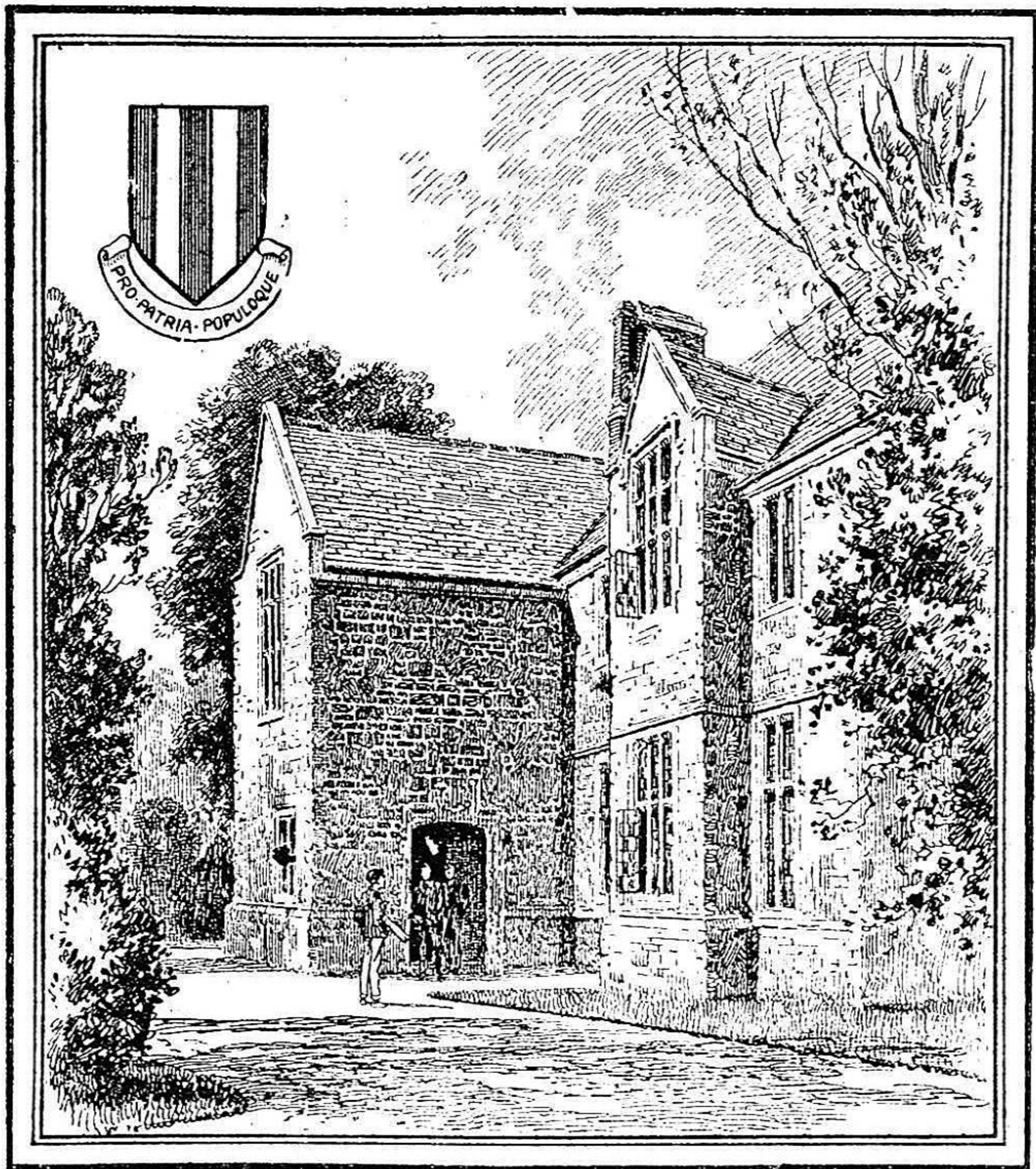
Thanks, all of you, for your whole-hearted support and enthusiasm. Unfortunately the League isn't a reality yet, although I hope that it will become a very real organisation in the near future. All your names are carefully listed, and when the right times comes you'll be called upon to make good your promises and do your bit. My only fear is that your enthusiasm may have waned during the period of waiting; but I am hoping for the best.

I want to thank everybody who wished me a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. I thought it was very nice of you to write especially, and I appreciate the thought which actuated your pens.

Those of you who have been worrying about the Old Paper being divided up into two can now rest content. The Editor and I have had several chats, and he thinks it'll be far better to carry on in the usual way. The only change will be one that you already know of. In a few weeks' time Nelson Lee and Nipper will return to St. Frank's, and the school stories will be lengthened accordingly, filling up most of the paper. I think this will please the hearts of the majority.

Within a week or two there may be a change in the Magazine—not in the contents, but in the form of it. I can't say anything for certain now, because the Editor hasn't quite decided. But if the change IS made I am sure that it will meet with general approval. So look out! I've got you guessing now, haven't I?

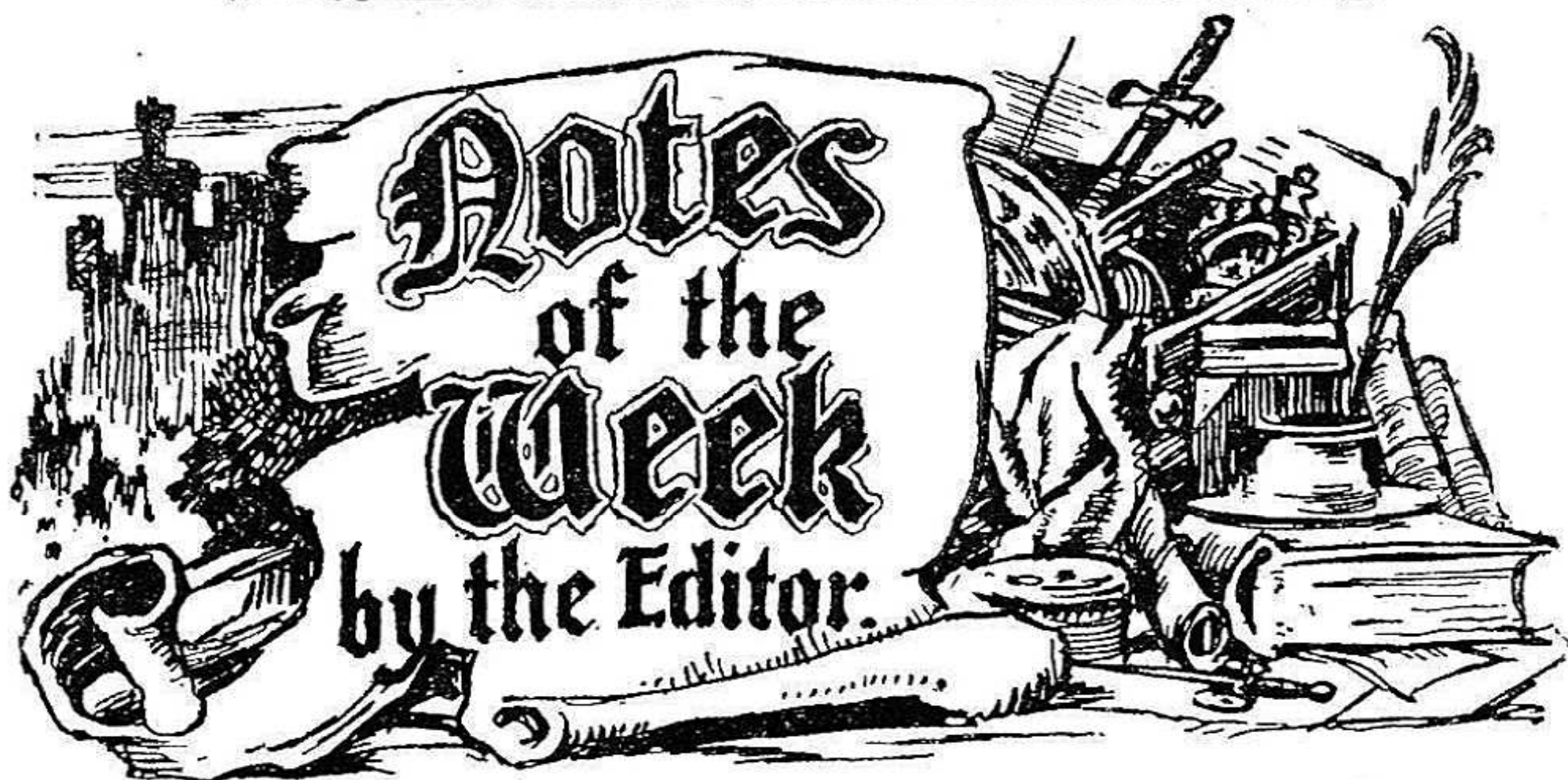
(Continued on page iii of cover.)



OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS SERIES OF ART SKETCHES.

No. 62. BLUNDELL'S SCHOOL, TIVERTON, DEVON.

Founded in 1604 by Mr. Peter Blundell, clothier, of Tiverton, this famous school has been immortalised by R. D. Blackmore in "Lorna Doone," Blackmore being a scholar there. The school is divided into Upper, Middle, and Lower Schools, and consists of 320 boys. Sports include Rugby football, cricket, fives, and lawn tennis.



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

My dear Chums,

You will all be delighted to hear that Nipper and Nelson Lee are both in the land of the living, and are in the best of health and spirits. I have just had a letter from Nipper, and he tells me that they have had an exciting time in connection with the Hollowdene Manor Mystery. This case is now satisfactorily ended, and there is a possibility that Nelson Lee and Nipper will return to St. Frank's before many weeks. Nipper sends his best wishes to everyone, and says he is looking forward to seeing all the fellows again.

NIPPER AND THE FOURTH FORM CAPTAINCY.

The actual date when Nipper returns I am not able to give. He will probably come back quite unexpectedly. But I would like to say something about the captaincy. While Nipper is at the school, I feel I must stand down in his favour for this responsible position. After all, he has had very much more experience as your skipper than me, and, for the sake of old times as well, I will resign in his favour as soon as he returns to St. Frank's. I have often wished during the last few months that we had the benefit of Nipper's detective ability, especially in getting to the bottom of the Moat Hollow School Mystery.

A NEW POSITION FOR NELSON LEE.

In his letter, Nipper tells me that Nelson Lee will also be returning to St. Frank's, and that our old Housemaster has been invited by the Head to start a special detective class and to assist him in the administration of the school. In many ways this will be an ideal position for the great schoolmaster-detective, for he will be able to follow up the work he loves without being tied down to the regular routine of House-

master, and at the same time he will be able to mingle with his old friends at St. Frank's. For a long time Dr. Stafford has looked upon Nelson Lee as his right-hand man, and has never sought his help in vain when faced with a difficult situation. This will mean that Mr. Beverley Stokes will remain permanently the Ancient Housemaster. We should all be sorry to lose Mr. Stokes, and it is satisfactory to know that the return of Nelson Lee will not make any difference to Mr. Stokes' position at St. Frank's.

THE DETECTIVE CLASS.

The training of boys in detective-work is quite a new departure in public school work, and it is to the credit of Dr. Stafford that he recognises its educational value. We cannot all be professional detectives, but if every man had some knowledge of detection, the criminal would find it increasingly difficult to flourish in our midst, and, in course of time, would become extinct. Often a hue and cry is raised for a wanted man. It is then that the public, by making full use of their powers of observation, can materially assist the police in bringing the criminal to justice.

THE FATE OF TOMMY WATSON.

There seems to be little doubt now that Moat Hollow as a school is a snare and a delusion. Once a boy is sent there, he is not given a chance to get out again, and similar precautions are taken to prevent anyone getting into touch with these wretched youths behind those high, dismal walls. Sir Montie is trying hard to obtain news of his former study chum, but without much success. Unfortunately, it is equally impossible to communicate with Tommy's father, since the latter has gone abroad with his family. So it is up to the Fourth to act, and without loss of time.

Your sincere chum, REGGIE PITT.

AMONGST THE REDSKINS

By **EUGENE ELLMORE**

Author of "Facts Let Loose," etc., etc.

THE MEDICINE MAN.

The most important man next to the chief himself in an Indian community is the medicine man.

The word "medicine" in this connection means nothing more than mystery. It is, of course derived from the French word "médecin," meaning doctor or physician.

Amongst the redskins the doctors are all magicians, and it is easy to see that everything that cannot be understood is referred to as medicine. Thus there is good and bad medicine, according as the results are pleasing or otherwise.

Each tribe has a number of medicine men. Their duties cover a wide field, for not only are they supposed to be able to heal the sick, but also to promote victory in battle and success in the chase.

So far as curing the sick goes, they are certainly quite capable persons. They have a good knowledge of roots and herbs. From these they can concoct various drugs, and very often the patient recovers.

A DRESS OF ODDS AND ENDS.

If that happens, the medicine man does not fail to rub the fact well home. He stands in some conspicuous place for days on end, preaching to the villagers and telling of his success.

If he fails he joins the band of mourners and bewails the fate of his patient, at the time assuring the tribesmen that it is the will of the Great Spirit that he should be taken.

The dress of the medicine man is as remarkable as it is overawing. Very often he will cover himself in the skin of a bear or other large animal. In addition to this there will be fastened to it the skins of ever so many other smaller animals or reptiles, such as snakes or frogs.

Claws of birds, hoofs of deer and all sorts of other portions of every sort of animal will also be affixed. And if their original owners have been deformed in any way so much the better. The medicine man in full war-paint looks like a sort of Christmas-tree!

STRANGE CUSTOMS.

If his patient is seriously ill he will try the effect of dancing round him. He will shake his spear and make strange noises with his rattles. He will yell and grunt in imitation of animals. Then he will jump round and over the invalid. He will appeal to the spirits. If these measures fail he will push and pull the unfortunate man about.

But curing the sick is not by any means the medicine man's most usual occupation.

He has ever so many feast-day celebrations to organise. On all such festive occasions he is asked to produce his "magic."

When white men first appeared amongst them the redskins credited them with being magicians, because they could use firearms or paint pictures or predict weather. Many a white man has held the position of honorary medicine man to a tribe. But it is not a very safe position to hold, as the native medicine men are sure to become jealous.

CEMETERIES IN THE AIR.

Another curious custom amongst some redskin tribes relates to disposing of their dead. Instead of burying them, they place the bodies upon small scaffolds so as to be out of the way of prowling dogs or wolves.

The bodies are dressed in their best clothes and are supplied with pipe, tobacco and provisions, which it is supposed he will need on his journey. The dead man's arms are also placed at his side.

Then a miniature scaffold is erected, and he is placed on top of it. Many of these scaffolds are erected side by side, so that the cemetery may be said to be in the air.

When the bodies have decayed the bones are buried. But the skulls are taken into the prairie. They are arranged, perhaps, as many as a hundred at a time in a large circle. Their heads face the centre, in which a tall medicine-pole is erected on a mound. And in addition there are often to be seen the skulls of a male and female buffalo. These little circles in the vast prairie are usually well-tended and looked after.

OUR PORTRAIT GALLERY. And WHO'S WHO.



**TIMOTHY
ARMSTRONG.**

No. 61.—TIMOTHY ARMSTRONG.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Big, burly and aggressive. Powerfully-built frame, but revealing weakness in his forehead. Eyes, grey. Hair, dark and sleek. Height, 5 ft. 5 ins. Weight, 8 st. 12 lb. Birthday, July 27th.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

Fond of making a lot of noise, and posing as somebody of importance. In any big matter, however, indecision and weakness reveal his real character. A windbag—always talking, but never doing.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

Fair at football and cricket, but not brainy enough to excel. Hobby: Boasting about his own capabilities.



**ERNEST
LAWRENCE.**

No. 62.—ERNEST LAWRENCE.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Well-built, with broad shoulders and athletic frame. Open, pleasant face, with fresh complexion and cheery smile. Eyes, grey. Hair, curly and golden. Height, 5 ft. 4 ins. Weight, 8 st. 8 lb. Birthday, March 31st.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

Modesty is Lawrence's chief characteristic. He hates talking about his boxing prowess, and in every way he is quiet and unassuming. Generosity and kindness are his other main points.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

Although interested in cricket, boxing is the one sport of his life. Lawrence can generally be found in his study or the gymnasium.

THE FOURTH At ST FRANK'S.



No. 63.—LOUIS GRIFFITH.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

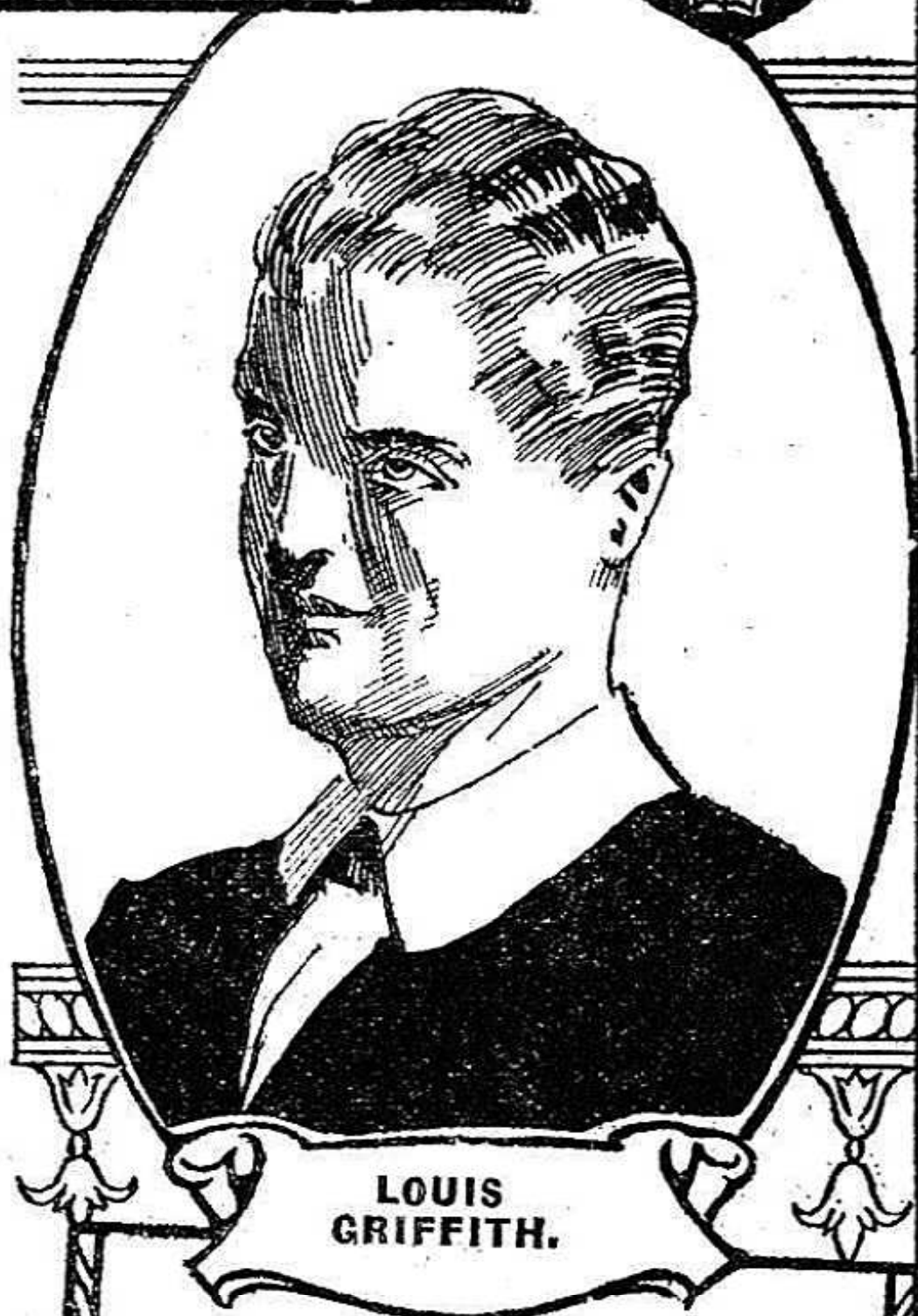
An average kind of boy, with pleasant features. Eyes, brown. Hair, dark. Height, 5 ft. 1 in. Weight, 8 st. 3 lb. Birthday, April 15th.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

Has a happy-go-lucky disposition, and is not very strong-willed. Easily swayed by an eloquent speaker at a junior meeting. Generally acts before he thinks—sometimes with unfortunate consequences.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

Weak at most sports, being rather a delicate boy constitutionally. Hobbies: Stamp collecting, fretwork, and playing the flute.



LOUIS
GRIFFITH.

No. 64.—WILLIAM FREEMAN.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Burly, clumsy figure. Unhandsome features, but rather pleasant. Eyes, blue. Hair, medium. Height, 5 ft. 2 ins. Weight, 8 st. 9 lb. Birthday, August 15th.

CHIEF CHARACTERISTICS:

Obstinate, but good-tempered. Always getting into arguments, but seldom gets angry over them.

SPORTS & RECREATIONS:

A good runner, with plenty of staying power.

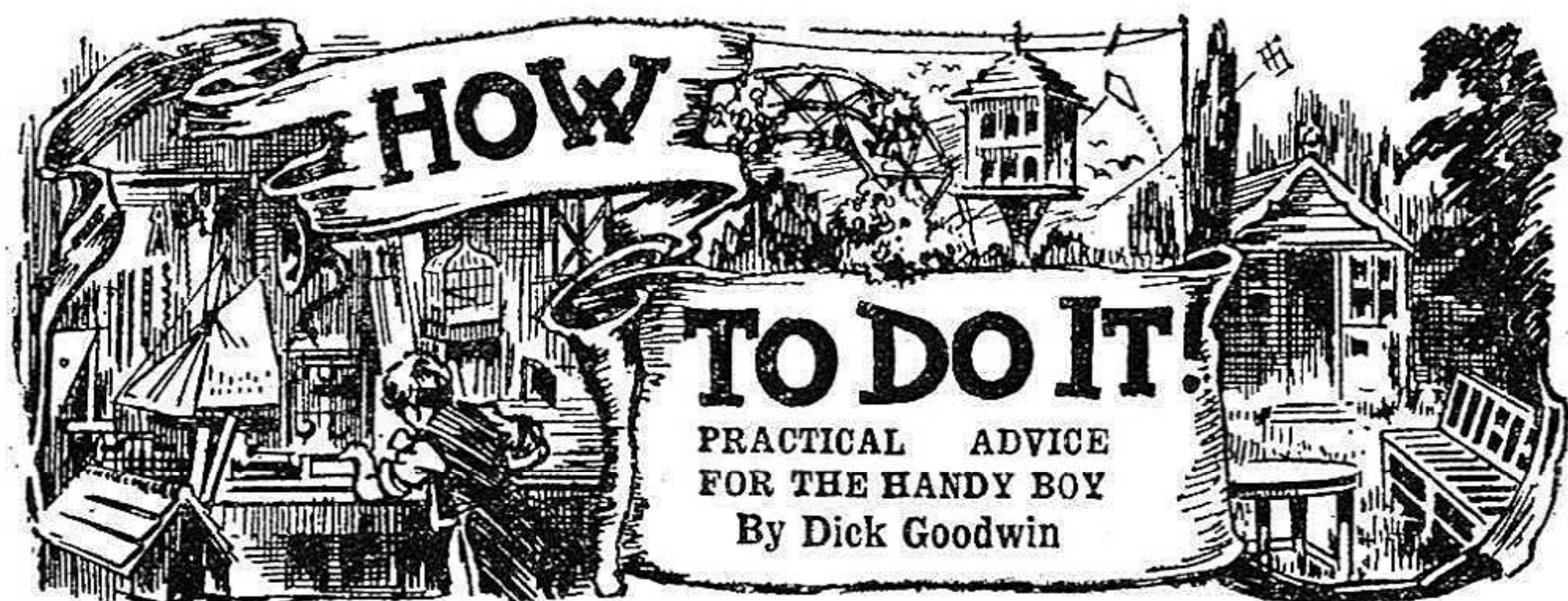


WILLIAM
FREEMAN.

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.

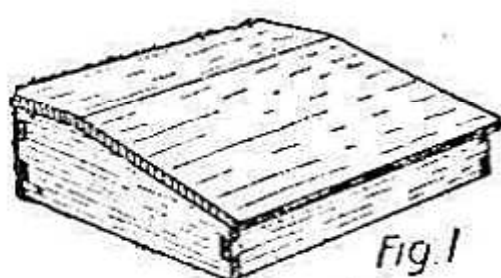
ERROR.—In the Portrait Gallery for December 13th the Duke of Somerton's birthday was given as May 23rd. This should have read December 27th.

NEXT WEEK: Justin B. Farman, Charles Owen, Harold Doyle, Yung Ching.



Readers who wish to ask questions or make suggestions regarding these articles are invited to write to Dick Goodwin, c/o The Editor, The Nelson Lee Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

A WRITING DESK SLOPE WITH A SECRET FASTENING (LOCK)



NOT only is the desk, shown at Fig. 1, convenient in use, but it is almost impossible for anyone to open it who does not know about the secret lock. When

the desk is open and the slope removed, the method of fastening is not entirely exposed. The main sizes are shown in the plan and elevations at Fig. 3. It will be seen that the desk is comprised of two sides A, a back B, a front C, which can be joined together in several ways, plainly butted and screwed, as at Figs. 2 and 3, lock cornered, as at Fig. 1, tongued, as at Figs. 3 and 4, or dovetailed. The bottom D can be tongued, as at E, or butted against a fillet, as at F, Fig. 3.

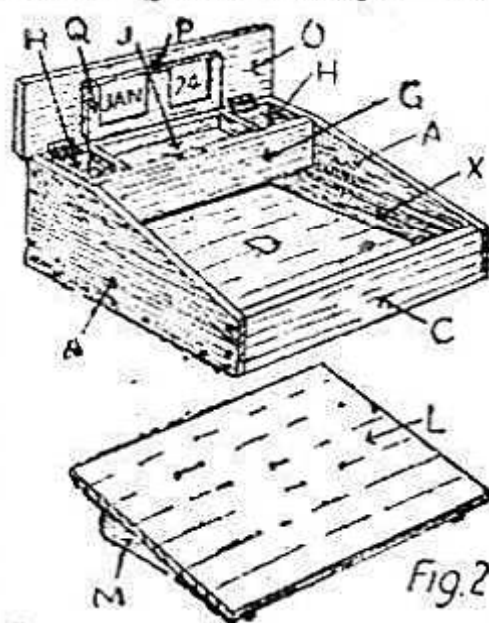
THE SECRET COMPARTMENT.

The ink and pen compartments are formed by a strip G with partitions H H, with a secret compartment covered with a strip J; this piece fits closely inside the pen compartment and rests on side fillets slightly bevelled at one end, as at K, Fig. 4. Pressure at one end will tilt the strip J and enable it to be lifted up. The slope L is supported on two tapered strips M, and strengthened with fillets N, as at Fig. 5, the small ends of the tapered lengths are bevelled to fit in taper-notched cuts inside the front C and shown at F, Fig. 3. The lid O is

hinged to the back B, and the front edge is bevelled to fit closely against the top of the slope, as at Figs. 1 and 3.

THE SECRET LOCK.

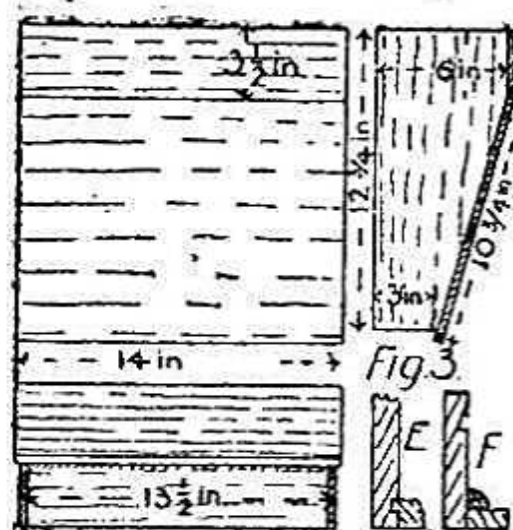
The lock P is placed behind the date calendar Q, as at Fig. 6, and is formed by using a dummy hinge R to which is soldered a short bar P and kept in position with two springs S S. The hinge shown separately at Fig. 6 should be the same size as those used to attach the lid O, and being cut away underneath, appears quite naturally placed between the other two and gives no apparent indication that it is not what it appears to be—an ordinary hinge. The bar slides between two strips T T, and is covered by the slot in the back of the piece Q which is made from three-ply wood, this material allows of the necessary rebates for the date cards to be made quite easily. The lock plate U is made



from a piece of sheet brass, and is screwed to the top of the strip G, with a groove underneath, as at Fig. 5. The key should be made from hard rolled brass or a thin piece of iron to the shape V, and is used, as shown at W, Fig. 5. The desk looks well in oak, wax polished, but deal can be used if stained and polished.

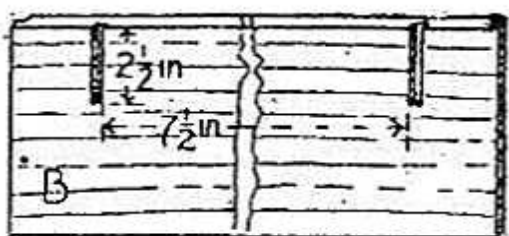
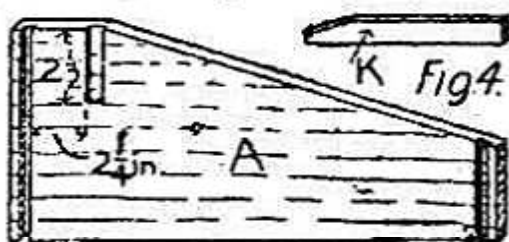
HOW TO MAKE THE DESK.

MOST of the wood used is $\frac{1}{2}$ in. thick, and although it is possible to obtain machine-planed wood of this thickness, the surface will require careful finish to obtain a good polish. In order to



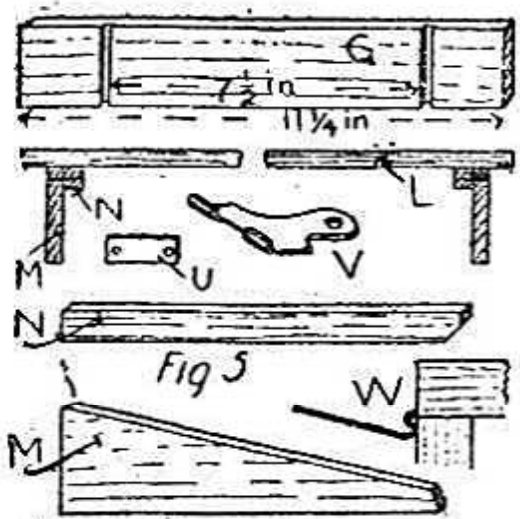
allow for the few shavings necessary with the smoothing plane, the wood should be a trifle thicker than $\frac{1}{2}$ in., and it will be as well when ordering the wood to specify $\frac{1}{2}$ in. full or $\frac{3}{8}$ in. bare. Both the tongue and groove and the lock corner joints have been described before,

so we can get ahead with the marking out. The two sides are $12\frac{1}{2}$ in. by 6 ins. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in. when finished, the full width is left for a distance of $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. and then the wood is tapered to 3 in. at the end. The back B is $13\frac{1}{2}$ in. by 6 in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in. finished, and the front C the same length and thickness, but only $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. wide.



CUTTING THE GROOVES.

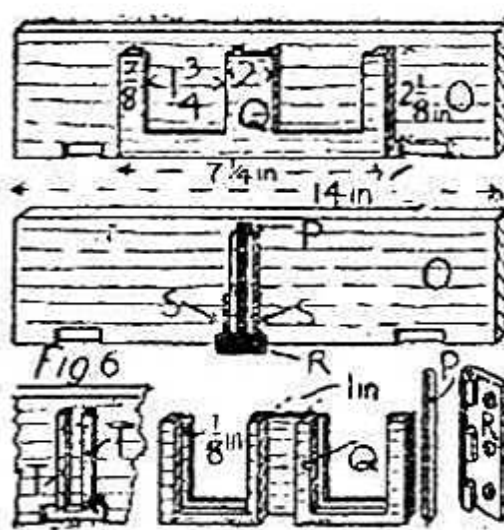
The parts are joined together before the top edges are sloped to match the sides, but before the joints are secured, the grooves are cut in the sides and at the back, as at Fig. 4. These are ordinary stopped grooves, those in the sides A are $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. long, $\frac{1}{2}$ in. wide, and $\frac{1}{4}$ in. deep.



Those at the back are $\frac{1}{4}$ in. wide and deep and the same length as those at the sides, all being $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. from the inner edges. The front of the partitions at G is grooved $\frac{1}{4}$ in. wide and $\frac{1}{4}$ in. deep, the partitions are all $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. wide, the front is $12\frac{1}{2}$ in. long, and the inner pieces $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. long.

FITTING THE BOTTOM.

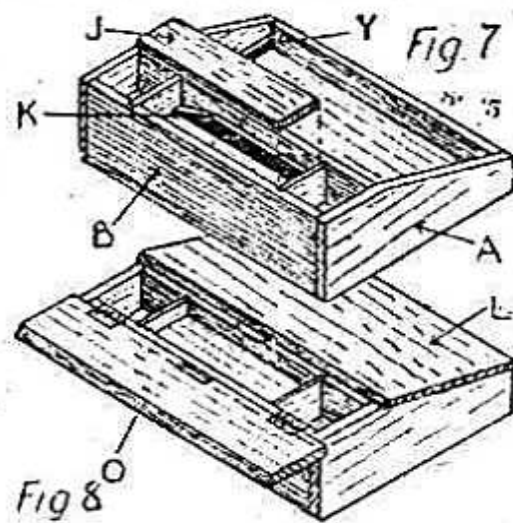
The bottom is screwed to the under edges, but the better way is to let it in the back and sides. The two fillets for supporting the false bottom are $7\frac{1}{2}$ in. by 1 in. by $\frac{1}{4}$ in., as at K.



When these parts are complete, the bottom D is fitted and the whole of the joints secured with glue. A fillet is now glued on each side to support the slope, as at X, this is $12\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $\frac{1}{4}$ in., but if the bottom D is of $\frac{1}{4}$ in. plywood, the fillets X should be $\frac{1}{4}$ in. wider.

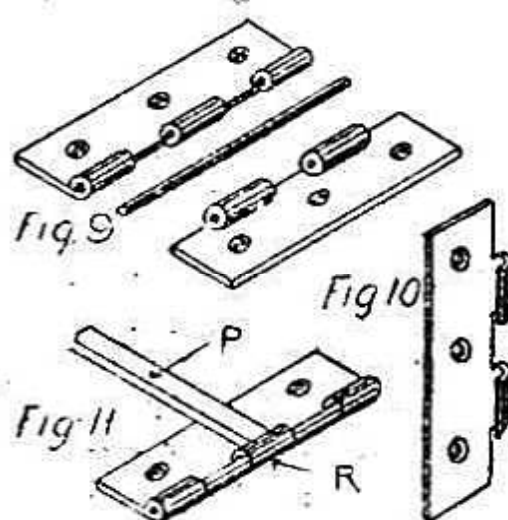
MAKING THE SLOPE.

The slope is 14 in. by $10\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in., the supports are 9 in. long, $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. at wide end, and $\frac{1}{2}$ in. at the small end, with a thickness of $\frac{1}{2}$ in. The small end is cut back $\frac{1}{4}$ in. to provide the projection necessary to fit in the slots which are shown in the inside view at Y, Fig. 7. The strips N are $10\frac{1}{2}$ in. by 1 in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in. with the ends trimmed off, as shown; they are screwed underneath $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. from the outside and the supports M screwed to them, this avoids the driving of screws or nails from the top of the slope. The lid O is first prepared to 14 in. by $3\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in., and then the front edge is planed down to the bevel required to enable it to fit against the top of the slope when it is in position, as at Fig. 8.



FITTING THE HINGES.

The lid can now be hinged with two $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in. brass butts, but in cutting the necessary recesses, an identical recess is cut in the centre, as at Fig. 8. One half of a similar hinge is cut off and the two inner knuckles are filed off, as indicated at Fig. 6. The best way to do this is to separate the two portions by driving out the rod, as at Fig. 9, then file the necessary portion away, as at Fig. 10, finally joining the parts together, as at Fig. 11 and soldering on the locking bar, which should be $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $\frac{1}{4}$ in. by $\frac{1}{8}$ in.



The springs can be made by wrapping lengths of fine piano wire round a 2 in. wire nail, fastening one end to the holes and the other to small round-headed screws; these are driven in alongside the two guide strips T, Fig. 6 $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $\frac{1}{4}$ in. by $\frac{1}{8}$ in., which are screwed to the

centre of the top as indicated.

(Continued on next page)

HOW TO MAKE THE DESK

(Continued from previous page.)

MAKING THE CALENDAR.

The calendar frame Q is cut to $7\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $\frac{1}{4}$ in. from three-ply wood, the centre slot, as at Fig. 6, is 1 in. wide and a trifle over

$\frac{1}{8}$ in. deep, the date and number card openings are $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. wide by $1\frac{1}{8}$ in. deep. The rebates at the back are $\frac{1}{8}$ in. and formed by cutting away two layers. The month and number cards can be made from two-sheet Bristol board and marked in Indian ink. The frame is now fitted over the lock, care being taken that the bolt moves easily.

IN REPLY TO YOURS

Correspondence Answered by E. O. Handforth

(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.)

OXO (Kennington): I'll bet those four new readers you've collected read your copies instead of buying their own. But thanks all the same. Oxo's the stuff! Willy's too busy with his monkey, Marmaduke, to bother about rabbits.

AN OLD READER (Newquay): So my Trickett Grim tales are rotten, and a kid of six could write them better! Oh, could he? Next time I'm in Newquay I'll teach you better manners. And if you're grown up by then I'll punch your silly nose!

GERARD T. MERCER (Liverpool): How could I help reading your first paragraph when you wait till the end of it before you tell me not to? Look here, my lad, don't you be so jolly cheeky if you want to get a proper answer out of me!

REDSKIN ERN (Hale): What! You don't know the best runner in the Fourth! Well, I'm too modest to tell you. That code of yours is thundering good. Esyct, ybet Eorgegas, tite sial! I wonder if any of the fatheads can make that out!

JOHN McKENNA (Taranaki, New Zealand): If Ernest Lawrence could beat Nipper, I know somebody he couldn't knock out. I'm tired of biffing that artist over the rotten photo at the top of my page, but I've given him another for you.

ARTHUR BOGGS (Greenmeadows, New Zealand): Is that the name of your town? If so, it's a caution! What a lot of you chumps go potty over stamp-collecting! You're as bad as Boots, Clapson, Grimth, Munroe, Hubbard and Cornelius Trotwood.

GLADYS (East London, South Africa): Please forgive me! Really, I couldn't

help bunching you up with nine others when I answered you before, in October. But now I've kept my promise, and given you an answer all to yourself, haven't I?

MOLLIE (Leamington Spa): Oh, Mollie! How could you? Fancy stopping away from church to write to me! Oh, well, I suppose you think I'm worth it. I expect you've seen my photograph. Most girls like good-looking faces.

BIFF (Leamington Spa): I believe that illness of yours was only an excuse to stay away from church with your sister. That gramophone sketch and the poetry are both jolly good. If you go on like that Clarence Fellowe'll get left!

ONE OF MY ADMIRERS (Brigg): Here! I'm not going to answer your insulting letter. I'll save the time for Cross Word Puzzles. You're no "admirer." You're a—a six letter word with two "t's" in the middle and an "r" at each end.

OLIVER AUBREY HUGHES (Sawtry): There's your name in print. You've got your wish to see it in "the best book of all"—a very nice phrase of yours. About that explanation you want, you're such a sensible chap that it's not necessary.

WELL-WISHER (Barnetby): Fathead! Isn't the story about us AS GOOD as a play every week? You're another who doesn't deserve an answer. But I must have the room to tick you off for calling me "a lumbering jackass." I don't lumber.

AN OLD READER (London, N.): Fancy picking me up like that about Splinter's broken legs. A fat lot of encouragement w^o authors would get if all our readers were as critical as you are. Literary licence covers a multitude of grins.

RHODA (Sheffield): Why SHOULD I mind you calling me Oswald? It's my name, and it's a nice one, isn't it? Of course, I'm one of the best boys here. So you think the Mag. would be a failure without my story. Rhoda, you're a peach!

TED.

DIRECTIONS.

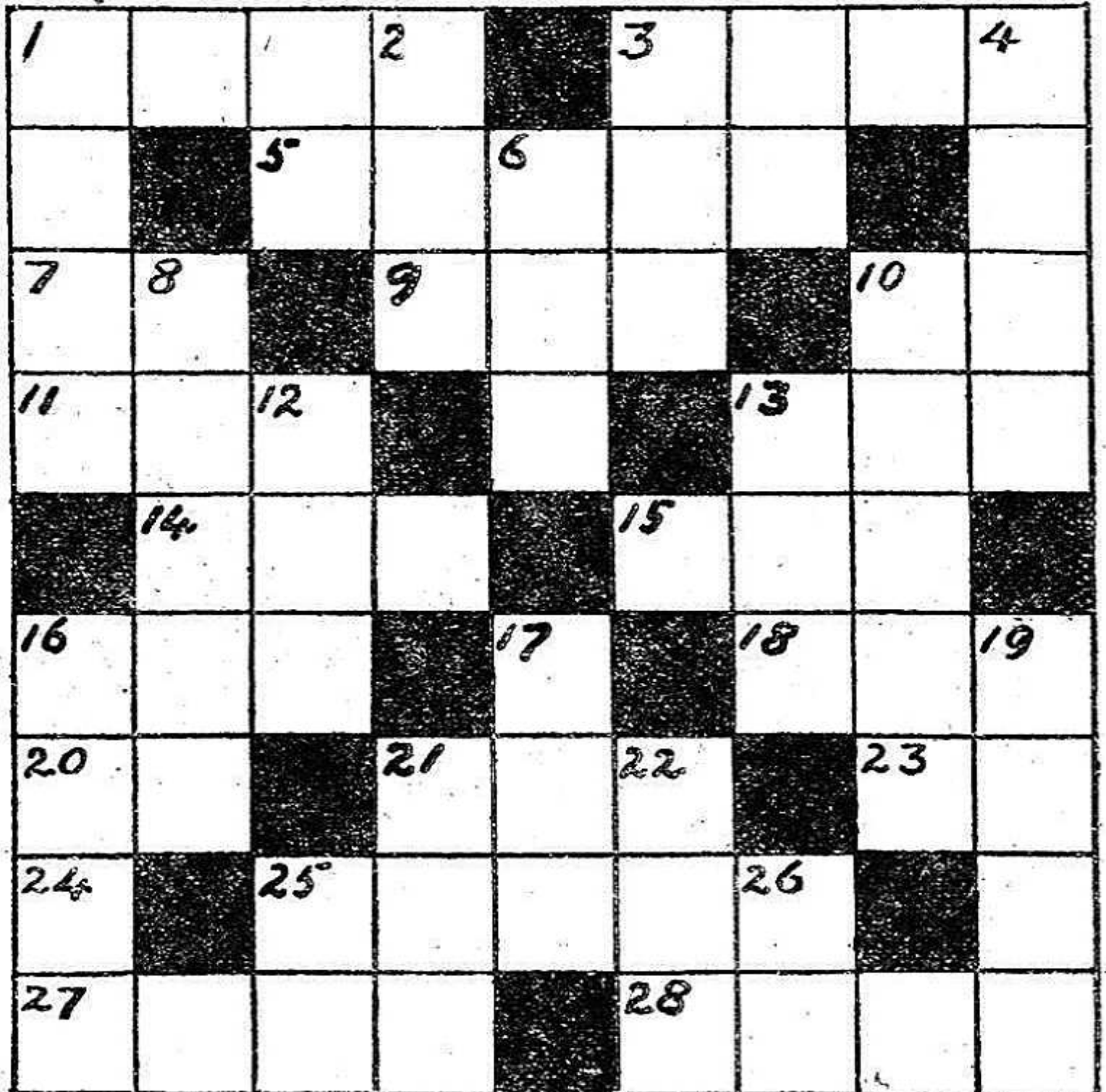
Each number in the puzzle shows the position of the first letter of the word, whose definition is given in the definition columns alongside the same number as the square. From the definition you can find out what the word is, and place each of its letters in one square so that they will just fit the number of squares allotted to the word.

Each word reads from left to right (Across), or from top to bottom (Down), according to positions as shown in the definitions. The final letter of any word will always be in the square immediately preceding a black square or an outside line.

For example, two words have their initial letters in square 1. One reads down and the other across. The initial is the same in both cases, and both must be words of four letters.

When you have finished putting in the letters, all the words that cross will interlock. The black squares only separate words which do not cross or interlock.

A ST. FRANK'S CROSS WORD PUZZLE.



LIST OF DEFINITIONS.

Across.

1. What all juniors enjoy.
3. Appears at dinner.
5. Good for boating.
7. Short for place.
9. Most boys have one.
10. Masculine.
11. Boy's name.
13. For the cricket season.
14. No score.
15. Successful match.
16. For Handy's cap.
18. Clarence Fellowe can write one.
20. Part of the verb to be.
21. An enemy.
23. Short for yard.
25. Prominent Removite.
27. Good to eat.
28. What Fullwood lost money on.

Down.

1. Very welcome.
2. Small boy.
3. What Archie likes.
4. Useful for footer.
6. De Valerie's got it.
8. Punishment.
10. A modest junior!
12. How to get buried treasure.
13. An angry noise.
16. A popular junior.
17. What Archie talks.
19. The mag. has someone to do it.
21. Jimmy Little.
22. And the rest.
24. Long-winded junior.
25. Abbreviation for French.
26. You.



IN QUEST OF GOLD!

A Marvellous New Serial of Breathless
Adventure in the Klondyke and Alaska.

By the Celebrated Author
Edward Oswald Handforth

MEMORIES REFRESHED HERE.

Out on the boundless prairies of the Wild West, Bob Brave and Claude Courage have joined a great train of covered waggon. They are on their way to the gold-fields. Bob Brave has just biffed Roaring Jake, the bully of the camp, and a terrific mill is beginning.

CHAPTER XVI. THE GREAT FIGHT.

CRASH!

Bob Brave's fist thudded upon Roaring Jake's chin, and the hulking great rotter staggered back and fell to the ground like a pole-axed bull. Bob Brave stood there with flashing eyes and fists.

"Get up, you cad!" he cried. "I haven't started yet!"

And the crowd surged round with tense excitement.

Roaring Jake leapt to his feet, and his eyes blazed with evil fury. Claude Courage stood by, ready to aid his chum. But Bob was in no need of assistance as yet.

"I'll larn yer!" snarled Jake hoarsely.

He charged to the attack, his great, hairy arms waving like mill-sails. Bob looked puny and slight compared to the hulking bully. But with supreme-coolness he neatly side-stepped, and, as Roaring Jake went blundering by, Bob's right came up with the force of a battering-ram.

Biff!

This time the blow landed on Jake's nose, and he turned two complete somersaults, stood on his head, and spun round like a top. And the crowd gathered round with tense excitement.

It was a test of strength—a test of courage. But the bully was already beaten. Two blows, and the stuffing was knocked out of him! He lay on the ground, and took the count without uttering a sound. He

groaned continuously and cursed in a voice that sounded like Vesuvius in eruption.

But the fight was biffed out of him. Bob Brave was the hero of the hour!

CHAPTER XVII.

THE TERROR OF THE MOUNTAINS.

FOR a whole week, Roaring Jake kept to his waggon, and wouldn't show his face. He was too jolly well ashamed of himself. And men who had been afraid of him before, now jeered at him like the dickens. He couldn't move a yard without somebody chipping him.

And the great waggon train went on—always on.

The plains were left behind, and the hardy pioneers found themselves in the recesses of the mountains. The Rockies! On all sides towered the great crags. Men and waggons and horses had to find their way inch by inch through the mountain passes—where man had never trod before.

Luckily, there was an old-timer among the men, and he was able to lead the waggon train along the trodden path through the mountains, where previous pioneers had trodden in ages past.

One day Bob Brave and Claude Courage were out hunting. The adventurers had camped amid the mountains, and our heroes were out after a couple of rabbits. They had their catapults with them, and were intent upon the hunt.

Rounding some jagged rocks, Claude Courage uttered a sharp, piercing cry, and stood frozen to the ground, as motionless as a stone statue. He shook violently with the excitement of the moment.

For there, two yards away, facing him, stood an enormous grizzly bear!

(Will Claude escape the bear's clutches? See next week's palpitating instalment and find out for yourselves!—AUTHOR).

(Continued from page 30.)

I was very pleased to get a letter from "An Enthusiastic Reader," of Rye, New York. It is very gratifying to know that you are still loyal to the Old Paper, "Enthusiastic Reader," even though you are now a man, and living in the United States. Your interest in my stories makes me feel "real good." I didn't visit Rye when I was in America, but I am very familiar with Tuckahoe and Bronxville and Mount Vernon, and many other parts of Westchester County. I should be very pleased to hear from you again, and it would be interesting to know if your views on America coincide with my own. By the way, you tell me that all your friends read my stories with eagerness. Will you let me know if these friends of yours are American? I have often wondered how the St. Frank's stories would appeal to the American public?

No, Robert Postill, I don't think you are mean for not writing to Dick Goodwin. But if you really want an article, describing how to make a ventriloquial doll, you can't do better than write to "Dick" direct.

I am glad you liked "Dinty Moore," Concordia Crescimus, and I thank you for your suggestion regarding him. It is quite possible that I shall re-introduce this character when a fitting opportunity arises.

I hardly know what to say to "A Lover of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY." You are a lady of fifty-two years, and your sister is sixty-eight. I have long since known that many adults read my stories, but the interest of your sister and yourself in my yarns is indeed wonderful. And when you say that you love my stories next to those of Dickens I can only reply that I am overwhelmed. I am afraid that such praise is quite undeserved, and I even hesitated a considerable time before writing the foregoing, for fear of being considered vain. But your sincerity is so evident that my scruples were overcome. I can only say that if my stories are one-hundredth part as good as those of Dickens I am a lucky man indeed! I can see that I shall have to keep myself up to concert pitch, and not topple off the pedestal on which you have so undeservedly placed me. Regarding your postscript, I agree that those people who have got half-crowns out of "JOHN BULL" Printers' Pie Column, for Handforth's literary contradictions, are either absolutely unprincipled or pitifully ignorant. There are a dozen examples of "Printers' Pie" in almost every one

of Handforth's contributions, and to pick them out as genuine mistakes is grossly unfair—both to our own paper and to the author, whose identity is more or less of an open secret.

William Burton has pointed out a little mistake I made in one of the stories, and he asks me not to be wild with him, and even asks me to forgive him. On the contrary, Bill, I have nothing to forgive. Thanks very much for indicating the little error. We are all far from perfect, you know, and in spite of every precaution we are liable to make a slip now and again. If anybody else catches me napping, please wake me up with a good old shove.

That was a nice letter of yours, Arthur Mallett, especially as it came all the way from Toronto. You tell me that you became a reader of the Old Paper by sheer chance, while you were looking over a newsagent's stock. I wonder how many other would-be readers we've got? I expect there are hundreds of thousands of people who don't even know that the N.L.L. exists! I am not foolish enough to imagine that all these would jump at the Old Paper as soon as they saw it, but I DO think a certain proportion would find my little yarns entertaining. Here's a chance for you enthusiasts who write me so glowingly, to round up a few of these "would-be's" and make them "be's."

I am glad you like the St. Frank's stories so much, Dora Marshall. Your father being an American, you are therefore half an American yourself. As you say, I don't "pull the Americans to bits, like a lot of authors do." At the same time, I have always been perfectly frank in my comments regarding America and the Americans.

When I was over in the United States, the impression was forced upon me that the Americans are inclined to belittle the English. Individually, however, they are charmingly hospitable. In some cases, this may be more apparent than real, but I like to feel that this is not so. I always found that the Americans secretly admire the English.

I was agreeably surprised at the great amount of interest readers took in my "American Notebook" articles, which were impressions I had jotted down during my recent tour of the States. Some other time I hope to publish a few more impressions about our cousins on the other side of the Herring Pond.

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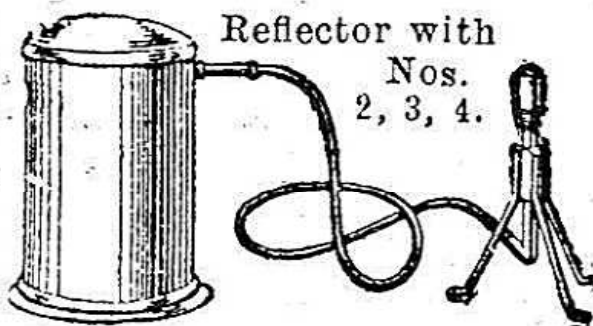
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