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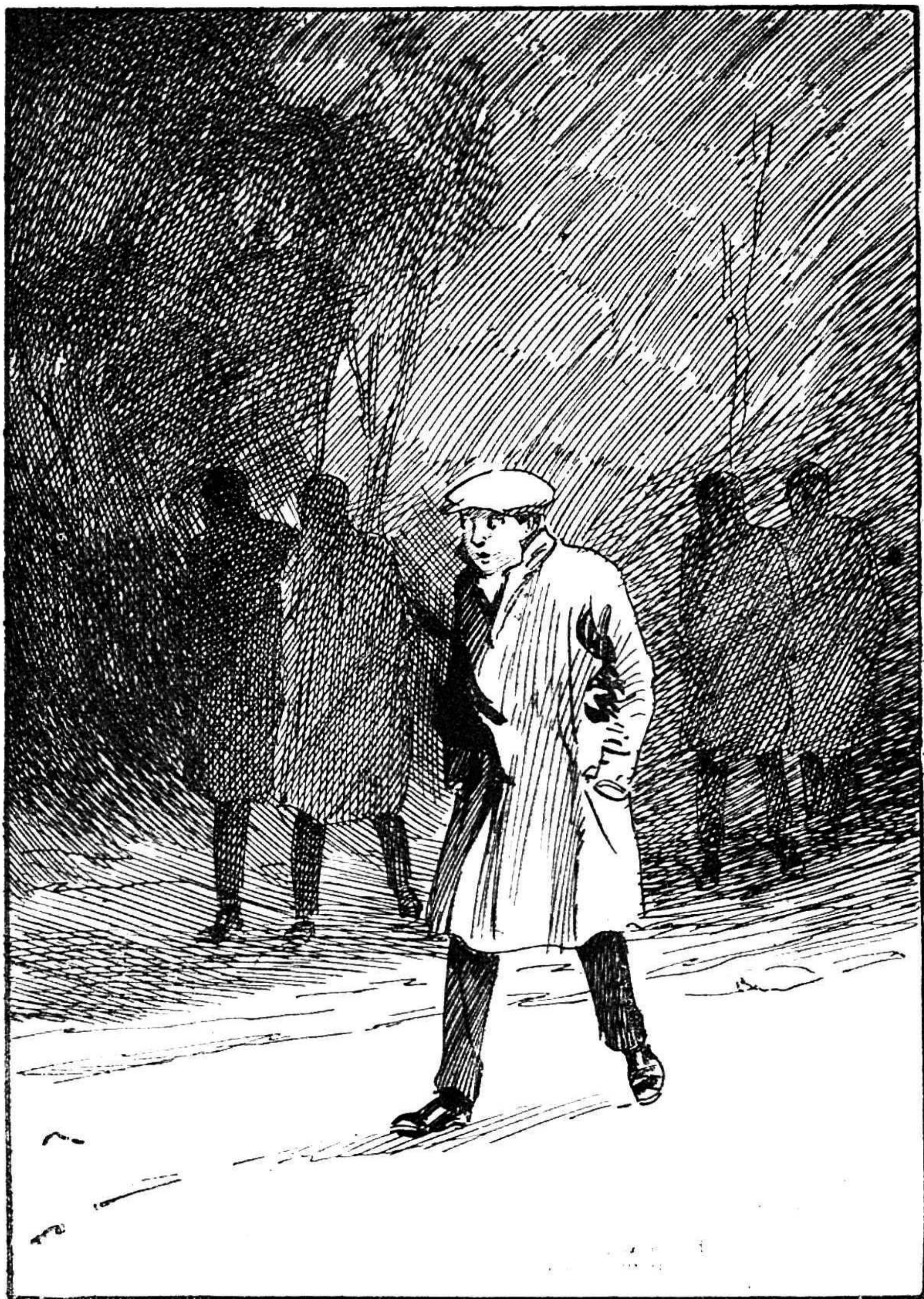
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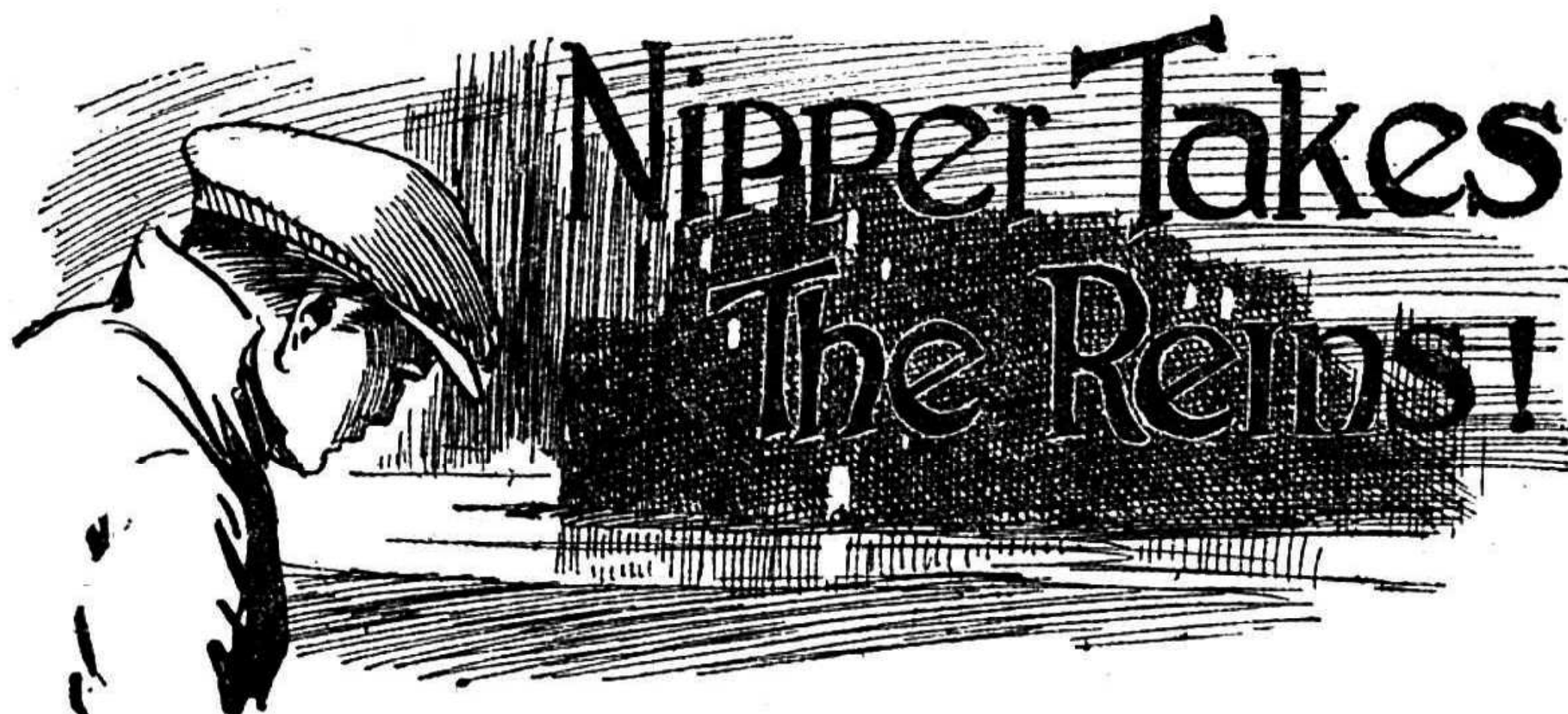
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NIPPER
TAKES the
REINS

Another stirring yarn of the
Moat Hollow series, in which
Nipper once more takes a lead-
ing part.



As he walked, he fancied that something was behind him.



Moat Hollow School is still the centre of exciting happenings. The school, which is in the neighbourhood of St. Frank's, is being run by a Mr. Grimesby Creepe. It is being gradually discovered that this man, who poses as a kindly, benevolent and charitable member of society, is really a despicable scoundrel. He is carrying on some nefarious business. The boys are ill-treated. In fact, they are little better than slaves. Tommy Watson, sent to the school, is determined to alter things. And now he is aided by Nipper, who has been appearing from time to time disguised as the Phantom Protector. Under Nipper's leadership things are about to take a thrilling turn!

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

CHAPTER I.

WILLY ON THE TRACK.

"SOMETHING," said Willy Handforth, "is up!"

The leader of the Third Form at St. Frank's was wearing a keen frown, and Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon looked at him with interest.

"I don't know about something being up—but we seem to be waiting here for nothing!" growled Chubby. "Just our luck, of course! Things always go wrong when we want 'em to go right!"

The heroes of the Third were lurking beneath one of the chestnut trees in the old Triangle. Tea was over, and the February evening was quite dark. The recent gale had died down, and a spell of clear, dry weather had set in.

Both the Ancient House and the Modern House were gleaming with lights, but the fags seemed to have the Triangle to themselves. They had been hanging about for nearly half an hour. It was not their usual custom to lurk under the chestnuts in this fashion, but something particularly important was afoot.

In brief, Willy had learned, during the

afternoon, that a hamper had arrived at the station for Parry minor—one of the leading lights of the Third in the Modern House. A keen rivalry existed between the two sections of the Third, and it was regarded as perfectly legitimate to raid a tuck hamper.

Parry minor and Fullerton, of the Modern House, had gone down to the station to fetch the prize, and Willy & Co. were in ambush to seize it before it vanished into the portals of the Modern House. Unfortunately, the hamper made no appearance.

A gnawing kind of fear possessed the fags that Parry minor and Fullerton had caught wind of the ambush, and had slipped in at the rear. Or it was possible that the rival fags were emptying the hamper en route. Anyhow, there was no sign of it.

"Don't be impatient!" said Willy. "And I'm not so keen on that hamper now, anyway."

"Not keen on it?" gasped Chubby. "But we haven't had any tea!"

"Bother tea!"

"You—you silly ass!" snorted Juicy Lemon. "Didn't we deliberately miss tea in Hall so that we should have a good appetite for young Parry's hamper? I'm

starving. Do you think we're going to be dished out of that feed?"

Handforth minor sighed.

"You ain't bad chaps, but you think too much about your giddy tummies!" he said impatiently. "I tell you there's something up! Never mind about Parry's hamper now—there's something up!"

"I believe you said that before!" remarked Chubby sarcastically.

"We've been hiding here for half an hour," went on Willy, "and what have we seen?"

"We haven't seen that hamper!" groaned Juicy.

"Blow the hamper!" roared Willy. "I'm not talking about what we haven't seen! I'm talking about what we have seen! And that's been rummy—not to say significant!"

His chums sniffed.

"You're talking out of the back of your neck!" said Chubby insultingly.

"Significant!" repeated Willy, ignoring the offending remark. "And if you chaps used your eyes, instead of moaning about grub, you'd be better off! What about Dick Goodwin?"

"What do you mean—what about him?"

"Didn't he sneak out of the Ancient House five minutes ago?" demanded Willy.

"Did he?"

"Ye gods and little fishes!" groaned Willy. "Did he! He walked right past, within ten yards of us, and you didn't see him! And he was carrying a great bundle of broomsticks and a bag!"

"You've been dreaming!" said Chubby Heath blankly.

"Broomsticks and a bag!" repeated Lemon. "What the dickens would Dick Goodwin want with broomsticks? You must have gone to sleep standing up, or something! You're like a giddy horse!"

Willy was exasperated, and with justification. Being a keenly observant youngster himself, he frankly failed to understand how his chums could see things without noticing them. Yet Willy was perfectly right in what he said. Dick Goodwin, of the Fourth, had actually hurried across the Triangle five minutes earlier with a huge bundle of broomsticks. And Willy very naturally viewed the proceedings with surprise. Hence his present thoughtfulness.

"We all know that Goodwin is a bit of a masterpiece when it comes to amateur carpentry and all that sort of thing," said Willy. "But why broomsticks? And why two dozen? There were at least two dozen under his arm."

"Are you trying to spoof us?" demanded Chubby.

"I've got something better to do!" retorted Handforth minor. "It wasn't so much the broomsticks, either; it was the way the chap went," he added. "He literally sneaked across the Triangle, and

whizzed out of the gates, and went up the lane. Up it, mark you—not down!"

"What difference does that make?"

"Wily, it proves that he wasn't going to the village to change the broomsticks for wire-netting, or something!" said Willy shrewdly. "What is there up the lane except the Moor View School and the moor? Why should Goodwin sneak off—literally sneak off, I repeat—in the direction of the moor? And with broomsticks?"

"I can't answer your silly riddles!" snapped Chubby. "I'm thinking about that hamper——"

"Rats to the hamper!" roared Willy. "Even if it comes I shan't raid it! And what about Handforth & Co.?"

"They went out ten minutes ago!" said Lemon impatiently.

"I know they did—and they went towards the moor, too!" said Willy, with a nod. "And they were carrying a couple of cricket bags. Doesn't that strike you as being rummy?"

"Oh, what do we care about Handforth?"

"Cricket bags—in February!" mused Willy dreamily. "I tell you there's something in the wind. Those Fourth-Form chaps are getting up a stunt. My sons, we're going on the track!"

CHAPTER II.

DISCOVERIES.



CHUBBY HEATH almost cried.

"But—but that hamper——" he began miserably.

"Are you going to stop talking about that hamper, or do you want me to push your face inside out?" interrupted Willy, squaring his shoulders. "I'm fed up! Instead of two loyal chums I've got nothing but a couple of—of greedy hamper-snatchers!"

Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon were justly incensed.

"It was your own idea to snatch it!" said Juicy hotly.

"Oh, well, perhaps it was; but now it's my own idea to abandon it!" retorted Willy. "That's enough! The hamper's finished with! Forget it. We're going on the track of those Fourth Formers!"

Willy's chums were at a disadvantage. They had noticed nothing strange about the juniors who had passed out of doors during the last half hour. But Willy had. He was as keen as mustard; nothing ever escaped his attention. His brain always worked at full speed.

And in the present instance his curiosity was understandable. It had been strange enough to see Handforth & Co. creeping out with a couple of cricket bags, and creeping out, moreover, in a decidedly

furtive manner. Willy's interest had been mildly aroused.

But when Dick Goodwin followed, five minutes later, with a whole bundle of broomsticks, the thing became mysterious. It just had to be investigated. Willy wouldn't have rested all the evening if he had allowed this affair to pass unnoticed.

"Come on!" he said crisply.

"Oh, good!" exclaimed Chubby Heath. "Going to the tuck-shop, eh? It's no good waiting for that hamper any longer—"

"We're not going to the tuckshop, and I don't want to hear another word about grub!" interrupted Willy aggressively. "I'm tired of grub. Fed up with the word. Mention it again and I'll biff you!"

His chums looked utterly miserable.

"We're going up the road," continued Willy relentlessly. "We ought to be able to find out—Hallo! What-ho! Look at that! Now do you believe that there's something in the wind?"

The three fags hung back under cover of the chestnut tree. Two figures had just emerged from the Ancient House. They were Reggie Pitt and Jack Grey. And for some strange reason they were carrying two big suitcases, and the suitcases were bulging.

"Well I'm blessed!" muttered Juicy Lemon.

"Nothing in that!" growled Chubby. "I expect they're going to the village with some of their old suits. They're going to have 'em pressed or cleaned, or something."

Willy made no comment. Pitt and Grey hurried across the Triangle with an almost unseemly speed, glancing back once or twice to see if they had been observed. And Willy nodded significantly when the two Fourth-Formers turned up the lane towards Bannington Moor.

"Now then!" he whispered. "What about it?"

"Looks a bit rummy, I must say," admitted Chubby, becoming interested. "What are they doing with those suitcases? They're not going to the Moor View School, surely! They wouldn't pay Irene & Co. an evening call with all that giddy luggage!"

"To say nothing of broomsticks and cricket bags!" added Willy grimly. "I'm not a spy, and I wouldn't dream of butting in where I'm not wanted. But this thing is crying out aloud to be looked into!"

He moved off towards the gates, and his chums hesitated.

"Well, ain't you coming?" asked Willy impatiently.

"Oh, might as well!" growled Chubby, with reluctance.

They followed him to the gates, and the trio passed outside. Lemon glanced down the lane, and then jumped. Two dim

forms were looming up, and they were carrying something bulky between them.

"My hat!" whispered Chubby excitedly. "That giddy hamper! Come on, now's our chance—"

"Too late!" interrupted Willy. "We're going after those chaps!"

"Oh, are we!" snorted his chums. "Here's this hamper, and we can wipe up Parry minor and Fullerton with one hand each!"

"Go ahead, then, but leave me out!" snapped Handforth minor.

And he marched off, leaving his chums to decide. They only took about ten seconds to do so. With the prospect of much food immediately ahead, they deserted their leader without thought or compunction.

Willy was more disappointed than surprised. He had firmly believed that the hungry pair would meekly follow when they found that he was firm. But the lure of food had proved too great.

Willy paused once, and glanced back along the lane. A scuffle was already in progress. Strange cries rent the air, and numerous thuds could be heard. Instinctively Willy clenched his fists. A fight was always welcome.

But then he squared his shoulders, and marched on. He had made his decision, and he would be firm! It wasn't likely that he'd tamely join Chubby Heath and Juicy Lemon after he had commanded them to obey his orders—and after they had mutinied.

He forgot about the fight, and broke into a trot. And in less than four minutes he caught sight of two indistinct forms in the distance ahead. Reggie Pitt and Jack Grey were trudging along with their suit-cases.

And the hero of the Third silently followed.

CHAPTER III.

SURPRISING ACTIVITIES.



THE chase was not a particularly long one.

After the quarry had passed the Moor View School, with Willy still on the track, he concluded that the pair were making for the Moor itself. He didn't pretend to understand why.

Willy, in fact, was puzzled. He couldn't think of any valid reason why half-a-dozen or more Fourth-Formers should go on to the Moor with well-filled suit-cases and cricket-bags and a bundle of broomsticks. Willy simply couldn't make it out.

But he was intensely curious.

"Well, one thing's pretty certain," he murmured. "There's only one place on the Moor they'd be likely to go to—and that's the old mill! But what the

dickens are they carting all this stuff to the old mill for? Patience, my son! And you'd better be careful, too! These Fourth-Form chaps are liable to get on the high horse."

Reggie Pitt and Jack Grey, two of the sharpest fellows in the Fourth, had no suspicion that they were being shadowed. Willy was so extremely cautious, and he lurked behind so silently, that the chums of Study E knew nothing.

Willy was right in his surmise.

Pitt and Grey went straight towards the old mill—which rose from the face of the deserted moor like some gaunt, ugly

Willy lurked behind a clump of gorse, watching keenly. His quarry had been swallowed up by the darkness. And Willy was puzzled. There wasn't a light of any kind in the building. The old place looked dreary and empty.

A casual passer-by, coming along the moorland road at that moment, wouldn't have glanced twice at the ruin—he would never have suspected, at all events, that strange activities were in progress within the weatherbeaten old structure.

Even Willy didn't know anything for certain—but he guessed. If Pitt and Grey had come here, it practically stood to

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sentinel of the night. It was more or less of a ruin, without any sails left. Swept and battered by every storm, the mill had been neglected for years. It was a wooden structure, and in many places the woodwork was rotting away.

But inside, as the juniors were well aware, the little structure was surprisingly weatherproof. The rain naturally swept through the broken windows, but the walls were still stout. Indeed, on the very topmost floor the window itself was intact, and this particular part of the mill was as weathertight as ever it had been.

The Fourth-Formers vanished inside, and

reason that Handforth & Co. and Dick Goodwin had preceded them to the same spot. But the absence of any light rather upset Willy's expectations.

He made a complete circle of the mill, and then began to wonder if he had made a mistake. Had Pitt and Grey actually entered? Or had they walked on, Willy missing them in the gloom? They seemed to have vanished utterly.

"I'm not going to be dished like this!" muttered the fag. "I know they went inside! I'm not blind! The only thing is to go right inside and investigate at close quarters. If I'm collared, I shall just tell

'em the truth—there's nothing like being candid! And I've got just as much right to be here as they have—so what's the odds?"

He walked boldly forward, encouraged by his decision, and entered the building. He was swallowed up by intense blackness. But he felt a little thrill as dull, muffled thuds came to his ears. They were proceeding from somewhere far above.

"Somebodys' using a hammer!" murmured Willy. "So they're up there, after all! I knew it!"

He felt his way across to the upright ladder which was fixed to the wall. These surroundings were quite familiar—he knew every inch of the old mill, inside and out. And in next to no time he was through the trapdoor and on the first floor.

He continued his way upwards, and at last there was only one floor above him. All speculation had now ceased. There was a trap-door in the top floor, and it was closed. Rays of light shone down through the chinks. And heavy footsteps and shufflings sounded on the floor above. And somebody was working hard with a saw. Then came some more hammering.

"Well, I'm blessed!" muttered Willy. "What's the giddy wheeze? What the dickens are those chaps doing up there? Isn't the workshop at school good enough for 'em?"

The trap-door suddenly opened, and took Willy by surprise. A flood of light descended upon him, showing him up clearly before he could dodge. As a matter of fact, Handforth major was just preparing to come down, and he had switched on an electric torch in order to light the way.

"My only hat!" roared Handforth. "Here's my minor!"

He stared blankly at Willy, startled to see him standing just below. The meeting was totally unexpected, and Edward Oswald Handforth was by no means pleased, judging by his expression. On the other hand, Willy was quite happy, it seemed.

"Hallo, Ted!" he said, nodding. "How goes it?"

"You—you young rotter!" roared Handforth. "Who told you to come here? How did you know anything about it? You little bounder, you've been spying!"

"Oh, fie!" said Willy, shocked. "Such words to your own brother! What have I done, fair Ted, to deserve such harsh terms? In other words, old son, kindly go and eat coke!"

"You wait till I collar you!" snorted Handforth fiercely.

He literally fell down the ladder, fully expecting Willy to flee like a rabbit. But Willy stood his ground, calm and serene. He smiled at his major benevolently.

"Can't touch me!" he said calmly. "I've got my fingers crossed!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE ONE AND ONLY NIPPER.



EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH breathed hard.

"Do you think I care about your giddy fingers?" he shouted aggressively. "Look here, you

little rotter, I'm going to take you in hand——"

"Don't be silly!" said Willy. "I'm safe! You can't touch me! When I've got my fingers crossed I'm as untouchable as the North Pole! So what's the good of arguing?"

Handforth dropped his fists helplessly.

"All right—I'll control myself," he said thickly. "Sometimes I'm accused of bullying, but, goodness knows, I never bill a chap younger than myself! What are you doing here, anyhow?"

"I'm looking at you!" said Willy promptly.

"You exasperating young idiot!" howled Handforth. "What are you looking at me for?"

"I don't know—I must be mad!" said Willy frankly. "I'd much rather look at the wall, or the floor. But you're in front of me, and you fill the whole giddy landscape! Anything else?"

His major grasped him firmly by the shoulder.

"I've had about enough of this!" he snapped. "You've no right to be here at all—we're here in secret! Nobody knows that we're working in the old mill! Not a soul!"

"Don't be a chump—I know!" said Willy impatiently. "You chaps are a bit too careless. I happened to be in the Triangle, and I saw a whole procession of bags and broomsticks and things going out. So I thought I'd follow, that's all. What's the game? What are you doing here?"

Willy spoke authoritatively, and Handforth gaped.

"If you think I'm going to answer your questions——" he began.

"Hold on, Handy!" called down Reggie Pitt from the aperture above. "It's no good arguing with your minor. He's here, and we must make the best of a bad job. He's got to be admitted into the secret, so bring him up!"

Willy grinned.

"I'm glad to see somebody's got some sense, anyhow," he remarked. "It's no good, Ted, old son, you can't get rid of me now! In order to buy my silence you've got to admit me into the dread secret. What are you doing, anyhow—building a few rabbit-hutches?"

Handforth snorted in disgust.

"So we've got to be bothered with you, have we?" he granted. "All right—come up! This is a bit thick, I must say!"

"Life's full of little worries," said Willy cheerfully.

He hopped up the ladder like a monkey, and arrived on the top floor. He was still very curious, and he was eager to find out what all this unusual activity meant. But all his interest in the hammering and sawing vanished during his first glance round.

For he found himself standing face to face with a tall, well-built junior in a lounge suit. His jacket was off, his shirt-

"Nipper!" he repeated. "I—I say! I—I thought you were up in London, messing about with those silly detective cases! My only hat! I'm jolly glad to see you've got some sense!"

"Thanks awfully!" grinned Nipper.

Willy's delight was genuine. His face was flushed with excitement, and he shook Nipper's hand with such warmth that the ex-skipper could not fail to be pleased.

"But where's Mr. Lee?" asked Willy,



In less than two minutes his arms were bound behind him and a muffler was tied round his face.

sleeves were up, and he looked business-like.

"Hallo, Willy!" said this youngster. "Pleased to see you again!"

"Great jumping corks!" gasped Willy blankly. "It's—it's Nipper!"

He was staggered. Dick Hamilton, the ex-captain of the St. Frank's Fourth—better known as Nipper, Nelson Lee's assistant—was the last person in the world he had expected to see.

looking round the room, as though he expected to find Nelson Lee hiding in one of the corners. "And what's the idea? Have you come here for a lark? Or have you come back to St. Frank's? How long have you been here? Why ain't you in Etons? When are you going back?"

"Hi, steady!" interrupted Nipper dazedly. "Do you expect me to answer all these questions at once? I haven't returned to St. Frank's, and nobody knows that I'm

in the district except the bunch of us here, and one or two others. It's a dead secret."

"It won't be dead now!" growled Handforth. "Willy knows!"

"That's all right—we can trust Willy," said Nipper confidently. "If he gives us his word he won't talk we can rely on him. Can't we, Willy, my son?"

"Spoken like a man!" said Willy promptly. "Trust me? Why, once I've given my word I'm as dumb as a gatepost! Thank goodness Chubby and Juicy didn't come along! I couldn't answer for their giddy tongues!"

"Then everything's all right," said Nipper. "I don't want to be too mysterious, Willy, but there are special reasons why strict secrecy should be maintained. I've come down here specially to help Tommy Watson."

"Oh," said Willy slowly. "Light begins to dawn! Moat Hollow, eh? You're going to dish old Grimesby Creepe? Well, you have my blessing!"

"Well, of course, after that I shall be able to work with absolute confidence," grinned Nipper. "The idea, my lad, is to expose Creepe in his true colours—and the only way to do that is to employ subterfuge."

"You can employ me, too, if you like," said the fag. "I'm game! Just say the word and I'll do any old thing. How long are you going to stay here?"

"For a week or two, anyway," replied Nipper slowly. "I suppose I'd better go into a few details or you'll bother the life out of me."

"You must have second sight," said Willy. "I'm glad you appreciate the position. Spout it up, old man. I'm all ears! Little Willy is waiting to be enlightened!"

CHAPTER V.

NIPPER'S PROGRAMME.



HANDFORTH MINOR calmly sat himself on the end of a box, and waited for Nipper to begin. It didn't occur to him that he was holding up the whole work-

shop, and that it was like his cheek to expect any explanation at all.

But there was something about Willy which couldn't be ignored. He was a force in himself. He never intended to be impertinent; he was impertinent in a perfectly unconscious manner. In fact, the Fourth-Formers were so accustomed to his cool cheek that they expected it. Only Willy's major failed to profit by experience.

"Look here, are we going to waste time on this giddy fag?" he asked tartly. "Have we got to stand here doing nothing

while Nipper explains things to my minor?"

"It'll be quicker in the long run," said Reggie Pitt soothingly. "Willy's here, and we can't ignore him. Better get it over and done with."

"Thanks!" said Willy sweetly. "Go ahead, Nipper!"

"It seems to me, my lad, that you've grown cheekier than ever!" said Nipper, with a frown. "I'm blessed if I know why I put up with it!"

"Because you can't help yourself," explained Willy. "Never mind these chaps; let's have the yarn. I'm simply bursting to know when you came down, and all about it. I say, are you coming back to the Fourth?"

"I don't know yet, but I might——"

"We'd love to have you back," said Willy eagerly. "St. Frank's doesn't seem the same place without you, Nipper. Why should you waste your valuable time on mouldy detective cases when you could be skipper of the Fourth again? Why waste your life?"

Nipper chuckled.

"I'm not saying anything for certain; but there's just a chance that I shall come back to St. Frank's after this affair is over," he replied cautiously. "In fact, everybody's so jolly sporty that I shall feel mean if I don't. It really depends upon the gov'nor."

"Oh, that's nothing!" said Willy. "You ought to be able to wangle Mr. Lee all right. But I'll tell you what," he added generously. "Leave it to me. I'll have a talk with him, and if he objects, I'll tell him straight from the shoulder——"

"Thanks all the same, but I can put it to the gov'nor," interrupted Nipper amusedly. "If I do come back—I repeat, if—I shall just be an ordinary member of the Fourth. Reggie Pitt's skipper now, and he's proved himself to be a better skipper than I was——"

"Rats!" roared every Fourth-Former present.

"Rats with knobs on!" added Reggie Pitt. "The instant you come back, Nipper, I resign. Don't forget that. Why, I only took on the captaincy as your deputy. When you come back, you'll step into your old place during the very first minute. And if you object we'll slaughter you!"

"Thanks!" said Nipper quietly. "But we needn't discuss this now, need we? You're making it very difficult for me to leave again. In fact, I'm more and more anxious to return for good."

"I'm still waiting," remarked Willy patiently. "Don't mind me, of course; but weren't you going to explain a few details?"

"I was—and I am," replied Nipper. "Well in the first place, I'm staying at Bannington, at The Grapes Hotel. I've

adopted a slight disguise, and nobody knows me in the town."

"But why all this funny business?" asked Willy.

"Because I don't want people to know that I'm here," replied Nipper. "My fight is against Grimesby Creepe, and my strength is doubled by the mere fact that I'm acting in secret. You know, of course, that Tommy Watson is at Moat Hollow. He's one of my special chums, and I'm doing everything I can to help him."

"Good man!" said Willy, nodding. "But why don't you go straight to Moat Hollow and drag Watson out by force?"

"Because it wouldn't do much good," said Nipper. "I never believe in half measures. Grimesby Creepe is in a strong position, and the only way to beat him is to expose him completely. We could fetch Tommy Watson away, but all the other poor beggars in Moat Hollow would remain under his lash. We've got to do the thing thoroughly."

"By stirring up a revolt, or something?" asked Willy keenly.

"You've hit it, my lad—right on the nail!" replied Nipper. "The only way to defeat Creepe is to organise a rebellion. Once there's a conflagration of that kind it'll rise up and overwhelm him. He'll resist, of course; there'll be all sorts of excitement. But in the long run we'll win. Incidentally, there'll be plenty of adventures. That's one reason why I'm so keen on the affair," he added frankly.

"Lucky bounder!" said Willy enviously. "I wish we could help!"

"So you can—and so you will!" retorted Nipper. "When the right time comes, we shall need help—chunks of it. But the first move is to get into Moat Hollow, and that's the reason for all these preparations."

Willy looked about him curiously. The place was littered with woodwork, but the fag couldn't make head or tail of the activity. He only knew that some ambitious carpentry job was afoot.

"What has the old mill got to do with Moat Hollow?" he asked curiously.

"You'll know all in good time," said Nipper. "There's a close connection or I shouldn't be here. These are just a few preliminary preparations. Nothing can be done unless the ground is prepared in advance."

"Same old Nipper—always thorough!" remarked Handforth minor. "Well, rely on me for anything you want—any old time. If it's anything against Grimesby Creepe, I'm your man. I don't care if you wake me up in the middle of the night; I'll be ready!"

And Willy meant it. He was as keen as mustard to help, and he would feel quite hurt if he was left out of the excitement

when it arrived. Somehow, Willy had an idea that the coming mutiny at Moat Hollow would be an event to be long remembered.

CHAPTER VI.

AT MOAT HOLLOW.



MR. GRIMESBY CREEPE smiled benevolently.

"Now, boys, a few minutes recreation," he said, in his kindest tones. "Just a little respite from the labours of the day, eh? I am a great believer in taking a breathing spell now and again."

The schoolmaster was at his desk in the cold, draughty class-room at Moat Hollow. It was the following afternoon. In fact, not far from teatime, and the daylight was already beginning to fail.

The February day was dull, and the class-room looked more drab and uninviting than usual. Mr. Creepe's pupils had been kept at work since early morning—the usual round of dismal drudgery.

For Mr. Grimesby Creepe had his own ideas. He ran his school on novel lines. There were no servants kept at Moat Hollow. The boys did everything. They prepared the meals, they washed the dishes, they scrubbed the floors, they washed the clothes.

Everything was organised to a pitch of perfection. Whatever else Mr. Creepe was, his powers as an organiser were remarkable. There was never anything wrong at Moat Hollow. Work was done to the minute.

But considering that Mr. Creepe secretly carried on a mail-order business, and that he forced his pupils to do all the work, their time for study was limited. They even dug the garden.

On the average, the Moat Hollow boys hardly ever got in more than an hour's usual school work in the day. And Mr. Creepe was constantly scolding them for being backward.

The greatest wonder of all was that a scandal of this nature should continue. Yet, when the facts were examined, it wasn't such a wonder, after all. For Mr. Creepe was a clever humbug. While actually being a bully and a tyrant, he pretended to be the opposite.

Even while he was inflicting punishment he would frequently shed crocodile's tears. And in the village and through the district Mr. Grimesby Creepe was famous for his benevolence, his generous spirit, and his open-handed liberality with money for charities.

And when his school was inspected—and Mr. Creepe always got wind of a proposed visit—his boys were carefully rehearsed, and

everything was made to look perfect. He always stood the risk of a boy escaping or blurting out the truth, but it was a small risk at the worst.

For who would believe the word of a schoolboy, alone and unsupported, against Mr. Creepe's oily statements—against the overwhelming consensus of opinion shared by the entire district? Mr. Creepe was quite safe.

In any case ninety per cent of his pupils—at least twenty-two out of the two dozen—were absolutely spiritless. They had had every ounce of individuality knocked out of them. For Mr. Creepe's training was effective. After a month or two in his charge any average boy was his, body and soul. And most of Mr. Creepe's pupils were not even average boys—they were children parent or guardians wished to forget. They were unwanted—they were sent to Moat Hollow for good. There were no holidays for these unfortunates.

The two exceptions were Tommy Watson, late of the St. Frank's Fourth, and a boy named Jevons. This latter was gradually resigning himself to the inevitable, and his spirit was becoming weaker daily.

Poor stuff for the making of a rebellion. Even Tommy Watson, whose spirit was as strong as ever, sometimes felt that there was no hope. But Watson was no leader; he was a blunt, honest schoolboy, but his powers of leadership were limited.

"It will soon be teatime, so we might as well read a few letters," went on Mr. Creepe, adjusting his spectacles. "First of all, I have here a communication for Smithson. Stand up, Smithson! I think the letter is from your mother."

A thin, weedy boy rose eagerly in his seat.

"Yes, sir—thank you, sir!" he said.

Mr. Creepe calmly tore open the letter and chuckled.

"Ha, what's this?" he exclaimed. "What's this, Smithson? Bless my soul! A ten-shilling note. Splendid! I am sure that you will be delighted to have a little pocket-money, Smithson."

Smithson didn't seem to like it; he only looked terribly anxious.

"Now, let us see what your mother says," exclaimed Mr. Creepe, glancing at the letter. "H'm! Nothing much—nothing worth repeating. A mere paragraph or two regarding your welfare, and a reference to the currency note. You are most fortunate, Smithson."

"Yes, sir," said Smithson meekly.

"It so happens that you accidentally smashed a teapot the other day," went on Mr. Creepe. "This ten shillings could not have come at a more opportune moment. You need worry no more, Smithson—the note will cover the full cost of the damage. You may sit down."

"Yes, sir," sobbed Smithson feebly.

He sank back into his seat with utter misery written over his face. He might have known from the outset what Mr. Creepe would do; but somehow the boys never learned. They always continued to hope.

But the schoolmaster never allowed any pupil to open his own letters; he always opened them personally, and took care to extract any notes or postal-orders that might be enclosed. And Mr. Creepe always had an excuse for these acts of petty robbery—as, for example, the teapot, which was not worth more than two shillings, and which was still in use, with a broken spout.

Tommy Watson glared at the schoolmaster from his own place. He simply couldn't help it. He felt a greater hatred than ever against this cold, sanctimonious tyrant.

Mr. Creepe did not fail to notice the glare, but he ignored it. He had had enough trouble with Tommy Watson already. For the past day or two he had been studiously ignoring the ex-St. Frank's boy.

Mr. Creepe had vivid recollections of the Phantom Protector—that mysterious, hooded unknown who had always come to Watson's rescue at the crucial moment.

Mr. Creepe didn't know that the Hooded Unknown had vanished for ever—that, in fact, he had been Nipper in disguise. The latter was now preparing a more intensive form of warfare, as Mr. Creepe would soon discover to his cost.

CHAPTER VII.

KIRBY MEETS WITH AN ADVENTURE.



THE letters were soon over.

There had been four of them, but, to Mr. Creepe's regret, none of the other three contained money. He consoled himself by making a few bitter, sarcastic remarks at the expense of the unfortunate boys' relations.

"A deplorable mail—a most insignificant postbag altogether!" he concluded. "Perhaps we shall have better luck to-morrow. And now, after a little more work, we must be thinking about the evening meal."

"Have I got time to slip into the village, sir?" asked Kirby.

Mr. Creepe frowned at the head monitor.

"Certainly not!" he replied. "A most unreasonable request, Kirby! Why should you desire to visit the village at such an inopportune moment?"

The hulking monitor shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, all right, sir; I don't care," he said carelessly. "I only wanted to go for your stamps. You told me you wanted ten shillings'-worth of halfpenny stamps this evening——"

"Good gracious, yes!" interrupted Mr. Creepe. "How remarkable that I should

forget them! Certainly, Kirby—go into the village, by all means! Those circulars must be prepared for the post to-night.”

Kirby grinned.

“All right, sir; I’ll go as soon as the boys are sent in for tea,” he said. “I thought you’d alter your tone, you old fool!” he added, under his breath.

Lessons went on until the class-room became so dark that further work was out of the question. Then, at a given signal, the boys were marched out in double file, guarded on either side by monitors.

There were six of these latter—six monitors to control twenty-four weakly, insignificant youngsters! It was small wonder that they seldom had an opportunity to conspire together!

The monitors always had an easy time. They were big, bullying fellows, and they took an enjoyment in their warder-like duties. Indeed, they had quite an easy time of it all round, and Mr. Creepe was quite content to allow them plenty of rope, since the boys were always kept with their noses to the grindstone. Without his monitors, Mr. Creepe would have been helpless.

Kirby went off to the village as soon as the school had settled down for the evening meal in the dining-room—a cold, dimly-lighted apartment, where the boys sat and shivered. Mr. Creepe was a mean, miserly man, and one of his greatest meannesses was the stinting of light. Moat Hollow was always dim—a place of deep shadows and gloom.

Kirby was glad enough to get outside. He crossed the moat, arrived at the big gates, and passed into the lane. The twinkling lights of Bellton could be seen over the river.

Kirby buttoned up his overcoat and thrust his hands into his pockets—but not before lighting a cigarette. He was not going to Bellton for stamps alone. He had errands of his own.

“Well, things ain’t so bad,” he murmured. “The old man’s been a bit better since that Phantom Protector chap got busy. It’s made him go easy. All the same, I’d like to see young Watson strapped up and horse-whipped until he howled for mercy!”

Kirby was very bitter against Tommy Watson. For Tommy had consistently refused to be frightened or intimidated. He had shown, quite plainly, that he didn’t care a toss for Kirby and all his bluster. And the monitor felt that he was affronted. He always liked to instil a lively fear into the hearts of his unfortunate charges.

He didn’t reach the village.

He didn’t even reach the bridge across the River Stowe. In fact, he only got as far as the corner, where the two lanes joined. It was very gloomy here, for darkness had enveloped the countryside. Something happened which literally swept Kirby off his feet.

As he walked, he fancied that something was behind him. It was a curious sensa-

tion, and he paused in his stride, and turned. Two dim figures were right at his heels!

“What the—” began Kirby, startled.

He was facing the mysterious pair, and, therefore, when he felt himself grasped from behind, it was another shock. He twisted round, and saw two other dim figures. All four had appeared mysteriously from the hedge. They closed round Kirby, in a kind of square.

“Going quietly, or not?” asked a calm, tense voice.

“Confound your nerve!” snarled Kirby. “What’s the idea? Who are you, and what do you want—?”

He broke off, peering at the one who had spoken. He was about Kirby’s own size, dressed in overcoat and cap. In brief, he was Nipper. But Kirby didn’t know him.

“There’s no need for an argument,” said Nipper quietly. “I’d like you to understand, Kirby, that you’re our prisoner—”

“Your prisoner?” ejaculated Kirby.

“That’s what I said!”

“But—but, confound you—”

“You have your choice,” interrupted Nipper. “You can either come quietly, or we shall be compelled to take other measures. You’ve got just ten seconds to decide.”

For a brief space there was silence. Kirby was bewildered. He couldn’t understand why anybody should want to capture him in this way. It was an extraordinary affair altogether.

The other three mysterious figures were nearly as big as Nipper, and their caps were pulled down far over their eyes. But Kirby had no difficulty in guessing their identity.

“What’s the idea of this rot?” he asked savagely. “I know you! You’re some of those infernal St. Frank’s cads—”

“Cads!” roared one of them. “You—you insulting—”

“Handforth!” sneered Kirby. “Think I don’t know your rotten voice? Keep your hands off me, you fools—”

“It’s no good,” said Nipper resignedly. “I’m afraid he’ll cause a lot of trouble unless we act drastically. It’s your own fault, Kirby—but you’ll have to go through it!”

With one accord, the quartette flung themselves at the monitor; he was whipped off his feet, and flung full length on the ground.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PRISONER.



KIRBY put up a bit of a struggle, but it was hopeless from the very start. Against four such stalwarts as Nipper, Handforth, Tregellis-West, and Reggie Pitt, he was well-nigh

helpless.

In less than two minutes his arms were

bound behind him, a muffler was tied round his face so that he could make no outcry, and he was roughly yanked to his feet.

"You asked for it, Kirby—and you've got it!" panted Nipper. "Now you'll come with us. Every time you struggle or try to hang back, you'll get a jab from behind."

"With my fist!" said Handforth grimly.

Kirby began to realise that this was no ordinary scrap. He was compelled to walk; and he wondered, with a vague sense of uneasiness, where he was being taken, and why.

He could have understood a rag in the lane. There was little love lost between the Moat Hollow monitors and the St. Frank's juniors. But why should he be taken away? Why should these four fellows go to such a large amount of trouble over him?

Kirby didn't feel flattered—he felt alarmed. He had two reasons. In the first place, he vaguely suspected that he was to be put through some ordeal; and, in the second place, any prolonged delay would mean a "bust up" with Mr. Creepe. Kirby would have his explanations, of course, but Mr. Creepe had an unfortunate habit of ignoring such details.

"Halt!" said Nipper suddenly. "Just a minute!"

The quartette came to a standstill, and Kirby was submitted to a further indignity. A kind of black gauze bag was placed over his head, and an elastic band drew it tight under his chin. It did not effect his breath in any way, but his eyes were rendered useless. He could see nothing. Everything was blotted out.

"You'll understand the reason for this later," said Nipper calmly.

They continued walking up the lane. But before long Kirby felt himself being turned round by his captors. They did it thoroughly. By the time they had finished, Kirby was dizzy and bewildered. And when the walk recommenced, he couldn't for the life of him tell whether they were going further along the lane, or returning on their own tracks.

He was confused even more soon afterwards by finding himself in a meadow. It seemed to him that it was a mere aimless wandering about. He was led across ditches, he was compelled to climb gate after gate, and more than once he was forced to cross a ploughed field.

He was so hopelessly confused that he believed himself to be in the neighbourhood of Edgemore. In reality, he was in the opposite direction—in fact, on the edge of the wide expanse of the bleak moor.

And as a short stretch of the moor was crossed, Kirby believed that he was in another meadow. And then came the greatest shock of all—one that he couldn't make head or tail of.

They had arrived at the old mill, and it was necessary to get the prisoner up to the top floor. To hoist him up in the usual way would be a fatal mistake, for, if he had any

sense at all, he would quickly recognise the nature of the ladders, and would then know his whereabouts.

Quite another method was adopted.

Kirby felt a rope tied round his waist. It was a thick rope like a cable, and it was pulled tight under his armpits. The absolute darkness, his helpless condition, and his inability to speak, bewildered him to a tremendous extent. He was now really frightened.

"All right—hoist away!"

He heard the voice distinctly, and a moment later the rope was drawn taut, and he felt himself swung off the ground. Foot by foot, he was pulled higher and higher, dangling helplessly.

It seemed to Kirby that he was being pulled to the top of a big house. It never occurred to him that he was at the old mill—for he had not the slightest clue.

He was pulled through a window, and felt enormously relieved when he found solid floorboards beneath his feet. At any moment during that period on the rope he had expected to fall.

But even now he was still left blindfolded.

He could hear movements all round him, and now his captors were making no attempt to conceal or disguise their voices. There was a light of some kind in this place, for a few rays percolated through the black gauze.

"He's all right now—might as well take the black cap off!" suggested Handforth. "The chap's a funk! He didn't even put up a fight! Just when I was longing to biff him, too!"

"He was wise," said Reggie Pitt. "Four to one struck Kirby as being a bit too heavy for him. He's in for a nice quiet time now, so he ought to be feeling pleased."

"Somehow, I don't think he will be," said Nipper, shaking his head.

Kirby gave a convulsive struggle. His fears were vanishing, but his anger was increasing. He was beginning to realise that he stood in no danger of bodily hurt, so his courage returned. Kirby had had a lurking dread that he was to be horsewhipped, or something pleasant of that kind.

His liberty was not restored for some little time.

The delay seemed unending. He heard the movements of the St. Frank's fellows all round him. He was occasionally pushed about, and once Handforth tripped over him.

And at last a kind of silence fell.

"All ready now, I think," came Nipper's voice. "Might as well let him come up for air! Ready? Good!"

To Kirby's relief, he felt the ropes being unfastened from his arm. They were removed completely, and he was pulled up into a standing position, and left suddenly alone.

"All right, Kirby," said Nipper quietly. "We'll leave you to remove the bag and the muffler yourself."

The monitor heard a sudden slam, and he wrenched at the bag fiercely. It came away, and he could see. He pulled the muffler from his mouth, and stood there—free.

But, to his startled amazement, he was still a prisoner.

CHAPTER IX.

DETAINED DURING THE FOURTH'S PLEASURE!



"GOOD heavens!" Kirby gasped huskily.

He started about him with dazed stupefaction. The apartment was the most extraordinary one he had ever been in. It was quite small, with a square skylight overhead. The walls were completely covered with sacking, fastened on in panels. The effect was not at all bad. The edges of the panels were matchboarding, neatly nailed up.

Just near Kirby there was a small camp bedstead, complete with blankets and clean sheets. Next to it stood a wash-basin, water-jug, towel, etc. And there was a small table with books. On one wall hung a little dresser, containing plates and cups and other crockery.

But, most staggering of all, one wall of this remarkable room was different to any Kirby had ever seen. From the floor and four feet upwards it was matchboarded—solid and well-built. But from this height to the ceiling the wall consisted of closely-set wooden bars.

In a dazed kind of way, Kirby saw that these bars were nothing more terrible than broomsticks—but they extended right across the room, hemming him in like a convict behind prison bars.

Through the bars he could see Nipper and Reggie Pitt and the other juniors. They were regarding him with interest.

Kirby turned completely round, breathing hard. He noticed that a door was let into the matchboarding up one side. In order to get through, one had to bend practically double—but it was a door, nevertheless. Kirby could see, however, that it was locked.

"What the thunder does this mean?" panted the monitor blankly.

"Pretty obvious, isn't it?" asked Nipper.

"Obvious!" snarled Kirby. "What do you mean—obvious? Is this a new game, or what? Where am I?"

"Well, it wouldn't be quite discreet to give you any exact information," replied Nipper. "We took a considerable amount of trouble to confuse you on the way here, Kirby, so I think we'll let that question slide. It isn't really necessary that you should be kept in ignorance of your where-

abouts—but there's nothing like being on the safe side."

"But—but this is like a prison!" roared Kirby.

"Something—but not much," agreed Nipper. "For example, in prison you don't get such a comfortable bed—you don't get books to read—you don't get real crockery—"

"You seem to know all about it!" sneered Kirby.

"Yes. I learnt it all when I was serving twenty years' penal servitude at Dartmoor for bigamy!" said Nipper drily. "It's no good getting wild, Kirby—you're our prisoner, and you'll be detained during the Fourth's pleasure."

"Detained!" stuttered Kirby. "Why, you—you—"

"It may be for a week, ten days, or possibly a fortnight," continued Nipper smoothly. "There's no telling—it all depends upon cires. But you'll be fully cared for and protected. We're always very lenient to our prisoners," he added. "We might have added a treadmill, for example, but we had mercy on you."

The Fourth Formers chuckled, and Kirby scowled.

"You mad young fool," he snarled. "If you think I'm going to stay here, you've made a mistake!" He eyed the broomsticks contemptuously. "Do you think these wooden bars are going to keep me in here?"

"I think so—they're strong enough—"

"Why, I could smash 'em up with one hand," roared Kirby.

"Try it and see," put in Handforth. "They may look frail, but they're not! I tried to smash one, but couldn't. With your bare fists, my lad, you're helpless—and you won't be allowed any saws or chisels!"

Kirby shook at the bars with rage and helplessness. They gave a little under his fierce effort, but showed no sign of breaking down. The monitor paused breathlessly.

"I'll make you pay for this one day!" he panted fiercely.

"I expect you're thinking that you'll get busy on the bars as soon as we've gone," smiled Nipper. "You'll use a pocket knife, or something? Sorry, Kirby—but you'll never be left alone! Night and day, there'll be a warder in charge."

"A warder!" repeated Kirby huskily.

"Well, not exactly a warder—one of these chaps," replied Nipper. "It's all arranged—they're going to take it in turns. It wanted a bit of wangling but it's all fixed. There'll always be somebody looking after your needs. So give up all idea of escape."

Kirby was still inwardly amazed.

"But—but what's the idea?" he demanded. "What do you want to keep me here for? Is it blackmail, or what? I won't give you a penny to buy my release—"

"Thanks all the same, but we've got more cash than you can supply!" interrupted Handforth sourly. "There's nothing shady about this, you rotter! We're keeping you here to help the scales of justice!"

"I suppose you read that in a book, Ted?" asked Willy, from the rear.

Handforth turned red. As a matter of fact, he had read it in a book, but he didn't like being reminded of it.

"Another word from you, my lad, and I'll shove you behind these bars with Kirby!" he threatened. "I don't want any of your cheek——"

"Now then, Handy, old man—there's a time for everything," interrupted Nipper. "And this isn't the time for scrapping with your minor. Clear the decks for the next move!"

Kirby looked on dully. What was coming now?

CHAPTER X.

KIRBY THE SECOND.



NIPPER had thought of the prison cell idea. Or, to be more exact, he had borrowed it. He vividly remembered that Nelson Lee had been imprisoned in a similar

kind of cage some months earlier.

And it struck him that the old mill would provide a splendid prison for the Moat Hollow monitor. The mill was isolated, and at this time of the year nobody ever came near it. A more desolate spot could not be imagined.

To keep Kirby under lock and key continuously was a problem. If he had been locked in the top floor of the mill in the ordinary way, the position would have been awkward. There was only a trap-door, and Kirby could have held a dozen fellows at bay with ease.

And every time he was visited a whole crowd would have been forced to attend—otherwise the prisoner would have escaped. And as it was impossible to keep him bound or chained, this simple plan of constructing a wooden barrier had been adopted.

It had the enormous advantage of keeping Kirby a prisoner, with only one "warder" to look after him. And in his own portion of the room he had his liberty. A week or ten days in this place would be tedious, no doubt, but it was all in a good cause.

The greatest difficulty was the providing of a constant guard. The Fourth Formers had undertaken this work. From tea-time

onwards every day until breakfast-time the next morning the juniors would take spells of watching. This would necessitate breaking bounds, but there was nothing else for it.

And during the day—from breakfast-time till tea-time—a staunch ally had been obtained in Tubbs, the page-boy of the Ancient House. He would stick to his duty like glue, and could be trusted to keep the whole affair strictly to himself. Reggie Pitt had learned that Tubbs had a fortnight's holiday, and the Fourth Form captain had grabbed the chance.

Tubbs didn't mind a bit—particularly as he was being paid handsomely for his services.

But why was Kirby being kept a prisoner? The monitor himself was dumbfounded—he couldn't think of any possible reason. But he was not left long in doubt.

A new activity began on the other side of his prison bars. There were seven or eight juniors there, and that part of the room was rather crowded. Nipper produced a suit-case and unlocked it. Then he gazed thoughtfully at Kirby.

"I might as well tell you the idea at once," he said. "It'll save a lot of trouble. While you're being kept a prisoner here, Kirby, I'm going to Moat Hollow in your place."

Kirby stared.

"You're mad!" he said. "How the thunder can you go back in my place? Do you think Mr. Creepe will let you in?"

"Of course he'll let me in—he'll think I'm you," said Nipper. "We're just about the same size, and my plan is to impersonate you—I'm going to make myself up to resemble your handsome features."

Kirby looked blank for a moment, and then roared with harsh laughter.

"Why, you blockhead!" he shouted, "you can't do a thing like that! You couldn't even imitate my voice."

Nipper's eyes flashed.

"Why, you blockhead," he roared, in tones that absolutely duplicated Kirby's own, "I couldn't imitate your voice, couldn't I? How's that?"

"My hat!" breathed Pitt. "Marvelous!"

"Kirby to a T!" grinned Willy.

"I don't want any back answers from you!" snarled Nipper, turning on the juniors. "I'll show you who's master, you young cubs! Another word, and I'll report you to Mr. Creepe!"

Kirby gaped. Although it was difficult for him to judge his own voice when attempted by another, he was startled. There could be no mistaking the tones that Nipper was now adopting. He was Kirby to the life.

"By George!" said Handforth. "I couldn't do it better myself!"

Nipper grinned.

"Well, time's getting on," he said in his

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natural voice. "I shall have to trouble you for your clothes, Kirby."

"My clothes!" repeated the monitor, with a start.

"Your suit, your boots, and your overcoat—you needn't trouble about anything else," said Nipper. "But those are essential. There's a tweed suit on the bed for you—waiting. Will you change?"

Kirby went purple with rage.

"No, confound you, I won't!" he roared defiantly.

Nipper sighed.

"In that case, we shall have to tear your

this one day! By thunder! I'll make you smart! I'll go to the police when I get free! This is a criminal offence!"

The Fourth-Formers roared. For Kirby's words, of course, were absurd. The whole affair was nothing more than an elaborate practical joke, but Kirby regarded it with a somewhat jaundiced eye.

He changed, and Nipper quickly donned his discarded clothing.

And then, watched by the juniors with interest, Nipper commenced the most difficult part of all—the transformation of his face.



And then, watched by the juniors with interest, Nipper commenced the most difficult part of all—the transformation of his face.

things off by force," he said resignedly. "It'll be quite an ordeal, Kirby, and you might even get a black eye or two in the process. Between the nine of us, I don't think there'll be much doubt as to the result. Be sensible, my lad! Calm down, and realise that you're only in a position to take orders—not to give them!"

Kirby did calm down—and although he fairly writhed, he realised that he would be wise to obey. Resistance would be mere foolishness.

"All right! I'll change!" he muttered thickly. "But I'll make you suffer for

CHAPTER XI.

THE GREAT ADVENTURE.



REGINALD PITT stood back, his eyes gleaming.

"I can't believe it—it's marvellous!" he exclaimed breathlessly. "I've never seen anything so absolutely startling!"

"By George!" breathed Handforth. "It's—it's uncanny!"

"By gum, you're right, lad," muttered Dick Goodwin, staring.

"Worth quids to see!" said Willy Handforth. "I can only rake up eighteen-pence, but, all the same, it's worth quids!"

Nipper had finished.

For nearly an hour the juniors had watched, entranced, forgetting all about time and their surroundings. Nelson Lee's famous assistant was a master of his craft—and he had just proved it.

Pitt, clever as he was at disguise, felt a hopeless novice as he gazed at the result of Nipper's handiwork. Kirby was standing behind the bars of his unique prison—but Kirby was standing with the juniors, too.

The impersonation was amazingly clever.

It must be admitted, of course, that Kirby's features lent themselves readily to this sort of thing. His face and Nipper's were about the same size, but whereas Nipper's was refined, Kirby's features were coarse. His nose was wide, and Nipper had changed the appearance of his own by the simple insertion of cunning little metal transformers into his nostrils. It was an old trick. They were rather uncomfortable at first, but Nipper had worn them on many an occasion.

Kirby's brows were bushy—so Nipper's became bushy. Kirby possessed a scar on his right cheek, and the scar was accurately duplicated. There was a wart on the left side of his chin, so Nipper rapidly grew a wart.

There was no difficulty about the hair. Nipper's was just a shade lighter, but this was hardly worth noticing. By dressing it in exactly the same style as Kirby—parted in the middle—Nipper had done all that was necessary.

And now he walked about with an uncanny imitation of Kirby's truculent manner. Nipper seemed to become bigger and his figure was hulking. He glared round him with an aggressive eye.

"Well, I suppose I shall have to be getting back to the old rabbit-hutch!" he growled. "If I don't, Creepe will start kicking up the dust! I shall need to cuff some of those confounded kids about, too!"

The juniors could hardly believe that it was Nipper talking. His voice and manner, coupled with the likeness, rendered the impersonation startling. There was practically no fear of discovery.

For, as Nipper had pointed out earlier, even if he made a blunder here and there—and a mistake or two would be inevitable—neither Mr. Creepe nor the others would suspect. They would take the second Kirby for granted. Not having the slightest cause to suspect a change, any alteration in Kirby's appearance or manner would be set down to an individual idiosyncrasy.

"You've only to think a bit, and you'll realise that I'm right," Nipper had said. "Why, haven't you often noticed a change in a chap? One morning he won't be like himself at all—he'll talk different—he'll act

different—he'll even look different. It's all to do with personality. He may feel inwardly excited about something that he knows of, and must keep a secret. So he changes. If I'm not exactly the same as Kirby, Creepe will simply take it for granted that I'm not quite myself—or, to be exact, that Kirby isn't quite himself. And he won't be himself, either!"

Nipper had weighed all the chances carefully before entering upon this escapade. On the face of it, it seemed rather fantastic, but in actual practice it would probably prove quite simple. It is amazing how ordinarily astute people can be deceived.

The juniors were overjoyed at Nipper's performance.

"It couldn't be better!" declared Pitt. "You're Kirby to the life, and if you're unmasked it'll be a miracle!"

"What's the exact programme, Nipper?" asked Tregellis-West eagerly.

"I wish I could tell you, but I can't," replied Nipper. "I'm going to Moat Hollow now, and if everything goes well, I shall take the first step to-night. But don't expect anything big for two or three days."

"But what about the rebellion?" asked Handforth.

"I think it'll come, but we mustn't be in a hurry," replied Nipper. "I've got to work those chaps up to the right pitch. But I want you fellows to be ready for instant action when the call comes."

"We'll be ready," said the juniors promptly.

"I may need assistance at a moment's notice," went on Nipper. "You see, when the great moment arrives, we shall want reinforcements—we shall want, food, ammunition, and goodness knows what else. But until I give the signal, don't breathe a word. I rely on you fellows to keep absolutely mum."

"You can trust us to the last giddy ditch!" declared Handforth. "And the sooner you stir up that rebellion the better! I don't believe in wasting time!"

The matter had to be left thus—for Nipper could give no details. Until he arrived at Moat Hollow and got to work, he couldn't say how the affair would proceed. It was even on the cards that he would be unmasked during the first hour or so, although he wasn't anticipating this.

He bade the juniors good-bye, and hurried away. A kind of partition had been placed in front of the platform, screening it from Kirby's view, so that he couldn't see how visitors made their entrance or exit.

After Nipper had gone, the Fourth-Formers felt rather lost. Even Reggie Pitt, the recognised leader of the Fourth, failed to instil his companions with the same confidence which Nipper had invoked.

The return of Nipper had had a great effect among those fellows who were in the know, and they were hoping against hope

that his unexpected arrival would lead to a permanent return.

Kirby, of course, was completely in the dark. He didn't know who Nipper was, having never seen him before. But he realised that Nipper was a most remarkable young gentleman, and quite capable of carrying the deception through to victory.

As far as Kirby was concerned, he was now out of the picture—and it seemed that he would remain out of it for good! For, if things went right, he would not be released until Mr. Grimesby Creepe and Moat Hollow were memories of the past!

CHAPTER XII.

WITHIN THE ENEMY'S GATES.



MR. GRIMESBY CREEPE glanced at his watch impatiently.

"You'd better go out and search through the village, Tarkington," he said. "I can't understand why the young idiot hasn't returned! Nearly eight o'clock! Upon my word! It's disgraceful!"

"Perhaps he was detained by somebody, sir," said Tarkington. "It isn't usual for Kirby to keep out all this time——"

"He's been gone over two hours," interrupted Mr. Creepe angrily. "If he can give no satisfactory explanation, I shall have something very strong to say to him! This sort of thing is too outrageous to be endured! Am I the master, or is he? It is nothing more or less than rank insubordination! Go at once, Tarkington!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Wait—wait!" snapped Mr. Creepe. "Good heavens, boy, can't you wait? Don't be longer than twenty minutes! If you can't find out anything immediately, come straight back. I won't have you, missing, too!"

"All right, sir, I'll waste no time."

Tarkington went out, making an insulting grimace as soon as he closed the door. He donned his cap and overcoat, and went through into the hall. The school was in bed—for the Moat Hollow boys were packed off into the dormitory at a very early hour.

"The silly old idiot!" muttered Tarkington impatiently. "He gets the wind up over nothing! How the thunder can I find Kirby? I expect he's gone into Bannington——"

The door opened at this moment, and Kirby walked in.

"Hallo, Tark!" he said crisply. "How's the old boy? A bit peeved because I've been out so long?"

Tarkington glared.

"You seem pretty pleased with yourself!" he said sourly. "What's the idea of staying out until this hour? You know as well as I do that the Head always gets

wild if you keep him waiting for his stamps! He was going to send those circulars off to-night—and now the post's gone! He's in a fine old paddy!"

Kirby clumsily removed his overcoat, and scratched his head.

"Stamps?" he repeated. "What stamps?"

"What stamps?" echoed Tarkington. "Haven't you got 'em? Didn't the Head tell you to get ten shilling's-worth of half-penny stamps? What's the matter with you, Kirby?"

He looked at the other monitor closely—for he had, in fact, detected a certain subtle difference in Kirby's voice and manner. Being in close daily contact, Tarkington was certain to notice the slightest change.

Nipper waited, realising that if he passed this test he would be comparatively safe. Kirby and Tarkington had always been inseparable. If anybody in Moat Hollow saw through the deception, it would be Tarkington.

"There's nothing the matter with me, old man," said Nipper, with a laugh. "The fact is, I met somebody—went for a long walk—but as it's private, I'm afraid I can't explain."

He had decided that this would be the best line to take. Not only would he be explaining the long absence, but by hinting at a personal secret, he would give a plausible explanation of his changed manner.

"I don't want you to explain," said Tarkington tartly. "I'm blessed if I know what's the matter with you. You'd better go along and see the Head! He'll be furious when he finds you haven't got those stamps!"

"Who cares?" growled Nipper, with a truculent shrug.

He hung his overcoat up, and passed along to Mr. Creepe's study. He knew the school inside and out. Even recently he had frequently been inside—in the personality of The Phantom Protector.

"Ah, at last!" exclaimed Mr. Creepe, as Nipper entered. "Indeed, sir! And what have you got to say for yourself? What explanation have you to offer? Where have you been all this while?"

"Can't I stay out for an hour or two if I want to?" asked the supposed monitor, in a sullen voice. "I met somebody, and went for a walk. I'm not very late, sir——"

"You met somebody?" interrupted Mr. Creepe. "Whom did you meet?"

"Oh, somebody I used to know, sir," replied Nipper, with perfect truth. "It's all right—you needn't worry—he's one of my sort. Knows all about you, and everything."

Mr. Creepe frowned heavily.

"You are very strange to-night, Kirby," he said, glaring. "I don't like this secrecy—I don't like this preposterous air of mystery! I demand to know whom you met!"

Nipper looked at Mr. Creepe squarely.

"Then I'm sorry, sir, I can't tell you!" he replied. "And I didn't get your stamps,

either. I'm sorry, sir—but they never entered my head. I think I'll be getting along to bed—"

"One moment, Kirby—one moment!" shouted Mr. Creepe. "Do not imagine that you can treat the matter in this loose fashion. Good gracious! Am I to be brow-beaten and bullied by my own monitors? Unless you give me an instant explanation of your secretive behaviour, I shall be compelled to adopt drastic measures! Understand me, sir—drastic measures!"

Nipper gave a perfect imitation of Kirby's unpleasant laugh.

"You can use that tone to the kids, sir—but there's no reason why you should try it on me!" he sneered. "I won't give you any explanation, and that's final! You can't bully me, Mr. Creepe!"

The two glared at one another.

"This is not the first time that you have dared to pit your will against mine, Kirby!" said Mr. Creepe thickly. "Very well, sir—very well! I am aware that you know too much! But I shall make you suffer for this, Kirby—make no mistake! I shall make you suffer! Get out of this room!"

Nipper gave a sneering grin, and departed—leaving Mr. Creepe fairly puffing with rage. The second test had been passed with flying colours! Even Mr. Creepe had suspected nothing.

Nipper had used the right note—arrogance. By so doing he had dismissed the subject of his long absence, and it would probably be allowed to rest. As for having earned Mr. Creepe's displeasure, he didn't care a jot.

He was in Moat Hollow—and nobody guessed the truth!

CHAPTER XIII.

IN THE NIGHT WATCH.



ELATION was Nipper's strongest emotion when he retired to bed.

He had spent an hour in the monitors' room before this, and his acting had been so perfect that none of the other monitors suspected. Both Tarkington and Fryer thought, vaguely, that Kirby wasn't quite the same as usual, but to suspect that he was a totally different person never occurred to them. Indeed, if such a suggestion had been put to them, they would have scouted it with derision.

And Nipper had learned a good deal during that hour.

Most important of all, he knew that he was booked for a spell of night duty from two o'clock till four—and no spell could have suited him better. By two o'clock Mr. Creepe would be soundly off for the night, and the other monitors would be equally deep in slumber.

The monitor on duty before Nipper would be Fryer, and he would naturally be sleepy

at two o'clock, and would be only too glad to tumble into bed. So, during the quietest part of the night, Nipper would have the unfortunate martyrs of Moat Hollow entirely to himself.

And this was the whole point of his stratagem.

By impersonating Kirby, he would have two hours every night in which to talk to the boys—to stir them up—to instil them with some rebellious spirit against the atrocious round of drudgery and slavery and tyranny. Nipper was convinced that the majority of these unfortunates contained a good proportion of the right stuff.

At one time Fryer had been looked upon as a possible helper. Tommy Watson had practically saved his life by extinguishing a sudden fire. Fryer had expressed his desire to help—for he was as sick of Mr. Creepe as any of the other pupils—but he was a weakling. He was afraid to take the slightest step. He was a broken reed.

And Nipper, learning this, had decided to enter Moat Hollow in the character of Kirby.

When he went to bed he did not sleep. He had a great deal to exercise his mind. He didn't even get undressed, but lay on his bed with the quilt drawn over him in the dark.

He decided to let Fryer go to bed when he relieved him—for Fryer was an uncertain quantity. Being such an arrant funk, he might go to Mr. Creepe with the story of what was going on. For, being a monitor, he could approach Mr. Creepe as he liked. It would be better to leave him out.

There was another point to be considered. Should Nipper tell the twenty-four pupils his real identity, or should he let them believe he was Kirby? He decided upon the latter course as being the safer. It would be fatal if Mr. Creepe heard a word of the real truth.

And then, as he lay on the bed, he started, and a slow chuckle escaped his lips.

"A brain-wave!" he murmured. "By Jove! And it had escaped me until this moment! It's the one idea—the best of all!"

Wouldn't it be far better to appear before the boys as neither Kirby nor himself—but as the Phantom Protector? The boys had seen this elusive figure on several occasions, and they looked upon the Phantom Protector with a kind of reverence and awe.

They would be more likely to heed his persuasive tongue than the supposed Kirby's, for they had long since grown to distrust the chief monitor. By appearing before the boys as Kirby, Nipper would have a great handicap to overcome. He would have to fight down the distrust, and make Kirby appear in a character totally foreign to his own. Whereas, in the role of the Phantom Protector he would have the school's ear during the first minute.

"Yes, by jingo, it's the absolute idea!" Nipper told himself keenly. "Thank good—"

ness I brought the things! It only shows that it's always as well to be prepared."

At the last minute Nipper had stuffed the black hood and cloak into his—or, rather, Kirby's—overcoat-pockets. It had occurred to him that certain circumstances might arise where it would be necessary for him to appear as the Hooded Unknown. He had certainly not imagined, at that time, that he would want the things on the very first night.

He wondered, now, how it was that he could have missed such an obvious opening as this. It had everything in its favour. Even to Mr. Creepe the Phantom Unknown was a figure of mystery.

And there was another powerful advantage to this decision. In case of a sudden, unexpected surprise, no harm would be done. Mr. Creepe, bursting in, would merely find the Phantom Protector addressing his boys! And if Nipper couldn't slip away, and quickly return as Kirby, it would be a pity!

Nipper, indeed, felt quite excited, and he waited anxiously for two o'clock to come. And when that hour finally approached, he was more alert and keen-brained than ever.

He rose quietly from the bed at five minutes to two, lit a candle, and took a look at himself in the mirror. He ruffled his hair a bit, rubbed his eyes to make them red, and then blew the candle out.

He entered the dormitory yawning loudly.

"Well, I'm hanged!" growled Fryer, pulling himself out of the easy-chair and throwing his blanket aside. "What's come over you, Kirby? This is the first time on record that you've been a minute before time!"

"Don't be funny!" snapped Nipper irritably. "You'd better have a look at your watch—it may be slow! Everything all right?"

"Yes," yawned Fryer. "They're all asleep. Young Smithson's been crying, poor kid—pining about that ten-bob note, I expect."

"Confound the young idiot!" snapped Nipper. "He'd better cry while I'm here—that's all! It won't take me long to tickle him up!"

Fryer went off, ruffling his hair and yawning. He closed the door, and Nipper felt a thrill pass through him. At last the moment had come! He was alone and unsuspected with the future rebels!

CHAPTER XIV.

THE FIRST STEP.



NIPPER seated himself in the easy-chair, and deliberately waited for five minutes. He was impatient and eager to begin his programme, but common precaution warned him not to be too precipitate.

The dormitory was still and quiet. A single

lamp burned on a little table—an insignificant, smelly oil-lamp. The dormitory was not heated—for Mr. Creepe had barred all oil-stoves in future—and the atmosphere of the long room was chilly.

But the monitor on duty was allowed a couple of blankets, so that he could sit in his chair with a fair amount of comfort. This night duty was a feature of Moat Hollow.

Mr. Creepe declared that the monitor was present in case any unfortunate boy became ill during the hours of the night. In real truth, the monitor was kept there to prevent any attempted escape. He was, in fact, a kind of warder.

After five minutes, Nipper rose and went to the door. He opened it, looked outside, and listened. Everything was deathly still, except for the mean and howl of the wind outside. Moat Hollow was a gloomy place indeed.

Nipper closed the door again, took a little piece of wood from his pocket, and carefully wedged it between the door and the frame. This would slightly delay any possible intruder, and might give him a chance to prepare himself—not that he expected any such interruption.

Softly, he crossed the floor, and went from bed to bed, glancing down at the faces of the sleeping boys. At last he halted, and his expression softened. He was standing over Tommy Watson.

He took Tommy by the shoulder, and gently shook him. Nipper's old chum woke quickly, and raised himself on his elbow. He blinked as he looked up into Nipper's face.

"What—what's wrong?" he muttered. "What are you waking me up for? Can't I sleep peacefully now?" he added bitterly. "It isn't time to get up yet—"

"Not so loud, old son," whispered Nipper softly. "Don't you know me?"

Watson stared, and his face flushed.

"I—I don't understand!" he breathed. "You're Kirby! And yet—and yet your voice sounds—"

"I'm not Kirby—I'm Nipper!" whispered the other. "It's all right, Tommy, old man—just one of my little dodges. I've fooled old Creepe, and I've fooled Tarkington and the rest. But I haven't got the heart to keep you in the dark. I'm here to make things hum!"

Tommy Watson fairly shook with excitement.

"But—but it's impossible!" he panted. "Oh, Nipper! I—I never hoped for anything like this—I don't believe it!" he added, with a sudden catch in his voice, as he looked at Nipper's disguised face. "You're fooling me, you cur! You're Kirby! I know you're Kirby!"

This was a compliment, indeed, and Nipper felt more secure than ever in his disguise. But he grabbed Tommy's hand, and then

talked to him steadily for three minutes. He even showed him one or two trifling objects—such as a watch, and a pocket-knife—to identify himself. And Tommy was at last convinced.

"You're here!" he muttered. "You're right in Moat Hollow—disguised! Good old Nipper! I don't understand even now—I thought you were up in London, with Mr. Lee! I only saw you for a minute the other night—"

"The gov'nor's in Vienna—and I had nothing to do, so I came down here," explained Nipper softly. "Now, there's not much time—but what there is I want to utilise to the full. I'm going to slip that hood and mask on, and appear as the Phantom Protector—then I'm going to have a chat with the whole crowd of you! If I don't wake the gang up, I'm a Dutchman!"

Watson's eye gleamed, and his heart beat faster as Nipper briefly outlined the programme. Watson's only doubt was that Mr. Creepe's pupils would not gather up sufficient pluck to rebel.

But Nipper was more confident. In any case, he would feel the pulses of the boys at once. And while Watson lay back in bed, Nipper crossed softly to the corner of the room and made his preparations. He appeared again in two minutes.

It was impossible to wear his close-fitting black garments, but in the dim light of the dormitory this was hardly necessary. The cloak round his shoulders, the hood over his head, and the whole mask which covered his face, were ample. He stood there—the Phantom Protector.

"My hat! It's wonderful!" murmured Watson excitedly.

Nipper went from bed to bed. He shook shoulder after shoulder, and within two or three minutes the dormitory was awake. The boys were sitting up, rubbing their eyes and staring. One or two of the weakest were frightened, and were even whimpering.

"Don't be afraid—I'm your friend!" exclaimed Nipper, his voice clear but soft. "I am here to help you—to protect you! Listen to me, all of you! Who do you think I am? Why do you think I have been guarding you and watching over you during these last weeks? What do you think is to be the end of this affair?"

The boys listened, more awed than ever. They were all awake by now, sitting up in bed, and looking at the hooded figure with wide eyes. Some were hugging their knees under the bedclothes, others were breathing hard, as though with fright. But all gave Nipper their full attention.

"Remember, your schoolmaster's tyranny cannot go on for ever!" exclaimed Nipper grimly. "And it rests with you to end it all. You have only to choose, and Mr. Grimesby Creepe will be beaten. It is in your power to free yourself from his slavery and to earn your liberty!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE DAWN OF HOPE.



THE Moat Hollow boys listened breathlessly. They had grown to look upon the Phantom Protector as a mythical figure who came to deliver them from harm. And his dramatic appearance in the dead of night had had an enormous effect.

"There are twenty-four of you," went on Nipper tensely. "There are two dozen—and your enemies number seven—Mr. Creepe and his six monitors. Are you willing to remain the slaves of this minority for ever? Answer me! What is your decision?"

"We—we can't do anything!" muttered Jevons. "I'd try, if there was a chance—but there isn't! They've got us down, and they keep us down!"

"They keep you down because you're afraid to use your strength!" replied Nipper quickly. "It is only a question of making up your minds. Once you rebel against this oppression you will win. Mr. Creepe is the kind of man who can be easily defeated."

"We daren't—we daren't!"

"He'd starve us if we dared to rebel!"

"He'd flog us all—he'd half kill us!"

"Not if you held the upper hand!" replied the Phantom Protector, his voice rising slightly. "Listen to me. What have you to look forward to? Work! Constant, grinding slavery! Do you have holidays? No. Are you allowed to walk about individually? No. You are slaves—you are the drudges of this scoundrel!"

"Oh!"

"He—he might come——"

"Let him come!" said Nipper grimly. "What harm can he do you if you stand together? Haven't you ever realised that? If he takes you singly, he can victimise you as he pleases. But if once you showed him that you were more powerful than he the end would be swift."

"We'll do it!" exclaimed Watson tensely. "The Protector's right! Why don't you back me up, you chaps? Haven't I tried to speak to you before? If we start a rebellion we're bound to win!"

"A rebellion!"

The word went round in frightened whispers.

"That's the spirit!" exclaimed Nipper, glad of Watson's support. "There's one of you with pluck. And you've all got pluck—if you only knew it. But it's been stifled; it's been beaten down. Forget your fears, boys. Prepare yourselves for a mutiny—a barring-out! Remember, I shall be here to help you to victory!"

"Why not start the rebellion now—to-night?" panted Watson excitedly.

"I'm game!" said Jevons, worked up. "I'll join in, if all the others will!"

"So will I!"

"I don't mind—anything's better than this slavery!"

"Let's rebel—let's throw old Creepe out!"

Nipper stood there, listening, grimly satisfied. Even in such a short space of time as this six or seven boys were expressing their willingness to fight. It was a good sign. The majority were silent, still frightened and meek.

"We must go steady; we must take things calmly!" said Nipper. "We mustn't

"Yes, Mr. Creepe is afraid of me!" he repeated. "Why is he afraid of me? I'll tell you. Because I am in the right, because he knows that he is a bully, a tyrant, a slave-driver. And Mr. Creepe would be afraid of you, too, if you showed him that you were strong. There's nothing to keep you here, amid this drudgery, except your own weakness!"

There were many excited buzzes.

"It'll be all over in one burst!" exclaimed Tommy Watson tensely. "Why should we suffer like this? Before the Phantom Protector came we had to—we couldn't fight.



Nipper went from bed to bed. He shook shoulder after shoulder, and within two or three minutes the dormitory was awake.

start this rebellion to-night; you must prepare. But to-morrow, perhaps, or the next day. Get yourselves ready for the great hour. There is nothing to fear, and everything to gain!"

"Who—who are you?" whispered one of the boys wonderingly.

"Who am I? A friend—a helper!" replied Nipper. "One day you will know more. Have I not proved my friendship? Have I not appeared time after time when I was most needed?"

"Yes, yes!"

"And Mr. Creepe's afraid of you, too!"

Nipper seized upon the last remark.

But he's with us; he's on our side. And he'll see that Mr. Creepe gets his deserts!"

"I'm with you, Watson; I'll fight!" said Jevons shrilly.

"Thanks, old man, but we must have the lot; we must be united," said Watson. "Mustn't we?" he added, appealing to Nipper.

"Yes, every one of you must join in," replied Nipper promptly. "There is safety in numbers, and disaster in a divided force. I've come here to-night to speak to you calmly. Do you doubt my power? Do you question my ability to lead you to victory?"

"No."

"We believe you!"

"Where is Kirby?" went on Nipper scoffingly. "I'll tell you where Kirby is. He's helpless; and when this affair is over to-night he'll say nothing. My power is such that even Kirby will show nothing of what has happened!"

The boys listened with wonder and amazement.

"Knowing my ability to win this triumph, why do you hold back?" went on Nipper. "I have come here to gain your liberty. But I can do nothing if you refuse to help me. Give me your support, and freedom will be yours!"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BEGINNING OF THE MUTINY.



TOMMY WATSON was overjoyed. He knew that Nipper's powers of leadership were great, but he had never expected to see what he was seeing now. These poor, down-

trodden boys were gaining spirit with every second.

Their eyes were shining, their faces were flushed, and the meek, hunted expression was leaving their faces. They looked bigger and stronger on account of the change. Even little Smithson was wild with excitement.

"It is your right to have freedom," went on Nipper, following up his advantage without loss of time. "Up the road there is a big school—St. Frank's. The boys play sports—football, cricket, tennis, fives. They can go out when they please during certain hours; they can come to the village and visit friends. When lessons are over their time is their own—they are free!"

There was a tense silence as Nipper paused.

"But you?" he went on scornfully. "What liberty do you enjoy? You cannot go out; you have no time of your own. You get up in the morning, you work and eat, and go to bed again. Week in and week out, it is the same round of drudgery. Are you willing to continue?"

"No! We'll revolt!"

"We'll strike against it!"

"Yes, yes!"

"Even when you get letters from home you are forbidden to take them in your own hands," went on Nipper softly. "You cannot write unless you leave your letters open for Mr. Creepe to destroy at will. Convicts in a prison are better off than you are!"

"That's what Watson told us," said Jevons.

"And Watson was right," replied Nipper. "This place is worse than a reformatory; and yet you are all honest boys, and your

parents or guardians are paying fees for you to be here. This man, Grimesby Creepe, is a black-hearted scoundrel—a callous, cunning brute. He daren't let you leave the school grounds for fear of giving him away. That is why you are always hemmed in! That is why you are always kept under lock and key!"

"We know it!" said Smithson boldly. "We've always known it; but we can't do anything——"

"Can't!" interrupted Nipper sharply. "You're wrong there! You can! You can, if you only make up your minds. The time has come for action, and I will help you over this stile. The Fourth Form at St. Frank's will help you; they have promised. Do you realise that once you start this rebellion the St. Frank's boys will support you to the bitter end? They are eager to help; they are only waiting for the signal!"

"Oh!" muttered Jevons. "We—we didn't know that!"

"We didn't think we should get any help!"

"It may not be true——"

"Do you think I would mislead you?" asked Nipper sternly. "I tell you the St. Frank's boys are only waiting for the signal, and that signal I shall give at the right moment. But I cannot attempt it until I have your united support. Not twenty-two of you, not twenty-three, but the whole two dozen! There must be no single weakling!"

Watson jumped up on his bed.

"You hear?" he panted. "Not only will the Phantom Protector help us, but the St. Frank's fellows, too! You're not going to hold back now? We may not get another chance, and that'll mean more drudgery and slavery——"

"We'll do it!" said Jevons, his voice rising.

"Yes, we'll all join!"

"Every one of us!"

Nipper was astonished at the general assent. He had not expected any such success as this on his very first night. But the eloquence of his appeal had gone right home to these unfortunate drudges. The very thought of freedom stirred them as nothing else could.

"Wait!" said Nipper quietly. "Every boy who will support me must raise his hand. And there must be no backing out—no funking. If you promise your support now, I shall expect it when the time comes."

Every hand in the room went up. One or two were perhaps hesitating, but there was not a single exception. And Nipper could hardly believe it. He could have danced with triumph. But he kept calm and sedate.

"Splendid!" he exclaimed. "I'm proud of you all; you've proved that you've got the right spirit in you after all. I'm going now, but I shall return when you least expect me."

"Oh?"

"The rebellion cannot happen to-night; there is much to be prepared," went on Nipper quietly. "But I have heard enough to convince me that success will be certain. Try to get to sleep again, and work to-morrow in the usual way. The hour will soon be here, and then your freedom will come!"

He backed silently to the door, opened it, and passed out. And the instant he vanished the boys fell to talking excitedly and almost hysterically. It was Watson who calmed them down.

"Better be quiet!" he warned. "Kirby's bound to come soon. The Phantom Protector must have done something to him——"

The door opened and Kirby came in. At

least, all the boys thought he was Kirby. He was yawning, and seemed in no way excited. But he frowned as he looked round the room.

"Who's awake here?" he growled. "What's all this noise? Get to sleep, you young cubs! Another sound and I'll come round with a birch!"

The dormitory fell into silence. But Nipper sank down in his chair. For the moment there would be a delay. But Nipper was inwardly rejoicing. The Moat Hollow mutiny had started. For all these boys were determined to fight against the drudgery of their drab lives.

On the morrow, Nipper decided, the actual rebellion would start. Mr. Grimesby Creepe was booked for the biggest shock of all his worthless existence.

THE END.

A Stirring Account of the Great Rebellion at Moat Hollow
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Now Read on.

CHAPTER XXVII (continued)

Harry nodded.

"You think the note was sent with the consent of the pater's captors?" he queried.

"That is self-evident," said Nelson Lee. "I don't suppose Mr. Langford has the remotest idea where he is being held a prisoner, and the lack of any sort of information in the note is clear proof that he wrote it under the eyes of his kidnappers. Its sole purpose is to ease your anxiety—and it surely ought to accomplish that."

"Well, yes—it certainly has," admitted Harry. "But I was hoping that it would help you to locate my father—"

"I'm afraid you're doomed to disappointment in that hope," cut in Lee, with a shake of the head. "It would be a mere waste of time for us to attempt anything of the sort, Langford. The letter was posted in the City—miles away from the spot where your father is being held a prisoner. But there is no need for you to despair; even at this moment Nipper is keeping his eye upon a man who will in all probability provide us with a direct clue to the criminals we are after."

Nelson Lee spoke in a cheery manner, and Harry was visibly impressed. Until now

he had seen very little evidence that any progress was being made—but the detective's assurance was certainly a step in the right direction.

Lee, perhaps, was taking a good deal for granted in this particular instance, but his theories were soon to be proved correct in the most startling manner.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MR. MAX KERNER'S ACTIVITY!



NIPPER was enjoying himself hugely.

Whenever a "shadowing" job was given to him he was in his element—for there were very few people who could beat Nelson Lee's astute young assistant when it came to tracking.

He had had a long and varied experience in this branch of detective work, and he was, therefore, entitled to be called an expert. None knew better than his master exactly how cute Nipper could be at this highly-skilled work, and the detective could always rely upon the most satisfactory results. Nipper, of course, was not infallible—but he very seldom failed in his duty.

This was partly because he loved the work with a whole-hearted affection, and partly because he hated to be bested by any member of the criminal fraternity. Finally, it was not his way to "let down" his master in any shape or form if it could be avoided, and for these reasons Nipper usually managed to come up trumps.

To-night he had been told to keep his eye upon Mr. Max Kerner, and within a very few minutes of parting from Nelson Lee, Nipper was worming his way towards the back garden of the financier's house.

The visit he had just paid to Kerner's library served him in good stead now, for he knew that the apartment was situated at the rear of the house—a position which was much better for his purpose than the front of the premises would have been.

Nipper, as silently as a cat, scaled the high fence which connected Kerner's house to its neighbour, and within a few seconds he was crouching beside the window-sill of the financier's library. A bright light was streaming out of the casement, and Nipper found that he could, by standing on tip-toe, peer into the apartment through the fringe of the blind.

His first look told him that Kerner was still within the room—staring in front of him with a thoughtful look on his face, and apparently waiting for something to happen. The financier was making no attempt to read, or even to smoke, and his attitude convinced Nipper that he was impatient and restless.

Now and again he glanced at the clock, and frowned in a manner which plainly indicated annoyance. Obviously he was quite unsuspecting that he was being watched so closely by Nipper's keen eyes, for he never once cast his gaze towards the window.

After fifteen minutes had passed, during which no change took place in the situation, Nipper began to devoutly wish for action—and his wish was very speedily fulfilled.

Kerner's manservant appeared in the library, spoke a few words to his master, and withdrew. And a few seconds later another man appeared—a dark-skinned, ruffianly-looking individual of foreign aspect. He held his cap in his hand as he approached the financier, and his expression bore evident traces of subdued excitement.

Kerner looked at the newcomer quickly; and then rapped out a single, sharply-spoken word.

"Well?" he asked, not without a trace of eagerness in his tone.

"I've located the whereabouts of Langford, boss!" said the other, with a grin of pride. "He's a prisoner in a little house on Putney Heath!"

"Good!" said Kerner, with a nod of

approval. "Splendid, Berger! Did you discover the identity of his kidnappers?"

Nipper, now greatly excited at what he had already learned, listened eagerly for what was to follow. He was prepared for almost anything—but he almost gave a cry of surprise as he heard Berger's reply to Kerner's question.

"Yes, boss—I discovered it by recognising him!" said the man. "There are two men in the game—but the one I mean is Professor Cyrus Zingrave, the Chief of the League of the Green Triangle! He escaped from Portmoor a little while back, and he's working this Langford business with a partner!"

Kerner nodded again.

"Zingrave, eh?" he muttered. "The once formidable head of the Green Triangle! Well, I don't think we have any cause to fear him, Berger. We will go ahead with our plans just as arranged, and I want you to have the others in readiness for instant action when I give the word. Do you understand?"

"We'll be ready, boss—never fear," said the other. "But when are you going to give the word—"

"Not until after I've paid a visit to Putney, and ascertained the lie of the land," cut in Kerner. "Zingrave has no suspicions that his lair has been discovered, I suppose?"

"He thinks he's as safe as the Bank of England!" said Berger, with a grin. "He hasn't got the least notion that I was prowling about outside the house."

Nipper, outside the library window, had heard every word, and he was almost hugging himself with delight. Nelson Lee had shown very sound judgment in sending his assistant here, and he also had made no mistake in assuming that Professor Cyrus Zingrave was taking a very active part in the "Mephistopheles" mystery.

The detective, in fact, had hit the right nail upon the head from the very commencement, as Nipper had now proved in a striking manner. All along, Lee had detected Zingrave's master touch, and Berger's statements had verified this beyond all doubt.

Nipper waited eagerly to overhear more of the man's conversation, but beyond a few details concerning the locality of Zingrave's lair, there was nothing more to be learned.

He saw Berger dismissed by Kerner, and a few moments later the financier himself left the library, after ringing for his manservant and ordering his car to be brought round at once.

Nipper waited for no more, but made his way as quickly as possible to the front of the house. Here, in the dim shadows of the roadway, he considered the position.

Kerner, obviously, was about to set off on his trip to the Putney headquarters of Zingrave, and Nipper had every intention of accompanying him, or following him. He

could, of course, hire a taxi and direct the driver to keep Kerner's vehicle in sight, but Nipper dismissed this plan as being too risky. The financier would undoubtedly observe the following taxi, and would become alarmed.

No. A better method would be for Nipper to travel at the rear of Kerner's private car—a "stunt" he had executed on many an occasion during the course of his detective work. Most private cars were possessed of luggage-grids, and Nipper gave a sigh of relief as he observed that the financier's saloon vehicle was so fitted.

The car came out of a near-by garage, driven by a smart chauffeur, and pulled up outside the house. A moment later Kerner took his place upon the luxurious cushions, and as the car started off, Nipper darted from his place of concealment, and hopped nimbly upon the back.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE DASH TO PUTNEY.



"SO far, so good!" muttered Nipper to himself, as the car gathered speed. "The gov'nor's told me to keep this merchant in sight, and I'm doing it!"

Nipper told himself that he was acting in the only possible manner, and he knew that his master would approve. He would have liked to telephone Lee before starting on this adventure, but there had been no opportunity.

According to what Kerner had said to Berger, he was merely making this trip to Putney for the purpose of discovering the lie of the land, and if that was the case, Nipper would have plenty of time to inform Nelson Lee of what was in the wind upon his return.

Upon the other hand, if the financier had any other plans in mind, Nipper would—by adopting his present methods—be able to keep a very close watch upon all Kerner's movements.

And Nipper, as he considered the matter in this light, was perfectly contented in mind.

The car was a very fast one, and it covered the ground between Wigmore Street and Putney in a surprisingly short time. Near the top of Putney Hill, in a dimly-lit portion of road, Kerner ordered the chauffeur to stop, and Nipper, guessing the financier's intentions, dropped from the vehicle.

In a few moments he saw his quarry emerge from the saloon, speak a few words to the driver, and then commence walking towards the wide stretch of heath at the top of the hill. Nipper waited for a brief space, and then set off after Kerner like a silent shadow.

Five minutes later he saw the financier pause near a small house which stood in an isolated position at the edge of the heath, and then approach it stealthily. For some little time he prowled about the place, peering in at a window here and there, but never going directly up to the building.

Nipper would dearly have liked to make an investigation on his own account, but such a thing was impossible with Kerner on the spot. And so the youthful detective had to content himself with just keeping his quarry in view, and remaining otherwise inactive.

The financier, after circling the house twice, seemed to be satisfied, for he commenced the return walk to the motor-car without more ado. Upon reaching it, he at once entered the vehicle and curtly ordered the chauffeur to return home as quickly as possible.

Nipper, as before, took his place upon the rear of the car, and crouched there until the saloon was about to come to a halt in Wigmore Street once more. Then he dropped off, and hobbled somewhat stiffly into the shadows opposite the financier's house. The jolting he had received had made him ache more than a little, but he knew that the effects of the ride would soon pass off.

He watched Kerner unlock the door of his house with his latchkey and disappear inside; the car meanwhile gliding off towards the garage. And Nipper, with a little grunt of satisfaction, prepared to take up his former position outside the library window at the rear of the house.

Once arrived there, Nipper peered through the pane below the blind and saw Kerner with the telephone receiver held to his ear, evidently waiting to be connected to his number. A moment later he spoke jerkily into the instrument, and Nipper listened intently to catch his words.

"That you, Berger?" asked the financier. "Right! I've just paid a visit to Putney, and I think we may as well act at once. Are the men all ready? They are, eh? Good! I'll be there within a few minutes, and we'll get off right away!"

He hung up the receiver as he uttered the last word, and Nipper's eyes gleamed excitedly. He knew that the time had come for him to hurry to Gray's Inn Road, and to tell Nelson Lee of his discoveries. There was not a moment to lose, and Nipper left the library window and clambered over the fence with the agility of a monkey.

Once in Wigmore Street, he pelted down the road with the speed of a hare, dashed through Cavendish Square, and was soon in Regent Street. Here he chartered the first empty taxi he caught sight of, and told the driver to take him to Gray's Inn Road as fast as the engine would "buzz."

The journey, via Oxford Street and Holborn, only occupied a few minutes, and

Nipper, after paying the cabman liberally and telling him to wait, lost no time in opening the front door of Nelson Lee's house and pelting up the stairs to the consulting-room.

He burst into the apartment like a young hurricane, and found his master there in company with Harry Langford—who had just shown the detective the note from his father. They looked at the excited Nipper curiously, and Harry gave vent to an exclamation of surprise.

"What the thunder is the matter, Nipper?" he asked. "You seem to be bubbling over——"

"Rather! I should think I am!" said Nipper, turning to his master with shining eyes. "You were on the right track all the time, guv'nor! Professor Zingrave is mixed up in this business, just as you suspected!"

Nelson Lee's eyes gleamed.

"How do you know——"

"I know more than that!" cut in Nipper, speaking with a rush. "Mr. Max Kerner is planning to make a raid on a little house in Putney now—for the purpose of obtaining Mr. Langford's apparatus——"

"Good heavens!" said Harry tensely. "That means that you know where it is, Nipper!"

"Yes, I do," said Nipper. "Come on, guv'nor—there's not a moment to lose! Kerner and his gang will forestall us if we don't look slippy! He's actually on the way there now!"

But Nelson Lee, instead of being enthusiastic, as Nipper had anticipated, stood regarding him with a heavy frown upon his brow.

What could be the meaning of the detective's displeasure?

CHAPTER XXX.

A SHOT FROM THE DARKNESS.



"KERNER!" repeated Nelson Lee, looking at Nipper with a queer expression

in his eyes. "Surely you must be mistaken, young 'un? I was under the

impression that Kerner was working hand-in-glove with the kidnappers of Mr. Langford—but possibly I am wrong——"

"You must be, guv'nor!" said Nipper. "Kerner, according to what I've just learned, is up against Zingrave in this affair, and he's just starting out to turn the tables on the professor!"

Lee nodded.

"Very interesting!" he commented. "You had better explain everything fully, young 'un, so that we know precisely where we stand. I have been labouring under a slight misunderstanding, by all appearances, and I'm very anxious to get on the right track. What have you learned, Nipper?"

"A terrific lot, guv'nor, considering the

short time I've been busy!" said Nipper quickly. "Listen, and I'll explain everything in about a couple of ticks!"

He lost no time in doing so—telling his master and Harry everything which had taken place since he had first taken up his stand outside the library window of Kerner's house. He omitted nothing, but related the whole of the facts in crisp, tense sentences.

He told of the conversation he had overheard between Kerner and Berger, and how the latter had spoken of Professor Zingrave's part in the affair. And Nipper concluded with an account of his trip to Putney, and of what he had learned upon his return to Wigmore Street.

"Kerner told his men to be ready at once, guv'nor," he concluded, "so there's not a second to waste if we're to be in time! That rotten German is after Mr. Langford's machine——"

"That is obvious—now!" said Lee keenly. "I was wrong in thinking that Kerner was an accomplice of Zingrave's, for it now appears that they are opposed to one another. I think my best plan will be to telephone to Chief Detective-Inspector Lennard at Scotland Yard, and get him to hurry off to Putney, and to meet us there."

Nelson Lee suited the action to the word, and grasped the telephone as he spoke. In a very few minutes he was put through to the headquarters of the police, and was soon in earnest conversation with the Chief Inspector.

Lennard was greatly astonished—but nevertheless delighted—at Lee's news, and he promised to collect a "bunch" of plain-clothes men at once, and to bring them along to Putney Heath without a moment's delay.

"You can rely upon us being there almost as soon as you are, Lee," he said eagerly. "I wouldn't lose this chance of recapturing Zingrave for a pension. So-long—see you later!"

He rang off, and Lee and Nipper and Harry Langford prepared for their own departure. The young man would not hear of being left out of this adventure, and the detective saw no objection to his coming.

"This is great!" he exclaimed, as he reached for his hat. "Thanks to Nipper, there's a chance of finding the pater almost at once, Mr. Lee! I can scarcely realise the good news, and I'm as excited as a schoolkid!"

In a very few moments the trio were ready, and they left the consulting-room and descended to the hall. Nipper ran out to the waiting taxi, closely followed by Harry Langford, while Nelson Lee brought up the rear.

The famous detective was in the act of closing the front door, when a startling thing occurred.

Without the slightest warning a revolver-shot rang out, and Nipper and Harry

twirled round in alarm, wondering what was the matter.

As they did so, Nipper gave vent to an agonised cry of dismay, for he was just in time to see his beloved master collapse upon the doorstep!

Nelson Lee had been shot!

CHAPTER XXXI. THE HOUSE ON PUTNEY HEATH.

"G O O D heavens!" panted Nipper, aghast. "The—the guv'nor's fallen! That shot must have caught him—"

Nipper, with a lump in his throat, ran forward dazedly towards the fallen detective, and Harry Langford mechanically followed.

The incident had occurred with such dramatic suddenness that the young man scarcely realised what had happened. He was not used to startling diversions of this kind, and he dashed after Nipper towards the front door of the house with a mingled sensation of excitement and consternation stirring within him.

Nipper reached his master's side, and bent down quickly—expecting to find the detective badly injured, and perhaps killed. The shot, by the sound of it, had been fired at pretty close quarters, and it seemed impossible that it could have missed its mark.

All thoughts of the proposed dash to Putney had flown from Nipper's mind, and he was now solely concerned with Nelson Lee's condition.

"Guv'nor!" he breathed anxiously, as he peered into the detective's face. "Are—are you hurt—"

"Sssssh!" was the surprising reply—uttered in a soft undertone. "No, young 'un—fortunately, the shot missed me com-

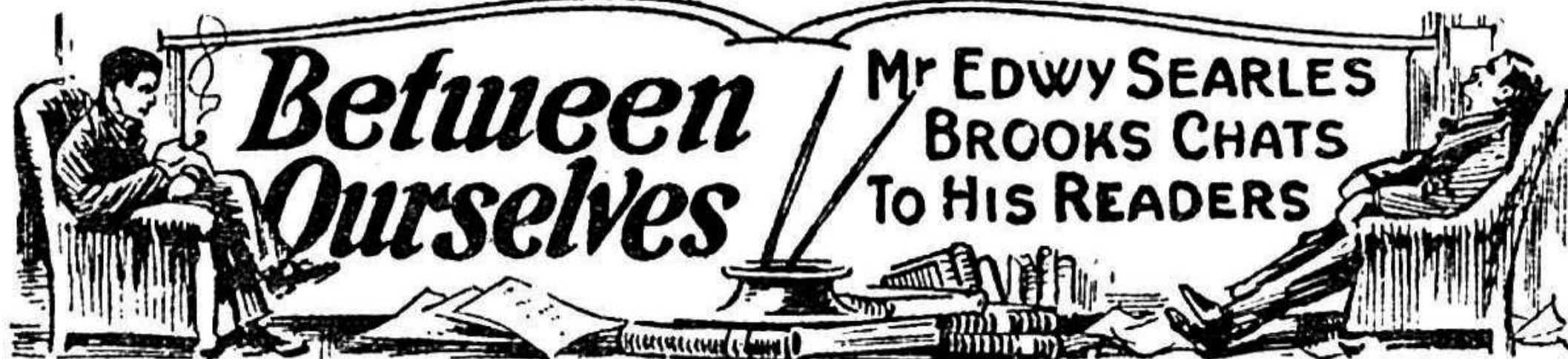


Nipper was just in time to see his beloved master collapse upon the doorstep. Nelson Lee had been shot!

pletely. The man who fired it is standing on the roof of the house opposite, and I happened to catch sight of him as I closed the front door. If I had not dropped as I did he would probably have fired a second time—with perhaps disastrous results. Ah, he has disappeared now!"

Nelson Lee, while he was speaking, had also been gazing at the house across the road, and he observed the would-be murderer's movements out of the corner of his

(Continued on page 30)



MR EDWY SEARLES
BROOKS CHATS
TO HIS READERS

(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 EDWY SEARLES BROOKS, c/o The Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.—E.S.B.).

Letters received: A Nelson Lee Fan (Halesowen), A Girl Reader (Bristol), J. Nash (Dublin), Bryan Slater (Christchurch), Ena Howell* (Plymouth), S. Sirrah (Nottingham), Peter Setford* (East Ham), Sydney J. Ward (Bluntisham), Margery Brook* (Wolverhampton), Basil Titchbourne (Pimlico), B. W. Messem (Forest Gate), F. Coomber* (Kentish Town), K. Willott* (Isleworth), E. Carter (Sydney, Australia), A. P. Marnitz (Johannesburg), E. C. Maidment (Bermondsey), L. Penny (Southampton), W. Johnson (Folkestone), Wyn and Dorrie* (Halifax), S. A. Mole (Northwood), H. G. Slatford (Brentford), A Regular Reader (Forest Gate), Smith Thompson (Bradford), F. P. Carpenter (East Ham).

Sorry, Nelson Lee Fan, that Tom Burton is "only among the crowd." But, you see, it's quite impossible for me to feature the less prominent characters, when I have to deal with so many. I do my best to give them a turn now and again, so perhaps the Bo'sun will be in the limelight again one of these days. You needn't ask me to forgive you. What do you think I put that notice at the head of this page for?

Just a word with you, J. Nash. (By the way, I can't tell whether you're a boy or a girl, you know, unless you give me your Christian name. Other readers, please note). You say you'll write to me again later on, when your answer is in the list. All right, I'll wait for your next letter, and if you don't make it longer than your first one I shall be disappointed in you.

Yes, of course, S. Sirrah, all the school will appear in the Portrait Gallery. Not every fag and every senior, of course, but all the prominent ones. I'm not so sure about the Moor View girls, though. In any case, they wouldn't come in until all the St. Frank's characters have been given a show.

And that'll take a long time yet. I suppose you want to see most of the chaps, don't you? You ask me to put more Third Form characters in my stories. So you like Willy & Co., eh? In that case, you'll possibly be interested to know that I've just finished a special long story of the St. Frank's fags—not for publication in the Old Paper, but elsewhere. Now say I don't work hard! Keep your eyes open for "The Fighting Fags of St. Frank's." It may be some weeks before you see anything of it, but it's written—and that's the main thing.

Sorry I was only able to answer you in a crowd last time, Peter Setford. And you send me such beautifully written letters, too. Too bad, isn't it? In fact, it's worse than that, because I don't forget that you hold the distinction of being the first reader to write me a letter in connection with this feature. I am afraid I shall have a lot of difficulty in getting copies of Nos. 1 and 2 for you—they're pretty scarce nowadays. But if I do come across them, you shall certainly have them. You needn't worry—I shan't forget you. By the way, I hope you've got over the shock of losing that ten shillings by now!

You'll have to wake them up in Bluntisham, Sydney J. Ward! But perhaps your village is only a very small one? I'm very glad you like Reggie Pitt better than Nipper as skipper, and your hope that he will remain captain when Nipper gets back will be realised. Wait a minute. I rather fancy I can hear a storm of protests from other readers. But why? It'll be a lot better for Nipper to retain his freedom when he returns to the Fourth, so that he will be able to help Nelson Lee in detective work, without having the responsibilities of the captaincy on his shoulders. And Reggie is a pretty decent skipper, isn't he? What do you say, Syd?

So you're a chap who likes plenty of sports interest, B. W. Messem? Well, after Easter, you'll probably be interested in my yarns. I'm writing a special series about cricket—although, needless to say, there'll be other interests as well. The Fourth already has a cycling club—but I'm afraid their adventures wouldn't be quite exciting enough for most of you.

Do you mean it, K. Willott? If so, you're a brick! Excuse me for doubting you, but it

sounds too good to be true. You tell me that you have a good excess of pocket-money, and that you are quite willing to spend it on the proposed League, if necessary. That's the right spirit, and no mistake! I hope, one day, that you'll have the opportunity. What's that you say about the newsagents in your district? They don't obtain enough copies to go round? And you can't get one on Thursday? Well, old man, there's one certain remedy—and that is, to order your copy in advance. Sometimes the Editor urges you to place a standing order, and I believe a lot of you think this is just a stunt. But it isn't. And if you buy the paper regularly, you might just as well order your copy, and be absolutely certain of it. It not only makes you safe, but it helps the newsagent, and it helps the publisher.

Here, steady on, L. Penny! You're a bit "fresh," as the Americans say, aren't you? You calmly tell me that I ought to be kicked for taking Nelson Lee and Nipper out of the school yarns! I know I asked you to be candid, but still—I expect some of the other readers will be telling me that I ought to be kicked for bringing them back before long. What a wangle it is to please everybody! Every time I look in the mirror I expect to see some grey hairs sprouting out.

Those two caricatures of yours, S. A. Mole, are extraordinarily good, if you want my candid criticism. But there's one thing I'd like to be certain about. Are they copies from sketches you have seen somewhere, or are they absolutely original? If they are copies, then, of course, it's no good sending them to me for criticism. Just let me know about this, will you? And then I shall be able to give you a much better answer. If I can help you in any way, you can count on me.

Hallo, Smithy, you've been at it again, I see. Yes, Smith Thompson—you're the chap I'm talking to. So that thing on the postcard is your face, is it? Are you really as good-looking as this? And look here, my lad, if you think I'm going to introduce you into my stories as a new character at St. Frank's, you've got off at the wrong station! As I told you before, it simply can't be done. It's very nice of you to be so enthusiastic, but—well, I mean to say—

I say, Ena Howell, it's very nice of you to show such interest in my yarns, but your shorthand is a lot more important, really. Perhaps Eugene Ellmore's articles are a bit brainy—but, then, you see, he's a brainy sort of fellow. I am sorry you don't like "Facts Let Loose." If you'd only read them, you'd find all manner of everyday facts which are not usually known—and which all help your general store of knowledge. You can't mean to tell me you don't like learning things!

Well, you see, I haven't chucked your letter aside after reading the first few lines.

Now and again one or two of you—I'm talking to everybody now—ask me to reply in "next week's issue." Now, you culprits, you ought to know better than that! It doesn't matter how interesting your letters are, or how important, I really can't guarantee any replies until four weeks, at least. Better say six weeks, and be on the safe side. Colonial readers, of course, a great deal longer even than that. At the present moment I've got a whole batch of letters in hand to answer, and they'll have to be held over till next week, because I've got no more space. And always remember that the Old Paper goes to press two or three weeks in advance. And a publication of this kind, with its wide circulation, cannot be produced and distributed in no time. So please be patient, and then we'll all be satisfied.

Well, that's all for this week. I've got nothing more to write about at the moment, and I expect you're all getting a bit tired of my ramblings. So the best thing I can do is to dry up, and give you a rest until next week.

Wait a minute, though! You're not going to get that rest yet, after all!

The Editor has just told me that he wants another page filled up, so I've got to start all over again. But, remember, the Editor is to blame, and not me. Still, I've got a good pile of letters to answer, so I'll fill up the next paragraph by acknowledging a few of them.

F. G. N. W. (West Croydon), Ernest E. Dunckley (Chiswick), S. R. Finn (Gosforth), J. L. Rodgers, Junior* (Oldham), Kathleen (Bath), H. Morgan (Liverpool), P.B.B.T. (Glasgow), Lionel Moxem (Rochdale), H. C. Daniels (South Lambeth), Eveline Stephenson (Derby), Charles Price (Leeds), An Art Student (Dalston), J. L. Higson (Clitheroe), Henry Victor Newman (Leyton), Claude Leverton (Plymouth), S. McClellan (Tottenham).

First of all, just a word with you, F.G.N.W. I think there are two of you, really, but I can't quite be certain. In any case, please have a look at that note at the beginning of these pages. You will see that I ask for suggestions and grumbles. But you are quite mistaken if you think you can dictate to me and give me your orders with impunity. You say that you have influence over a good few readers, and use this as a kind of threat. I'm always ready to give careful consideration to all thoughtful suggestions, and if you have any faults to find with my stories, I'd like to know what they are. But don't give me your orders.

The next letter before me is of a very different nature. In fact, Ernest Dunckley, you are distinctly one of the right sort. It was good of you to send the Old Paper every week to your friend in Reading. You say he is now a constant reader, and has gained many new readers in Reading. Thanks for your chatty letter, and your splendid enthusiasm.

Now, look here, H. Morgan, what's the idea? Are you trying to have a gentle little pull at my leg, or what? You say that you have earned the nickname of "Bunter," and you ask me to reply in these pages, and tell you the reason. You surely know that "Bunter" is a celebrated character in Mr. Frank Richards' stories of Greyfriars School?

With regard to your suggestion, P.B.B.T., you really ought to write to the Editor, and not me. He deals with competitions, and everything of that sort. I've got all my work cut out in writing the stories.

A few words with you, Eveline Stephenson, will be rather apt at this point, I think—after my remarks in the previous paragraph. For you address me as "Dear Editor, Mr. Brooks." I've mentioned this matter once before, but I can see I'll have to mention it again. I am NOT the Editor. That gentleman has complete control of the general policy of the Old Paper, the competitions, the Magazine, and so forth. I'm only the fellow who writes the stories. So, Eveline, and all the rest of you, please don't mix us up. I thought it was exceedingly nice of you to send me No. 145, because you saw that F. W. Dickenson was asking for it. I have sent it on to him, and I'd like to express my appreciation of your kindly, generous spirit. To go to the trouble of sending me an old back number for the benefit of a perfect stranger was indeed nice of you.

I'm afraid you don't hold the record, by any means, H. C. Daniels. You needn't wonder if any other readers have read the Old Paper for six years, as you have. My dear chap, I have heaps of letters from readers who have read the Old Paper from No. 1 onwards—nearly ten years. All the same, you are one of the right sort, I can see, and I'm sorry to hear that you were ill in bed at the time of writing. Hope you're O.K. now.

As you are hoping to be mentioned, J. L. Higson, here goes. And you deserve recognition, for the excellent drawings you sent me. One of these days you'll be a great artist if you go on at this rate. Your Portrait Gallery is quite good on the whole, although in one or two instances I think you have got the proportions a bit "squiffy." But, with practice, you ought to do wonders. I hope your Dad wasn't wild because I referred to you as "Higgie" the other week. But it was your own fault, remember.

THE INVISIBLE GRIP

(Continued from page 27)

eye. The man, in all probability, was under the impression that he had accomplished his purpose, and was now taking his departure.

Nipper looked at the house indicated by the detective, but he saw nothing of the assassin.

"Well, I'm jiggered!" he exclaimed, in a tone of great relief. "Of all the blessed cheek, guv'nor! It's a dashed good thing that he missed you. But who the dickens could he have been?"

Nelson Lee rose to his feet and shrugged his shoulders.

"Either a henchman of our friend, the professor, or else one of Mr. Max Kerner's delightful associates!" he replied. "It was one or the other, Nipper, and the incident proves that we are fighting a very determined and unscrupulous force—"

"A gang of murderous ruffians seems to be a more fitting name for 'em, sir!" said Nipper, with a snort. "But what about the chap who tried to plug you? Hadn't we better collar him—"

"It would be a hopeless task to hunt for him, Nipper—quite hopeless," said the detective. "By this time he has descended from the roof, and is making his escape across the back gardens. Besides, we have been hindered quite sufficiently already, and we cannot afford the time to bother with the fellow."

Nelson Lee was right. The shooting incident, although it had only occupied a comparatively few seconds, had undoubtedly hindered their departure, and every moment was of importance.

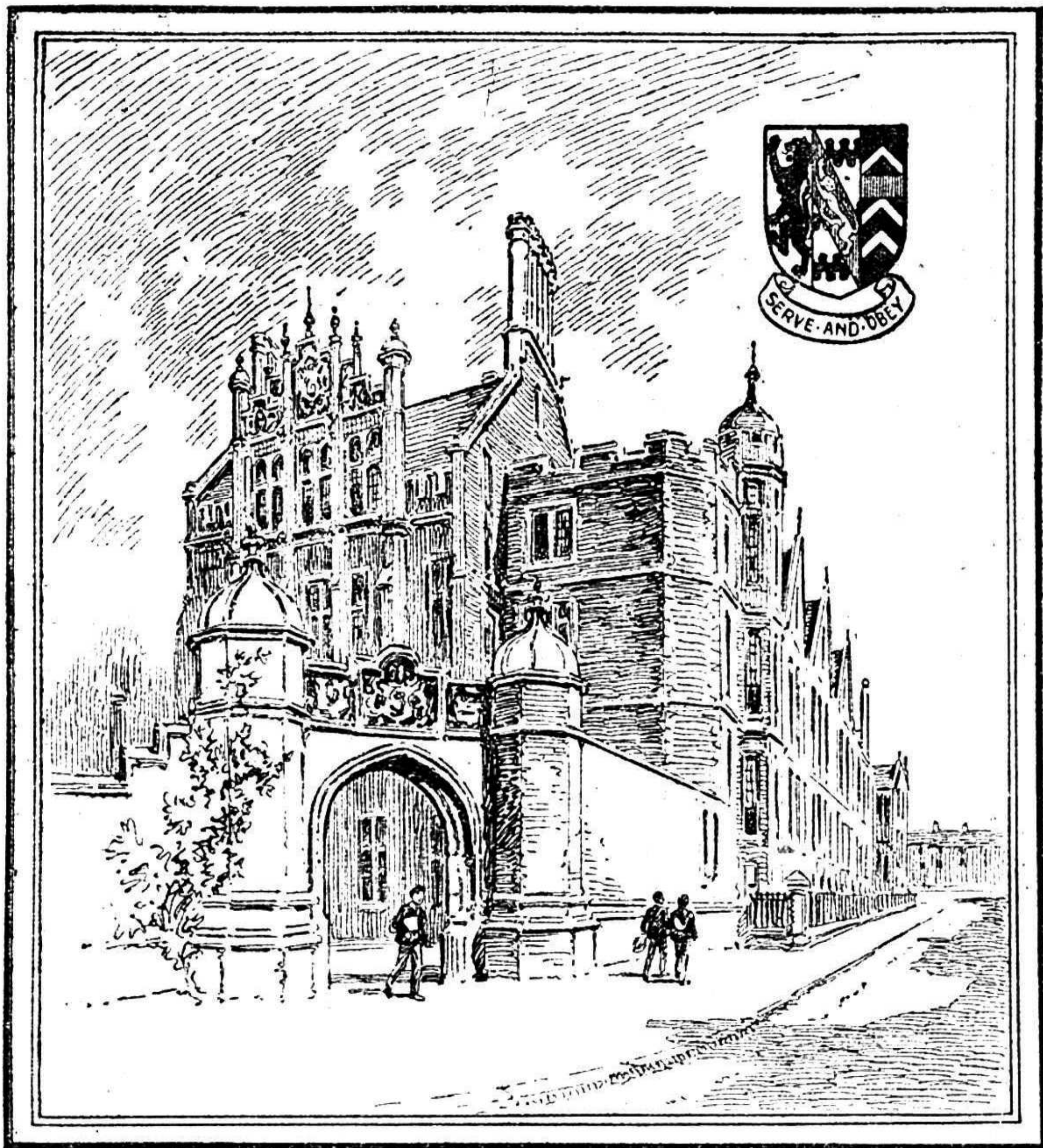
And so the trio hurried into the waiting taxi, and started off for Putney, Lee telling the driver to make all possible haste. Now that Nipper had obtained such an abundance of definite information, the detective was keenly anxious to act upon it, and Harry Langford, needless to say, was brimming over with impatience to see his father rescued from his kidnappers.

Chief Detective-Inspector Lennard, at Scotland Yard, had been exceedingly active since he had received Nelson Lee's surprising message, and, with really commendable promptness, he ordered a couple of official cars to be got ready.

At the same time, he issued instructions for a dozen of his best men to prepare for instant departure, and well within five minutes the two police cars set out on their journey.

And, during this time, the occupants of the little house on Putney Heath were sublimely unconscious of all the preparations which were being made for their undoing.

(To be continued.)

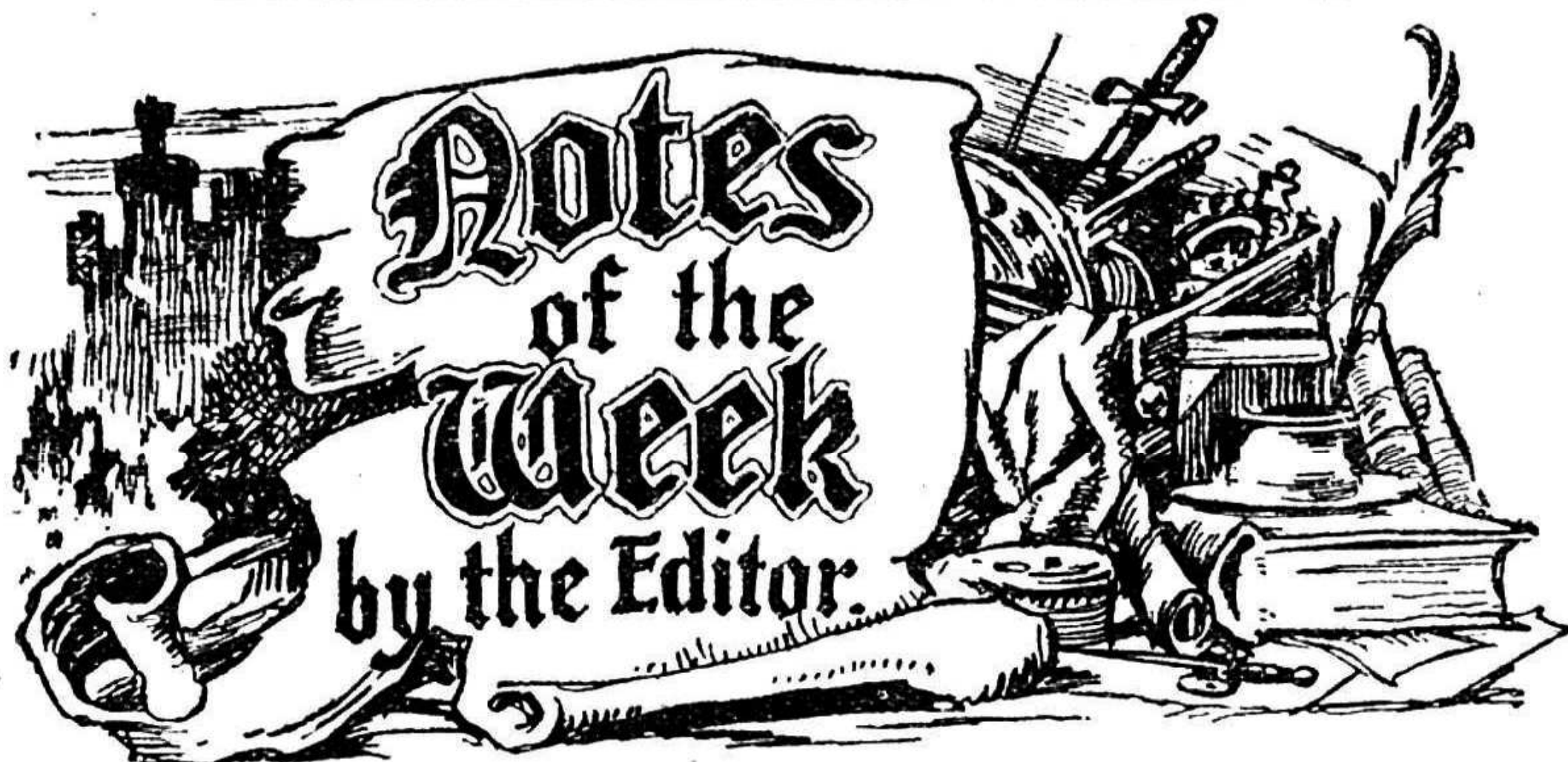


OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS SERIES OF ART SKETCHES.

No. 67.—MONMOUTH GRAMMAR SCHOOL.

This famous old grammar school, situated in picturesque old Monmouth, on the banks of the Wye, was founded in 1615 by William Jones. The school numbers about 250 boys, of whom 75 hold scholarships, and is

divided into classical and modern sides. Boys are prepared for the universities, the professions, public services, and business life. There are seven acres of playing-fields. Rugby football is played.



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

My Dear Chums,

Another week has gone by and once again it is time for me to write my notes. I wonder if you realised how difficult it sometimes is to find anything to say or any time to write it down. Just now, for instance, my spare time is pretty well occupied.

The doings at Moat Hollow School are enough to keep anyone occupied. The very fact that Nipper has so unexpectedly come back is enough to take my mind completely off the Mag. I almost think of asking him to take over the job again.

But Nipper's hands are full enough without that. He has set himself a stiff task in trying to raise a revolt at Moat Hollow. But I have no doubt under his inspiring leadership it will end in success. Good luck to him.

HANDY'S NEW SERIAL.

So at last the new masterpiece is ready. How many sheets of paper, how many bottles of ink it has cost Handy I do not know. Nor how many punches on the jaw and black eyes it has cost Church and McClure. Handy is not the easiest chap to live with when he is busy—or, at least, so I am told.

But I know he enjoys writing for the Mag. Trackett Grim and Splinter are favourite characters of his. There is something about them that makes a strong appeal to their celebrated author.

I dare say it is their modesty and cleverness.

OUR PORTRAIT GALLERY.

I expect many of you will have noticed that there are no portraits in this week's

Mag. And also that there were none last week.

They will appear as usual in our next number. We shall then start a new series dealing with members of the Third Form. Unfortunately the details concerning their ages, weight, etc. have not been very easy to collect. The information is now however complete, and I can promise you these popular juniors will be ready for you next week.

RUNNING A MAGAZINE.

The second article in this splendid series appears this week.

I hope you have all been able to follow the directions given by Dick Goodwin. It is a pity that we have to reduce the diagrams to such a small size. But if we made them bigger, there would be no space to devote to the article.

Our pages in the Magazine are rather limited, and we have to cut down our articles to a page or two. Therefore it is necessary to keep the sketches as small as possible.

ADVENTURE ARTICLES.

You will see that with this issue we start a new series of adventure sketches by that popular character and sportsman, Lord Dorrimore.

I think all of you will be interested to read about his thrilling duels with those great river beasts, the hippos. They are certainly a splendid brand of creature to hunt.

And now I have come to the end of my space for another week.

So I will close with one little request. Let's hear how you like Handy's new serial.

Your old pal,

REGGIE PITT.

MY ADVENTURES WITH HIPPOPOTAMI

By LORD DORRIMORE

1. A THRILLING EXPERIENCE.

HUNTING hippos is not generally supposed to be exciting or dangerous. But I have proved that it can be both. On the Victoria Nyanza I had a most thrilling experience with one of these beasts. The hippopotamus, by-the-by, is found only in Africa, where it haunts the rivers. Hippos are of two kinds, the ordinary species, and the pigmy variety. This latter is no bigger than one of our full-grown pigs. But the larger specimen is a monster, a bull standing nearly five feet high at the shoulders, and sometimes weighing over five tons. Its mouth is a veritable cavern, filled with teeth and tusks, the latter frequently being three feet long. To look into that mouth is to get a fright.

I was out to shoot anything, but particularly crocodiles, which I detest. However, a bull hippo lifted himself out of the water, and my men urged me to shoot him, as the natives were short of food owing to a meagre harvest. And five tons of edible flesh means something. So I fired when the hippo got nearer, aiming at the brain, but only wounding the brute. He made for the canoe, opening and shutting his huge cavern of a mouth as if in anticipation of the meal he was going to make of one of us. The boys paddled away in terror, nor would they heed my orders to stop till the hippo dived. We waited, as he couldn't stay under for more than three minutes, and when he came up, with a mighty roar I fired again. But again I failed to kill, owing to my arm being knocked. Again he made for us, and again the crew paddled away for dear life. When the hippo came to the surface he only showed his nose, and before I could fire he was gone again.

I waited in the canoe, and to my surprise was pitched headlong into the river without warning. The hippo had attacked the canoe, and turning round as I swam to land I saw him tearing the canoe to pieces in his rage. Gun, glasses, compass, the canoe and its contents, all lost, and I was fifty pounds out of pocket. The monster was found dead next morning, and for a long time the natives gorged themselves on hippo steak, which they dearly love.

WILD BIRDS

By
GEORGIE HOLLAND

THE first impulse of an Englishman, especially if he is a farmer or a gardener, when he sees a wild bird, is to kill it. He could not do a more foolish or suicidal thing. Wild birds are his best friends. For they live mainly on insects, which are destructive pests to fruit and corn crops. The Balance of Nature is a curious and delicate thing, and to upset it is to court disaster. A wise Providence designed that birds should be naturally appointed instruments for keeping down insects. And it is the simple truth, that if all birds were destroyed, we could grow nothing at all; our food supplies would cease, and the human race would be conquered by insects. So vitally important are these apparently insignificant creatures.

All over rural England this senseless war against wild birds has been carried on ruthlessly. What are the consequences? Caterpillars and weevils and other insect pests swarm. In fighting them, the fruit-grower has to spend from £6 to £8 an acre to "dress" his orchards; liming or spraying the trees with lime, later using nicotine and all sorts of patent insecticides; putting grease-bands round his trees to keep the caterpillars from climbing up them, and so on. These elaborate precautions were not necessary years ago. Why? Because the birds were there, and they can do the work far better than man, with all his science.

Many a farmer and horticulturist now realises what fools he and his like have been. They would give much to have the wild insectivorous birds back again. Who would not rather see the feathered insect eaters flying about his fields and orchards and gardens, even if they do take some toll of the crops, than see trees and plants covered and blighted by loathsome caterpillars and destructive insects—especially as it is so much cheaper?

Handforth's Colossal New Serial!

THE YELLOW TERROR

Our Exciting, Thrilling, and Startling New Yarn of Trackett Grim and his Assistant, Splinter.

By EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH

CHAPTER I.

A CLIENT AT LAST!

TRACKETT GRIM, the most celebrated incriminator in the world, paced up and down his consulting-room in Baker's Inn Road. There was a frown on his brow, and he pulled fiercely at his cold and empty pipe.

Suddenly he paused, and stared at Splinter, his faithful assistant.

"Splinter," he said tensely, "you are hungry!"

Splinter made a noise like an empty barrel.

"You know everything, sir!" he exclaimed, in stupefied amazement. "It's staggering, sir! How did you make that marvellous deduction?"

"Elementary, my dear Splinter—elementary!" said Trackett Grim carelessly. "We are broke, and you have had no food for three days. Deduction—hunger!"

"It all comes clear when you explain it, sir," said Splinter in an awed voice. "It's all the fault of these clients. They don't seem to come in much nowadays. We haven't had a case since last Shrove Tuesday, when we had to track down those stolen pancakes."

Trackett Grim sighed.

"Ah, if only we could track down some stolen pancakes to-day, Splinter!" he said, licking his lips. "I am afraid our client would never recover his property! But what is this? Hark! Somebody's coming up the stairs!"

"The landlord, sir," said Splinter. "He's been up three times already, and he said he was going to bring a gun—"

The door burst open, and a client staggered in. Trackett Grim could tell he was a client by the hunted look in his eyes.

"Mr. Grim!" he croaked. "A thousand pounds if you will save me from a great and

terrible peril! Will you accept my case?"

Trackett Grim leapt at the client, and Splinter put his back against the door.

"Give me ten bob on account, and I'm yours!" said Trackett Grim crisply.

CHAPTER II.

THE MAN WITH THE YELLOW BRAND!

THE client gave a sob of relief as he heard Trackett Grim's grateful and comforting words. He looked round for an easy chair to sink into, but not seeing one, he sat down on a soap box.

"My name is Theophilus Twiddle," gasped the client, who was a short, plump, prosperous-looking old boy. "I am being hunted down by two Chinese Tongs."

"Ah a pair of tongs!" said Trackett Grim, nodding. "Very serious!"

"And this morning, Mr. Grim, I was branded with a poker!" said Mr. Twiddle hoarsely. "These dreadful Chinese secret societies are terrible! Each one is the biggest criminal organisation in the world! There is a terrible Chief, and he is known as The Yellow Terror. See! This is his handiwork!"

Mr. Theophilus Twiddle pushed back his sleeve and revealed a huge yellow brand on his arm. It was a kind of Chinese dragon, and Splinter looked at it with great admiration.

"I say, that's ripping!" he remarked approvingly.

"That brand means that I am doomed to die!" said Mr. Twiddle, leaning back in his chair, and falling headlong off the soap box before he discovered it had no back.

"Have no fear—I will protect you!" said Trackett Grim. "If you will give me a small sub. to be going on with—"

At this moment there was a terrific scuffle in the chimney, and two huge Chinamen landed in the fireplace. They leapt out, and before Trackett Grim and Splinter could interfere, Mr. Theophilus Twiddle had been pushed up the chimney, and was gone!

CHAPTER III.

A DESPERATE CHASE.

TRACKETT GRIM was stupefied, but only for half a tick.

"They've gone!" he roared.

"They've pinched our client! And he didn't even whack out that ten bob on account! Quick, Splinter—after 'em! Up the chimney, you fathead!"

Splinter, ever ready to obey his famous master, dashed to the chimney and leapt upwards.

The situation was serious. Mr. Theophilus Twiddle had vanished—captured by agents of the terrible Chinese Secret Society! And he was the first client who had come in for weeks! The only thing was to tear after him, and drag him back.

So, while Splinter climbed up the chimney, Trackett Grim dived out of the window, grabbed the nearest water-pipe, and swarmed up to the roof. Crowds of people in Baker's Inn Road thought he was the Cat-burglar, but he didn't care. He wanted to get to the chimney before the yellow miscreants.

He arrived in the nick of time.

Three black objects emerged from the chimney, and one of them gave a despairing howl.

"Save me, Mr. Grim!" he yelled.

"All right, keep your hair on!" shouted Trackett Grim. "When I get on the track, I stick on it until I triumph! No man has ever got the better of Trackett Grim!"

While he was speaking, a loud buzzing sounded, and an aeroplane swooped down from the clear blue of the heavens. A rope-ladder was hanging from it, and the two Chinamen grabbed it, and took their victim with them. The next moment they were being swept away into the misty murk.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CLUE OF THE SOOTY FOOT.

SPLINTER failed to rescue Mr. Twiddle as he was being carried off into the heavens. And the brave lad, gnashing his teeth with mortification, stood on the roof with Trackett Grim, watching the aeroplane grow into a speck in the distance.

"Dished!" moaned Splinter. "What's to be done now, sir?"

But Trackett Grim didn't reply. He was in one of his most terrible moods. He always hated to see a client wrenched out of his clutches before he could touch him for a preliminary fee.

The famous pair reached their consulting-room, and Trackett Grim paced up and down, with a black frown on his brow. Splinter looked black, too, but he couldn't help it. He was just going off to the bathroom, when Trackett Grim uttered a cry of triumph.

"A quid!" he exclaimed. "My only hat! Old Twiddle must have dropped it out of his giddy pocket! We're saved, Splinter! Buzz off to the tuck-shop, and get some sausage-rolls!"

It was true enough. A sovereign had been lying on the floor, and the sight of gold made Splinter leap. He grabbed the Treasury note, rushed off, and returned with a supply of grub.

"And now we can get on the track again!" said Grim, as he finished the last mouthful. "By to-night, Splinter, Mr. Theophilus Twiddle will be saved! I never fail!"

"But how shall we track him down, sir?"

"We must go to Limehouse at once!" retorted Trackett Grim briskly. "All Chinamen live in Limehouse—and we'll search every opium den in the place until we find old Twiddle!"

They started off at once, and they hadn't been in Limehouse for more than five minutes when Trackett Grim came to a halt, and stared up a narrow, inky passage. It was dark now, and everything was pitch black. And there, on the ground, clearly visible, were the marks of a sooty foot!

"I knew it!" breathed Trackett Grim. "There's an opium den down this passage, Splinter, and it's the headquarters of the Yellow Terror! We are about to meet the head of the gang!"

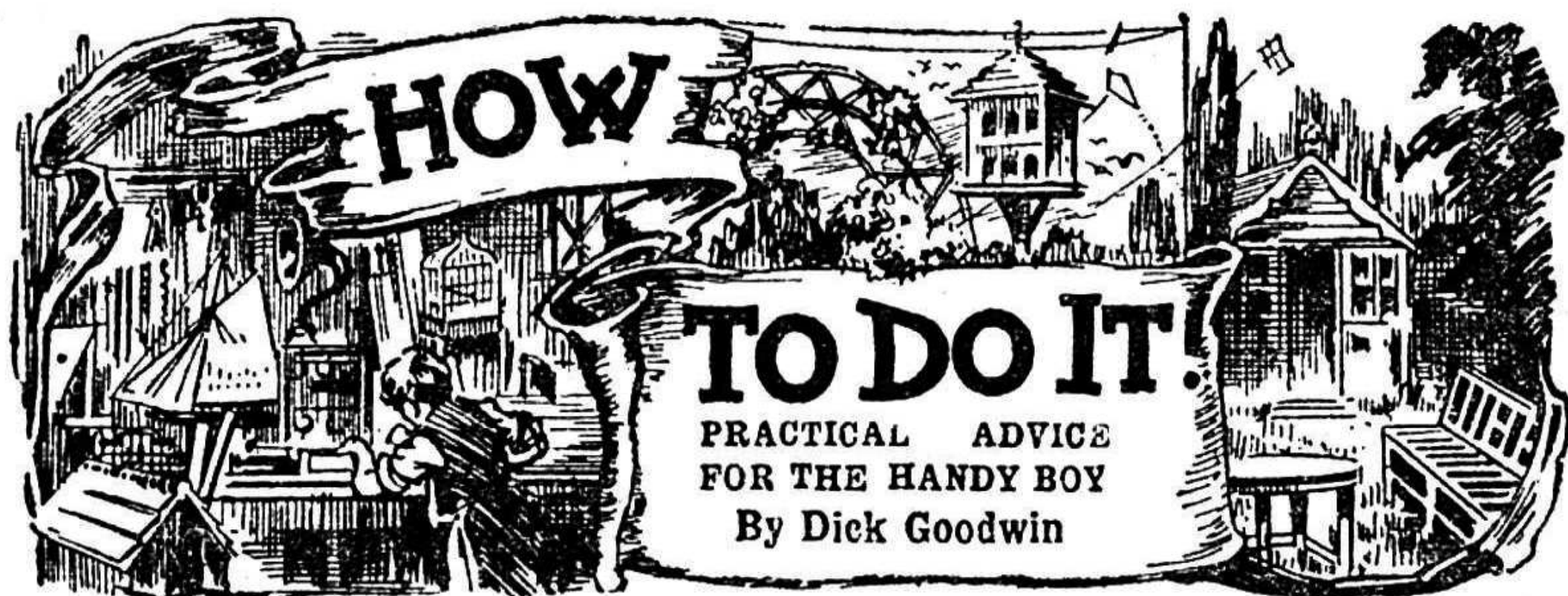
Like shadows, they crept up the alley, ripe for adventure.

(Have no fear! Trackett Grim gets on the trail next week, and although Reggie Pitt says the first instalment is rotten, he'll jolly well go dotty when he sees next week's! Church and McClure both fainted with excitement after the first page, and it took me ten minutes to bring 'em round!—AUTHOR).

HOW TO RUN A SCHOOL MAGAZINE!

Part 3 of this interesting Series will appear Next Week and will describe:

How to Illustrate and Decorate the Pages



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.

HOW TO RUN A SCHOOL MAGAZINE

(The First Article in this Splendid Series appeared last week.)

LAST week I explained the method of duplicating pages by means of a hectograph, which will produce clear copies up to fifty, and sometimes more. This week I am describing a method of duplicating which can be used in either handwriting or typewriting, and will give, with careful use, several hundreds of copies, very much clearer than is possible with the best of hectographs.

The apparatus is known by several names, generally as a cyclostyle, and consists of a waxed sheet which is written on with a special pen or typed on, a special plate for writing on, a frame to hold the waxed sheet, which becomes a stencil, and an inking block and roller, the two latter parts being illustrated in Fig. 1.

MAKING THE APPARATUS.

In making the duplicating apparatus the first thing to make is the base, as at Fig. 2. This is composed of a bottom piece 16 ins. by 12 ins. by $\frac{3}{4}$ in., as at A, with a piece B, 13 ins. by 9 ins. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in., glued to it.

This piece should be of plywood if possible, but if not, must be in the opposite way of the grain to the under piece, and measure 9 ins. by 13 ins.

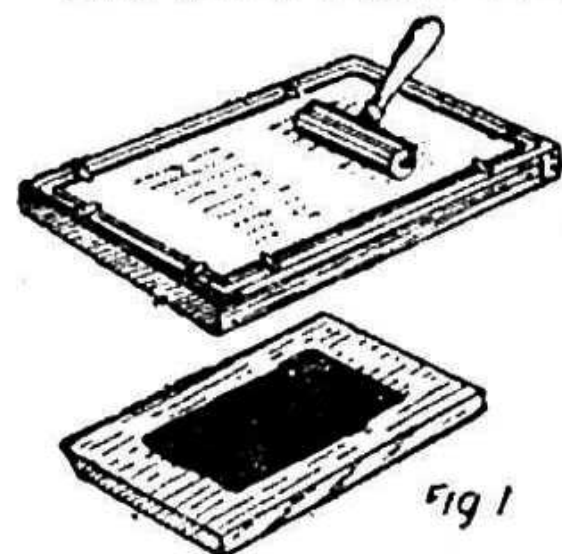


Fig 1

It is important to have the surfaces quite true and the edges square. The next thing to make is the hinged frame, as at Fig. 3; this

has an inside measurement of 13 ins. by 9 ins., and is composed of $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. by $\frac{1}{2}$ in. wood. The corners are joined with the half lapped joint as at Fig. 4, prepared with tenon saw and chisel.

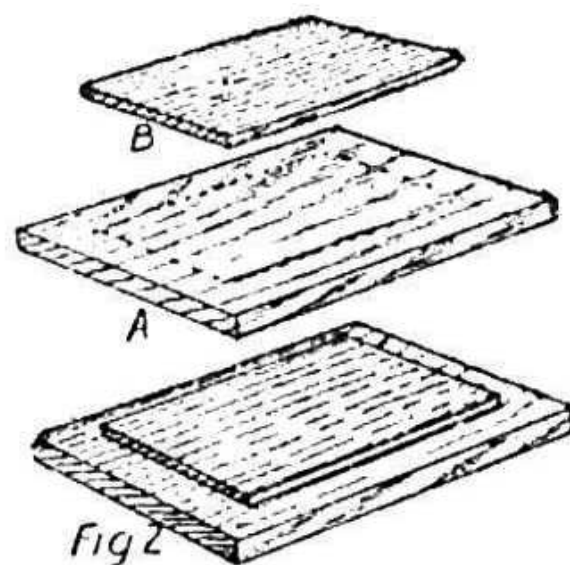
Special care should be taken with the planing of the wood to make it the exact size, and then with the marking and sawing, because the frame must be accurately made. The corners are glued as well as screwed, but for those who are skilled enough a mitre joint with a thin piece of wood glued inside it will be quite as strong and look neater.

The two hinges are made from $\frac{1}{2}$ in. brass to the shape shown at C; the top length is $2\frac{1}{2}$ in., the width $\frac{1}{2}$ in., and the projection $\frac{1}{4}$ in. each way. Three screw holes are drilled along the top, and another in the centre of the projection.

MAKING THE FRAME.

The next stage is somewhat difficult, and consists of making an $\frac{1}{2}$ in. or 3-16 in. frame from round or square rod, and cutting a groove for it to fit in, as at Fig. 5.

The frame is shown at D, the groove at E, and the wire frame to fit in the grooves at F. The metal work should be done first, and the frame made to an outside measurement of 14 ins. by 10 ins.; this will mean a soldered



joint, which must be strongly made. If square section metal is used, all four corners must be soldered, but round wire can be bent to a sharp enough curve.

When the wire frame has been made it is placed on the wooden frame and marked; gauge lines are now cut to the same depth as the diameter of the metal, and the surplus cut out with a gouge for the round metal, as at G, and a chisel for the square section.

The grooves can be a trifle larger, as they have to receive a thickness of paper as well as the metal.

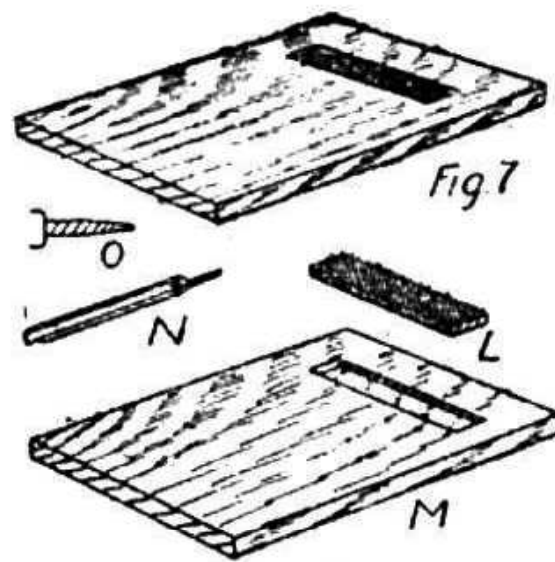
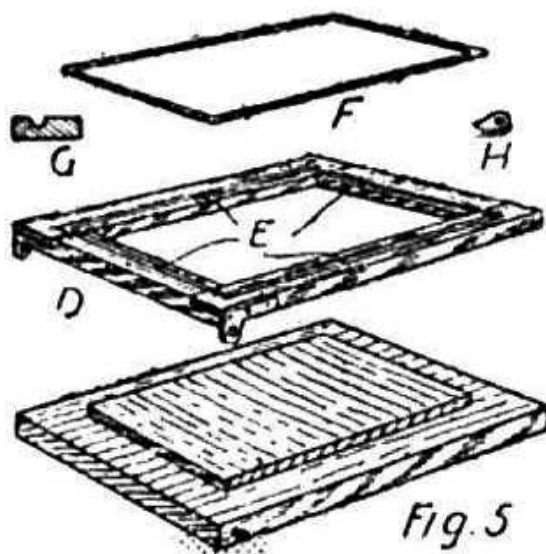
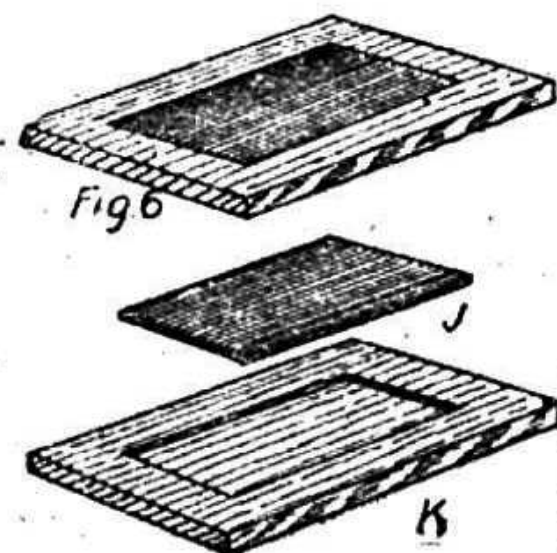
The next thing is to make the brass buttons, as at H; these are cut from $\frac{1}{8}$ in. brass to a length of 1 in. and taper from $\frac{3}{8}$ in. diameter at the large end to about $\frac{1}{8}$ in. at the small end.

The frame is now completed with two buttons each side, but these should be removed and the whole of the woodwork carefully glass-papered, sized and varnished, and the pieces of brass lacquered; this is done by first polishing them with fine emery cloth, warming them and then coating with shellac varnish, the latter being quite suitable for coating the woodwork as well.

THE INKING BLOCK AND ROLLER.

The inking block, as at Fig. 6, is made preferably from a piece of thick plywood with a piece of slate let in, as at J and K. An ordinary piece of slate as sold in a frame will do, but the edges should be sawn square with an old tenon saw. The actual dimensions of the block do not matter very much, but it would be convenient if the slate were about 10 ins. by 7 ins., and the wood about 14 ins. by 11 ins. by $\frac{3}{4}$ in.

The recess for the slate should be level, and if the slate fits tightly there will be no need to cement it in. The roller generally used is made of rubber or composition, and can be purchased quite reasonably, but it is quite possible to make an effective roller in the same way as shown last week, but the wood should be covered with a piece of large size rubber tubing, or two or three thicknesses of inner tube from a cycle tyre.



THE WRITING PAD AND PEN.

The writing pad can be in the form of a zinc sheet and used in connection with a wheel pen, the latter being somewhat expensive, or in the form of a block of wood with a finely scored steel let in as at Fig. 7. The steel

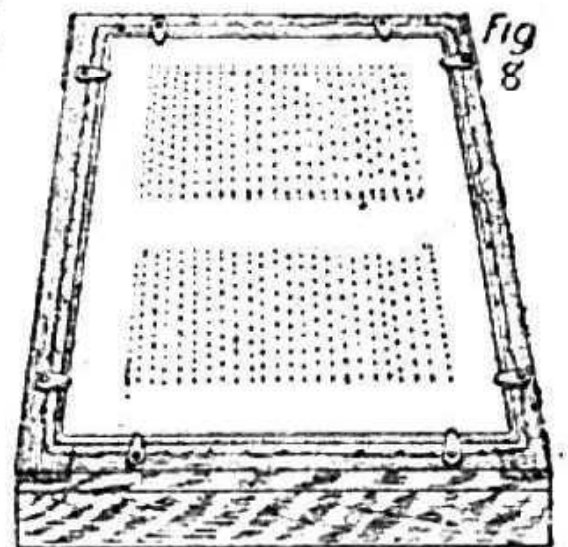
can be a portion of a fine worn flat file, as at L, a suitable groove being cut, as at M.

The surface of the file must not be too sharp, but sufficiently serrated to give a bite when the finger is passed over it. The pen is a style as at N, and must be of hardened steel wire or rod fitting in a wooden handle. A suitable shape for the end of the style is shown in the enlarged section at O.

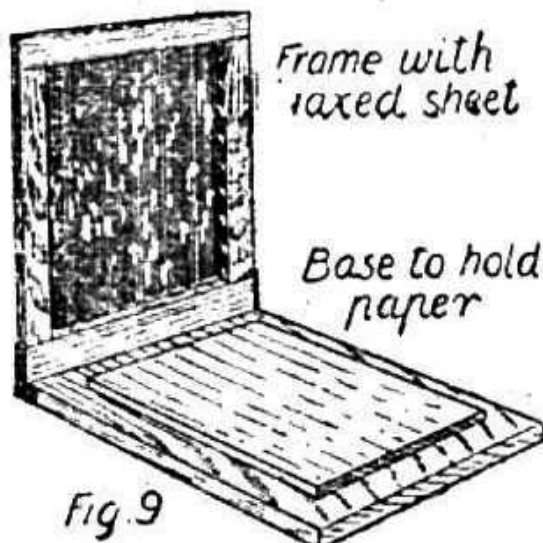
The ink is specially prepared for the work, and can be purchased in tubes ready for use from most large stationers or stores.

HOW THE PRINTING IS DONE.

The method of procedure is to first write on the waxed sheet (these are also obtainable from stationers and stores), pressing the style on the steel and moving the sheet so that the writing can be done on the same place. In using a typewriter, remove the ribbon, place a sheet of thin tissue paper in front of the waxed sheet and a piece of silk behind, and proceed in the usual way.



The waxed sheet containing the writing is now placed on the frame under the metal frame and clipped down, as at Fig. 8; it should be quite stretched. The frame is now lifted up, as at Fig. 9, a piece of blotting paper placed on the base, and then a sheet of slightly porous duplicating paper.



The frame is let down, some ink spread on the block spread with the roller, and then the latter rubbed over the surface of the waxed sheet. The result will be that the ink from the roller will work through the holes made by the style or typewriter, and give a copy on the paper underneath. This can be repeated until the waxed sheet wears out.

(Next week methods of making illustrations will be described.)



IN REPLY to YOURS

Correspondence Answered by
Edward Oswald 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.).

IVY STELLA GREY (Quambatook, Victoria, Australia): How old are you, Ivy? I suppose Quamby, where you shop, is short for Quambatook? And I'd like to hear more about that school of yours at Barraport. Your letter isn't nearly long enough. Send me all the news next time, Ivy, and I'll answer you fully.

J. B. (Newmarket, New Zealand): Haven't you got any schools over there? You can think yourself jolly lucky, my lad, that you've got me over here to correct you. Your spelling and punctuation are terrible—quite insulting to that fine typewriter. Try again, sonny! Yes; Yung Ching's still here.

A. C. Albany, (W. Australia): Take my advice and don't start writing detective stories! It's the most difficult fiction of any, and only the very cleverest succeed at it. You'd never believe what an uphill climb it was before I reached the top. So what a fine chance you'd stand!

BRAINY (Melbourne): You careless chump! Fancy calling my Trackett Grim stories piffle from beginning to end, and sign-yourself BRAINY! It's a good job for you I spotted at once that you'd got mixed up and transposed the words. Now you'll be looking for your reply under PIFFLE, and will get sucked in!

HAROLD JONES (Goulburn, N.S.W.): Are you dotty, or what? First you say it's bitterly cold there in November, and then that you have it unbearably hot at Christmas-time! Explain yourself, Harold! And what do you mean by saying I didn't answer your last letter?

Church and McClure take care I don't miss any.

CYNTHIA (Gravesend): Many thanks for that jolly little Christmas card you sent me. But you shouldn't have sent your love on it. Willy's just collared the card, and buzzed off with it to glorify his scrap-book. You know what a young beggar he is! He won't keep your secret, and I shall never hear the last of it!

T. W. BEARD (Derby): It's about time you toed the line, my lad, and admitted that the "Nelly Lee" was the best 2d. worth on the market. As you DO realise this at last, I won't grumble at you this time. But I must say you've got a fine check to write to me only because you've got "nothing better to do!"

LEAPING ELEPHANT (Ireland): You're a rotten writer, you can't spell properly, the competition of yours is too silly for words, and your sketch of me is a proper dud! You can't be Irish, to slander the dear old Emerald Isle like that! And you can think yourself jolly lucky to get this nice reply!

REBECCA FORMAN (Johannesburg): If you knew Willy as well as I do you wouldn't think he is "the darlinest brother anyone would be proud to own!" What with his insects and his animals and his continued borrowing, he's just a giddy affliction! You love us BECAUSE of our faults, and not in spite of them!

DOROTHY CHALCROFT (Tonbridge): So you think I would make a better skipper than either Reggie Pitt or Dick Hamilton? Well, Dolly, you're quite right. I should! When it comes to leadership, they don't stand an earthly against me! You know how I'd make all the fatheads sit up and take notice, don't you?

F. C. F. C. (Camberwell): Putting the initials of Foolish Correspondent twice over isn't a nom de plume, you fathead! And you're all wrong about me being the half-bred son of an acrobat, because my father's a baronet. Victoria is the London railway station for Bell-ton. Every fool knows that, except you.

A. S. (Nottingham): How could the worst fighter in your school lick me to sawdust? I'm full of beans—not wood! Besides, even the best fighter among your

schoolmates wouldn't stand the ghost of a chance with me! Why, even Lawrence, here, would think twice about it before taking me on!

AN ARDENT ADMIRER OF TRACKETT GRIM (Dublin): It's only because you've given yourself such a nice title that I'm answering you at all. Besides, I must keep my promise to answer everybody. You Irish fatheads never mean what you say, so I'm going to take your insults as compliments. They're not from the heart.

KENNETH H. ELSEY (Downham Market): If I gave Willy a hiding every time he did something to annoy me, I should be always at it, and there wouldn't be anything left of the poor little bounder by now. So, like all other great philosophers, I just make the best of it. It's a case of have to.

THE UNKNOWN (Kensington): Why the dickens do you ask me for my London address, when it's at the top of this page every week as plain as a pike-staff? Use your eyes! I'm glad you realise I'm an ideal fellow to take after. I don't often even get that mite of credit. It's a hard world, isn't it?

WILLIAM RILEY (Ikstock): It's not my fault, you silly josser, if you're the only one in Ikstock who writes to me! Why don't you persuade all the other lads of the village to have a go? It's your own fault if you missed No. 482. It came out all right. But it was in No. 480 (not 481) where I punched the lion!

SMITH THOMPSON (Bradford): So you've bobbed up again, Smithy, have you? Good egg! Always pleased to see your scrawly piffle. Why don't you keep your word about coming over here? I'm surprised at you, Smithy, telling such whoppers! Yes, I was good in that pantomime, wasn't I? So glad you noticed it!

C. T. NONSNITAP (Walthamstow): Don't you worry, old son—Church and McClure will get their full share of biffs this year. They'd be as miserable as anything if I didn't keep them well supplied with tuppenny ones. As long as you keep your resolution to read all my T. G. tales, the other five resolves don't matter.

CURLY (Lincoln): I've a good mind to tell you off in about six words, and cut your reply down to a couple of lines. What do you mean by apologising for your horrible pencilled scrawl, and that make-shift lump of paper you used, and then saying they're good enough for me! I won't answer you at all!

A. B. C. D. E. F. G. H. (Lambeth): You're worse than CURLY. Do you think I'm going to stand being addressed as "Dear Old Snubnose"? Where's your manners,

you potty third of the alphabet? And if you hadn't a turnip in place of a head you wouldn't say I'm like a fool because my nose resembles a carrot.

L. J. T. (Bungay): If my brains were buck-shot they WOULDN'T rattle in a thimble—they'd have to be in a barrel to do that. As for yours, well, you like my Trackett Grim tales, so you've got more than your fair share. I couldn't tell you my favourite film actor without boasting—a thing I never do.

BEAVER (Epsom): All right, whiskers, as you've apologised I'll let you off for all those insulting things you said to me last time. I agree with you about "IN QUEST OF GOLD"—it was a great story, wasn't it? But just you wait till my Pirate Serial starts! When that happens you will know what rapture means!

GEORGE COECKS (Antwerp): Bravo, George! I believe you've got the distinction of being the first to correspond with me from Belgium. Now, doesn't that make you feel a great chap? But you must try not to be overwhelmed by such an honour. Just treat it off-handedly, as if it was something of no consequence.

A READER (Sevenoaks): So my contributions to the Mag. are "dribble," are they? You tear them out and give them to baby, and even baby thinks they're so rotten that she eats them! Why, you silly chump, if they're good enough to eat, what more do you want? Give that baby a kiss for me!

A COLONIAL CHUM (Beckenham, Chirstchurch, N.Z.): All right! I'll excuse the typewriting this once. But don't do it again! I suppose you sent your first lesson to me for safe preservation! Well, I'll tell Church to frame it, and hang it up in Study D as a horrid example! The First and Second Forms are hardly ever mentioned because they don't count—they're only a lot of cackling kids!

J. H. SINCLAIR (Scarborough): It's too bad of you, Jimmy, to accuse me of blushing when I see Irene. You know jolly well I don't do that—unless, of course, she catches me doing something I know she doesn't like. That's different. How can a fellow control himself when he's surprised in that way? Don't make me out to be a shy noodle when I'm nothing of the kind. I can say "Boo!" all right—and to a flock of geese, too! I've got quite enough to put up with as it is, without you trying to show me up like this before all the readers! "THE RIDDLE OF DEVIL'S GAP" was No. 388 of the Old Paper, dated November 11th, 1922.

TED.

CASUAL CONVERSATIONS.

Imagined by Charlie Talmadge.

LISTENING-IN.

I.

IN MR. PAGETT'S STUDY.

MR. PAGETT (Removing earphones): Some more of that rubbishy comic stuff! Too much of it altogether, in my opinion, Mr. Crowell. I'm afraid the B.B.C. panders to the frivolous taste.

MR. CROWELL: Yes, it is a pity. What is this? A kind of concert party, or something of that sort? Dull and wearisome, of course—a sheer waste of time listening to it. However (consulting a newspaper), I see that a celebrated scientist is to broadcast a lecture on the Atom in twenty minutes' time. We must not miss that, Mr. Pagett.

MR. PAGETT: No, indeed! I'm particularly interested in that lecture, and if you care to remain there are an extra pair of earphones. The reception is particularly good to-night, and we ought to hear every word. As far as I can see, the Atom— (They discourse learnedly upon the Atom.)

II.

IN MORROW'S STUDY.

WILSON: What's the matter with your set, Morrow? I never heard such an infernal din in all my life. There must be something up with your loud-speaker, old man—

MORROW (Glaring): You ass! I can't help the atmospherics, can I? That loud-speaker is a jolly good one—cost five quid, anyhow! A present from my pater, you know.

WILSON: Lucky beggar! I had to spend my own money. And my loud-speaker's twice as good as this, although it only cost two-ten. What's all this rot they're talking? Who ever heard such drivel?

MORROW: It's a good thing you can't be heard. That's a lecture on the Atom, delivered by one of the most famous scientists of the day. If you want to improve your stock of knowledge—

WILSON: It sounds like gibberish to me!

MORROW: You ought to have been here half an hour ago, old son. A concert-party, you know—some of the funniest stuff I've heard. But it's all right,

they're broadcasting another spasm before long.

WILSON: Good! I'll listen-in; but if you don't mind. I'll go to my own study. This thing of yours sounds like a crocodile with the influenza.
(Strolls out, leaving Morrow speechless.)

III.

IN STUDY D.

HANDFORTH: There you are, my sons! Just listen to that. That's what I call music!

CHURCH: Then I'm sorry for you! I call it a ghastly din.—My dear ass, it sounds more like a dog-fight than a musical comedy selection. My hat! It's getting worse all the time!

McCLURE: Cut it off, for goodness sake!

HANDFORTH: Those orchestras are pretty awful, aren't they? Still we can't help that; we've got to have what they give us. Is that violin out of tune, or—

CHURCH: The orchestra's all right, Handy; it's your giddy receiving set! You're using the wrong kind of valve, or you haven't tuned in right. That grating noise isn't in the programme at all. I think you want to turn one of those knobs a bit.

HANDFORTH: Rats! She's tuned in perfectly.

McCLURE (Fiddling about with the knobs): There you are! How's that? All that fearful din's gone now, although the music is pretty rotten at best.

HANDFORTH: That's funny! They must have done something at the broadcasting station just as you touched the thing, Clurey. But why waste time on this fat-headed music? I thought there was going to be a concert party to-night?

CHURCH: We had that an hour ago, old man.

HANDFORTH (With disgust): This wireless isn't as good as it's cracked up to be. They always broadcast the very thing you want to hear when you're too busy to hear it. And when you've got plenty of time they send out a whole heap of imitation music and fatheaded lectures! Why can't they have concert parties every evening?

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