

NIPPER LEADS THE GREAT REVOLT !

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*And St. Frank's
Magazine*



The Moat Hollow Mutiny

Splash! Mr. Creepe descended into the moat in an inverted position.

A Long Rousing School Yarn of the Great
Rebellion at Moat Hollow.



"You impudent young scoundrel!" roared Mrs. Creepe. It was a perfect bellow, and the school sat up with a jerk.



is about to take place. How St. Frank's became interested in the movement against Mr. Creepe is explained by the presence of Tommy Watson, an old St. Frank's boy, as a new boy at Moat Hollow, and also because Moat Hollow is in the same locality as St. Frank's. The dramatic return of Nipper in the last two stories is still kept a secret from most of his former school-fellows. In the story you are about to read this week, Nipper takes an active part in bringing about the mutiny, which is the first step towards the overthrow of the rascally schoolmaster. Undoubtedly, this fine school series is approaching an exciting climax.

THE EDITOR.

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

CHAPTER I.

RISE EARLY IN THE MORNING.

ARCHIE GLENTHORNE started up in bed.

"Good gad! What's that?" he demanded huskily.

"It's all right, sir—only me!" came a soft voice from the darkness of the room. "I thought you were asleep, sir—"

"Here, I say!" said Archie feebly. "Dash it all, Phipps! What's the big idea? What's the priceless scheme? Creeping in the old sleeping apartment like a dashed ghost, and giving the young master heart failure? Why, dash you, I'm all dithery!"

The genial ass of the Fourth felt rather aggrieved. His bed-room in the Ancient House was dark, and although the blind was up no light penetrated, save the twinkle of one or two watery-looking stars.

Archie had been aroused out of a light slumber by the creak of a board, and he had started up, half awake and half asleep. The shadowy figure of Phipps, his valet, lurking near the bed, had given him a turn.

"Quite a mistake on my part, sir," said Phipps penitently. "I shall have to attend to that loose board. The creak is most annoying—although I have hitherto attempted to avoid treading in that spot."

"I should think so, dash it!" grumbled Archie. "I don't wish to be frightfully inquisitive, old sparrow, but what's the exact idea of gliding up to the old bedside in the still hours of the night? I mean, is this a new game, or has something happened?"

"It is time for you to get up, 'sir," said Phipps.

"To get up?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who—me?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good gad!" said Archie blankly.

He sat up in bed, staring at Phipps in a dazed kind of way. If Phipps said it was so, then it was. Archie never doubted his valet's word. But he was frankly startled.

"I have brought your tea, sir," went on Phipps.

"The tea?" repeated Archie vaguely.

"Yes, sir."

"What? I mean, tea?" yawned Archie. "That is to say—What-ho! The good old works begin to function! The brew Phipps? The cup that cheers and revives? Kindly allow me to absorb the old stuff!"

He took the tea greedily and sipped at it.

"Ah, the absolute stuff!" he sighed contentedly. "I mean to say, Phipps, you absolutely stood there, with this cup of magical nectar in the old paws, and I didn't know a dashed word about it! All you could do was to stand there and mouth at me! Hardly playing the game, what?"

"The time is just five-fifteen, sir," said the valet smoothly.

Archie nearly upset the tea over his silken pyjamas.

"Five-fifteen?" he repeated dazedly. "Oddslife! But, laddie, I don't usually rise at this ghastly hour! And why do we converse like this in the gloom? Switch on the lights, dash you!"

"I thought it would be more discreet, sir, to attract as little attention as possible," said Phipps. "You may remember that your early-morning mission is somewhat secretive."

Archie took another sip of tea.

"I may remember, Phipps, but, dash you, I don't!" he said plaintively. "I mean, it's too much to expect! It's bad enough to come sliding in here in the centre of the second dog-watch, but when you ask me to remember things it's time to start howling for help. I mean, the good old grey matter is somewhat congealed at this hour. Congealed, Phipps—absolutely!"

Phipps was very patient.

"It was your own suggestion, Master Archie—and if you will recall the circumstances, I strongly advised you to abandon the idea," he said gently. "But you insisted, sir—and it is only my place to obey."

"Absolutely!" said Archie. "The good old willing slave stuff, what? Absolutely priceless of you, laddie, but allow me to warble that the mind still remains a blank. I don't remember giving you such poisonous instructions as you intimate. I mean, dashing out of bed at five-fifteen in the morning is nothing more nor less than a piece of foul business!"

"But, Master Archie—"

"Tantamount to dirty work at the cross-roads!" declared Archie firmly. "And, what's more, Phipps, I absolutely refuse! The young master will now proceed to take forty more of the best! Kindly vanish!"

"Very good, sir," said Phipps. "But I am afraid your young friends will be disappointed—not to say let down."

"Young friends?" repeated Archie. "Let down?"

"I think it was arranged that you should visit the ruined windmill on the edge of Bannington Moor, sir," explained Phipps. "It is your intention to relieve Master

Handforth. That, at least, is what I understood from your remarks last night."

Archie started, and the teacup rattled.

"Good gad!" he breathed. "The grey matter begins to stir! Somehow, Phipps, I believe you're right. Six o'clock, what? That was the idea—to relieve Handforth at the murky hour of six."

"Allow me to remind you, sir, that the minutes are slipping by—and unless you are prepared to hurry, you'll be late for the appointment," said Phipps. "I rose at four-forty-five on purpose to facilitate your departure," he added, in a kind of reproachful voice.

"Oh, I say! Really?" said Archie. "That was frightfully sporty of you, Phipps. Well, a promise, dash it, is a promise. I suppose I shall have to drag the weary bones out of the old couch, and array myself for the day's doings. The tissues are still flabby, Phipps, but a promise, as I observed, is a promise. In other words, duty must be done."

"I have already set out your clothes, sir."

"Oh, you have? Good!" said Archie, climbing out of bed. "I say, this is somewhat mouldy at the edge! Moth-eaten round the old hem, so to speak. Why do we do these things, Phipps?"

"Which things, sir?"

"Make promises overnight," said Archie complainingly. "I mean, there ought to be some dashed law to suppress that sort of thing!"

CHAPTER II.

TWO EARLY BIRDS.



PHIPPS felt relieved. He had begun to fear that Archie would fail to turn out—and Phipps knew, from previous experience, that he would be unjustly blamed for the disaster later on in the day.

"I mean, these frightful overnight promises," went on Archie, as he removed his elegant pyjamas. "They're all very well at the time, Phipps, but later on they leap out, dash it, and bite you!"

"Yes, sir."

"Absolutely bite you!" repeated Archie. "At night, you see, everything is blithe and gay—the old tissues are full of health and strength, and the gear-box is working at full pressure. Up at five-fifteen, what? It sounds easy, Phipps—nothing in it, as it were."

"Exactly, sir."

"But in the cold, dread hours of the morning, the old tale strikes a chappie in a different light," went on Archie complainingly. "Here we are, groping about before the dawn! In future, Phipps, I shall not only think once, but I shall think twice!

In order to be absolutely on the safe side, I'll bally well think three times!"

"A wise decision, sir," said Phipps feelingly.

"I say, what's this?" ejaculated Archie, as he took a garment from the valet. "You don't mean to say, you foul bounder, that you've condemned me to the jolly old tweeds?"

"At this early hour, sir, the air is somewhat raw," explained Phipps. "And I hardly think the Etons are suitable for climbing ladders——"

"But, dash it, Phipps, this suit is decrepit with age," protested Archie. "It's a mere rag, old chirper! It ought to have gone into the dustbin weeks ago. Why do you keep this old tosh, Phipps?"

"The suit was new two months ago, sir," explained Phipps. "I think you have worn it on nine or ten occasions, sir. Surely it is still wearable."

"Well, if you say so, Phipps, there it is," replied Archie. "You're the high chancellor of the wardrobe, so to speak. But if I had my way, dash you, I'd give the frightful thing to the first tramp. No well-dressed chappie can possibly wear a suit after it's a month old. However, considering the darkness, I'll give way."

And Archie finished his dressing with a resigned air—as though he were attiring himself in rags and tatters. The suit, of course, was practically new, and in perfect condition.

It was twenty minutes to six when Archie went downstairs and prepared for the journey. There was no law at St. Frank's against any boy rising early in the morning—but, strictly speaking, Archie would be breaking bounds. Not that this thought ever occurred to him. It was Phipps who warned him to be cautious—a warning, of course, that was utterly ignored.

The genial ass of the Fourth sallied out of the Triangle, well wrapped up in a thick overcoat and muffler. The early March morning was raw and cold, and there was a cutting wind. Archie made his way towards the gates in a solemn frame of mind. This early-rising was a fearful bore, and something would have to be done about it.

The gates were open, for old Cuttle, the porter, was generally up and about before five-thirty. Out in the lane, Archie turned his footsteps towards the moor, but he almost immediately came face to face with an elderly gentleman of quaint appearance. He was attired in an enormous travelling-coat with a wide cape, but the effect of this sombre garment was somewhat marred by the fact that a school cap, many sizes too small for him, reposed on the top of his head.

It was scarcely any wonder that Archie started and winced. He had a keen eye for

clothing, and this elderly gentleman's general get-up struck Archie as being particularly poisonous.

"Good gad!" breathed Archie hoarsely.

He saw nothing comic in the appearance of Professor Sylvester Tucker—for the elderly gentleman was no less a person than that celebrated scientist. To Archie's eye, the whole thing was tragedy. He was positively shocked to observe that the professor wore one brown boot and one black boot. And both were only partially laced.

Archie shuddered. It was bad enough to see the professor in the dim, uncertain light of early morning—but cold shivers went down his spine when he realised that the light was growing with every second that passed.

He forgot the old mill—he forgot the waiting Handforth. There was only one thing to be done. At all costs, he must smuggle Professor Tucker indoors before he brought utter disgrace upon the school.

"What-ho!" said Archie. "That is, good-morning, sir! Greetings and all that rot! What about trickling indoors, old fright? Er—that is—sorry, sir! But you grasp the trend, perhaps?"

Professor Tucker fixed a stern gaze upon Archie.

"Go away!" he said testily. "Go away!"

"Oh, I say! But look here——"

"Why," asked Professor Tucker, "should I be pestered like this? And why should I look there, when I have no desire to look there? I am in the midst of an important experiment."

"Oddslife!" said Archie. "An experiment, sir?"

"Some time during the morning the sun will be partially eclipsed," said Professor Tucker, his voice becoming dreamy and abstract. "Do you understand, sir—partially eclipsed! Nothing to interest the ordinary lay mind, I dare say, but in the realms of science this occasion is one of importance. Yes, young man—one of importance."

"Absolutely!" agreed Archie. "But, you see——"

"At present," went on the professor, "the sky is cloudy. A distressing circumstance, and one that may ruin everything. It is scandalous—perfectly scandalous! Why," demanded Professor Tucker heatedly, "do they allow clouds to obscure the sky on such a morning as this?"

Archie started back.

"Dash it all, sir, it's not my dashed fault!" he protested. "I mean, there's no need to squirt liquid fire in my direction. The good old eyes, if I may point it out, are absolutely blazing, sir."

Professor Tucker waved his hand.

"The class is dismissed!" he said absent-mindedly. "You may go!"

CHAPTER III.

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER.



ARCHIE GLENTHORNE raised his eyebrows.

"There appears to be some slight misunderstanding, sir," he said.

"I am alone—absolutely! And here I stand, swaying

slightly, positively dazed by that dashed cap of yours! I mean, I'm getting dashed dizzy!"

"Cap?" repeated the professor. "What cap?"

"You're wearing it, sir."

The professor tore himself away from his thoughts, and took the cap off his head. He gazed at it, and then glared at Archie.

"Well, sir?" he demanded, stuffing the cap into his pocket. "What is wrong? I failed to find my own hat—so I took the first head-covering available. Be good enough to leave these trifling matters alone. Upon my soul! Am I to be pestered continuously?"

"But, good gad!" gasped Archie. "You don't mean to assure me, sir, that you absolutely donned that frightful cap deliberately?"

"Enough!" said the professor. "I am in the midst of my observations—I am trying to determine whether the clouds will disperse before the hour of the eclipse. According to my present calculations, there is just a chance— Good gracious! The wind has suddenly grown cold!" he added. "My head is positively chilly!"

He reached up to adjust his cap, and found nothing.

"Good heavens! What has happened to my cap?" he demanded. "Where is my cap? I shall catch a cold— There! A sneeze—yes, a sneeze! How distressing!"

Professor Tucker jerked the cap out of his pocket, and proceeded to blow his nose. But he stopped in the nick of time.

"Well, well, well! How remarkable!" he murmured. "Indeed, how extraordinary! By what curious circumstance did my cap get into my pocket? Splendid!" he added, donning it. "That is better! Much better!

And now, sir, what is it you require? I am very busy at the moment—I cannot spare any time—"

"But, really, your boots, you know—"

"My boots!"

"Those frightful things on your feet, sir," said Archie.

Professor Tucker stared down at his feet and started.

"Dear me!" he murmured. "What a singular mistake, to be sure! What a truly remarkable blunder! The bootmaker, obviously, has made one shoe black and the other shoe brown! Distinctly careless of him!"

Archie nearly gave it up.

"I don't think the good old bootmaker is to blame, sir," he observed. "It seems to

me that you have mixed up two jolly old pairs, so to speak. The effect, of course, is somewhat venomous."

Professor Tucker adjusted his thick spectacles.

"Why should you bother about my shoes?" he demanded. "Why should you concern yourself about my cap? Go away! I have not had a moment's peace since you entered the room! Get out of my study, young man, and close the door!"

"The door?" repeated Archie vaguely.

"This draught is appalling!" roared the professor.

"But, dash it, you're in the open air, sir!" gasped Archie.

The professor looked round him and started.

"Bless my soul! So I am!" he ejaculated in surprise. "What on earth am I doing out here? Why, indeed, did I come out at all? Surely I had some good reason for emerging—"

"The good old eclipse, what?" suggested Archie gently.

"Ah, yes! The eclipse!" said the professor triumphantly. "Of course—of course! How careless of me to forget it. It is your fault, young man!" he added severely. "How can you expect me to remember things when you will persist in bothering me? Where is it? What have you done with it?"

"Eh? Done with what, sir?"

"The eclipse!" snapped the professor. "No, no! Of course not! You cannot have mislaid the eclipse—how absurd! My telescope, sir! What have you done with my telescope?"

"Dash it, I haven't seen the dashed thing!"

"How dare you?" asked the science master. "How dare you stand there and deliberately— Upon my soul!" he added, taking his telescope from beneath his ulster. "Here it is all the time! Splendid! You may go, sir! I must lose no time in getting indoors."

"Good!" breathed Archie, with relief. "A priceless idea, sir!"

The professor looked round, and inspected the sky, which was now becoming lighter and lighter.

"Dear me! Dear me!" he murmured. "It is evening already! Before we know where we are, darkness will be upon us! This half light is most trying to the eyes. I bid you good-evening, young man!"

The professor, firmly believing that it was dusk instead of dawn, toddled off anxiously. His brow was still worried, and the momentous question of the great eclipse occupied his thoughts to the exclusion of all other matters. As a matter of fact, the eclipse was so slight that the general public would know nothing about it unless expressly told. It would be so partial that nobody would take the trouble to look at it in any case.

Archie, greatly relieved, braced himself up and set off up the lane.

"Well, that's that, dash it!" he murmured. "I mean, we couldn't allow the old boy to roam about the countryside in that frightful rig-out. And now for the good old doings!"

Archie was feeling much brighter. The fresh air had braced him up, and "that early-morning feeling" was becoming dispelled. He glanced at his watch and swayed somewhat dizzily.

"What-ho!" he murmured, in alarm. "Six o'clock! It seems to me that we've got to do a lot of dashing about, laddie!

"Can't you let me sleep, confound you?" interrupted Kirby.

"Eh? Speaking to me?"

"Yes, I am!" said Kirby irritably. "You've kept me awake for the last two hours, and I'm fed up!"

Handforth breathed hard.

"You're not in a position to make complaints!" he said grimly. "A prisoner behind bars has to do as he's told! This is a punishment for all your rotten bullying and torture. Retribution, you cad!"

Kirby scowled—for the shot had gone home. He was lying in his camp-bed, and, for a prisoner, he seemed to be exceedingly

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Tally-ho! Yoicks! And all that sort of stuff!"

And Archie actually broke into a trot.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PRISONER IN THE MILL.



EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH paced up and down like a caged tiger.

"Ten-past six!" he roared ferociously. "And that fat-head hasn't turned up yet! By George! When he comes I'll—I'll—"

comfortable and well-cared-for. He had an ample supply of blankets, and the sheets were spotlessly clean.

The apartment was a strange one. The walls were composed of roughly made panels, with canvas as the main material. And right across the apartment, in the centre, ran a barrier.

Waist-high, it was made of match-boarding. But from there to the ceiling, bars occupied the space. They were set about four inches apart, and the bars were really, nothing more formidable than broomsticks.

However, they served their purpose, for it was impossible for Kirby to escape from

his side of the room. He was watched day and night, and if he had made any attempt to cut or hack down the bars, prompt measures would have been taken.

Handforth's side of the room was quite comfortable, too.

There was a cosy easy-chair, a table, magazines, a well-burning oil-lamp, and a screen. The screen was placed in front of a trapdoor—this latter being hidden from Kirby's gaze.

Up one corner stood a large pail of water, with a syringe resting in it. The syringe was fitted with a sharp-pointed nozzle, so that a small, powerful stream of water could be projected. This little combination, standing in the corner, was significant.

It was, in fact, a weapon of deadly offence.

Kirby had been told, in plain and blunt terms, that if he started any "monkey tricks," the guard on duty would have no hesitation in bringing the syringe into full play. Kirby had not tried any monkey tricks.

"Quarter-past six!" exclaimed Handforth fiercely. "This is what comes of bringing Archie into the game! I'll half slaughter him when he does arrive! I shan't have time for a nap, even!"

"Take one now!" suggested Kirby hopefully.

The chief monitor of Moat Hollow School was getting resigned to his fate. He had been a prisoner since the previous day, and it was obvious to him that he was to remain a prisoner as long as his captors chose to keep him. There was little or no hope of escape. The precautions were too thorough.

Handforth had every reason to be annoyed. He had broken bounds at the unearthly hour of three-thirty, and had relieved Reginald Pitt at four o'clock. Edward Oswald's spell was from four till six. And now his relief had failed to appear.

This careless young gentleman was, however, hurrying with all speed. Archie reached the moor in a fine glow of healthy perspiration. The trotting had brought colour to his cheeks, and his languor had completely vanished.

The moor was looking very bleak and drab in the grey, early-morning light. Some distance back the gaunt, leafless trees of Bellton Wood stood out against the sky like massed sentinels. And in the foreground stood the dilapidated ruins of the old mill—with the stumps of broken and missing sails. There was nothing particularly inviting in the prospect.

Quite near by a figure was moving across the moor. He glanced round as Archie hove in sight, paused for a moment, and then halted. Archie came up at a trot. But before reaching the other he faltered, and stopped.

"Gadzooks!" he breathed. "I mean to say, you've escaped, dash you!"

He was standing face to face with Kirby, the Moat Hollow monitor!

"Well, what do you want?" growled Kirby.

"Eh? Oh, dash it all!" said Archie. "I mean, greetings, old sportsman! No, I don't mean that at all! How the deuce did you escape from the bally old dungeon, dash you?"

The other's face broke into a grin.

"Come along, Archie, where are your wits?" he asked, with a startling change in his voice. "I'm not Kirby at all—but it's gratifying to find that you can mistake me for him so easily. Just going to relieve Handy, I suppose? You're late, my lad!"

Archie stared.

"Good gad!" he ejaculated. "Then—then— Oh, really! I mean to say, oh, really! This is a bit dashed thick, don't you know! I absolutely mistook you for Kirby. You must be careful, Nipper, old stranger! This sort of thing absolutely strains the sinews!"

Nipper chuckled. It was true—this hulking looking youth was not Kirby at all, but Nipper himself. The ex-captain of the Fourth was disguised with amazing cleverness.

"Come on, we'd better go and find Handy," he said briskly. "I was expecting to get hold of you alone, Archie, but it'll be all the better to chat with Handforth as well."

They entered the old mill and climbed up the ladders from floor to floor. At last they reached the top, and came up into the prison chamber behind the screen. They closed the trapdoor and walked round. Handforth was just getting himself ready for the onslaught.

"Oh, so there you are!" he said sourly, as Archie appeared first. "What's the idea of arriving here twenty minutes late—"

He broke off as Nipper appeared.

"Why, hallo! What the—?" he went on. "Oh, I thought—I didn't expect to see you here this morning, Nipper. By George! You look so much like Kirby that I got a start!"

Now that the real and the substitute were in the same apartment together, the exact likeness was more uncanny than ever. Handforth looked from one to the other, and forgot all about Archie.

"I thought we shouldn't see you for days?" he asked.

"I didn't think I should have occasion to come," replied Nipper, lowering his voice. "But things have gone so well that I have decided to bring the whole affair to a head at once."

Handforth looked rather startled.

"You mean—" He paused.

"I mean that the rebellion is due to start to-day!" said Nipper quietly.

CHAPTER V.

THE PLAN OF ACTION.



REBELLION!

R It was a significant word—a word that brought a thrill to the turbulent heart of Edward Oswald Handforth. His one and only regret was that he

was not in a position to take part in this great affair. But the very thought of a revolt—a barring-out—stirred him to the core.

For a barring out was indeed being prepared!

Not at St. Frank's, however—that celebrated public school was contented and happy. Everything was going well at St. Frank's. The scheme of the rebellion, if it actually came to a head, would be at Moat Hollow.

It was here that Tommy Watson, late of the Fourth, was suffering the tyranny and oppression of Mr. Grimesby Creepe. The owner and master of Moat Hollow was, in many ways, an extraordinary man.

He had succeeded in earning himself a good name in the district. Everybody, from the vicar downwards, regarded him as a kindly benefactor and a genial, generous man towards his boys. Everybody believed that Moat Hollow was run more after the style of a private home than a school.

And yet, startlingly enough, precisely the opposite was the case. If everybody had reversed their views about Mr. Grimesby Creepe, they would have been somewhere near the truth. For the squat, heavy-jowled schoolmaster was false to the core—a plausible fraud of the very worst description. He had humbugged the entire district with consummate skill.

For in reality he was a mean, miserly tyrant. Once behind the walls of his own establishment, his cloak of kindness and



"On duty or not on duty, it is your business to be here!" interrupted Mr. Creepe.

Nipper shrugged his shoulders in Kirby's truculent style.

benevolence dropped from him. And his pupils knew him at his truth worth.

His school was a prison. His unfortunate scholars, numbering two dozen, were little better than drudges and slaves. They worked constantly, from morning till night, with never a pause. The word "liberty" had practically no meaning for them. They didn't know what it was to enjoy a moment's freedom.

From the moment they rose in the morning till the moment they went to bed they were either working, exercising, or eating. And they were always watched. There was always a monitor on hand, and others within call. For Mr. Grimesby Creepe kept six of these burly monitors to maintain order and discipline.

Kirby was the chief of this choice group. But he had not been missed from Moat Hollow, because Nipper had taken his place, and Mr. Creepe was quite unaware of the coming storm.

Watson had been sent to Moat Hollow because his father had encountered him in financial difficulties, and Moat Hollow had seemed cheap. And Tommy himself had expressed a strong desire to go there, since he would still be near his old school chums. Little had he dreamed that it would have been better for him to join a school two hundred miles away. For in that case he would at least have been able to keep in touch with his chums by letter.

But at Moat Hollow the boys were not even allowed to write, or if they did write, it was at Mr. Creepe's dictation. They only left the school grounds on a Sunday, and then they always walked in close file, with Mr. Creepe at the head, and with the monitors in close attendance.

Things had been better of late, for Nipper had been quite active. In the guise of a hooded, elusive Unknown, he had watched over the Moat Hollow unfortunates, hoping to bring about a change. But Mr. Grimesby Creepe was a hard nut to crack, and Nipper had come to the conclusion that only drastic measures would succeed.

Not only Nipper but all the best fellows in the St. Frank's Fourth had burned with indignation at the disgraceful state of affairs at Moat Hollow. Such tyranny and oppression made them boil.

Moat Hollow, after all, was a neighbouring school, and Tommy Watson's inclusion among the pupils gave the Fourth a personal interest in the place. They were longing to give some practical demonstration of their sympathy.

And now it seemed the opportunity was at hand.

"What's happened?" asked Handforth breathlessly.

"Nothing much—yet," replied Nipper, in a whisper. "We don't want to talk too loud—there's no reason why Kirby should know our secrets. You know I went to Moat Hollow last night in Kirby's place?"

"Absolutely!" breathed Archie. "Odds-life! I hope, dear old companion, that nothing frightful has happened? You're not legging it, by any chance? I mean, they didn't penetrate the masterly disguise?"

"No, they're all fooled, even Mr. Creepe," replied Nipper. "I think Tarkington sees a little change, but he doesn't suspect. He

accepts me as Kirby all right. But the sooner this deception is over the better."

"But I thought you were going to be in Kirby's shoes for two or three days?" asked Handforth.

"I was prepared for it, because it's always best to be on the safe side," replied Nipper. "Last night I talked to all the chaps; I put the whole thing to them straight from the shoulder."

"Good! What happened?"

"Well, as far as I can see, they'll be ready to mutiny when I give the signal," replied Nipper grimly.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PLAN OF ACTION.



"B Y gad! That's frightfully interesting!" murmured Archie.

"When you give the signal, eh?" breathed Handforth. "And when are you going to give it? Let's hear all about it; don't keep anything back. I'm as keen as mustard on this thing."

Nipper smiled.

"I'm glad to hear it," he replied. "If those Moat Hollow fellows had your spirit, Handy, there wouldn't be any need for a rebellion at all. I'd better explain that I appeared before the boys with my hood and mask on—"

"As The Phantom Protector, eh?"

"Yes; I thought it was better," said Nipper softly. "You see, Kirby, is hated like poison; he's the worst bully and tyrant of the lot, except for Mr. Creepe, and if I'd egged on a revolution in his character, there wouldn't have been an earthly chance of success."

"Absolutely not!" agreed Archie.

"But the Phantom Protector is a kind of mystic figure to those poor kids," went on Nipper. "You see, I've butted in once or twice during the last week or two, and I've generally managed to save somebody from Creepe's clutches. So the chaps think I'm a kind of miracle worker. Poor beggars! It was good to see the way they bucked up when I put it to them."

"You talked about the rebellion?" asked Handforth eagerly.

"Yes, rather!" whispered Nipper. "I asked them why they should continue to be slaves meekly and tamely, why they should put up with Creepe's bullying, and why they should cringe before him. I explained the freedom and liberty of a big school like St. Frank's."

"Good!"

"Of course, a private school is always stricter and more hidebound than a big public school," went on Nipper. "Even at its best, Moat Hollow couldn't give its pupils the same freedom as the St. Frank's fellows enjoy. But I clearly pointed out

that these kids were nothing but slaves. And—would you believe it—they opened out like flowers in the sunlight? They worked themselves up, and as good as wanted to rebel on the spot."

"That must have been your eloquence, old man," said Archie, nodding. "I mean, when you get the good old flow fairly going you absolutely carry all before you. We've seen some of it, what? A dashed political speaker, laddie—that's what you'll be one day!"

Nipper groaned.

"If that's going to be my fate I'll chuck up the sponge at once!" he said. "I care about as much for politics as a cat cares for red ink. Well, about those Moat Hollow chaps. I've decided to start the rebellion at tea-time to-day."

"Good man!" said Handforth approvingly. "There's nothing like acting at once. Strike while the giddy iron's hot. Of course, you'll want some help? You'll need the Fourth?"

Nipper nodded.

"Not all the Fourth—but our special crowd, anyhow," he replied. "Once the mutiny has fairly started the thing will become public, so everybody can be brought into the secret. I suppose the whole school knows that I've turned up again?"

"Nobody knows, except a few of us," replied Handforth. "Didn't you ask us to keep it dark? Even my minor knows, but he daren't let on. He'd have me to reckon with if he did!"

Nipper was rather amused. He wasn't afraid of Willy Handforth in the least, but he had certainly feared that Edward Oswald would inadvertently say a few things in public. But it wasn't wise to tell Handy this.

"Well, after this evening all that secrecy can end," he said. "It doesn't matter who knows I'm here; I don't care. Once this storm starts it'll sweep along at full speed. I want you to give the tip to Reggie Pitt and the others, and then stand by, as they say on the radio."

"Stand by?" repeated Archie.

"Yes; hold yourself in readiness for action when I want it," replied Nipper. "If I'm any judge of Mr. Creepe, he'll fight to the bitter end. This barring-out won't be an easy victory. We shall have to battle every inch of the way. And if we can rely on some help from St. Frank's, it'll be a great comfort."

"We'll rally round as soon as you like," declared Handforth.

"Good man!" said Nipper. "Strictly speaking I think the Fourth will be the deciding factor in the whole business. It'll depend upon the Fourth whether old Creepe is beaten or not."

And soon afterwards, Nipper having given a few more details, he and Handforth left. Archie remained in charge of the "prisoner."

He would remain on duty until eight o'clock, when Tubbs, the page-boy, was due to relieve him.

Tubbs was a trustworthy youngster, and it so happened that he was enjoying a holiday, so his time was his own. To-day would be his first day, and the page-boy was resolved to acquit himself well.

After leaving the mill, Nipper and Handforth parted, for any chance observer might have thought it strange to see Handforth of St. Frank's on amiable terms with Kirby of Moat Hollow.

Nipper made all haste on his way back to Mr. Creepe's school. He had come out without permission, and was confidently expecting a row when he got back. But he had no fear of Mr. Creepe. The schoolmaster was more or less in the hands of his monitors, and dared not inflict severe punishment upon them.

It was just after seven when Nipper unlocked the door of the big main gates, and walked in. He had naturally seized all Kirby's keys when Reggie Pitt & Co. had captured the chief monitor. In fact, Nipper was wearing Kirby's clothing.

Moat Hollow was looking more forbidding than ever in the early light. The sky was grey, and a cold wind blew through the trees and ruffled the surface of the moat. There was something even sinister about the appearance of this grim old house.

The bridge leading to the front door was in position, and Nipper crossed it at once. Indoors, he found the boys just commencing their breakfast—for seven o'clock was the hour for this meal. The day started very early at Moat Hollow. By eight o'clock the boys were always at work.

Nipper walked leisurely into the dining-hall, and found the school indulging in thick slabs of bread-and-butter and weak tea. Tarkington was in charge, and he looked at the newcomer sourly.

"Playing a fine game, aren't you?" he growled. "Mr. Creepe's been looking for you everywhere. Blessed if I can make you out, Kirby—you're different, somehow. What have you been doing?"

"Minding my own business!" retorted Nipper, in Kirby's unpleasant tones.

They glared at one another for a moment, and Nipper walked out into the hall again. He came face to face with Mr. Grimesby Creepe.

CHAPTER VII.

FUEL TO THE FIRE.



MR. CREEPE gave a kind of growl. "Oh!" he exclaimed unpleasantly. "So you have had the goodness to return, Kirby. Very kind of you, I am sure—very kind indeed! And may I ask

where you have been? May I be allowed to know why you calmly walked off just at the hour you were most needed?"

The schoolmaster's tone was an indication of his inward rage. When Mr. Creepe was very angry, he adopted a purring kind of note. It was always a sign of danger. He stood there, his squat, ugly figure attired in rough tweeds, with a coarse sweater in place of a waistcoat. His face, with its big, heavy cheeks, looked singularly unpleasant. Mr. Creepe was in need of a shave, and this did not add to his looks.

"When I was most needed, sir?" repeated Nipper sullenly. "I didn't know it. I'm not on duty until after breakfast—"

"On duty or not on duty, it is your business to be here!" interrupted Mr. Creepe. "Do you think you can run out just when and how you like? I am becoming tired of you, Kirby—my patience is almost exhausted! You are taking too much on yourself, young man!"

Nipper shrugged his shoulders in Kirby's truculent style.

"No need to get huffy about it, sir," he growled, deeming it wise to smooth Mr. Creepe down a bit. "I wasn't exactly feeling unwell, but I wanted some fresh air. So I went for a walk. I didn't think I should be needed until after breakfast. Sorry if I upset you, sir."

Mr. Creepe grunted.

"I am glad to find that you realise your faults, Kirby," he said, with a heavy suer. "Wonders will never cease! I was beginning to think that I should have to take you firmly in hand—"

"Don't waste your breath on that stuff, sir," interrupted Nipper sourly. "Those other kids may be prisoners—but you can't keep me under lock and key! Why was I needed this morning, anyhow? Has anything happened?"

Mr. Creepe scowled.

"Nothing has actually happened, but the boys are in an extraordinary mood!" he replied. "Truly, an extraordinary mood! I am frankly puzzled. They seem to be excited, nervous, worked up. I don't know why. I can't imagine why. Even the meekest and mildest are flushed with some secret excitement."

Nipper was inwardly pleased. Mr. Creepe's words proved that the Moat Hollow boys were not falling back into their previous condition of tame lethargy. His lecture to them was having a lasting effect.

"Your fancy, I suppose, sir," he growled. "I'll take charge of the young brats if you like. They'd better not start any foolery with me—that's all!"

Mr. Creepe looked rather relieved.

"Yes, Kirby—you had better take charge," he said. "I really don't know what I should do without you for my deputy. Tarkington and the others are different—they don't understand. I wish you had been here earlier, Kirby—the boys have been very troublesome."

Kirby nodded, and walked off. He had not failed to note the conciliatory tone in Mr. Creepe's voice. The schoolmaster knew better than to fall out with his chief monitor.

Nipper walked into the dining-room and glared round. The boys were still at breakfast, and one glance showed Nipper that they were a very different set of youngsters to those who had sat down to supper the previous evening. Their eyes were brighter—even their figures looked bigger. They were not so drooping and forlorn. Their spirit was awakening.

"Yes, you can stare—they're a bright lot this morning!" said Tarkington sourly. "I've had a deuce of a job with Jevons, the young cub! He actually turned round and cheeked me half an hour ago."

"They'd better not cheek me!" snapped Nipper. "Now, then, Watson! Stop that grinning! You infernal young hound!"

Tommy Watson flushed; but not with fear. He was the only Moat Hollow boy who knew the secret. He was amazed at Nipper's perfect impersonation, and he flushed at the thought of what was to come.

"I can grin if I like, can't I?" he demanded defiantly.

"No, you can't!"

"Perhaps I can't breath, either?" asked Watson sarcastically.

A snigger went round the table, and Tarkington started. This was something new indeed! Previously, the boys would have remained dull and listless—too broken-spirited to dare to snigger.

"Did you hear that?" asked Tarkington sharply.

"Yes, I heard it—and I'd better not hear it again!" roared Nipper. "Where's my birch? The next giggler will have something to giggle about! Now, then—get up! The whole crowd of you!"

The order was obeyed with alacrity, although the boys had not yet finished breakfast. Ordinary common sense warned them not to try any petty rebellion against the bullying Kirby.

"Please, Kirby, we haven't finished our breakfast," said Jevons.

"There'll be the birch for you, my lad!" roared Nipper. "Now then—line up! Hear me? Line up! I'll teach you who's master!"

Tommy Watson was enjoying himself immensely. Nipper's imitation of Kirby's raucous bluster was astounding. Now and again Watson caught himself vaguely wondering if Kirby himself had somehow got back.

Nipper knew, of course, that his tone was as good as fuel to the fire. He was assisting the rebellion, even in his capacity as Kirby, and he took full advantage of the opportunity.

But never once did he approach Kirby's actual brutality. He raved, he blustered, he threatened, but none of the boys felt the

sting of his birch. And, curiously enough, they didn't notice that Kirby, for the first time, barked without biting.

Their thoughts were running in a different direction.

It dawned upon most of them that they were being treated like animals, and they vaguely wondered why they had put up with it for so long. And there was one thought in all their minds—when would the Phantom Protector appear?

They little realised that he was with them all the time!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TRIALS OF PROFESSOR TUCKER.



WILLY HANDFORTH, of the Third, emerged from the Ancient House with all his usual energy and speed.

To be absolutely exact, he came out feet first, turning a kind of catherine wheel on the step. It was only by sheer luck, and extraordinary adroitness, that Fullwood saved himself from being kicked in the face.

"Look out, you young idiot!" snapped Fullwood angrily.

"Eh? What's that?" asked the fag, righting himself with ease. "What's biting you, funny face?"

"You cheeky young sweep!" said Ralph Leslie Fullwood. "You nearly kicked me in the face!"

"Sorry! Just a little mistake!" said Willy blandly. "I'll try not to miss next time! I don't know how I came to make such a bloomer—a face like yours is visible miles away—just like a beacon!"

"Why, you—you—"

"My only hat!" gasped Willy. "What's that smudge?"

"Smudge?"

"Yes, underneath your jacket!" said Willy, shading his eyes. "That red thing with yellow stripes! Have you been in a paint factory, or what? You're in an awful mess!"

"That's my waistcoat!" roared Fullwood.

"Great Scot! I thought it was part of an accident!" said Willy. "Fullwood, my son, you've got no more taste than a coal-heaver! That waistcoat of yours is an offence against society—it ought to be punishable by penal servitude! Go away, or I shall get dizzy!"

Fullwood made one grab at the Third-Former, but Willy wasn't there. He skipped out into the Triangle, uttering derisive remarks. And then he observed, for the first time, a curious looking tripod near the fountain, with Professor Sylvester Tucker in close attendance.

Willy transferred his attentions without delay.

"Just taking a few observations, sir?"

he asked innocently. "What's on the menu this morning? There's nothing wrong with the sun, I hope?"

Professor Tucker looked round, frowning.

"Why do you boys come here and disturb me?" he asked testily. "This is the fourth time I have been disturbed in five minutes! I am examining the sun, young man! This morning there is to be a partial eclipse!"

"Is this where we cheer, sir?" asked Willy.

"You may cheer if you wish—but don't interrupt!" said the professor.

He turned back to his telescope, and applied his eye to the end of it. Naturally, he omitted to observe that Willy carelessly tossed his cap up, and hung it over the upper end of the telescope.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated the professor blankly.

"What is it, sir—a total eclipse?" inquired Willy eagerly.

"The sun is black—absolutely black!" muttered Professor Tucker, his voice quivering. "This is extraordinary! But how can a total eclipse be possible? One minute ago the sun was untouched! Indeed, the eclipse is not due for another hour!"

"Extraordinary, sir!" said Willy, shaking his head.

He gave a light leap upwards, and removed his cap. Unfortunately, he jerked the telescope at the same time, and the whole contrivance came perilously near to collapse.

"Dear me! What is the matter?" asked the professor. "Bless my soul! The sun is shining as brightly as ever!" A suspicious look came into the professor's eye. "Young man, have you been playing tricks?" he asked severely.

"Tricks, sir?" asked Willy, shocked. "I? Little Willy! Oh, sir! How can you suspect me of such naughty things?"

The professor beamed.

"No, no! Of course not!" he said benevolently. "You are a sweet-looking child! Dear me! Quite a beautiful child, indeed!"

Willy turned pale. He had been enjoying himself, particularly as several juniors were standing round appreciating the situation. But the howl of laughter which went up at the professor's remark made Willy tremble at the knees.

"Here, I say!" he gasped. "Cheese it, you know! What rot! I'm not a child at all—"

"Will you go away?" demanded the professor. "Your interest in my experiment is most gratifying, little boy, but you must run away and play. Go back to your toys!"

"Toys!" said Willy feebly.

He reeled away, realising that it was impossible to slay Professor Tucker on the spot. Somebody asked him if he'd mislaid his Teddy bear, and another junior blandly observed that he'd seen some marbles lying about.

"Oh, corks!" panted Willy desperately. He fled, completely and absolutely routed.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A roar of laughter followed him into the Ancient House, but Willy didn't pause until he reached his own little study. For his age, he was a wonderful fighter. He was fearless. He shared Edward Oswald's contempt of overwhelming odds.

But when it came to ridicule, he was finished—it touched him in his weakest spot. It threw him into a state of complete disorder. And to be called a child, to be referred to as a little boy, and to be told to run away to his toys were crushing blows that left him dazed.

He sat perfectly still on the edge of the study table for five minutes—a clear record for Handforth minor. And then, sadly, he turned to Septimus the Squirrel and Ferdinand the Ferret for consolation.

CHAPTER IX.

THE UNEXPECTED.



"**A** NNOYING—most annoying!" said Professor Tucker indignantly.

Everything was going wrong. Not only was he being constantly bothered by inquisitive juniors, but, to cap matters, a large and formidable-looking cloud had now butted into the heavens. The sun had modestly retired from view, as though eager to escape the professor's scrutiny.

The school bell was ringing, for it was close upon nine. Scurrying forms were observable on every side. Professor Tucker was so annoyed that he gathered up his telescope and tripod and marched away.

Morning school began at nine o'clock at St. Frank's, and the routine was invariably the same. All the boys collected in their various form-rooms at the stroke of the hour, and it was the form-master's duty to call the roll.

And at the last minute there were always numbers of tearing figures rushing along, striving to dash in to answer their names. After roll-call, each form marched solemnly to Big Hall for prayers. And when this ceremony was over the lessons for the day commenced.

Professor Tucker was such an absent-minded gentleman that he took it for granted that these disturbances would continue throughout the morning. Had he paused for a moment, he would have realised that in another two minutes the Triangle would be beautifully deserted.

But he marched out into the lane, set his tripod up in the middle of it, and five minutes later awoke to the fact that he was in the midst of a flock of sheep. It was a disconcerting experience.

Pausing in his experiments for a moment—attracted by some foreign body brushing against his leg—the professor gazed round to observe endless numbers of sheep wandering all round him.

"Good gracious me!" ejaculated the man of science. "What is all this? Go away! How dare you interrupt me in this way? Go away at once!"

Sheep are not exactly noted for their intelligence, and they gazed dumbly at the professor maintaining, at the same time, a steady and somewhat eccentric movement of the jaws.

"This is too bad—altogether too bad!" said Professor Tucker angrily. "Good gracious! I am to be allowed no peace at all?"

At this point he was compelled to grab his telescope and tripod in frantic haste, for they reeled drunkenly, and nearly subsided. The spectacle of Professor Tucker picking his way through the sheep was a diverting one, but, unfortunately, nobody in particular was there to witness the incident.

The professor marched up the lane with a resolute, determined expression. There was no peace in the Triangle—there was no peace in the road. Vaguely he seemed to remember that a wide stretch of moorland existed at no great distance. There, at least, he would find peace!

The professor nearly walked into the Moor View School in his absent-mindedness. He turned into the gateway quite naturally—for it was one of his favourite little tricks to enter every drive he came to. He was always under the impression that he had arrived home.

This time he was only pulled up short by the melodious sound of numerous young feminine voices, raised in song. The professor pulled up short, and started. He was passing by the window of Miss Charlotte Bond's big class-room, where all the Moor View girls were taking their singing lesson.

"Good heavens!" gasped the professor, terrified.

He fled, bewildered. On the road again, he came perilously near to walking back to St. Frank's, but wandered in the other direction, more by chance than anything else.

And at last, to his joy, he found himself on the moor. Not a soul was in sight. He had the entire world to himself. The great moor stretched out endlessly, to merge into the horizon in the far distance.

"Splendid!" said the professor. "Here, at least, I shall be undisturbed."

He set up his tripod, and then it commenced to rain.

There was nothing half-hearted about it. It wasn't just a mere pretence—a few reluctant drops. The rain came down in a steady deluge, and the sky was black and threatening.

"Upon my word!" ejaculated Professor Tucker, staring up with a glint in his eye.

"This is really too bad! The eclipse is due to start within half an hour, and these clouds must necessarily fill the entire sky!" He glared at the clouds angrily. "Go away!" he added. "Go away at once!"

But, even as King Canute failed to stay the tide, so Professor Tucker's words were wasted upon the heavens. The clouds not only refused to go away, but they rolled up in formidable battalions.

And the rain poured down in torrents.

"Good gracious me!" muttered Professor Tucker. "I'm getting soaked—positively soaked! Why is there no roof to this building? I shall have to communicate with the plumbers— Dear me! Absurd! Of course, I am in the open air! Something must be done."

His gaze fell upon the gaunt old mill, which lay comparatively near by. It brought fresh hope to the professor's heart. He sprinted for the mill with surprising agility—quite forgetting that he had left his telescope standing deserted and forlorn on the moor.

He entered the mill just as the rain commenced in deadly earnest. It swept down in sheets. And this, of all mornings, was the morning of the eclipse! If the professor had considered for a moment, he would have known that such a thing was bound to happen. Whoever heard of a clear sky during an eclipse of the sun?

"Dear me! Dear me! I am in a terrible condition!" murmured the scientist. "And the eclipse— Good gracious! The eclipse will soon start, and I am in no position to take my observations. Ah!"

He looked round, and a gleam entered his eye. He vaguely remembered having been in this place before—and he had a sort of hazy idea that if he went up several ladders he would reach a window on the top floor. And from that window he would be able to make his observations successfully, and completely under cover.

Professor Tucker became happy. He forgot his soaked condition, he forgot the clouded sky, and he overlooked the all-important fact that his telescope was alone on the moor.

He resolutely mounted the first ladder.

CHAPTER X.

FREEDOM!



TUBBS, the page-boy, shook his head stolidly.

"It's no good you trying to bribe me—there's nothing doing!" he said, with firmness. "Master Nipper

got me on to this job, and I wouldn't play the dirty on him for bags and bags o' gold. See?"

Kirby scowled.

"You young fool!" he snapped. "What

does it matter to you? If you let me out of this place, I'll give you a quid for yourself! You can easily say that something went wrong—"

"I ain't tellin' no lies for you!" broke in Tubbs obstinately. "I give my word to Master Nipper, an' that's enough! 'E's back again, an' mebbe he'll come right back to St. Frank's, too! That's what I 'opes—an' so do most o' the young gents. It ain't the same place without Master Nipper."

"Master Nipper—Master Nipper!" shouted Kirby. "I'm sick of this confounded Master Nipper! Who is he, anyhow?"

Tubbs looked astonished, and then pained. He was sitting on his side of the broomstick barrier, and the imprisoned Kirby was standing against the bars in his enclosure, glaring through them.

"Who's Master Nipper?" asked Tubbs slowly. "My 'at! You don't know who Master Nipper is! Why, 'e used to be at St. Frank's. 'E was the captain of the Fourth—the captain of football and cricket, too. A rare one, is Master Nipper!"

"I'd like to wring his neck!" snarled Kirby. "Nipper sounds like a confounded gutter brat! What's his real name, anyhow?"

"Master Richard Hamilton," said Tubbs proudly. "That's Master Nipper's real name—the other's only what the young gents call 'im. Besides, ain't you ever heard o' Mr. Nelson Lee?" he asked, with scorn.

Kirby started.

"Nelson Lee!" he echoed. "You mean the detective? By glory! Nelson Lee and Nipper! Look here, you don't mean to say — Nipper! So that's who he is! Well, I'm hanged!"

Kirby was startled. Curiously enough, this was the first time he had known the actual identity of the fellow who had rung these changes. He had never associated the nickname of "Nipper" with anybody beyond schoolboys.

But the revelation didn't worry him much. It would be rather unfortunate for Mr. Creepe to have the assistant of a famous detective within his infamous school. Kirby's position, however, remained unaffected.

There was no prospect of escape. Tubbs was immovable. Once or twice a wild idea occurred to Kirby to smash down the wooden bars—but he remembered that syringe in the corner. Nothing could be done. He was helpless.

Tubbs got up from his chair, and walked about. Then he paused. A curious sound had come to his ears. Somebody was coming up the ladder. The page-boy felt his heart beating more rapidly. He wasn't expecting any visitors until dinner-time.

He went behind the screen, raised the trapdoor, and looked down. A bulky form was mounting the ladder! At the first glance Tubbs could see that the intruder was a man. His heart leapt.

"I say!" he gasped. "Half a mo!"

Professor Tucker was taken by surprise. He was so startled that he released his hold, and dropped to the floor with a thud. Then he sat down with another thud. The way Tubbs streaked down the ladder was worth seeing.

"Oh, corks!" he panted desperately. "One of the masters!"

To Tubbs, Professor Tucker was a man to be feared—he was just as much a master as Mr. Beverley Stokes, or Mr. Crowell, or Mr. Pagett, or even the Head himself. He was, in short, "one of the nobs." All Tubbs's courage oozed away out of his finger-tips.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated the professor, getting to his feet. "How dare you? What do you mean by giving me such a turn? Boy, go away! I have half a mind to thrash you!"

"Please, sir, I—" began Tubbs feverishly.

"Enough!" roared the professor. "I have no time to waste on boys! I have been pestered all the morning by boys! It seems to me that the whole world consists of inquisitive, mischievous boys! Go away, sir!"

He commenced climbing the ladder again. "Hold on, sir—you mustn't go up there!" gasped Tubbs frantically.

The professor took no notice of him. In fact, he had practically forgotten Tubbs' existence already, for he had suddenly remembered that time was getting short. Tubbs watched him disappear through the trapdoor with a dull, sinking sensation at his heart.

He had failed! He had betrayed his trust! But it had all happened so quickly and so naturally that Tubbs was still dazed. Certainly, he was in no way to blame. Nobody could have anticipated this contretemps.

"Oh, my 'at!" groaned Tubbs. "That's fair done it!"

Professor Tucker found himself on the top floor, and he marched round the screen triumphantly. He looked for the window, and then paused in blank astonishment.

The window was nowhere to be seen. The Fourth Formers, in fact, had completely covered it in the manufacture of Kirby's prison. The place was illuminated by an oil lamp.

"What on earth—" began the professor.

"I say, sir—unlock this door, please!" shouted Kirby, his voice trembling with excitement. "There's the key, hanging on the wall! I'm locked in here, sir!"

Professor Tucker eyed him severely.

"Upon my word! Another boy!" he

ejaculated. "Go away, sir! How dare you interfere—"

"I can't go away until you unlock me!" interrupted Kirby. "I've been put in here by some of your boys—and they've been keeping me a prisoner. Please unlock this door, sir—there's the key—"

"Key?" interrupted the professor testily. "Oh, this? All these disturbances are most annoying!"

He took the key off the nail, but it wasn't until Kirby had shouted at him for another two minutes that he found the little door in the partition. He not only unlocked it, but he pulled back the bolts. His chief idea was to get rid of this noisy intruder.

Kirby emerged from his prison. He didn't wait. With glittering eyes, he rushed round the screen, and nearly fell headlong down the trap. This was the first time that he had received an inkling of his whereabouts.

A minute later he was outside—in the rain—free!

CHAPTER XI.

MR. CREEPE SEES DOUBLE.



"KIRBY, you will take charge for half-an-hour—I have important work in my study. See that the boys work well."

Mr. Grimesby Creepe got up from his desk, and Kirby the Second nodded. "All right, sir," he said. "Leave 'em to me!"

The morning work was well advanced. The class-room at Moat Hollow was a place of hard labour. This morning the boys were busy at the writing lesson—in other words, they were addressing envelopes for Mr. Creepe's precious mail-order circulars.

The room was cold and cheerless. Outside, the rain splashed down, and added to the general sense of depression. Nipper was not feeling exactly happy. It was not an ideal day to begin a revolt. Already the majority of the boys were slowly relapsing into their old lethargy.

The weather had something to do with it. Nobody could feel really brisk and energetic in a cold, dismal room, writing at full speed to the accompaniment of pattering rain on the window panes.

Mr. Creepe himself was depressed. A visit to his study was distinctly necessary. The schoolmaster generally left his boys at intervals for these study visits. He always had some work to do in private.

This morning his work was exactly the same as usual. He went to his study, removed a glass and a bottle from the side-board, and poured himself out a stiff livener. Mr. Creepe and whisky were old friends—indeed, they were inseparable companions. They had lived hand in hand, so to speak, for years past.

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"Ah, that's better—much better!" muttered Mr. Creepe, as he drained the glass. "The air is quite chilly! I think—I really think—another little drop will be beneficial."

He proceeded to pour it out, and at that moment a shower of pebbles struck his window with such force that one pane was cracked and another was splintered. Mr. Creepe wasted nearly a quarter of whisky on the tablecloth.

"What—what's that?" he ejaculated huskily.

He set the bottle down, and ran heavily to the window. Then his eyes goggled. On the

doors isn't me at all—you've been tricked!"

"Tricked!" said Mr. Creepe thickly.

"What—what—"

His brain reeled. He hurried out, and ran along the passage and into the hall. He flung open the door and heaved at the cunningly constructed bridge—the only means of communication with the "mainland."

Kirby came running over, and Mr. Creepe eyed him suspiciously. He was beginning to think that this was the trickster—not the Kirby in the class-room. But he was still bewildered.

"What foolery is this?" he began.



Pausing in his experiments for a moment, the professor gazed round to observe endless numbers of sheep wandering all round him.

other side of the moat stood Kirby—Kirby dressed in unfamiliar tweeds—Kirby, drenched, hatless and excited.

Mr. Creepe was more than startled. Three minutes earlier, he had left Kirby in the class-room. And here he was, outside and wet through! The thing was absolutely impossible.

"Kirby!" he shouted. "What are you doing there?—How on earth—"

"Let me in, sir!" panted Kirby. "The bridge isn't out! Let me in—that fellow in—"

"I'm Kirby—don't you know me?" gasped the monitor. "Is there somebody else here who pretends to be me?"

"Good heavens! I—I left you in the class-room ten minutes ago—"

"You didn't!" shouted Kirby. "He's Nipper—Nelson Lee's assistant—in disguise! He's a detective! I only just escaped—"

"A detective!" broke in Mr. Grimesby Creepe hoarsely. "Nelson Lee! Are you mad, Kirby? Do you realise what you're

saying? Nelson Lee! Boy, you must be out of your senses—"

He paused, nearly choking. But he could see that he was facing the real Kirby. In a flood, numerous little things came back into his mind. He remembered being vaguely puzzled at a slight difference in the other Kirby's tone—in his way of speaking—in his expression. But having no suspicion of the awful truth, he had accepted the substitute for the real.

But now that the genuine article stood in front of him, he was staggered at his own obtuseness—he was amazed that he had not seen through the deception at a glance.

It is always the way. One generally sees with crystal clarity after the truth has been made known to one. It is the same with a conjuring trick. One is hopelessly puzzled, but after the trick is explained, it resolves itself into a matter of childish simplicity—and one is amazed that the obvious could not be detected.

"Come—come to my study!" said Mr. Creepe, through his teeth.

They went to the study, and in breathless sentences, Kirby poured out his story. He explained that the whole thing was a put-up job of the St. Frank's Fourth, and that the object was to help the Moat Hollow boys.

Mr. Creepe was relieved to hear this piece of news—he had suspected something else. It was only a schoolboy practical joke—and he could deal with it. His fear left him, but his rage increased.

"By Heaven! We'll settle this matter, Kirby!" he said grimly. "Come with me! This—this interfering brat of a Nipper shall suffer! I'll flog him—I'll beat him until he writhes!"

And with this pleasant prospect in view, Mr. Creepe and Kirby hurried to the school-room. They burst in, and Nipper had an instinctive feeling that something unpleasant was going to happen.

CHAPTER XII.

MR. CREEPE SETS THE BALL ROLLING.



TOMMY WATSON gave a violent start.

He was not a quick-thinking junior. He was blunt, stolid, and honest. But on this occasion his brain acted like lightning. Kirby was with Mr. Creepe—he had escaped! The whole plot was ruined!

"My only hat!" gasped Watson in despair.

Even Nipper was startled. His plan was to begin the rebellion at tea-time—and here they were in the middle of the morning! It began to look as though the excitement would commence forthwith.

"You impudent young scoundrel!" roared Mr. Creepe.

It was a perfect bellow, and the school sat

up with a jerk. They had heard that tone before, but not often. The schoolmaster only used it when he was enraged beyond control.

Mr. Creepe was pointing a quivering finger at Nipper. Tarkington, Fryer, and the other monitors looked on blankly. They stared from Kirby to Nipper with protruding eyes.

"Why, what the—!" began Tarkington.

Nipper acted promptly.

"Listen, you fellows!" he shouted. "I'm not Kirby—I'm your friend! Now's the time to show what you're made of! Come on—up! There's only one way to act now—mutiny!"

"Seize that boy!" thundered Mr. Creepe.

The monitors were too dazed to take any action. Only Mr. Creepe himself and Kirby made for Nipper.

"Do you hear me?" raved the schoolmaster. "Tarkington! Roberts! Fryer! Quick! Hold him tight! He's an impostor!"

"Good!" shouted Nipper. "Come on! I'm ready!"

He drew back with clenched fists. Kirby and Tarkington attacked him at the same moment.

Crash!

Tarkington reeled back, howling. Nipper's left hand caught him on the point of the jaw, and Tarkington had bitten his tongue.

Thud! Biff!

Nipper was fighting desperately. He used every ounce of his strength, and all his skill. For the first few moments, he held his attackers at bay. Mr. Creepe retired precipitately. This young fellow looked too dangerous.

"Seize him! Hold him!" raved the schoolmaster. "Are you afraid? Six of you against one! Drag him down, you fools!"

But Nipper continued to fight like one possessed.

"Watson—Jevons!" he roared. "All of you! Now's your chance! Rescue! You're not going to let me go under?"

Tommy Watson was leaping about with wild excitement.

"Come on!" he yelled. "Where's your spirit? Let's mutiny now! The time's come! Come on, you spineless rotters!"

"I'm game!" gasped Jevons breathlessly.

"Same here!" shouted one or two others.

"Then come on—set the example!" roared Watson.

He rushed to Nipper's assistance, and about half-a-dozen others joined. They were the strongest of the Moat Hollow crowd. Thinking that the moment for the mutiny had come, they threw all precautions to the winds and sailed in.

But the rest were dumb—they sat in their places, unable to move. They were terrified by the whole occurrence—staggered and stupefied to such an extent that they could only stare.

The fight was now a glorious affair.

It raged in the middle of the school-room. All the monitors were engaged, but they were more than matched. Nipper and Tommy

Watson alone were nearly capable of beating the whole six. They were bullies of the worst type—brave and bold when they had cringing victims to deal with, but marrowless in a real fight.

"Come on!" roared Nipper. "We're winning!"

He looked round with gleaming eyes, but that one glance told him that the moment was ill-chosen. Most of the boys were scared out of their wits. There wasn't an atom of fight in them.

There was only one thing to be done. "Keep it up, Tommy!" he muttered. "I'll soon be back!"

With one final drive at Kirby, he slipped away. Two monitors attempted to clutch him, but he avoided them. He streaked for the door, dodged Mr. Creepe, and vanished.

The door slammed and the key turned in the lock outside.

"You dolts—you fools!" raved Mr. Creepe. "He's escaped!"

But his voice was unheard in the terrific din. It did not last long. Nipper's escape was the beginning of the collapse. Watson and Jevons fought well, but they were practically unsupported. The other mutineers suddenly grew panic-stricken, and threw up the sponge. They had discovered that they were unsupported, and the moral effect was devastating.

Watson and Jevons were held at last, struggling, breathless and dismayed. And all the others scurried back to their places, pale with fright. Now that the thing had failed they were scared out of their wits.

Mr. Creepe soon realised that he was master of the situation.

"It is useless going after that infernal boy who escaped!" he said harshly. "By this time he has doubtless got clear away. We could not engage in any vulgar pursuit, in any case. I intend to deal with these unprincipled young hooligans here."

He rushed to his desk and produced a horsewhip.

"Now!" he thundered, glaring round. "I'll show you who's master; I'll teach you the meaning of discipline! You unmitigated young ruffians! The whole school shall suffer—every boy! But these mutinous dogs shall be horsewhipped on the spot!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE COST OF FAILURE.



KIRBY nodded with approval.

"That's the way, sir!" he agreed.

"There's nothing like tanning the young cubs! It's the only language they know. I'd like

to get hold of those fellows who attacked me—"

"Never mind that now, Kirby; there's something more important on hand!" interrupted Mr. Creepe. "We will take Jevons first. Jevons must be taught that mutiny is a very serious thing."

Mr. Creepe was calming down. His blind rage was leaving him, but with his coolness came an even more dangerous mood. He was in a condition to half murder his victims.

For the first time within the history of his school there had been an attempt at rebellion. It was unheard of—unprecedented. And the only way to avoid any repetition of the scandal was to act drastically.

He would terrify the school; he would put fear into the heart of every boy—such fear that no further mutiny could possibly take place. And Mr. Creepe felt almost pleased at the prospect. It gave him real happiness to ill-treat his unfortunate slaves.

It was useless to go after Nipper, for the schoolmaster was convinced that the intruder had fled the building. At the same time, he dispatched Fryer and Roberts to search the house from top to bottom. Personally, he would remain in the school-room, to attend to this flogging.

Tommy Watson had ceased struggling.

He was held by Kirby, and he knew that it was useless to attempt any further resistance. Jevons was in the grip of Tarkington. All the other boys sat in their places, pale, tense, and frightened.

Those who had actually joined the mutiny were so scared that they shivered visibly in their seats. Even the others had a horrible fear that Mr. Creepe's wrath would be visited upon them.

"It's all up, Watson—we've failed!" muttered Jevons miserably.

"Have we?" said Tommy. "Wait! It isn't over yet!"

"No talking!" snapped Kirby.

"I was only saying—"

"No talking!" roared Kirby, bringing his fist round and delivering a punch on the side of Watson's head that nearly stunned him. It was an exhibition of brutality that pleased Mr. Creepe.

"That's right, Kirby, allow no nonsense!" he exclaimed. "A crisis has arrived, and we must deal with it! Well, Fryer? Did you find any sign of that boy?"

Fryer and Roberts had reappeared.

"He's nowhere in the school, sir," said Fryer. "He must have escaped."

"The bridge was in position across the moat, sir," said Roberts.

"Did you pull it in?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good!" said Mr. Creepe. "Then we can rely upon being undisturbed. It is a pity the boy escaped, a thousand pities. He will circulate lying stories; he will do his utmost to libel my school."

But Mr. Creepe consoled himself with the thought that nobody would believe the truth. Past experience, and a wide knowledge of the world had proved to Mr. Creepe that the most difficult thing of all is to make people believe the truth. They will readily accept lies, bluster, and false stories, but the truth is hardly ever credited. So Mr. Creepe felt safe.

In any case, at the moment he didn't much care. His whole attention was centred upon this task of punishing the mutineers. He knew that the school had come perilously near to a complete rebellion. He must safeguard against any such scene in future.

"Jevons will be the first!" he said again. "Bring Jevons forward and tie him to the ropes. Wait! Strip him to the waist!"

Jevons was plucky; his eyes blazed defiance.

"Brutes!" he panted. "I don't care if you kill me! I'd rather die than live here in the same old way!"

"Silence!" snarled Mr. Creepe.

Jevons was stripped to the waist. His clothing was torn off ruthlessly. And Tommy Watson, still in the grip of Kirby, felt not only miserable but terribly alarmed.

Why had Nipper deliberately left them in the lurch? It would have been useless for him to remain, no doubt, but his exit had been almost a flight. Why had he deserted the unfortunate boys whom he had promised to help? It was a problem.

But Watson refused to give up all hope.

"He must have had some good reason," he told himself. "He hasn't left the school; he's in hiding somewhere. He's planning some sort of——" Watson caught his breath in with a jerk. "I wonder—I wonder if——"

An idea struck him, one that would have occurred to him long ago if his mind hadn't been so full. It was an idea that provided a full explanation for Nipper's abrupt departure.

"Of course!" breathed Watson. "Of course!"

He unconsciously pulled his shoulders more erect, and as he glanced round, Kirby saw the flash in his eye.

"Defiant, eh?" snapped the monitor. "All right—just you wait! By glory! You're going to get the worst of anybody! You won't be able to walk for a month after Mr. Creepe's done with you!"

Watson made no reply; he didn't want to invite another cowardly blow like the last. His head was still singing from the effect of it. And in his heart he stored up a few black marks against Kirby.

But he was feeling happier. Nipper would never allow the matter to stand as it was. He hadn't fled; he would return, and perhaps everything would come out right after all.

But as Watson glanced round his heart

failed him again. Never before had he seen such a collection of hopeless weaklings. The Moat Hollow boys were huddled down in their seats, a pitiful-looking lot.

"Now!" said Mr. Creepe grimly.

Watson looked round. The schoolmaster was preparing his horsewhip. Jevons was suspended from the floor by ropes which were tied round his wrists. It was the same old story. But this time the flogging would probably be a revolting, horrifying spectacle.

Mr. Creepe raised his whip, and simultaneously the Phantom Protector appeared.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MUTINY.



THE Phantom Protector entered as silently as a shadow.

He came through the doorway without anybody noticing him except Tarkington and Fryer. And they stared dumbly. That familiar hooded figure had come again. And once more at the crucial moment.

"Hold!" said the Phantom Protector quietly.

The single word caused Mr. Grimesby Creepe to twirl round. He fell back a step, livid. For a second he nearly went mad with rage. He was going to be cheated out of his revenge at the moment of its fulfilment. The thought caused Mr. Creepe to gibber.

"Touch that boy at your peril!" said the Protector, his voice clear and sharp. "You have come to the end of your rope, Mr. Creepe. This morning your brutal reign of terror comes to an end!"

Nipper was sure of his words. True, his heart had failed him for a second as he saw the condition of the boys, but now that he had started this thing the only course was to go through with it.

And in the course of ten seconds a magical change occurred.

The school was electrified. The terror had gone out of the boys' eyes—the listlessness had vanished from their drooping figures.

The Phantom Protector had come!

He it was who had stirred them up to such a pitch in the dormitory the previous night. They had blind faith in this mysterious figure. He was the embodiment of power and strength, the unknown friend who delivered them from dangers.

And his appearance at this dramatic moment was the one thing needed.

Nipper had realised this when he had rushed from the school-room. In his disguise as Kirby he had no power; even in his own personality he would have had little, for he was unknown to these boys.

But as the Phantom Protector his leadership would count. And during the first few seconds he had watched the change with his heart beating a glad tattoo against his ribs.

Mr. Creepe found his voice at last.

"You again!" he exclaimed thickly. "By heavens! You shall not interfere this time! Kirby—Tarkington—all of you! Throw this intruder out; eject him at once!"

The Phantom Protector laughed.

"Try it!" he said pleasantly.

He stood there at ease, and his very indifference caused the monitors to hang back. There was something terrifying in the coolness and composure of this masked, hooded figure.

"Try it!" repeated Nipper contemptuously. "You won't have much further chance! For within five minutes the end will come; you and your precious head tyrant will be ejected yourselves!"

The school drank in the words feverishly.

"There can be no going back now!" went on the Protector, his voice gathering in strength. "Boys, I am here in accordance with my promise. The moment has arrived. I call upon you to answer me!"

"He's come—he's come!" sobbed Jevons, from his position of torture. "Don't you understand? We all promised to support him when he appeared, and here he is. It's the signal, you chaps!"

"The signal!" shouted Tommy Watson.

The school answered to the word in an awed, subdued whisper:

"The signal!"

Mr. Creepe cracked his whip furiously.

"Stop!" he boomed. "The first boy who speaks will be flogged even more severely than Jevons! Stand by, Kirby! We will ignore this petty intruder! Stand by, I tell you!"

Slash!

Mr. Creepe was so furious that he lashed the whip round Jevons' bare body with terrifying force. The poor boy gave a scream of agony, forced from him by the unexpected nature of the vicious blow.

And when the whip uncurled an ugly mark lay across Jevons' back—a trickle or two of blood appeared. Even Mr. Creepe started at the sight of it. Brute as he was, he had not intended to apply such force.

"Cur!" shouted the Phantom Protector, leaping forward. "Coward!"

With one wrench he took the whip away and sent it hurtling across the room. The entire school was on its feet now, madly excited.

"Come on—come on!" roared Watson. "It's the mutiny!"

Crash!

He twisted round like an eel and delivered a punch on Kirby's nose that sent the monitor staggering. At the same time the

Phantom Protector left Mr. Creepe's side and dashed into the ranks of the schoolboys.

"Strike now, and victory is yours!" he shouted tensely. "Follow me, boys—and win the day! Watson, the window—the window! Up with it! And then out with these brutes into the moat!"

"Hurrah!" yelled Watson, his voice cracking.

"Chuck them into the moat!" shrieked Jevons wildly.

It was as though a match had been struck and applied to a vast stretch of dried prairie. One little burst of flame, and then the whole thing became a staggering conflagration.

For one instant the school hesitated—then, with inarticulate cries, the released slaves hurled themselves upon their torturers.

The mutiny had started in real earnest!

CHAPTER XV.

SHORT SHRIFT.



MR. CREEPE started back, shivering.

He was amazed and scared. Never had he believed that his scholars would turn on him like this! He had always

imagined them to be broken—to be completely and absolutely under his sway.

He wasn't allowed to even consider the position.

A flood of boys swept down upon him. Shouting madly, he was flung off his feet and thrown to the floor. Seven or eight boys piled upon him, and held him down.

"Got him!"

"Give him beans!"

"Pay him!"

"Give him some of his own back!"

The fire of victory was in the blood of these boys, and they lost their heads. Month after month they had been crushed down by this tyrant, and now that he was in their power they only wanted revenge.

Mr. Creepe was in real danger.

"Steady!" shouted Nipper. "Don't do anything brutal! Two wrongs don't make a right! Chuck him out into the moat—and keep him at bay! Hold back there, you young idiots!"

Nipper pushed his way through the crowd grimly. He was half afraid that the boys would go too far—and that would be disastrous. His very presence protected Mr. Creepe from being injured.

"Don't go mad—take it calmly!" shouted the Phantom Protector sternly.

In the meantime, the monitors were all being attacked—the entire school-room was a mass of struggling figures. Tommy Watson's first move was to whip out his knife and cut Jevons down. Then he rushed to

one of the windows, dragged a form underneath it, and raised the lower sash.

Outside, the moat lay nearly flush with the wall.

"All clear!" yelled Watson. "Out with 'em!"

Kirby was the first to go. Kicking, struggling, but helpless in the grip of seven or eight boys, he was whirled to the window and pitched out like a stone from a catapult. He sailed through the air head first.

Splash!

Kirby entered the moat flat, and sent up two waves of water before he disappeared into the black depths. He rose, struggling and gasping, and struck out for the bank. There was no danger, for even a non-swimmer could have struggled to safety without much trouble.

"Next one!" roared Watson.

Fryer was brought, kicking and fighting.

"Hold on!" he gasped. "I'm with you! I'll join in this rebellion, you chaps! Watson! Don't let them——"

"In with him!"

Fryer went shooting out, and Watson felt no pity as the monitor tasted the waters of the moat. When put to the test he had failed. Tommy Watson had saved his life a few days earlier, and in spite of this he had refused to help the conspirators. He wasn't worth having as a supporter.

"Look out—clear the way!" shouted somebody. "Here we come!"

Mr. Grimesby Creepe was forced along by a crowd of excited boys. Now that the power was in their hands, they had become astonishingly bold. They cared nothing for Mr. Creepe's threats. The more he made, in fact, the greater grew their strength.

"Out with the tyrant!" commanded Nipper.

He was anxious to see Mr. Creepe ejected. Nipper's plan was to make this rebellion a clean affair—he had no wish to see it marred in its opening stages by violence.

"Wait! Wait!" screamed Mr. Creepe, livid with terror. "Control yourselves, boys! I will do anything you wish—I will promise you——"

"Don't take any notice!" shouted Jevons. "Look at my back!"

"Yes! Look at Jevons' back!"

"Chuck him into the moat!"

The schoolmaster was dragged to the window.

"Stop!" he shrieked wildly. "I'll give you all your liberty—— Help! Help! You young demons! I'll skin you alive——"

Splash!

Still screaming and threatening, Mr. Creepe descended into the moat in an inverted position. A roar of joy went up as he was seen struggling in the water. Kirby and Fryer, on the other side, assisted the defeated tyrant out of the moat.

"Now for the others!" sang out Watson. The rest of the monitors were dealt with swiftly. There was no fight in them—they had crumpled up completely upon seeing the defeat of their chief. And one after the other they were hurled out.

"Hurrah!"

"We've won—we've beaten 'em!"

"Long live the rebellion!"

The boys capered about madly, having completely lost their heads. There were twenty-four of them, and Moat Hollow was entirely in their possession. The hated tyrant and his underlings had been expelled! And the moat lay between the victors and the vanquished.

But Nipper was cool, even if the others were out of hand. And Nipper realised that immediate steps would have to be taken if this initial success was to be maintained.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN FULL POSSESSION.



"LISTEN to me!"

Nipper shouted the words loudly. His voice rose above the din of excitement, and the majority of the rebels turned and regarded him with flushed faces and gleaming eyes.

"Listen!" repeated Nipper. "We've won the first round in this fight, but there'll be other rounds yet! Mr. Creepe isn't beaten; he'll fight to the bitter end! And if once he regains control your case will be absolutely hopeless. Don't let him beat you!"

"Never!"

"We'll all walk out—we're free!"

"Hurrah!"

Nipper had been expecting this, and he promptly dealt with it.

"That's just where you're wrong!" he shouted. "You can't walk out—if you do, it'll mean the collapse of the whole rebellion! Calm down, my sons—there's not a minute to be lost!"

"Who are you?" shouted two or three of the boys.

Nipper pulled off his hood and mask, and stood revealed as himself—for, before appearing as the Phantom Protector, he had removed all traces of his Kirby disguise. His action caused a hush, and the Moat Hollow boys became somewhat steadier.

"I am Dick Hamilton—better known as Nipper!" shouted Nipper. "Until recently, I was captain of the St. Frank's Fourth—and I'm just as much at home there as ever. I found out that you fellows were being tortured and enslaved, and so I came along to help."

"Hurrah!"

"You're a brick!"

"Now that the crisis is over, there's no necessity for me to stick to this Phantom Protector get-up," went on Nipper.

"That's done with—it's a thing of the past! I've got one thing to say to you, and then we'll get busy. Somebody talked about walking out just now——"

"Yes! Let's all go into the village!"

"Hear, hear!"

"If you do that, you'll ruin every bit of work that we've already accomplished!" shouted Nipper warningly. "You'll be rebels—insubordinate schoolboys! Every-

rushing out. If you do, you'll all be dragged back within a couple of hours—every hand will be against you. The best thing is to stick here and bar the brutes out!"

"Exactly!" agreed Nipper. "A barring-out is the only sensible way. We've got to dig ourselves in, and resist all attacks. A school doesn't bar the masters out unless there's something wrong—and sooner or later the truth will get known, and then Creepe will be beaten. Don't give him the chance to make your lives worse than ever!"



The fight was now a glorious affair. It raged in the middle of the schoolroom. All the monitors were engaged, but they were more than matched.

body will be against you, and they won't believe a word of your story! Creepe and his monitors will come along, rope you in, and bring you back here!"

"Oh!"

"Don't you understand that Mr. Creepe's position is solid?" went on Nipper grimly. "Until that's undermined, you've got to stay here, and keep the enemy at bay. Don't expect too much in a minute! Be content with a successful beginning. Full victory is bound to come in the long run!"

"He's right, you chaps!" shouted Tommy Watson. "It's no good getting excited and

"You mean, we've got to stay here?" asked somebody.

"Yes!"

"But for how long?"

"I don't know how long—until everybody in the district gets to know the facts and sympathises with us," replied Nipper. "It may take days—it may take over a week. The longer we hold out, the better. But you can take one thing as absolutely certain—if we walk out of Moat Hollow this minute we shall get no sympathy at all! Creepe'll have everything his own way!"

We'll be looked upon as a set of young ruffians!"

The excited boys were convinced, and they said so.

"The first thing to do is to protect our weakest points!" went on Nipper. "The moat is a great advantage—Creepe and his gang are cut off from us. But every door and window must be guarded—and a strict watch must be maintained night and day. We'll soon have things ship-shape."

And the rebels gave another victorious cheer.

In the meantime, Mr. Grimesby Creepe had made a disorderly retreat into the gymnasium—a building which stood quite apart from the rest of the school. He gathered there with his wretched monitors. All were soaked and shivering.

"We'd better go to the village, sir!" gasped Tarkington.

"Fool!" snarled Mr. Creepe, between his chattering teeth. "The village must know nothing of this affair! The gates are locked, and not a soul knows of this disaster. We must keep it to ourselves!"

"But——"

"I am not beaten!" went on Mr. Creepe harshly. "These boys are prisoners within the school—they have no food—and we have only to keep them hemmed in, and within twenty-four hours they will be tamed!"

"You—you mean it, sir?" asked Kirby eagerly.

"Of course I mean it!" said the schoolmaster. "They think they are victorious—but they are fooling themselves! For the moment, all we need is a fire, to dry these soaking clothes. Get this stove going, you idiots! There's plenty of wood here—plenty of coal! Get it going at once!"

And Mr. Creepe and his henchmen camped in the gymnasium. Within half an hour a roaring fire was sending out a tremendous heat, and the soaked ones were getting dry.

Beyond the gates of Moat Hollow everything was going on placidly as usual. Not a soul knew of this storm. But before long the affair was destined to increase, and there would be no lack of excitement.

For Mr. Grimesby Creepe was far from beaten!

THE END.

By Your



Editor.

My Dear Readers,

The return of Nelson Lee and Nipper to St. Frank's is now an established certainty, and as this is the result of numerous requests to Mr. Brooks, I hope that you will all be satisfied, and will enjoy the forthcoming yarns featuring the great schoolmaster-detective and the popular hero of St. Frank's more than ever.

THE EVE OF A GREAT REBELLION.

The present series, dealing with the Moat Hollow School, is rapidly approaching the end, and at the present juncture it has reached its most exciting part. The school is on the eve of a great rebellion, and our old hero, Nipper, is once more taking the lead.

"THE SCHOOLBOY MUTINEERS!"

This will be the title of next week's story. It is a thrilling account of how the boys of Moat Hollow rise up at last against their

cruel and cunning oppressor, Grimesby Creepe. Needless to say, the boys of St. Frank's are keenly interested in the turn of events. The Fourth Form, in particular, mean to have a finger in the pie, and, as you will read, in next week's story, they lend their weight with good effect in the forthcoming struggle.

LONGER ST. FRANK'S STORIES.

When the Moat Hollow series concludes, within the next week or so, the St. Frank's stories will be considerably lengthened. To make this possible, we shall have to shorten the detective serial and reduce the size of the Mag. This is being done in deference to the wishes of the vast majority of my readers, whose letters to the author have proved very useful in determining our future policy.

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.



The INVISIBLE GRIP!

*New Serial of Nelson Lee and Nipper
introducing Professor Cyrus Zingrave*

THREADS OF THE CASE.

A daring safe robbery has occurred in the City. Nelson Lee investigates and discovers that the thieves are armed with a new and powerful instrument of destruction. Lee suspects Professor Zingrave to be associated with the crime, and this is confirmed by discoveries made in the kidnapping of Mr. Roger Langford, and the theft of his wonderful invention, which in the hands of criminals would prove a highly dangerous means of destruction. While shadowing Max Kerner, a financier, Nipper learns that Langford has been abducted to a house in Putney by Zingrave and that Kerner is working against the professor to secure the invention. Nipper informs Lee, and the two are leaving for Putney when Lee is shot by mysterious assailants on the doorstep of his house in the Gray's Inn Road.

(Now read on.)

CHAPTER XXXI (continued).

WITHIN the little building the scene was a strange one indeed.

Mr. Roger Langford—Harry's father—was seated in a chair, his arms and legs securely bound, and he was glaring vindictively at two queer-looking individuals who were standing opposite to him.

One of them was attired in the scarlet dress of Mephistopheles, with flowing cloak and hideously-horned headdress. His features were completely concealed beneath a red, tightly-fitting rubber mask, only his eyes and lips being visible through apertures in the material.

The second man wore a disguise of a totally different nature—being clothed in the usual manner, and wearing a thick black beard and moustache, and a slouch hat pulled well down over his eyes.

This extraordinary pair confronted the prisoner in the chair, and completely ignored his angry glances. Mephistopheles, in fact, was smiling genially beneath his

mask, and he spoke in a tone which held genuine admiration.

"I really must congratulate you, Langford, upon your remarkable achievement," he said, waving his hand vaguely towards a corner of the room. "This machine of yours is amazingly perfect, and my colleague and I have found it to be surprisingly effective! The manner in which it gave us access to the safe in Messrs. Barlow's establishment was nothing less than marvellous, and we had no trouble whatever in helping ourselves to what we wanted!"

An angry growl came from between Langford's lips.

"You—you thieving ruffians!" he exclaimed fiercely. "How—how dare you use my machine for such base purposes? Good heavens! I would rather see the apparatus smashed to smithereens before my eyes than have it defiled in this outrageous manner! And if only I could free myself for a few moments I would prevent you from committing——"

"I dare say!" cut in the black-bearded man, in a soft, silky voice. "But you are

by no means likely to obtain your freedom yet awhile, my dear Langford! My friend and I brought you out of your prison-room just to have this little chat with you, and to inform you of the astounding efficiency of your machine. Really, I have never seen anything like it—and I am scarcely an amateur in matters scientific!”

The black-bearded man was not boasting, but spoke the literal truth. No doubt Mr. Langford would have recognised the speaker if he had not been so effectively disguised—for his features were known throughout the length and breadth of the land.

He was, in fact, none other than the notorious Professor Cyrus Zingrave—one-time Chief of the League of the Green Triangle!

His vast criminal organisation, thanks to the efforts of Nelson Lee, had been completely disbanded, and most of its members were now serving long terms of penal servitude. Zingrave himself had been tried and imprisoned, but he had made his escape a short time ago.

A skilled chemist and scientist himself, he was vastly interested in Mr. Langford's electrical apparatus—so interested that he was apparently making the fullest use of it!

Harry's father writhed impotently in his chair as his two captors gloated over their triumphs.

“My colleague is quite right,” said the red-cloaked man blandly. “The apparatus is wonderful, Langford. We had the misfortune to be chased by Nelson Lee in a racing car; but your machine disposed of his vehicle in a flash! It is a valuable asset to us just now—but you need have no fear that we shall harm it. Both you and your apparatus will be free to leave this place within a short time, but for the time being we are compelled to keep you in captivity—”

“By Heaven, you'll be made to pay for your conduct!” said Mr. Langford angrily, straining at his bonds with fierce intensity. “The police will hound you down—”

“If you are relying upon help from that quarter, I am afraid you are doomed to disappointment!” said Zingrave, with a smile. “This little retreat of ours is perfectly secure from police interference, and you will remain here until we choose to allow you to go!”

Without more ado the unfortunate prisoner was re-gagged, and carried into an adjoining room—a cell-like apartment with a strong door and a barred window. Zingrave and his red-masked companion dumped Mr. Langford unceremoniously upon a camp-bedstead which stood against the wall, and then left the room—locking the door securely.

“It's a scurvy way to treat the poor man, but there's no help for it,” said “Mephistopheles,” in a tone of slight regret. “But it's not for long, anyhow. Now, what

about our immediate plans, professor? Is there anything else to arrange?”

“Nothing,” said Zingrave. “We have fixed everything up to the last detail, and there's no possibility of a hitch. We're absolutely safe, and there's not a single clue—”

Professor Zingrave broke off abruptly, for even as he uttered the words, there came a thunderous crash upon the door!

CHAPTER XXXII.

TURNING THE TABLES!



PROFESSOR ZINGRAVE twirled round sharply, and looked from the groaning door to his startled companion.

“It—it must be the police!” gasped the red-cloaked man fearfully. “Just when we thought ourselves to be so secure—”

“Nonsense!” snapped Zingrave, with a grim note in his voice. “The police have had no opportunity to discover anything about us! Whoever it is, it can't be the police— Ah! No doubt it is that confounded detective, Nelson Lee—”

“Nelson Lee!” repeated the other, in a trembling voice. “That is worse than ever, professor! We must get away from here at once—”

Crash! Crash!

Two more tremendous thuds sounded from the other side of the door, and it was evident that very determined efforts were being made to force an entry into the house. The interruption had come with such dramatic suddenness that Zingrave and his colleague had been taken completely by surprise, and for a few moments they were undecided how to act.

And these seconds of indecision proved fatal to them.

Just as they were about to make a dash for the rear exit, the door of the cottage was sent splintering into the room, and a harsh voice smote upon the ears of the two criminals.

“Stop!” said the voice, in a sharp, snappy tone. “I've got the pair of you covered, and I advise you to act in a sensible manner! Up with your hands!”

Zingrave and “Mephistopheles” came to an abrupt halt, and turned round to face the intruder—who had by this time entered the room, closely followed by three companions. These latter were a trio of grim-looking ruffians of the East End “tough” variety, villainous and sinister in appearance.

The red-cloaked man uttered a sharp exclamation as he looked at the foremost of the invaders and it was evident that he recognised him upon the instant.

"Max Kerner, the financier!" he gasped in surprise, turning to Zingrave quickly. "The man who tried to buy Langford's machine for two hundred thousand pounds——"

"Exactly!" cut in Kerner readily. "You are quite right, my dear sir! Mr. Langford very foolishly refused to treat with me, with the result that his apparatus was stolen from him by you! But you're not going to keep it—oh dear, no! I have come to take it away with me——"

"He mustn't be allowed to take it!" said "Mephistopheles," turning to Zingrave, with an angry glitter in his eyes. "Kerner obviously intends to seize the machine so that he can send it out of the country! We must prevent that at all costs! He's a German, and I should never forgive myself if Langford's apparatus was stolen by foreigners! Good heavens—can't we do something to prevent such a catastrophe? Better a thousand times to be captured by the police than by this man and his gang of cut-throats——"

"You're a little bit too late!" interrupted Kerner, with a grin. "I fancy that my men and I hold the key to the present situation, and we're going to make the best of it! It is our intention to seize the Langford machine at once!"

He turned to his men as he spoke, and commenced issuing orders, while Zingrave and his colleague looked on helplessly. They were obviously unable to prevent the newcomers from carrying out their purpose, and this fact seemed to cause "Mephistopheles" the most acute anxiety.

His words to Zingrave implied that he was very much averse to seeing Mr. Langford's machine getting into the hands of Kerner and his men—which indicated plainly enough that the red-cloaked man was distinctly patriotic, despite his criminal inclinations.

Professor Zingrave remained discreetly silent—but his keen brain was very actively engaged in seeking a way out of the present somewhat peculiar position. Here it was a case of two criminal factions in conflict, and it would be interesting to watch which of them emerged victorious.

"Look lively, man!" said Kerner briskly, keeping a wary eye upon Zingrave and his colleague. "Don't worry about these two—I've got them covered! Get the machine, and pack it up as quickly as you can."

The three ruffians nodded, and crossed the room to where the Langford apparatus was standing on its tripod. Professor Zingrave had taken it out of its case shortly before, for the purpose of making one or two minor adjustments, and it would be necessary to re-pack it before it could be taken away by the invaders.

"Mephistopheles" watched the three men as they approached the machine, and then suddenly darted forward—ignoring Kerner's revolver completely.

"You shan't touch it!" he exclaimed frantically, standing in front of the apparatus defiantly. "I gave my word to Lang-

ford that his apparatus shouldn't be harmed, and you'll have to kill me before I'll allow you to lay a finger upon it——"

"Don't be a fool!" snapped Kerner angrily. "Stand away from that machine before I lose my temper! If you don't, I'll shoot you down like a dog——"

A dramatic interruption came from the open doorway.

"If there's any shooting to be done, I think it can be safely left to me!" said a quiet, stern voice. "You, Mr. Kerner, together with your men, will be well advised to follow the example of your victims, and raise your hands above your heads! At once, please!"

The last three words were ripped out with surprising sharpness, and Kerner and his three henchmen swung round and peered across the room—at the same time obeying the order which had been so peremptorily uttered.

The financier had already recognised the voice of the newcomer, but he seemed to require the confirmation of his sight before he could bring himself to realise the truth.

"Nelson Lee!" he muttered beneath his breath. "Nelson Lee, the detective!"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

FIRE AND CONFUSION!



"EXACTLY!" said Nelson Lee, stepping into the room as he spoke, closely followed by Nipper and Harry Langford. "We appear to have arrived at a very opportune moment!"

The man in the red cloak, strangely enough, seemed delighted to see the detective and his two companions.

"Thank Heaven you have come, Mr. Lee!" he exclaimed fervently. "You have prevented this foreign thief from stealing Mr. Langford's machine, and that is a splendid achievement! I will admit that my friend and I have been using it temporarily for our own purposes—but that is a totally different matter to taking it out of the country, as Kerner intends to do!"

Nelson Lee looked at the speaker curiously. His attitude seemed to be extraordinary, in view of the peculiar nature of the situation, but there could be no doubt that he was serious in what he said. His relief and pleasure at Lee's arrival was not assumed, but genuine.

"Well, that's good news!" said Nipper, with a nod of approval. "We had an idea that we should be too late—but we couldn't have come at a better time!"

This, indeed, was the literal truth, and it was apparent to everyone. Lee and Nipper and Harry had dashed from Gray's

Inn Road in their taxi at almost a breakneck speed, and they had reached the little house on the heath just as Kerner and his men had been breaking down the door.

And the trio had waited, and had cautiously approached the building—Lee making his presence known only when he saw Kerner's threatening attitude towards "Mephistopheles."

But the financier, in spite of the disadvantage at which he found himself, had no intention of taking things quietly. He could see that everything was going against him, and he knew that unless he acted quickly it would be useless to act at all.

He emitted a savage growl, and turned to his men.

"Rush for the door!" he exclaimed grimly. "Come on—follow me!"

He brandished his revolver as he spoke, and took a couple of steps forward. But the three ruffianly confederates stood where they were, undecided what to do. Nelson Lee saw their hesitation, and he quickly took advantage of it.

Crack!

The detective's revolver spoke sharply, and Kerner's weapon was sent spinning from his hand—thus disarming him completely. Lee was now in a position to dominate the situation.

"Don't be a fool, Kerner!" he said sternly. "These men of yours showed more sense than you did, and they did quite right in refusing to make a dash for liberty. Perhaps it will interest you to know that Chief Detective-inspector Lennard, together with a force of men, is on his way here from Scotland Yard. They will be arriving at any moment now, and your best policy is to take matters quietly!"

The financier gave another furious growl. The information which Lee had just imparted almost drove him frantic, for he knew well enough that if he was found here by the police authorities he would be sentenced to a long term of imprisonment.



Nelson Lee broke off as a curious figure came staggering towards them—a mud-splashed figure with a cut and bleeding face.

His one thought was to get away, and with surprising suddenness he turned and flung himself at Nelson Lee. Kerner lost his temper completely, and he flew at the detective like a wild beast—sending his weapon spinning out of his hand instantly.

Lee, of course, was taken unawares—but he grappled with Kerner in a flash. Within three seconds the pair were fighting fiercely—and Kerner's men, seeing the turn of events, at once rushed to their leader's assistance.

Nipper and Harry Langford now joined in, and a battle royal commenced—the seven combatants getting down to business in deadly earnest. It was Lee and Nipper and Harry against Kerner and his three ruffians—the latter trio kicking and scratching in the most savage manner in order to gain the advantage.

Kerner, knowing that his attempt to obtain the Langford apparatus was doomed to failure, only thought of making his

escape, and he urged his men to fight their way out of the room at any cost. And they took him at his word—resorting to any and every means to achieve their object.

Nipper and Harry rushed to Nelson Lee's assistance without hesitating a moment, and they gave a very good account of themselves. Harry was the first to go down—being completely lifted off his feet by a terrific punch from one of the ruffians' fists.

Nipper followed a moment later, having been felled by a brutal kick—a kick which barked his shins, and caused him to groan in agony. It was hopeless to hold their own against such tactics as these, but Nelson Lee was standing up gamely to his opponents.

The detective, in fact, was fighting as he had seldom before. Time after time he sent his tormentors crashing to the ground with clean, rapid drives, and Kerner and his men had had more than enough within the first two minutes.

Just as Nipper and Harry were rising to their feet to renew the attack, he gave the order for his men to flee—and they did so with alacrity. Helter-skelter they charged through the doorway into the blackness of the windy heath—but Nelson Lee, much to Nipper's surprise, made no attempt to follow.

"Let them go," he panted breathlessly. "These other two men are our main objective, and it is they whom we desire to capture. Remember that one of them is Professor Zingrave himself—Good heavens!"

But while the fight had been in progress, Zingrave and his companion had not been idle. Taking advantage of the confusion, they had drawn the Langford machine to the further corner of the room, and Zingrave was now standing behind it—ready to operate it with deadly effect in case of necessity!

Nelson Lee's sudden exclamation had been caused by a burst of flame which had abruptly arisen from the wall close beside him—the wooden wall of the cottage literally breaking out into a mass of flame.

And at the same second Professor Zingrave's silky tones burst upon their hearing.

"You see, Mr. Lee!" he said coolly. "We still have the advantage of you. This apparatus has caused the woodwork to flare up at the touch of a lever, and I warn you that if you approach a step nearer you will be killed by the invisible force which the machine is capable of generating! In order to convince you that I am not exaggerating, I will repeat the demonstration!"

As he spoke Professor Cyrus Zingrave touched a knob here and a lever there upon the uncanny apparatus, and focussed its power upon another portion of the wall.

Instantly a second sheet of flame burst from the spot and roared towards the ceiling!

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE RESCUE OF MR. LANGFORD.



"YOU see?" said the professor blandly. "Perfectly simple, isn't it? This machine is capable of dealing out instant death, and you will be extremely foolish if you attempt to come nearer. Its power is invisible—but utterly beyond comprehension!"

Nelson Lee, as well as Nipper and Harry, were greatly impressed. They needed no further convincing that the apparatus before them was something extraordinarily effective. It was amazing in its action, and appalling in its results.

In a flash it had set fire to the wall of the room in two separate places, and the flames were greedily licking their way ceilingwards, crackling and spluttering and rapidly filling the apartment with dense, choking whirls of smoke.

But even then Zingrave was not satisfied, for he caused the machine to ignite the wall in several more places in quick succession. Instantly more flames and smoke appeared, and the air was filled with a lurid glare.

Nelson Lee could see that in a few moments the room would be uninhabitable, and he turned a grim face to Nipper and Harry.

"This is intolerable!" he exclaimed furiously. "We are simply being made fools of! These crooks have set the place on fire in order to cover their escape, and we must act quickly if we are to prevent that happening—"

"I may as well tell you, Mr. Lee," broke in Zingrave's voice again, "that Mr. Roger Langford is a prisoner in the adjoining room. Seeing that the house is on fire it may be well if you release him—"

"Great heavens!" exclaimed Harry furiously. "Do you mean to say that my father is here—a prisoner?"

"Mr. Langford is certainly a prisoner!" said Zingrave. "You will find him lying on a camp-bedstead, bound hand and foot, and gagged into the bargain!"

Harry was frantic with anxiety upon hearing this news, and he completely forgot the aches and pains he had received during the recent fight. Nelson Lee and Nipper, too, were now solely concerned with the rescue of Mr. Langford, and with one accord they dashed across the room to the locked door of the "prison."

The smoke was now so thick that they could scarcely see, and they were almost choked with the acrid fumes which filled the air. Flames were hissing and crackling furiously all around them; three walls of the room were now burning with great intensity.

There could be no doubt that Professor Zingrave intended the house to burn, and

he had brought about this state of affairs in order to enable him and his companion to escape, just as Nelson Lee had surmised.

For Zingrave knew well enough that Lee would never leave Mr. Langford to perish while there was a chance of saving him, and the wily professor guessed that the detective would be too engrossed in this task to pay much attention to anything else.

It was only another instance of this amazing criminal's clever methods—one of the subtle touches which had made him notorious. The man's audacity and calmness were amazing.

Harry flung himself at the door of his father's prison and then looked at Lee and Nipper with an agonised glance.

"The brutes have locked it and taken the key!" he exclaimed furiously. "We shall have to force our way in, Mr. Lee—and there's not a second to lose! The flames are coming this way with amazing rapidity!"

The young man spoke the truth, for the fire was indeed creeping round the room with fierce, relentless intensity. Huge masses of flame were now pouring through the ceiling at different places, and it could only be a matter of seconds before the roof of the building became involved.

Nelson Lee pulled his handkerchief from his pocket and tied it tightly round his mouth and nostrils, Nipper and Harry following his example. This precaution had now become an absolute necessity, for the smoke and fumes were so dense that they could scarcely see one another at twelve inches' distance.

Then at a word from the detective the trio hurled themselves against the door of the locked room, charging into it with tremendous force.

But it did not yield.

Again and again they were forced to repeat the operation, and each time they did so they had the satisfaction of seeing the door gradually giving way. Almost choked and blinding, they persisted in their efforts, and at last the door burst in with a crashing and splintering of woodwork.

"Thank Heaven!" said Harry fervently, as he landed with a crash upon the floor of the inner chamber. "My dad's safe, Mr. Lee—he's safe!"

Harry pointed frantically towards the camp-bed, which could be seen quite clearly in the comparatively clear atmosphere of the apartment. Mr. Langford, writhing painfully, was staring towards them with wide-open eyes, but he was unable to utter a word on account of the gag which covered his mouth.

Nelson Lee quickly grasped the prisoner's shoulders, while Harry gripped his ankles. Then Mr. Langford was lifted from the bed and carried towards the doorway.

Nipper was standing just against the yawning aperture, watching the seething flames, and as his master and Harry

approached with their burden, he suddenly let out a frantic yell of warning.

"Go back, guv'nor—go back!" he exclaimed. "The roof's falling! Great guns!"

Even as Nipper spoke, a great flaming beam came crashing down and struck the floor outside the doorway, upon the very spot where Nelson Lee and Harry would now have been carrying their rescued prisoner towards the exit.

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE PROFESSOR SCORES.



HARRY LANGFORD shuddered as he stepped back.

"Great Scott!" he gasped, beneath the handkerchief which covered his mouth. "That was a near thing, Mr. Lee! Nipper's warning came only just in time!"

The detective nodded. He and Harry were still carrying the bound form of the prisoner, of course, and in consequence their movements were greatly hampered.

"Our only chance is the window," said Lee tensely, looking at the roaring flames anxiously. "We shall have to be quick, or we shall find ourselves trapped!"

Without a second's loss of time, the helpless Mr. Langford was replaced upon the bed. Then Nelson Lee, having got rid of his burden, devoted his sole attention to disposing of the window-bars.

Seizing a chair, he quickly tore one of the legs from it, and with this implement he hurried towards the window. The casement was only a small one, but it was fitted with four or five iron bars, and these would have to be wrenched from their sockets before an exit could be made.

Using the chair-leg as a lever, the detective frantically set about his task, Nipper pulling and straining at the bars in order to help in their removal.

And all the time the flames were getting nearer and nearer to them, surging in through the doorway and hungrily licking the low ceiling. The heat and smoke were now almost unbearable, but Nelson Lee worked calmly and efficiently, knowing that the removal of the iron bars was their only hope of escaping from that seething inferno.

The fire had taken a hold of the old timbers of the house with astonishing rapidity, and the blaze was a terrifying sight. But for the necessity of rescuing Mr. Langford, Nelson Lee and his two companions could have taken their departure before the danger had become acute; but the time which had been occupied in forcing the door of the inner room and carrying the helpless man as they had done, had hindered their retreat.

The window was the only possible means of getting out of the place, and Lee and Nipper worked with a will, slashing and tearing at the bars with frantic haste.

Their efforts were quickly rewarded, and the iron rods were wrenched from their sockets one after the other. Then Lee directed Harry to skip through, and to hold himself in readiness to receive his father's bound form, which Lee and Nipper grasped, and handed through the open casement.

It had been touch and go, for even as the gallant detective and his brave assistant clambered through the window into the cool night air the flames came surging and roaring after them in a blinding sheet.

Scorched and singed, the pair tumbled upon the ground and staggered towards the spot where Harry had carried his father. And as they turned and looked at the doomed building, the roof fell with a mighty crash, sending a shower of sparks into the heavens, and completely crushing the little apartment they had just vacated.

"Phew!" said Nipper, with a little shiver of horror. "We're lucky, guv'nor! Three more seconds in that place and we should have remained there for good!"

The detective nodded.

"Yes, it was a narrow squeak, young 'un," he returned calmly. "But a miss is as good

as a mile, they say. I'm very thankful that we all managed to get out without any fatalities——"

"Thankful!" repeated Harry Langford, almost with tears in his eyes. "Why, Mr. Lee, my father and I will be indebted to you until the end of our lives for what you have done to-night! Without your help he would have perished in that ghastly furnace!"

The young man's gratitude was genuine and spontaneous, but the famous detective merely smiled. He was wearing a thoughtful expression, and as Harry devoted his attention to releasing his father from his bonds Lee turned to Nipper.

"I can't understand what has detained Lennard and his men," he said. "If they had come earlier things would have been very different—— Well, upon my soul!"

Nelson Lee broke off as a curious figure came staggering towards them out of the smoke which whirled in all directions—a mud-splashed figure with a cut and bleeding face.

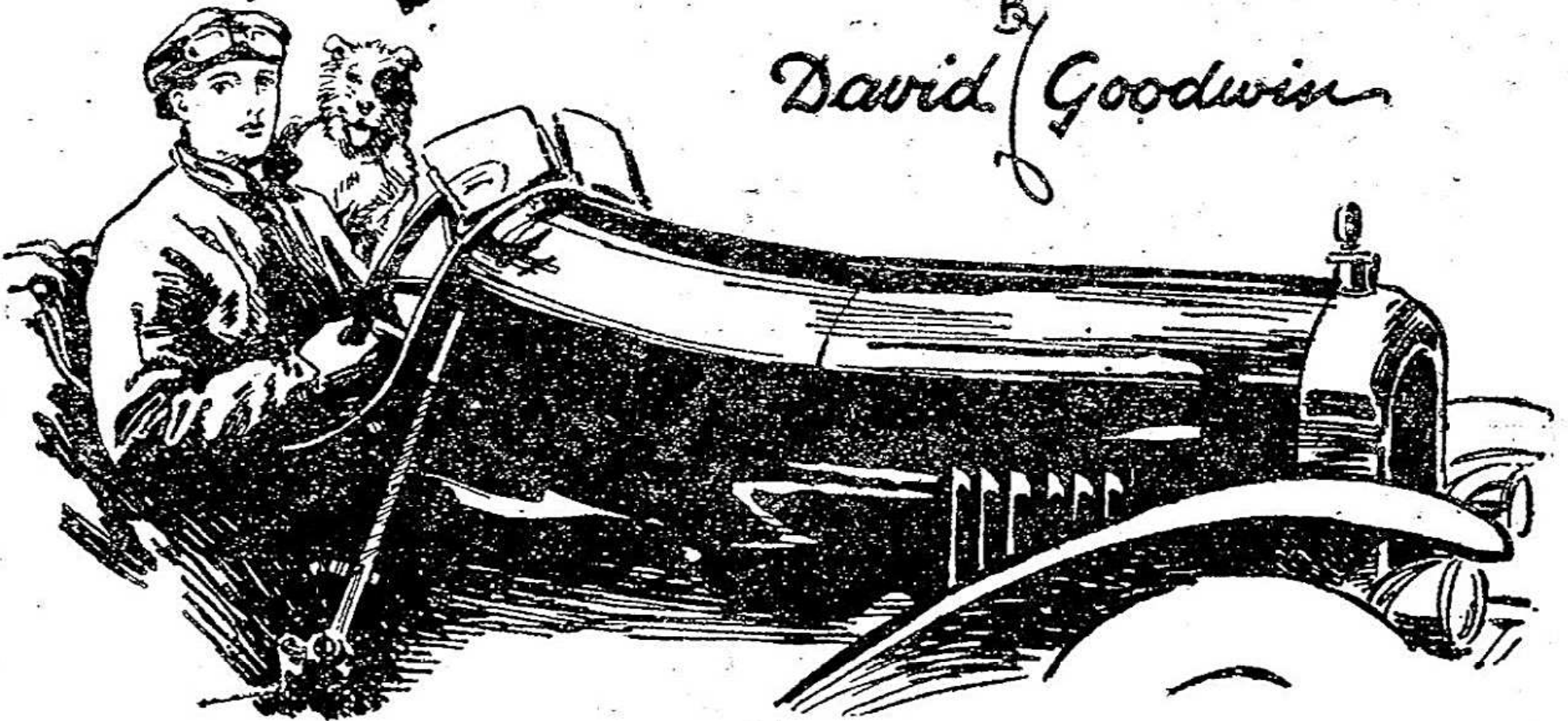
He was reeling drunkenly, and seemed to be almost on the point of collapse. He tottered towards Lee and Nipper, tried to mutter something, and then crumpled up inertly into the detective's arms.

(To be continued next week)

Thrills Galore in this Great Story!

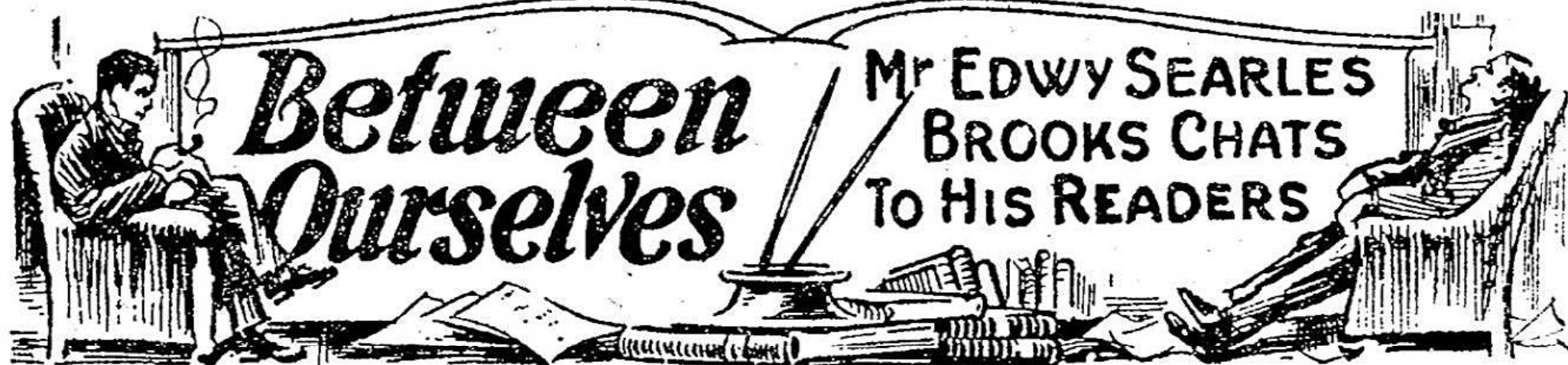
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Mr EDWY SEARLES
BROOKS CHATS
TO HIS READERS

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

Letters received: C. Thompson (Adelaide, South Australia), James Bury (Darwen), William Parker* (Birmingham), Frank Voce Jnr. (Liverpool), Stephen Robinson* (Bingley), L. S. Elliott (East Ham), J. Smyth (Belfast), Willie Donaldson* (Edinburgh), Gracie P. Wilson (Selhurst), A Life-long Reader (Langstone), Frank Taylor (Oldham), Arthur Seville* (Leicester), S. D. (Durham), Jacqueline (Long Crendon), Alfred Newman (Chelmsford), Anonymous (No Address), Archie II (Torrington), S. R. Dimple (Southport), P. Rose* (Tottenham), A Faithful Reader (King's-Langley), J. L. Higson (Clitheroe), Sydney J. Ward* (Bluntisham), A Reader (Leeds), W. L. Thorpe (Aylesbury), Ivy R. S. (Lincolnshire), C. Pantery (Stratford), Joseph Coombs (Lambeth), J. Spalding (Blackburn), Old Reader (Leigh-on-Sea), R. W. Stephens (Cornwall), F. Greenwood (Cricklewood), A Reader (Clapham Common), Sheawb (Bildeston), H. Simpson (Wavertree), Alfred Cooper* (Sheffield), S. Sirrah (Nottingham), J. Napier (Wisbech), W. D. Johnson (Stow-on-the-Wold), B. Deal (Widnes), Frederica Beazley* (Maidenhead), L. W. Burgess (Titchfield).

Thanks, everybody, for your enthusiastic votes regarding the summer series. There is an overwhelming majority in favour of Foreign Adventure—particularly in some tropical zone or other. I haven't made up my mind yet exactly what I shall do, but later on I'll probably drop a hint in these pages. I am sorry I shan't be able to please the few who want a tour of the British Isles. But, after all, the majority of the stories deal with our own shores. So I'm hoping it'll be a bit of a change for everybody to read about other climes.

I'm awfully pleased, C. Thompson, to hear that you think I'm as good an author as Nipper. But considering that I perpetrated all the stories "narrated by Nipper and set down by E. Searles Brooks," the compliment is a double-barrelled one. I'm not sure that I shall excuse your handwriting, even though you did burn your fingers. By the way, it frequently happens that when letters are badly written, their writers tell me that they have squashed their thumb, or burnt their fingers, or twisted their wrist. Very awkward, these little mishaps! I'm not doubting the veracity of these accidents, of course, but it sometimes strikes me as being a little strange.

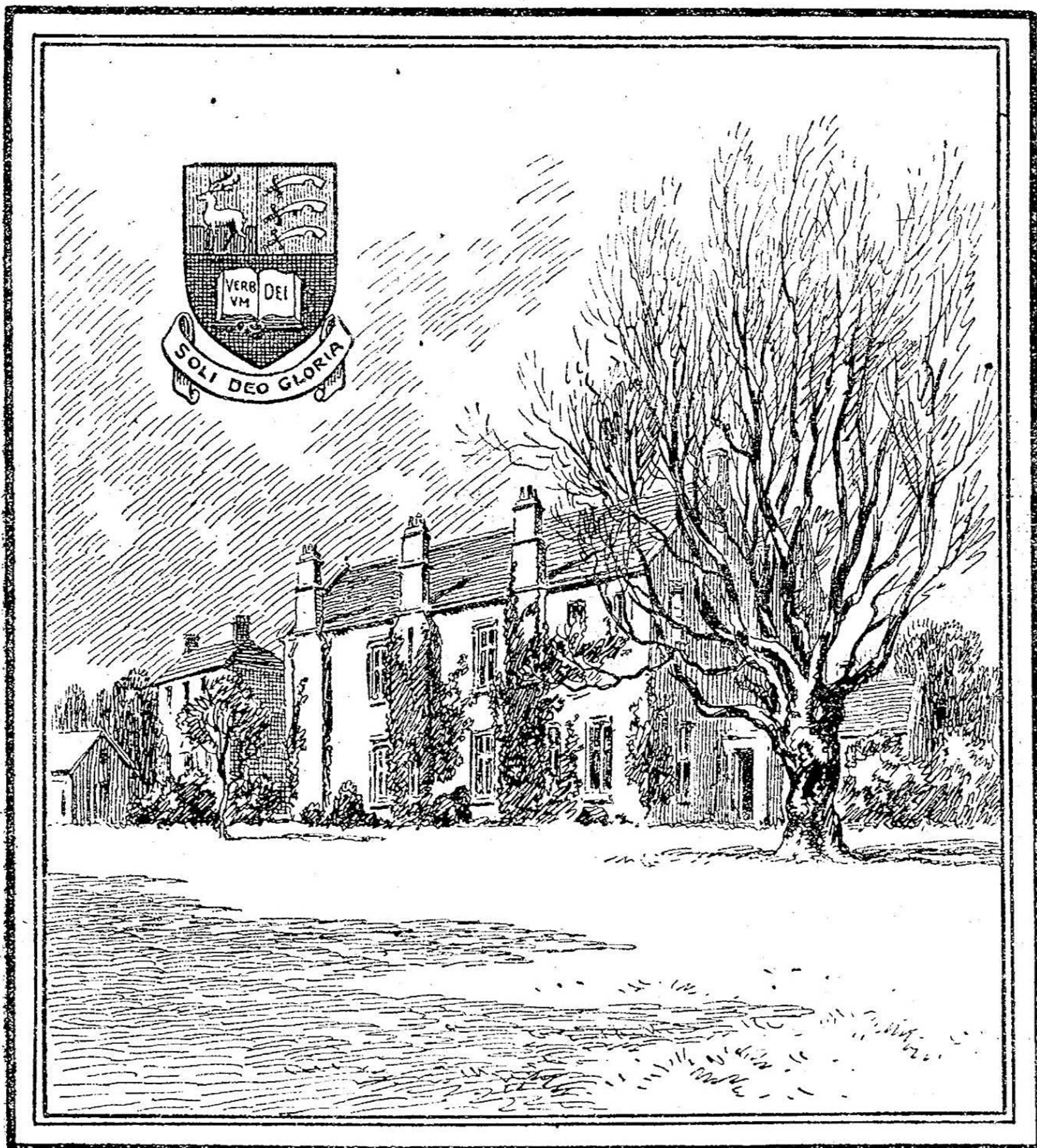
Frank Voce Jnr., quite an old pal of mine, wants me to write a series of football stories, with Handforth as a professional. Well, Frank, I'm not so sure about that. In any case, I can't do anything until the autumn, because I'm busy on a cricket series at present, and after that we shall be having the summer holiday stories, and it's a bit early to settle anything for next September, isn't it?

I think you've got the list fairly correct, L. S. Elliott. As far as I can remember, no other stories of mine have appeared in "The Boys' Friend Library." You've mentioned them all—except, now I come to think of it, one or two which appeared several years ago. Thanks for your offer of back numbers.

Regarding back numbers, I've had many offers, and a few other readers have asked to be supplied. Well, I want everybody to be patient. If I can manage to get a supply of these back numbers in hand, I'll look up all readers who want certain issues (I've got your names filed away and marked), and then I'll do my best to supply your wants.

Sorry I got your name wrong, John Smyth. It was really your own fault, you know, for signing your name a bit carelessly in the first place. It's quite possible that I've mangled a few other readers' names, too. I'm not a professional signature elucidator, you know! And when I get one that

(Continued on page iii of cover.)



OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS SERIES OF ART SKETCHES.

No. 68. BISHOP'S STORTFORD COLLEGE.

Founded in 1863 by Nonconformists, for the education of Nonconformists, and re-constituted in 1904. There are about 320 boys at the school. A general education is given up to the age of 16½, after which a more specialised course is selected. Physical drill is compulsory, and every boy is expected to learn how to swim. The school has twenty acres of playing-fields, where Rugby football and cricket are played.



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

My dear Chums,

It must have been a great surprise to many readers when they found out that the Phantom Protector was none other than our old friend Nipper. Some of my correspondents suggested that this mysterious figure who haunted Grimesby Creepe and his monitors, and watched over the boys of Moat Hollow, was Nelson Lee, Mr. Stokes, and several other persons, but few guessed that it was Nipper in disguise. It was characteristic of Nipper to return to St. Frank's in this quiet and unobtrusive manner. Officially, of course, he is not back at the school yet. But he is not far away, and it is now generally known that he is leading the barring-out at Moat Hollow. With the exception of Tommy Watson, the boys at Moat Hollow are a poor spirited lot, and nothing short of a revolt would ever improve their wretched existence at the hands of old Creepe. Even with such a fine leader as Nipper it will be no easy matter for him to incite the boys of Moat Hollow against their oppressor. For so long have they been crushed that they have little or no fight left in them. Well, we wish Nipper success in his revolt, and if the Fourth can assist in any way we shall be pleased to do so.

NELSON LEE ABROAD.

I understand from Nipper that Nelson Lee is at present somewhere on the Continent on business, and that he will be returning to St. Frank's as soon as he has cleared up the case he is now engaged upon. That possibly explains why Nipper is filling in his time at Moat Hollow. He is, no doubt, waiting for Nelson Lee before he begins again in real earnest at St. Frank's.

NIPPER AND THE CAPTAINCY.

Some few weeks ago when I first made it known that Nipper would be shortly returning to St. Frank's, I offered to resign the captaincy of the Fourth and the editorship of the Mag. in his favour. I have since spoken to Nipper of this intention, but to my surprise he has begged of me to carry on, so that he can devote all his time in helping Nelson Lee in his detective work. I have lately hinted at the proposal that Nelson Lee is going to start a special detective class at St. Frank's, and, in that case, Nipper will have his work cut out in helping the guv'nor. I hear also that Nipper will be in charge of the museum, which will contain not only interesting relics of some of the big cases he and Nelson Lee have been engaged upon, but a complete reference to all the chief criminals of the past and present day, with finger-prints and photographs complete. In fact, we shall be able to boast at St. Frank's of being the first public school to possess a miniature Scotland Yard.

MAG. CONTRIBUTIONS FROM NIPPER.

Since Nipper does not intend to take over the control of the Mag. from me, we shall expect to receive many more contributions from his pen than heretofore. There are few boys who have experienced so many strange adventures as Nipper, and if I can induce him to write up some of these adventures for the Mag. they will form one of our most interesting features. Besides giving us short accounts of strange cases in which he has figured, I am going to ask Nipper to write a few articles on the methods of waging war on criminals, such as identification by finger-prints, handwriting, etc.

Yours as always,

REGGIE PITT.

BIRD HEROINES

By
AUGUSTUS HART

IT is a well-known fact that birds will die in defending their young. But it is nearly always the female bird that does this. The males will fight each other to the death when choosing their mates, but when it comes to protecting their young they are arrant cowards. All they can do is to fly around uttering excited cries, and leave all the fighting to their partners.

Now and then a male bird will prove himself a hero, and die in defending his mate and her eggs, as I have heard of a raven doing, but this is a very rare case.

A naturalist tells us that he once found a whinchat's nest on fire. The little mother bird stuck to her nest, and was trying to beat out the flames, while her lord hovered about at a safe distance. The naturalist put out the flames, and all was peace again.

The same writer tells us that one day he found a robin's nest, containing young, in a tree stump, and that the hen bird was in a state of great excitement. Looking around for the cause, he found it in a weasel, which was trying to locate the nest. He drove the marauder off, and waited to see if it would return. It didn't—while he was there. But it evidently did later. For when he went next morning the poor little mother robin lay dead at the entrance to her house, and all the young had gone. She could have saved herself, as her mate did, by flying off. But she preferred to sacrifice herself for her little ones. Before the enemy could reach them he had to pass over her dead body.

Surely these things are parables, lessons: the birds of the air have their message for us.

MY ADVENTURES WITH HIPPOPOTAMI

By LORD DORRIMORE

2.—A COSTLY ENCOUNTER

MY next adventurous experience with hippos was in East Africa. The friend in whose camp I was staying had bought a great number of sheep and cattle, which were herded close to our tents. While out hunting I was thrown by my donkey, through a careless native boy having loosened the saddle girth and forgotten to tighten it again, and I was dragged over the hard ground before I could get free. My shoulder was dislocated.

The pain made sleep impossible, and I got a native warrior to sit by me and tell me stories. We were suddenly startled by the appearance of a huge hippo. The native shot a poisoned arrow, which went deep into the beast's shoulder, causing it to dash through the fire which was burning in front of our camp. Then it turned and dashed into the herded cattle. Sheep were trampled under foot, over twenty being killed, and many more injured, while the cattle and donkeys stampeded. To make matters worse, leopards appeared upon the scene during the night, and killed nearly forty more sheep, just for the sake of killing, for they made no attempt to eat them.

Next morning the hippo, a big bull, was found dead about a quarter of a mile from the camp. It was worth only a few pounds, and yet its appearance had caused the death of six good milch cows, fifty sheep, and four donkeys! The native "boys" were quite content, however, for they were able to feast themselves upon hippo flesh for a fortnight. The flavour of this meat resembles that of mutton, and the natives prize it highly.

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

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE FIRST INSTALMENT.

Trackett Grim and Splinter, most famous detectives in the world, are on the track of a Chinese secret society. Mr. Theophilus Twiddle is being hunted by a pair of Tongs—in other words, two deadly Chinese Tongs are after him. He has been pinched by the Yellow Terror, the head of the gang, and Trackett Grim and Splinter are in Limehouse, hot on the trail. They are just about to creep into an opium den.

CHAPTER V.

IN THE MIDST OF PERILS.

LIKE shadows of the night, Trackett Grim and Splinter tip-toed their way along the murky passage. Somewhere ahead lay the secret entrance to the opium den, and it was a hundred chances to one that Mr. Theophilus Twiddle would be here. That clue of the sooty foot was unmistakable.

"The men who came down our chimney, Splinter, have been here," said Trackett Grim tensely. "There's no doubt about it! How else could that sooty mark come on the ground? Ah! What is this?"

He stared at a door which faced him. It was a narrow, hidden door which was absolutely indistinguishable from the wall. It was so cunningly contrived that no human eye could detect the secret. Yet Trackett Grim's super-gaze did the trick in a trice.

"Where, sir?" breathed Splinter. "I can't see anything!"

"But I can, Splinter—I see everything!" replied Grim. "Look!"

He pointed to the wall, and Splinter was more puzzled than ever. For half-a-tick he thought his guv'nor was going off his

rocker. But the celebrated detective knew what he was about.

He seized the door-knocker and gave a peculiar rat-tat. Instantaneously, a panel shot back in the door, and an evil yellow face appeared.

"Youee knowee passee wordee?" asked the face, with a hiss.

"Allee samee velly good!" said Trackett Grim. "Me oldee customer. Wantee smokee opium. Open door and be quicke."

The words were hardly out of his mouth before the unseen door swung silently open, and our celebrated pair passed into the opium den.

CHAPTER VI.

THE OPIUM FIENDS.

THE scene was a remarkable one.

After passing down a short passage, Trackett Grim and Splinter found themselves in the opium den. It was a big room, with one or two flickering gas-jets, and there were bunks on every side. These bunks were filled with chaps who were smoking opium with expressions of soppy happiness in their bleary eyes. Opium is rummy stuff to tackle.

An attendant came up to the new arrivals. He was a wizened little Chinaman in a flowing gown. He held out the usual briar pipes and a pouch.

"You smokee?" he asked unemotionally.

But Trackett Grim waved the rotten things aside, and the next instant he had whipped out his six-cylinder Colt. The revolver gleamed wickedly in the subdued electric light.

"Hands up, everybody!" shouted Trackett Grim. "Quick, Splinter, have a look for old Twiddle!"

Splinter leapt to the task. The Chinaman flung up his hands and howled in Chinese at the top of his voice. Many of the

opium smokers hid themselves under the sheets, but those who were too far gone looked at Trackett Grim with dull, listless eyes.

Passing from bunk to bunk, Splinter examined the occupants. And at last he gave a shout of triumph. Mr. Theophilus Twiddle lay there, bound hand and foot, and heavily gagged.

"Save me!" he pleaded despairingly. "They're going to torture me!"

"That's all right!" gasped Splinter. "The guv'nor's here."

These simple words brought such relief to Mr. Twiddle that all the worry left his eyes. Being gagged he couldn't express his thanks audibly, for it was impossible for him to utter a word.

With one heave, Splinter yanked the client out of the bunk, and the next second his ropes were cut and he was free. In the meantime, half-a-dozen Chinamen had planted themselves in the entrance, and they all wielded wicked-looking daggers.

"Stand back!" roared Trackett Grim. "The first man who advances will never live to tell the tale! Come on, you chaps—we've got to make a dash for it!"

It seemed to Splinter that their end had come. The Chinamen—all members of the Tong—made one determined rush and swept towards the intruders.

CHAPTER VII.

THE ROOM WITHOUT A FLOOR.

TRACKETT GRIM twirled round like lightning.

"This way!" he roared. "Follow me!"

With his usual bravery he led the way, and rushed straight at a door at the other end of the opium den. Mr. Twiddle and Splinter followed, with the Chinese Tongmen hard at their heels. It was a tense moment.

Crash!

With one blow of his fist Trackett Grim smashed the door down, and charged through into inky blackness. Mr. Twiddle and Splinter followed before they could stop themselves. And all three got a terrific surprise.

For, instead of walking into another room, they dropped sheer. Down, down, into the murky depths. It seemed ages before they reached the bottom. And then, with a terrific splash, Trackett Grim dived beneath a lot of water.

As he bobbed up for the first time, Mr. Twiddle landed on his head, and down he went again. He came up for the second time, and Splinter nearly brained his guv'nor with his left heel.

But Trackett Grim took no notice of these trifles. Being a man of iron, such adventures as this were mere child's play to

him. He pulled out his electric torch, switched it on, and found that they were in a sewer. It was pouring with rain outside, so the sewer was running like a mill race.

"Hurrah!" panted Grim. "We can escape! Follow me, and we shall soon be out in the Thames."

The tide was so tremendous that the trio were forced to go with it, whether they wanted to or not. They were swept along like corks in the gutter. And, under Trackett Grim's guidance, they plunged out of the sewer and fell with a splash into the Thames.

They had escaped from the Chinese Tong!

CHAPTER VIII.

OFF TO CHINA.

BY a piece of luck, an empty boat came drifting down the Thames just at that moment, and our heroes were soon aboard. Trackett Grim seized the oars, and pulled for the shore.

"I cannot express my gratitude, Mr. Grim!" exclaimed Mr. Theophilus Twiddle. "You have saved me from a living death! Those yellow dogs meant to take me to China. Years ago I pinched one of their silly idols, and they won't be satisfied until I've been sacrificed in one of their fat-headed temples. Thank goodness you've saved me!"

"I shall protect you always," declared Trackett Grim. "Providing, of course, you pay for it. When we get home you must tell me your story in full, and then I will make preparations to save you—"

At this moment Splinter gave a yell of warning.

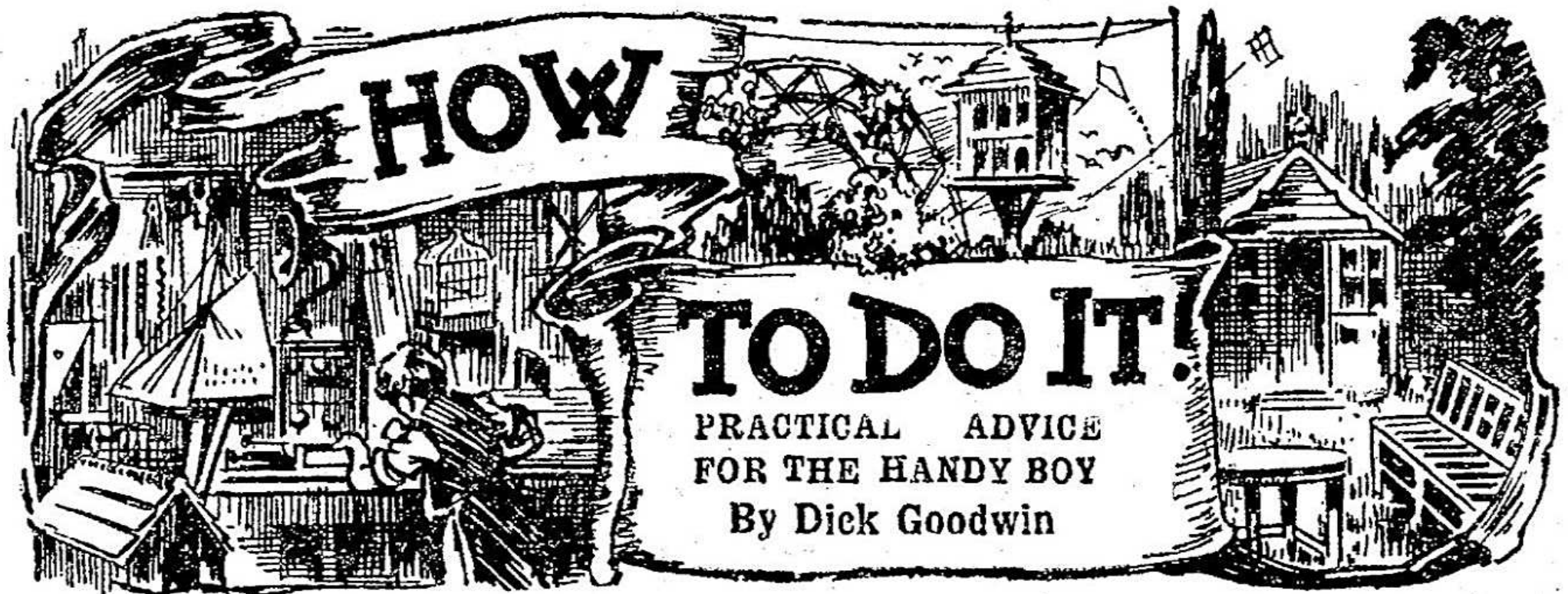
Unseen in the darkness of the night, a huge Chinese junk was coming down the river. It was the battleship of the Tong! Taking advantage of the blackness, the vessel had crept up the Thames, and was in the heart of London!

And then, at that moment, ropes came hissing down from the junk's deck, and Trackett Grim, Splinter and Mr. Twiddle were caught in the toils. Fighting desperately, they were pulled upwards, hauled on board, and thrust below into a prison with steel bars.

And the Yellow Terror himself stood gloating over them.

"Allee samee good!" he chuckled, rubbing his hands together. "We sail for China at once! You all be put to the torture, you rotters! Heap finee sacrifice for Tin-Kan, the Idol of the Mah-Jongg-Tong!"

DON'T miss next week's marvellous account of stirring adventures by Trackett Grim and Splinter in the wilds of China.—AUTHOR.



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

Illustrating and Decorating the Pages

ALTHOUGH it is possible to illustrate a hectograph printed magazine by drawing in coloured inks, it is difficult to do the same thing if a cyclostyle is used. There is, however, a good method of making illustration blocks suitable for cover and title page, and also for initial letters. For use with either method of printing, the illustrations and decorations can be done on the paper first, and then it can be printed in the usual way.

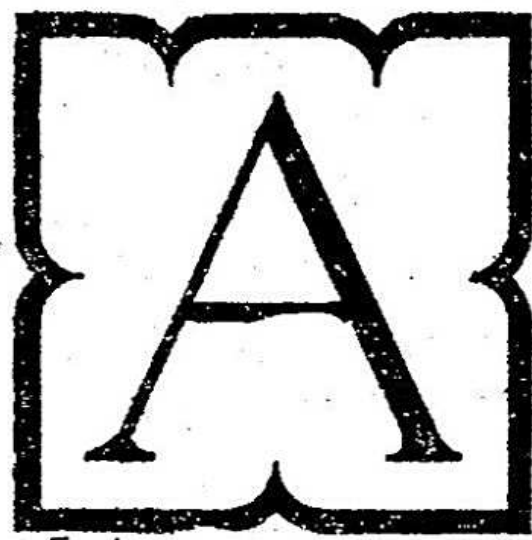


Fig. 1

As an example of the method of making blocks, a simple decorated letter has been taken, as at Fig. 1. The block itself is shown at Fig. 2. First of all obtain some spare pieces of linoleum, the thicker the better, with a plain smooth surface. If it is not quite flat, place it in a press or under some heavy books and leave it to flatten. A drawing is now made of the required illustration, and a tracing made with Indian ink on Japanese tissue—as used by typists—not tracing paper.

PREPARING THE LINO.

The linoleum is cut a little larger than the drawing, and a piece of ply-wood cut to the

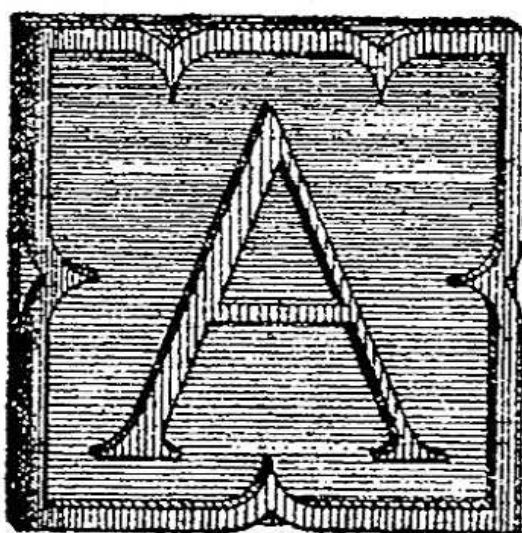


Fig. 2

same size. Coat the back of the linoleum with seccotine, and press it evenly on the ply-wood, allowing it to set quite hard. The surface of the linoleum should be quite smooth, and, if necessary, it can be made quite level as well as smooth by rubbing it with a piece of fine glasspaper attached to a flat piece of wood. The surface of the linoleum is now coated with paste or thin glue, and the tissue paper with the design on placed on it and carefully smoothed down.

The cutting is done with a sharp knife, as at Fig. 3. A strip of fine emery cloth should be mounted on a strip of wood for use as a stop in keeping the edge of the knife perfectly sharp. The knife should be held at right-angles to the side of the cut, but it may incline slightly inwards to increase the width of the cut towards the bottom. On no account should the knife undercut the top edge.

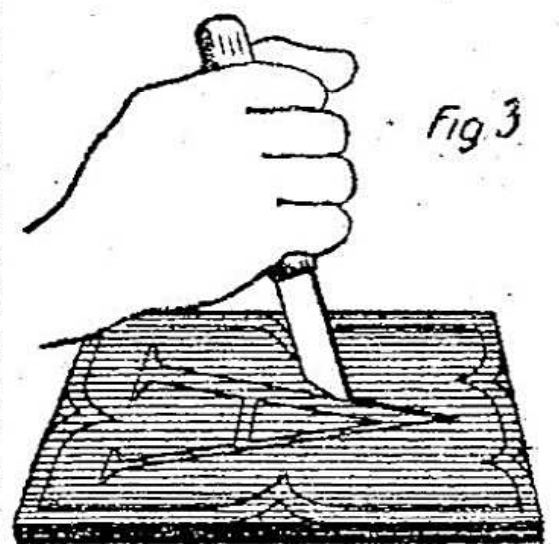


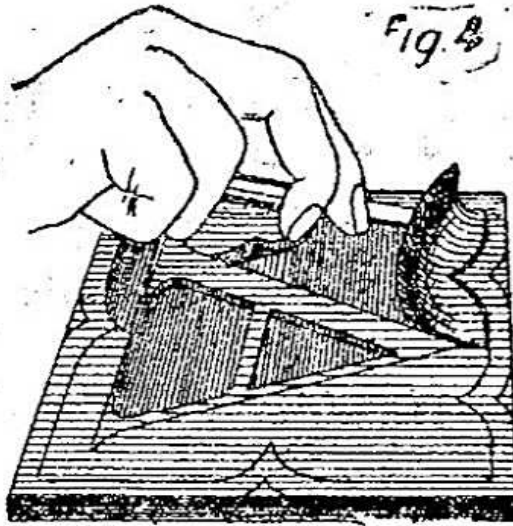
Fig. 3

REMOVING THE WASTE.

The waste portions of the block are removed with the knife, as at Fig. 4, care being taken that the portions of the linoleum forming the design are not damaged by a slip of the knife. The illustration shows the whole of the thickness of the material removed, but there is really no need for this, if a depth of $\frac{1}{8}$ in. is reached.

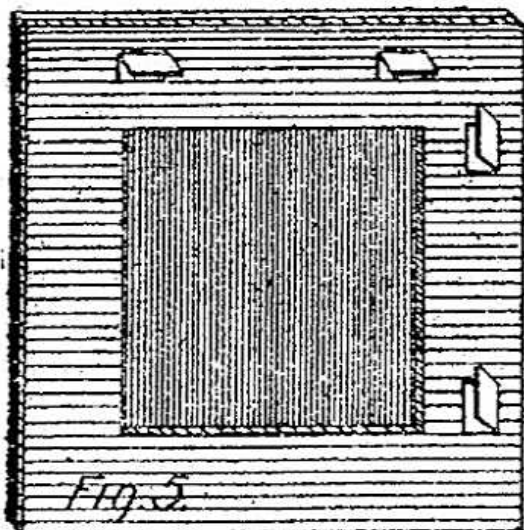
The block is now ready for printing, and to aid this process, a frame should be prepared similar to that shown at Fig. 5. The centre

hole is equal to the outside of the block, and the thickness of the upper layer should be slightly smaller than the combined thickness of the block. The bottom can be of ply-wood of any thickness. The dimensions of the surface should be larger than the size of the paper to be printed on, so that four paper guides can be glued on the top, these guides act in registering the correct position of the paper for each impression.



INKING THE BLOCK.

The block can be inked in two ways, either with printers' ink applied with a composition roller, or with a stencil brush. The latter method is quite satisfactory in use, and is suitable for use with printers' ink, Indian ink, or colours; the two latter mediums should be mixed with a little rice paste in order to make them stick to the surface of the block and



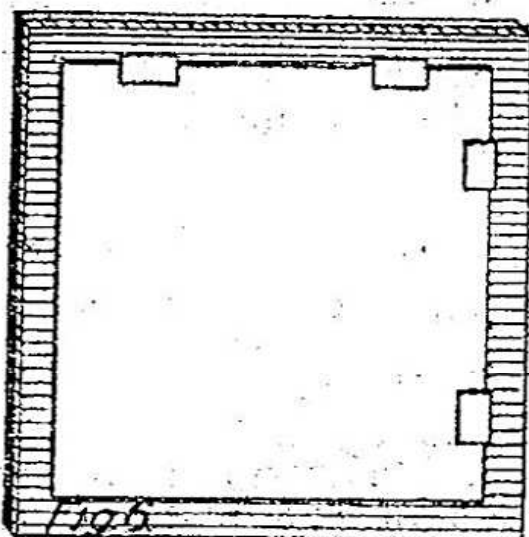
transfer easily to the paper. Soluble powder colours should be used, but ordinary water colours can be used if moistened with paste instead of water. Great care must be taken that every part of the block containing the design is covered with the inking medium, probably it will be

necessary to press two or three sheets before a really satisfactory impression is produced.

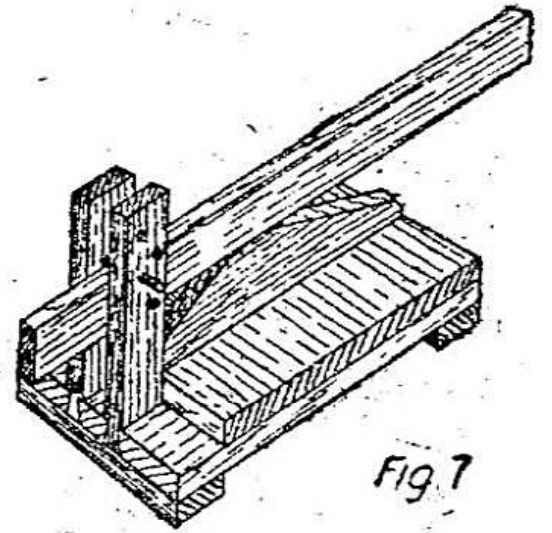
The best paper to use is that used for duplicating, as it is somewhat porous; it is also the best for use with either the hectograph or the cyclostyle. It should not be too porous or rough. With the hectograph surface, a rough-surface paper will soon cover the surface of the graph with a fine dust. The printing paper will give the best results when it is slightly damp; this condition can be produced by placing a few sheets of the paper between damp blotting paper in layers and placing under press.

PRINTING THE BLOCK.

The block ready for printing or proofing, as it is termed, is shown at Fig. 6, the sheet of paper being covered with a pad formed of several thicknesses of blotting paper. An ordinary letterpress makes an ideal printing-press for this work. They are somewhat out-of-date for



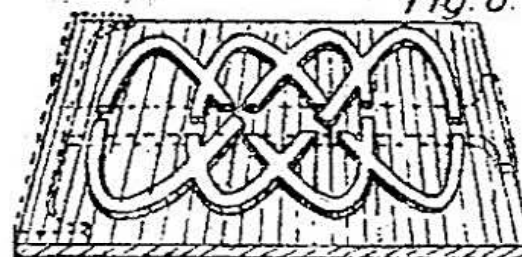
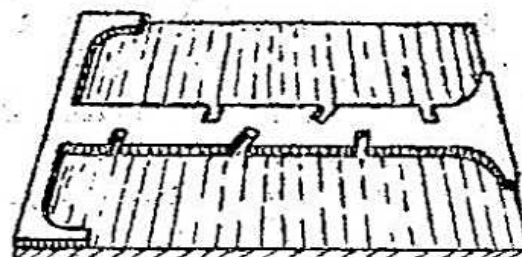
ordinary office work, and can be picked up very cheaply. A linen press can also be used, or one can be made by using a spare bench screw in a similar manner. A useful form of press is shown at Fig. 7. This can be made to any convenient size, as its construction is quite simple and evident from the drawing. The arm should be long enough to exert a good pressure. For a base of 12 in. by 15 in., the arm should be about 3 ft. long, and made of hardwood at least 2½ by 1½ in.



It is quite possible to make effective prints without a press by using a baren or rubbing pad. The pad should be made of stout leather, at least 4 in. in diameter, and a handle should be sewn on so that it can be held firmly. The method is to rub the back of the paper with a zig-zag motion, so that every part of it comes into contact with the ink covered block beneath.

COLOUR PRINTING.

Colour printing in two or more colours is only a matter of making separate blocks for each colour. A suggestion is given at Fig. 8 for a



letter T, decorated with a simple strap-work ornament. The letter is in one colour, and the ornament in another. In preparing the blocks, the original should be coloured as desired, and tracings made of the portions in each colouring, these being cut out. Success

depends mainly on correct registration of each print, but this will not be difficult with all blocks of the same size and fitted in a frame.

The block-printed pages should not be printed on the hectograph or the cyclostyle until they are quite dry, and when all the work is completed, the sheets can be sewn or wired together.

NEXT WEEK

GOODWIN

begins a new series of articles dealing with

MODEL AIRCRAFT

The first of these articles tells you all about

PAPER GLIDERS—

How to Make and Fly Them.



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.)

C. E. RILEY (Sevenoaks): If I've got your second initial wrong don't blame me. It looks more like an "E" than anything else in the alphabet, so I've put that. And now your bad writing's lost you a proper reply.

JOSEPH JAGO (Redruth): All right, you're in touch with me now. So let's have that nice long letter you have promised me. You're quite right—I've got so many letters to answer that I've got to cut replies down this week.

STANLEY FAULKNER (Waterlooville): Of course I ought to skipper the Remove. Everybody knows that. But the fat-heads here never give me a chance to shine. So St. Frank's is like a gold ring with the diamond missing.

H. WOOD & CO. (Tottenham): You chumps! Fancy stopping the Old Paper just because Nelson Lee and Nipper were away for a bit. Such disloyalty as that that doesn't deserve an answer from me at all. So you won't get one!

A GIRL READER (Macclesfield): Church and McClure don't have a trying time at all. They've got me for a leader, so what more do they want? I do all the trying, and they finish where I leave off—or get biffed.

BOOK BUG (Sydney, N.S.W.): You're as bad as the Americans! They call all insects bugs. I'm glad you like the Old Paper so much, but sorry you don't class yourself any higher than a "down under" insect! You'll have Willy after you!

A.J.W.M. (Toorak, Melbourne): I haven't got much room for anybody this week. So I'm going to save a bit of space, and pay you out at the same time by ignoring your letter! That's what you get for doubting my sanity!

CATHERINE JONES (North Yass, N.S.W.): Why should Irene object to your writing to me? She's too broad-minded for such piffle! Thanks for your nice letter, Catherine, and I'm coming over to see those Blue Mountains of yours some day.

ROD BACON (Bendigo, Victoria, Australia): So you've got to ride about twelve miles for the Old Paper every week, and you think it's worth it! That's great! I hope you'll be just as enthusiastic after reading about us for another four years.

LLOYD COWDELL (Melbourne): What next! You call be a bear, and think my Trackett Grim stories are mad. Then on the top of it all you ask me to give Irene your love. You can go and eat coke, you cheeky rotter! Nerve!

JOHN D. TRESTRO (Melbourne): Your letter's too full of questions for me to answer when I'm pushed for room like this. Do be reasonable, John! Nipper may be a ventriloquist, but he won't know much about it till I start teaching him.

JULIUS HERMAN (Capetown, South Africa): Boys will be boys, you know. And you can't expect them all to be grammatical, even at St. Frank's. If I was a master and Irene my pupil, I'd give up my seat to her any old time.

DOT FLACK (Enfield): Is this reply quick enough for you? But although you say so many nice things about me I'm not going to give you any more space than the others. But write again, Dot, and tempt me once more!

ALBERT NOTT (Poplar): As soon as I'd read your letter I chucked it in the trash basket, and if Church hadn't fished it out and reminded me of my promise to reply to everyone you wouldn't have got this nice answer, you insulting ass!

ROY HEARNE (Bath): How long have you been reading the Old Paper? Not for

long, I'll swear, or you'd know that St. Frank's was one of our leading public schools. As to where it stands, continue reading and you'll soon discover.

MAY (North Walsham): You've got more sense than your brother, May, and he'll be sorry one day that he gave the Old Paper the chuck. Presently he'll read one, and then be after you for your back numbers. Do write me again, May.

HARRY WHARTON (Exeter): The postmark gave you away. Besides, your handwriting's not a bit like Harry Wharton's. What's the good of asking silly questions? You know Nipper's real name as well as I do. The question is, what's yours?

GEORGE G. P. V. A. N. CLARKE (Portsmouth): Next time you write me, my lad, just put that name of yours in full. Then it'll take all the space, and I shan't have to puzzle my brains what to say to you, like I've had to do this time.

G. A. BEWLEY (Bletchington): This is easy. To your newsagent: Please see that G. A. Bewley has the Old Paper regularly in future.—E. O. Handforth. There! Show him that! If it doesn't make him tremble, nothing will!

J. REDMOND (Canning Town): You can tell your six pals that just because you asked me so nicely, and to give everybody an extra special treat, I've got round the Editor to put in special long T.G. instalments last week and this.

FRANK HYDE (Nuneaton): I've given Fullwood and Long those biffs for you. About your autograph album. You can send it along if you like. But Church and McClure are so careless with my things that I can't promise you'll see it again.

SIGNAL-BOX LAD (Manchester): By George! You ARE an enthusiast. Keep on hoping about those back numbers of the Old Paper. I've got Church and McClure busy on the job, and perhaps I'll have some good news for you soon.

CHARLES O'DONNELL (Dublin): My dear ass, if I wasn't in the stories every week the Old Paper would expire in no time. I'm glad you realise the amazing cleverness of the Trackett Grim tales, as I'm too modest to praise them myself.

X.Y.Z. (E.C.2.): Can't you think of any more names to call me? My T.G. tales are trash, are they? And you're coming here to punch my nose if I don't reply! Well, I'm not going to answer your rot! No, keep your threat, if you dare!

KENNETH R. CRONIN (Bath): Of course you'll buy the Old Paper till you die! It's the only paper in the world publishing those wonderful adventures of the celebrated Trackett Grim and

Splinter. So what else can you do, brother goalie?

GLADYS E. S. (Birmingham): Nipper may be the best captain the Fourth ever had, but you wouldn't think that if I'd had my proper chance as skipper. The best chaps often remain quietly in the background. But it's no good grumbling.

G. (Upper Norwood): Of course you can rely on me to tell you the truth. But if you've been reading the Old Paper for six years, and have such a high opinion of it, how can you doubt the reality of St. Frank's College? You'll doubt my reality next!

JACK MONSELL (Oldham): I don't care if you've read the Old Paper for fifty-five years. If you ARE a fathead, why shouldn't I call you one? Your last letter proves that I was right. What's more, you're an insulting jackass! How's that?

S. SIRRAH (Nottingham): Yes. Bannington has a football team in the English League. But if you want to see some tiptop footer in our part of the country, come and see me keeping goal for St. Frank's!

DEADWOOD DICK (Leicester): Of course you want more Trackett Grim and Splinter! Don't I jolly well know it. Well; I've given you all a double dose of them in the last two numbers, and if you were Dick Turpin you couldn't expect more.

WILLY (Belfast): That's not nonsense about me having a heart of gold. It's almost as good as an Irish heart, so it must be all right, because you can't beat those, you know. I expect you've gone potty over "The Yellow Terror."

CHEESE-RIND (East Grinstead): I've given those notes of yours to Archie, Willy, and Reggie, and I must say your drawing of the Old Mill is pretty good. But you spoil yourself by boasting. Your school team wouldn't get a look in against ours!

ETHEL (Toronto): There's been such a run on those Portrait Gallery numbers that I'm not sure whether I can get you the first six. But I'm having a good try, and if you don't get them before you see this, keep on hoping.

M. EATON (West Hallam): That drawing of Irene you sent me is jolly good. I daren't show it to her, because I know she'd want to pinch it. So I've stuck it in my album for safety. When did you see her to get such a good likeness?

A. W. WIGLEY (Battersea): You'll get all those sports particulars from the Old Paper if you keep on reading it. Be sure to write me again when you've got into your new home, and then I'll tell you all about "John Martin." Cheerio!

TED.

Who Wants a Study Mate?

Some Bitter Complaints Against Larry Scott

By a Sufferer—HAROLD DOYLE

GOODNESS knows I'm not a fibber, and when it comes to general matters, I suppose I'm about as truthful as any other chap. No decent fellow likes telling deliberate whoppers.

Teddy Long, for example, couldn't speak the truth if he tried. But it seems to me that it's almost as bad to be the opposite. Take Larry Scott, for example. He and Yung Ching are my study mates. I'm not saying anything against Larry in a nasty spirit, but I wish he wouldn't be so fond of the truth! The fathead can't help it, of course—for some extraordinary reason he trots out the candid truth every time.

And, I can tell you, it's jolly awkward now and again. Look what happened a fortnight ago. My uncle came down for a few hours, and I persuaded him to have tea in Study K, and tipped the wink to Larry Scott and Yung Ching to be on their best behaviour.

My Uncle George is a nice old chap, but he's got a bee in his bonnet about tidiness. Unless a chap has got a crease in his bags, and a spotless collar, and well brushed hair, he gives him the cold eye. As for getting a tip, it's hopeless unless you pander to him a bit.

So, naturally, I warned Larry well in advance, and told him to be smart—not that he's usually anything else. That afternoon I felt awful, all dressed and stiff and absolutely disgustingly clean. I'll admit I'm a bit careless as a rule, and why not? How can a chap enjoy life with a crease in his trousers?

Well, my Uncle George came to tea as merry as a sandboy, and he cocked his eye over the study and took us all in, and said that we were all looking jolly fine. And then, of course, Larry calmly goes and messes the whole thing up—after I'd been going about in torture for two hours.

"This is what I like to see," says my Uncle George, nodding. "Smartness! That's the word, eh?" he goes on, bashing Larry on the shoulder. "I suppose you're always neat and tidy like this, boys?"

It wouldn't have mattered if he'd bashed me on the shoulder, because I should have known what to answer. But, of course, Larry simply shook his head, and put his foot in it at once.

"I'm afraid not, sir," he sings out, in that horribly truthful way of his.

"Afraid not?" says my Uncle George, frowning. "Do you mean to tell me that Harold has dressed himself up like this especially for me?"

"Not at all, uncle!" I shoved in hastily.

"I'm talking to your friend, Harold!" says my uncle sharply. "Now, my boy, tell me the truth about Harold!"

Naturally, that did it. When Larry tells the truth, he tells it. Not partially, but the whole giddy lot. I sat there like a gibbering idiot. Out comes the whole story. All about my baggy trousers, ink-stains, crumpled collar, ruffled hair, and all the rest of it. I nearly had a fit. Until Larry trotted it all out like that, I hadn't had the ghost of an idea that I was so untidy.

And my Uncle George simply gave me a shrivelling look, told me off properly, and buzzed off. And I didn't click as much as a tanner. It wasn't any good having a row with Larry—he hadn't done it maliciously. That's the worst of the chap, he can't help speaking the truth.

He's always the same, too. Only three days ago Larry and I were going down the lane and we met two or three of the Moor View girls. Winnie Pitt was one of them, and she was looking simply stunning in a new sports coat—one of those orange-coloured jazzy affairs. She could see we had spotted it.

"It came down this morning," she told us. "Do you like it?"

"Gorgeous!" I replied promptly.

But Larry, naturally, doesn't think the same. Said it was too highly coloured, and that it spoilt the look of her complexion. Then when she began to press him, the ass got absolutely drivelling. Said the coat was cut all wrong, and hadn't got the right buttons, and that it was trimmed with imitation fur. I believe it was, as a matter of fact, but that last bit did it.

The girls simply gave us an icy glare, and now they won't speak to me at all. Just as if I'm to blame! And Larry didn't even know that he'd done anything wrong!

That's him all over—always trots out the truth, as blunt as you like, and gets people's backs up. He doesn't mean to, but there you are. If anybody wants him for a study mate, I'm always ready to swop.

He's a nice, easy-going chap—one of the best—but he's driving me off my nut with worry. I'm always afraid to go out with him, and his truthfulness is gradually turning my hair grey. Who wants him? Don't all shout at once, but the sooner somebody applies the better!

(Continued from page 30.)

looks like a jigsaw puzzle, I just put down what I think it resembles.

Awfully sorry to correct you, Mrs. Wilson, but you're wrong when you state that Eileen Dare married Captain Masters at the conclusion of the Combine Series, some years ago. She was in love with him, certainly, and in the "Phantom of Tregellis Castle," I distinctly stated that Eileen Dare and her fiancé, Captain Masters, were among the guests. Later on, in the following summer series, and in a story called "S.O.S." (No. 160, June 29th, 1913), there appears the following paragraph: "She was engaged to be married to one of the finest chaps I'd ever met—Captain Masters, of the R.A.F." So, you see, Eileen hasn't got a husband. A long engagement, eh? If it comes to that, my schoolboys have been a long time in the Fourth, haven't they? Please think it over.

Both "A Lifelong Reader" and H. Simpson, are as anxious as L. S. Elliott for me to write some more stories for "The Boys' Friend Library." Well, there's one in hand now, as I think I mentioned last week, and I'll try to turn out a fairly regular supply. But with the St. Frank's yarns in the Old Paper longer than ever (as they will be within a few weeks), I shall have a bit of a tussle to do it. By the way, H. Simpson, that letter of yours was particularly nice, and although you are correct in saying that detective stories were my first love, I must admit that it is the school story which now attracts me most. I've grown to know my own characters so well that I should feel utterly lost without them. I wish you all success in your B.Sc. final. Will you ask those acquaintances of yours, who condemn my yarns, to glance at these notes?

Now then, Acquaintances, I'm sure you're sportsmen! Before you cast my stories aside, unread and condemned, please be good enough to read just ONE—this week's, for example. You may not like it, but I hope you will. In any case, you'll be in a better position to judge, won't you?

Thanks, Jacqueline, for your nice letter. I should certainly take your schoolmistress a copy of the Old Paper, as she requested. If she is as broad-minded as I imagine, she won't raise any objection to your being a reader.

I've got a letter here from somebody—a lady, I think—who gives no name, and no address. There's a reference to "Our Dumb Friends" and Willy Handforth's pets in it. Perhaps you'll write again, so that I can give a more adequate reply. I can't quite understand that reference to Willy's pets.

I say, Archie the Second, you're not quite fair, are you? After saying that you are entirely against taking the St. Frank's boys to foreign parts, you state it as your opinion that the adventures in the Tropics are too far-fetched for words. But you also write this: "Personally, I have not read the adventures at all that take them away from England, with the exception of the American tour, which was really good." My hat! How the dickens can you tell me the tropical stories are too far-fetched if you haven't read them? You're not relying on what those friends of yours say, are you?

I've just noticed, Faithful Reader, that you've made the same mistake regarding Eileen Dare, as Mrs. Wilson. There's no need for me to give you a long paragraph. Please refer back to what I have said to Mrs. Wilson.

Thanks, J. L. Higson, for those sketches. They are exceedingly clever, especially the tiny drawing of Handy on the warpath. Smith-Thompson will have to look to his laurels, for you have certainly gone one better. You ought to go in for black-and-white work as a career, Higgie. That map of yours is good, too, and I hope St. John's is flourishing, as it deserves.

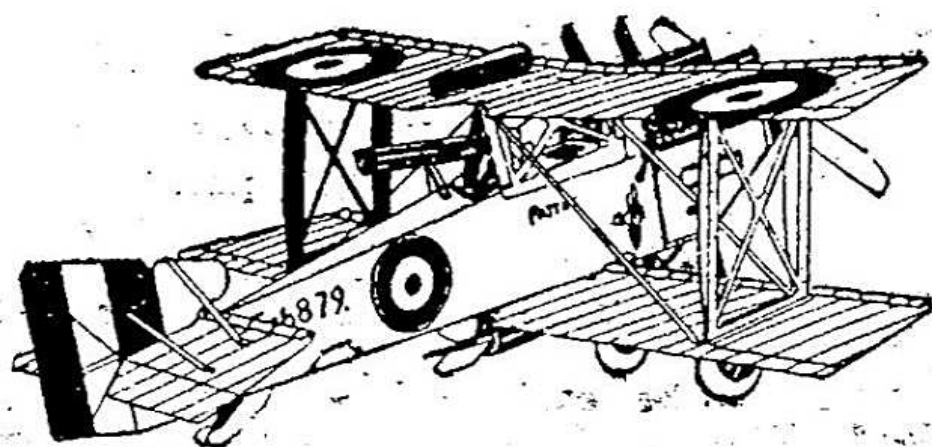
Your elder brother doesn't know what he's talking about, Joseph Coombs. Because you're sixteen, he calls you a big boob, and says that you ought to be ashamed of yourself for reading such trash as the Old Paper! Tell him that you are in good company, for there are thousands of adult readers, many of them mothers and fathers. What on earth has age got to do with it? One might just as well say that a boy or girl ought not to read the Classics! Plenty of grown-ups take a keen pleasure in reading boys' stories of all kinds. That pal of yours who told you all these answers are imagined by myself is on the wrong track. And so are you—for you admit that you have an idea that you won't get an answer. I hope you'll change your opinion after this. By the way, I hope you've got hold of a good job by now.

You're wrong, J. Spalding. I'm afraid I must plead guilty to being responsible for ALL the stories. There's nobody else on the job—Honest Ijun! Thanks muchly for your nice compliments.

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