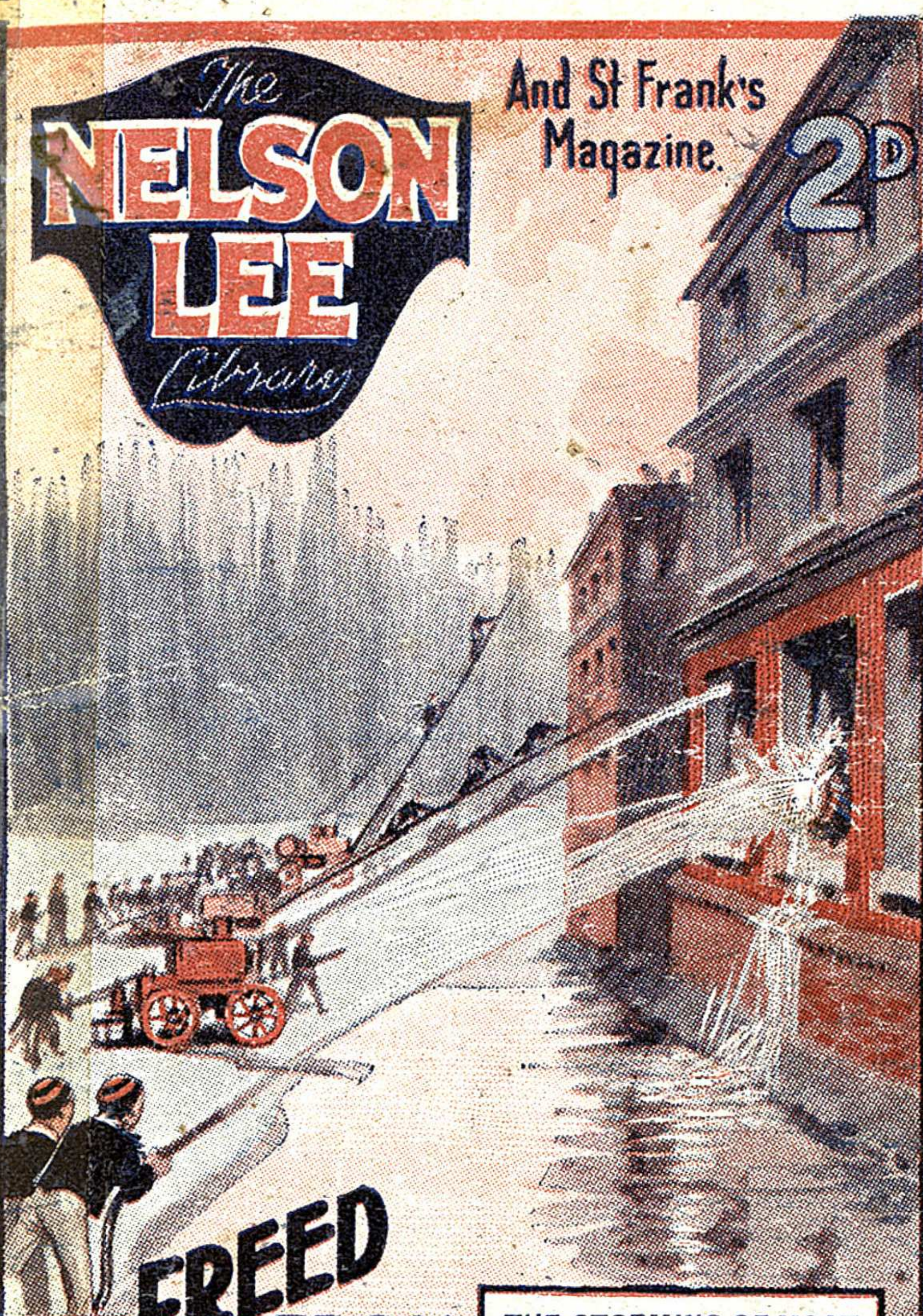


GLORY OF THE BATTLE OF MOAT HOLLOW!

The
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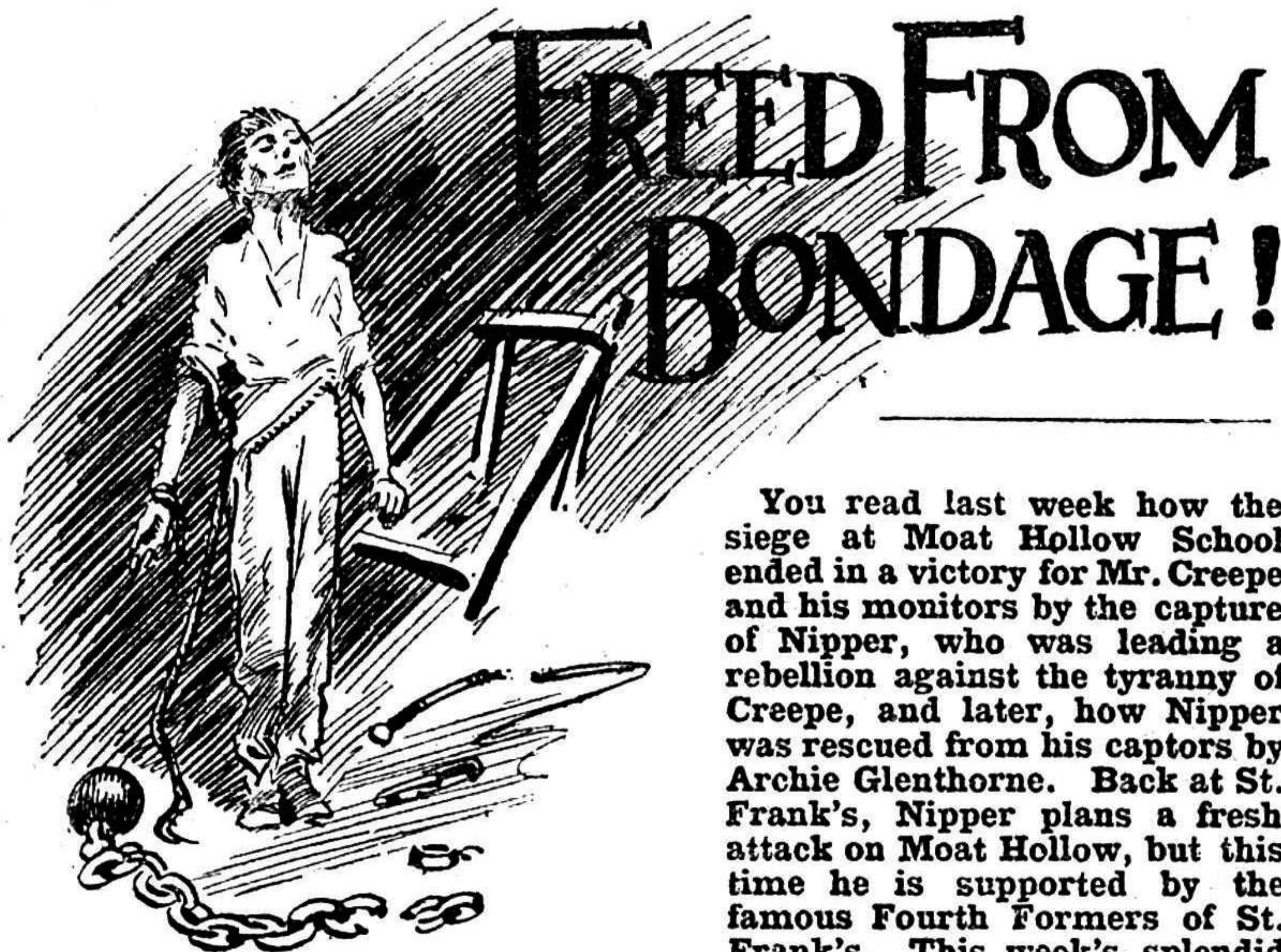
**THE STORMING OF MOAT
HOLLOW!**

The picture above is taken from
this week's grand long story of how
the Boys of St. Frank's rescue the
Moat Hollow boys from the tyranni-
cal Mr. Creepe.



Crack !

A shot rang out on the morning air, and Nipper jerked violently sideways, lost his balance, and toppled headlong over the parapet.



You read last week how the siege at Moat Hollow School ended in a victory for Mr. Creepe and his monitors by the capture of Nipper, who was leading a rebellion against the tyranny of Creepe, and later, how Nipper was rescued from his captors by Archie Glenthorne. Back at St. Frank's, Nipper plans a fresh attack on Moat Hollow, but this time he is supported by the famous Fourth Formers of St. Frank's. This week's splendid

yarn describes the final overthrow of Creepe by Nipper and his chums at St. Frank's, and so brings to an end the stirring Moat Hollow series. Next week will begin the new St. Frank's stories greatly increased in length.

THE EDITOR.

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

CHAPTER I.

THE TEN-THIRTY RELIEF MAN.

EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH sat up in bed with a jerk.

"Hallo! Just chiming the quarter-past," he murmured. "I shall have to get a move on!"

He hopped out of bed and groped for his clothes. It wasn't late—only ten-fifteen, to be exact, and the prefect on duty hadn't been gone more than a few minutes after seeing lights out. But most of the Fourth-Formers in the Ancient House dormitory were asleep.

"I shall just do it!" said Handforth crisply.

"You'll have to look sharp," came the voice of Reginald Pitt, from further down the room. "You're relieving Archie, you know—his hour was from nine-fifteen to ten-thirty."

"His what?" asked Handforth, staring.

"Rather a stretched hour, I know, but we couldn't wangle it any other way," said the captain of the Fourth. "It's bed-time at nine-thirty, you see, so Archie had to get down to Moat Hollow in time to let De Valerie get back by half-past. That tired watchman is now sleeping the sleep of the just. If you listen carefully, you can hear his bass note on the still air."

"What's the good of Archie as a sentry?" growled Handforth, as he felt for his trousers. "I shall probably find the fat-head sound asleep! It's a pity you couldn't find some other chap—"

"Patience, rash one—patience!" interrupted Reggie gently. "Archie was chosen because he sleeps alone, in his own bedroom. He doesn't suffer from the annoyance of having prefects dodging in and out in the neighbourhood of ten o'clock, putting

lights out, and suppressing minor fights. Archie's life is generally a life of peace."

"A life of laziness, more like it!" retorted the leader of Study D.

"Anyhow, he's on the job now," said Pitt. "He won't be missed, and he can slip indoors at about a quarter to eleven without anybody spotting him. So all's well. I shall relieve you, Handy, at eleven-thirty."

Handforth went on dressing. He sat down on McClure's bed, mistaking the hump near his elbow for one of McClure's knees. He gave it a jab—a most unreasonable thing to do; considering that he had no actual right on the bed at all.

"Move your giddy knee out of it!" he said tartly.

The bed heaved, and McClure's head came to the surface.

"Fathead!" he howled. "You nearly brained me!"

"Eh? Was that your head I biffed?"

"Yes, it was!"

"Serves you right!"

"Look here, Handy——"

"Only lunatics sleep with their heads halfway down the giddy bed!" said Handforth judicially. "What's the idea, anyhow? I thought that lump was one of your silly knees!"

"Well, it wasn't!" growled McClure, rubbing his head tenderly. "My hat! I shall have a lump there like an ostrich's egg! What did you hit me with—a crowbar?"

"Get up—and don't talk so much!" retorted Handforth.

"What do you mean—get up?"

"What I say!" snapped Handforth. "I'm nearly dressed, and you haven't even started! Great pip! And there's Church sound asleep, snoring like a fog-horn! I'll soon shake him up!"

Church had just dropped off into a peaceful slumber. He was certainly snoring, but only faintly—Handforth always exaggerated. He lay in bed with his mouth open, and with a reposeful expression on his cheery face.

Crash!

A crêpe-soled shoe struck him on the nose with much vim, for Edward Oswald's aim was generally excellent. Church sat up, bewildered. He seemed to think that a fight of some kind was in progress. He grabbed the shoe, whirled it round, and hurled it across the dormitory. A wail from the far end announced that Church had unwittingly scored a bullseye.

"You chump!" roared Handforth. "That's my shoe!"

"Eh?"

"You've chucked my shoe away——"

"Sorry!" gasped Church, blinking. "I thought it was a clod of earth. I was dreaming that we were fighting against old Creepe and his gang, and—— I say! What's happened to my nose? It smarts like anything!"

Handforth didn't think it necessary to explain.

"Are you idiots going to get up or not?" he asked grimly.

"Pardon the intrusion, old son, but may I be allowed to insert a remark at this interesting point?" asked Reggie Pitt gently.

"What's the idea?" asked Handforth.

"You've taken the very words off my lips," said Reggie. "What IS the idea? Is it really necessary to turn the whole dormitory upside down like this? When you go out on a solitary expedition, is it essential to arouse everybody and biff people about?"

"Who's biffing people about?"

"Well, I don't think Church and McClure are exactly unbiffed," said Pitt. "And where do they come in, anyhow? This isn't their act at all. You seem to have forgotten that you take the stage alone. It's a solo, my son."

Handforth started.

"By George!" he ejaculated. "Well, I'm blessed! I've got to go down to Moat Hollow by myself, haven't I?"

"That, I believe, was the scheme."

"And Church and McClure don't come at all?" asked Handforth.

"They don't appear on the fixture list, anyhow," said Reggie.

"Oh, well, that's different—they can go to sleep again," said the leader of Study D.

"The asses! Why couldn't they explain? I wouldn't take 'em with me even if they begged to come!"

Church and McClure breathed a sigh of relief. There wasn't much chance of their begging to go, and they turned over in bed and settled themselves for sleep with the grateful, comforting thought that Handforth would soon be well out of harm's way.

CHAPTER II.

TROUBLE STARTS EARLY.



REGINALD PITT watched the departure of Handforth with some misgiving.

"He'll probably run 'slap into Mr. Stokes in the corridor, or barge into the Head in the Triangle, but I've got to let him go!" he decided. "If I tried to stop him, there'd be a second battle of Waterloo!"

Handforth had firmly insisted upon taking his turn at night watch duty. And when Handforth firmly insisted there was nothing else to do but let him go ahead—unless, of course, one was prepared to engage in gory combat.

Handforth had a curious idea that he was an expert at detective work, and anything in the nature of to-night's special programme appealed to him strongly. But he was only really useful when plenty of noise was required, and when a desperate scrap

was in progress. On such occasions, the redoubtable Edward Oswald was a host in himself.

He went down the corridor on tiptoe, and, by great good fortune, met nobody. It was still a minute or two from ten-thirty, and the school, naturally, was far from asleep. None of the masters had retired, and one or two prefects were knocking about.

Handforth descended the stairs as silently as a shadow. At least, he thought he did. He failed to take into account the stair he missed half-way down—resulting in a series of thuds that shook the whole house. And it was a matter of no consequence to him when he nearly knocked the umbrella stand over in the lobby. He had met nobody, and he passed unchallenged, and nothing else really mattered.

He crept down the Fourth Form passage, went into Study D, and closed the door so quietly that the crash was only heard about two hundred yards away. Then he went to the window, opened it with an absolute shriek of uncoiled pulleys, and charged out into the Triangle.

But it was evidently Handforth's lucky night. For all these disturbances had drawn forth no response from the powers that were. The leader of Study D passed on his way without let or hindrance.

The fact that he was breaking bounds after lights-out did not worry him. Nevertheless, it was a somewhat gruesome business.

In most of our great Public schools the punishment for breaking out of the school at night is swift and sudden—in a word, the sack. There are no two ways about it.

But at St. Frank's they were not quite so hard and fast. If a boy, discovered in the act of breaking bounds, could give a reasonable explanation for his conduct, the punishment might be nothing worse than a swishing, or possibly the docking of two or three half-holidays.

Handforth, however, appeared to think he was in no danger at all. He marched across the Triangle boldly, and Reggie Pitt, watching from the dormitory window, felt his heart sink within him.

"It's little better than suicide!" groaned Pitt. "The poor simpleton is absolutely yelling for trouble. He might just as well stand on the top of the fountain and start singing! He's bound to be dropped on!"

Handforth vanished behind the shrubbery, and Pitt breathed a little more freely. By some miracle, the leader of Study D had escaped detection. His star of fortune was evidently shining very brightly to-night.

And then suddenly it grew dim and went out. At least, Handforth thought so. For he had hardly taken a couple of steps beyond the shrubbery before he caught sight of a lurking form. The lurking form was standing quite still, and waiting. Handforth halted, holding his breath.

"All right, Ted!" came a whisper. "Don't get the wind up—it's only me!"

"By George!" breathed Handforth. "Willy!"

"The one and only!" said Handforth minor, creeping up. "I say, are you trying a new game, or something?"

"A new game?"

"Because, if so, you'll probably be very successful," continued Willy. "The idea, I suppose, is to attract as many masters as you can?"

"You young ass——"

"I heard you coming hours ago!" said Willy. "You crossed the Triangle like a traction-engine, and, as for pushing through the shrubbery—— Well, my hat! Anybody might have thought that a tornado was loose!"

"Look here, you cheeky young fag!" said Handforth hotly. "Are you looking for a thick ear? I'll—I'll——"

"Oh, my goodness!" groaned Willy. "Don't yell like that! You'll have a dozen masters on us! Let's get out of this quick. Come on, we've only got to nip over the wall——"

"What are you doing out here?" demanded Handforth.

"If it comes to that, what are you doing out here?"

"I'm just off to Moat Hollow to take my spell of sentry-go!"

"Two minds with but a single thought!" said Willy. "It must be a kind of telepathy. I didn't know I'd put the 'fluence on so hard."

Handforth stood there, glaring.

"Do you think you're going down to Moat Hollow?" he demanded grimly.

"No."

"What's that?"

"I don't think anything about it—I know it," said Willy easily. "Now, look here, Ted—don't start any of your silly rot—— Cave!" he added, in a hiss.

"Eh?" gasped his major.

"Who is that?" came a thin, nervous voice from behind the trees. "Come out at once! Who is that, I say!"

Handforth and his minor stood rigid. The moment was a tense one. Standing near the fringe of the shrubbery was Mr. Horace Pyecraft, the master of the Modern Fourth!

CHAPTER III.

A DRAMATIC MEETING.



MR. PYCRAFT was on the warpath.

A mean, unpleasant sort of man, he was subject to petty prejudices and had an exaggerated idea of his own importance. At the same time, he was not

renowned for his pluck. And he made no attempt to investigate the shrubbery.

"Who is there?" he demanded peremptorily. "Come out at once! Do you hear me? I command it!"

A hand clutched Edward Oswald's sleeve.

"Not a word!" breathed Willy. "He's as nervous as a frog—he'll never come in here! Let him jabber!"

For once, Handforth revealed genius. He remained perfectly still, and didn't even whisper a reply. And Mr. Pycraft moved uneasily away from the immediate vicinity. He didn't like the tense silence.

The Form-master had been going back to his own quarters after a most unpleasant game of chess with Mr. Pagett, of the Fifth. Mr. Pagett had not only won, but he had fairly wiped Mr. Pycraft off the board—leaving that gentleman a mere wreck amid the ruins of his shattered army. The fact that Mr. Pycraft's queen had abdicated early in the game—owing to a master-stroke of Mr. Pagett's—had affected him deeply.

Mr. Pycraft was retiring in disorder, and he was that type of man who cannot accept defeat—even in a game of chess—without getting irritable and bad-tempered. Sounds of human presence from the shrubbery had momentarily cheered him. The thought of dropping on some youthful evil-doers had bucked Mr. Pycraft up considerably. But he didn't like the look of that shrubbery.

"Come out at once!" he repeated, his voice losing some of its authoritative command. "Must I come in and drag you out by force?"

Dead silence.

"Very well!" said Mr. Pycraft nastily. "Oh, very well! We will see about this!"

He sped off towards the Modern House—his intention being to fetch a light, and, if possible, one or two assistants in the shape of prefects. It was a weak admission of failure. Handforth and his minor nipped away, and were in the lane before Mr. Pycraft had even entered the House.

When, five minutes later, the Form-master reappeared, dragging Reynolds and Carlile with him, the shrubbery was naturally empty. The two Modern House prefects—pulled forcibly away from an impromptu fox-trot, the music for which had been supplied by the Savoy Havana Band, via Reynolds' four-valve wireless set—were by no means overjoyed.

They made a thorough search, found nothing, and mentally concluded that Mr. Pycraft was several kinds of an ass. And Mr. Pycraft himself retired in confusion and in a worse temper than ever.

In the meantime, Handforth and his minor had paused in the lane to settle a little argument. Willy was quite prepared to fight the thing out on the spot, but Edward Oswald maintained that his age barred him from touching his younger brother.

"Don't let that stop you!" said Willy tartly. "Size isn't everything! You've got a bigger head than mine—but, if it comes to that, so have all idiots!"

"Look here, you cheeky young rotter!" hissed Handforth. "Are you going back to bed, or are you not?"

"And a sweet little voice whispered, 'Not likely,' " replied Willy.

"You—you——"

"It's no good, Ted—you'll only burst a blood-vessel if you go on like that," interrupted Willy. "On second thoughts, you're more likely to burst a few buttons, or a seam or two. Why not accept the inevitable, and be resigned? You ought to be jolly pleased that I'm willing to keep you company!"

"Pleased!" snorted Handforth. "I'm quivering with joy!"

"Good!" said Willy. "Those Moat Hollow chaps need assistance—they need somebody near by, in case of trouble. They are holding a ripping barring-out, and Mr. Grimesby Creepe and his beauty chorus have got the bird."

"I know all this——"

"Of course you do," said Willy soothingly. "But even the best memory is liable to misfire at times. There are those Moat Hollow fellows, triumphantly holding the fort. And there's Archie Glenthorne, on sentry-go, waiting for us to relieve him. We're late already."

"Look here——"

"Have you no heart?" asked Willy scornfully. "Have you no soul? Are we to leave Archie waiting in vain—like Sister Ann at the garden gate? Our duty is clear—we've got to whiz to Moat Hollow. Long live the rebellion! Three cheers for the barring-out! And may Grimesby Creepe be withered into a dried mummy!"

Having thus unburdened himself, Willy marched down the road. And Handforth was compelled to follow—since the idea of letting his minor take the job out of his hands was unthinkable.

Willy had a way with him that could not be denied. The things which Handforth gained by sheer force and obstinacy, Willy secured by coolness, imperturbability and cheek.

And the situation was not one that could be dealt with lightly.

The boys of Moat Hollow—twenty-four in number—with Nipper in full command, were in rebellion against the tyranny of Mr. Grimesby Creepe. There had been stirring scenes that day, and Mr. Creepe had retired, beaten, after several attempts to dislodge the mutineers.

Nipper had taken advantage of the fact that Nelson Lee was abroad to come down and help. He was no longer a shining light of the St. Frank's Fourth, but his very presence in this crisis was encouraging to

all concerned. Many of the St. Frank's fellows were building on the hope that Nipper would return for good at the beginning of the summer term—that is, after the Easter holidays, which were even now looming ahead. Nipper had hinted at such a thing, but could say nothing definite until he saw his beloved "guy'nor."

Pitt & Co. had taken a prominent part in the Moat Hollow doings, but there was no need for any drastic action now. The rebels were in a comfortable position, and all was quiet for the night. Pitt had organised a system of sentries, so that the alarm could be given in case of a surprise attack.

CHAPTER IV.

THE STORY OF THE DISASTER.



"**F**ALLEN!" echoed Handforth blankly. "Crashed, laddie; a b s o l u t e l y crashed!" said Archie Glen-thorne. "Creepe and his frightful gang are in possession of the good old school, and the outlook is becoming murky!"

"You're rotting!" put in Willy, staring. "Oh, I say, really!" protested Archie. "I mean, I wouldn't rot on such a dashed serious sub, old tulip! I don't wish to be

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But the latest report, brought by Cecil De Valerie, had been to the effect that everything was calm and peaceful.

It was a dramatic surprise, therefore, when Edward Oswald and Willy came face to face with Nipper and Archie Glen-thorne. They were coming up the lane at a trot, and with obvious urgency.

"Hallo!" said Handforth, stopping. "My hat! What are you doing out here, Nipper? I was just going down to relieve Archie——"

"It's a good thing we met!" interrupted Nipper crisply. "Old Creepe's made a coup, and the garrison has fallen!"

pessimistic, but the whole frightful position is frightful!"

"Creepe's in possession again!" ejaculated Handforth. "Well, I'm blessed! Didn't I say all along that I ought to have been in charge? How did it happen? De Valerie told us that everything was quiet an hour ago——"

"So it was," interrupted Nipper.

"Then what's wrong now?"

"Everything!" went on Nipper. "It started by Creepe cutting off the water supply. We didn't know it at first, but there's a kind of drain running from the scullery to a pit in the grounds—it goes

right under the moat. All the drains and water-pipes at Moat Hollow are modern. Old William K. Smith—you remember him—had everything done."

"Yes, but I don't see——"

"You will in a minute, if you'll only listen," said Nipper. "We don't want to be standing here, either—let's walk on. We're going up to the school for help," he added. "This is where the Fourth comes in."

"To say nothing of the Third!" remarked Willy. "In case you don't know it, I'm the Third. The others don't count!"

"But what about this awful disaster?" asked Handforth.

"Creepe cut the water off, and it was a serious thing," replied Nipper. "I spotted a loose flagstone in the scullery, and Tommy Watson and I pulled it up. Then I went down to investigate. Mind you, I'd no idea there was a tunnel arrangement, and I crawled along to see where the pipe was cut off. Naturally, Creepe and his monitors were investigating that tunnel at the same time. Things always happen like that. I ran slap into 'em," added Nipper simply.

"And got caught?"

"Naturally!"

"Then what are you doing out here?"

"There," said Archie, "hangs a tale. But I won't dream of interrupting the old flow. Carry on, Nipper, old cherry! Proceed with the foul story!"

"There's nothing much to tell," said Nipper grimly. "I was chucked down in the gymnasium cellar, and Creepe and his gang got into the school, and took the rebels by surprise. Within five minutes they were whacked."

"Miserable weaklings!" grunted Handforth.

"You can't blame them for that," said Nipper quietly. "They've been kept down for so long that their spirit was broken. It only revived because I had the lead. And without me, they crumpled up in no time—although I expect Tommy Watson did his best. I'm not boasting, but it's an absolute fact that I held those chaps together and made 'em fight. I take no credit for that—because I was never brow-beaten like they've been."

"But how did you get free?" asked Willy.

"That was where Archie came in," said Nipper, as they approached St. Frank's. "He scented that something was wrong, and hopped over the wall to investigate. Allow me to introduce our Dark Horse—our Fighting Firebrand——"

"Here, I say, dash it——" began Archie.

"He found Fryer on duty—Fryer, a monitor about twice his size!" said Nipper. "What did Archie do? What didn't he do? By the time he'd finished with Fryer, the poor chap was a mere mangled heap on the floor. You didn't know that Archie was England's White Hope, did you?"

"Nipper, dash it," said Archie frigidly, "you're an absolute jackass!"

"You're too modest, old son," grinned Nipper. "Anyhow, Handy, he came and released me, and we put Fryer back in the cellar. And now we're dashing to the Fourth for assistance. I don't think we shall appeal to Reggie Pitt and his merry men in vain. Already, a vision is taking shape before me."

"A vision?" said Handforth, staring. "Where?"

"My dear ass—just a figure of speech," said Nipper. "I can see Creepe & Co. being booted out within the hour. It merely requires one swift, lightning attack, and the garrison will be in charge again. We've simply got to make a determined raid, and the thing will be done."

"Absolutely!" said Archie.

"That's the talk!" put in Willy, with a nod. "There's nothing like determination. Are we going to let Creepe and his bullies get the best of us now? Not likely!"

"By George, no!" snorted Handforth. "Why, it's—it's an insult against the Fourth! We've promised to back those Moat Hollow chaps up, and if we fail in a crisis like this, we shan't be worth our salt!"

"It isn't salt we want just now, old man," said Willy. "It's pepper—mustard—ginger! I'll tell you what. I'll go and rout out the Third, if you like. All hands to the pumps——"

"Let the Third rest in peace," interrupted Nipper. "You can come, if you like Willy, but it'll be at your own risk."

"Oh, all right!" said Willy. "You know best!"

"All hands to the pumps!" mused Nipper thoughtfully. "H'm! That's given me an idea. Yes, by Jove—an idea!"

CHAPTER V.

PLENTY OF VOLUNTEERS.



ELEVEN o'clock was striking as the little group dropped over the school wall into the Triangle. A few lights were showing from the various windows, but everything was

quiet.

"I expect old Pycraft's gone to bed with the hump!" murmured Handforth. "Anyhow, there's no sign of him now. I suppose we'd better go straight in, Nipper? There's no time to waste, you know——"

"I think you'd better stay out here, old man," said Nipper diplomatically. "Keep your eyes open, and if any masters appear get the warning to us somehow. Is that settled?"

"No, it isn't!" retorted Handforth. "I'm not going to be left out here in the cold——"

"All right—come along in!" interrupted Nipper. "In fact, it'll be the best way. This watching business doesn't matter—"

"Oh, doesn't it!" interrupted Handforth gruffly. "It's jolly important; and now I come to think of it, I'm the best man for the job. I'll stay here while you go in and rout the Fourth out. And look sharp, or I'll come along and touch you up a bit."

Nipper grinned in the darkness.

"Good old Handy!" he murmured. "All right, we'll soon be back."

the lobby, it seemed to him that he hadn't been away for a day.

"There's something about the old place, you know," he murmured.

"What-ho!" breathed Archie. "Absolutely! That is to say, rather! Something about it, what? A frightful dusthole in many respects, laddie, but you bally well can't beat it!"

"I've a good mind to come back next term!" whispered Nipper.



Buster Boots, leader of the Modern Fourth, blinked at the figure by his bed. The rest of the dormitory was quiet and undisturbed.

He and Archie stole off towards the Ancient House. Willy elected to remain behind with his major—to keep him in order. He omitted to mention this all-important point, however. Edward Oswald could never see things in the right light, anyhow.

It was with a slight thrill that Nipper entered the window of Study D and then crept down the Fourth Form passage. These surroundings were very familiar to him, although for more than a term he had not trod this ground. But as he glided into

"Never," said Archie, "spoil a good mind. But here we are at the top of the old stairs, and a brooding silence on our part seems to be indicated. I mean, the less chatter the better. Some of these dashed masters have a somewhat ripe method of oozing out of the offing!"

But they reached the Fourth Form dormitory without mishap, and Nipper took a deep breath as he entered the long, familiar room. The walls were only distempered, and the floor was covered with cold linoleum, but the lengthy apartment with its rows of

beds brought many memories back to the ex-Fourth-Former.

"It all depends on the gov'nor," he breathed.

"Eh?"

"Nothing, Archie. I was only——"

"Who's that?" came a voice out of the darkness. "Have you come back already, Archie?"

"Absolutely!" said Archie.

"Then Handy must have shot down to Moat Hollow pretty quick——"

"Reggie, old greengage, dirty work has been committed," interrupted Archie. "The Creepe reptile has absolutely pounced. A somewhat ghastly situation is confronting us, and——"

"What on earth are you talking about?" interrupted Pitt, sitting up in bed. "De Valerie reported all was quiet, and there hasn't been time—— Hallo! Who's that with you?"

"It's me!" whispered Nipper.

"Why, what the dickens—— Is that you, Nipper?" ejaculated Pitt, jumping out of bed. "But—but what—— I say! Then something HAS happened?" he added breathlessly.

He was startled to see Nipper there, and he was ever more startled when Nipper briefly related the facts. And after he had heard all, his face glowed, and his eyes gleamed.

"Yes, something's got to be done," he said. "As far as I can see, the best thing we can do is to shake up all the reliable chaps, and sneak quietly out. No need to arouse the whole Fourth."

"There's no help for it," replied Nipper. "You'll never keep them all quiet, and the others are bound to wake up. Besides, it'll take too much time to go round singly. Speed's what we want."

"All right—I suppose you know best," said Reggie promptly. "I think somebody ought to go across to the Modern House, though. Buster Boots and his lot were awfully cut up because they didn't take part in the scrap this afternoon. They'll be useful, too. There are plenty of hefty warriors over in the Modern House."

Five minutes later McClure was dressed and on his way to the dormitory of the Modern Fourth, on the other side of the Triangle. And the Ancient Fourth was awake to a man, eager, tense, and excited.

"For goodness' sake keep quiet, you fellows!" urged Pitt anxiously. "It isn't very late yet, and if a prefect hears anything suspicious he'll be in here in a brace of shakes."

"Who cares for prefects?" demanded Armstrong.

"Let 'em come!"

"We're going to Moat Hollow, whatever happens!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Wait a minute!" hissed Reggie. "Is this our rebellion or is it Moat Hollow's? By the way you fatheads talk anybody might think that the Fourth was in revolt. If we're caught sneaking out it'll mean a jolly stiff gating and probably a public flogging."

These words had a calming effect, and even Armstrong cooled down. Armstrong was a bold, aggressive fellow when he had lots of others with him. Alone, he was greatly deficient in stuffing.

Nipper watched anxiously and approvingly. Pitt was handling his men well, and in a short time all the volunteers were ready. The other Fourth-Formers sat in bed, looking on, excited enough, but pretending to be indifferent.

Slowly and silently the procession left the dormitory.

CHAPTER VI.

PREPARING FOR THE FRAY.



JOHAN BUSTERFIELD
BOOTS sat up, rubbing his eyes.

"Hallo! Who's that?" he mumbled. "What the dickens——"

"Don't make a song—I'm McClure!"

Buster Boots, the leader of the Modern Fourth, blinked at the dim shadow which stood beside his bed. The rest of the dormitory was quiet and undisturbed.

"McClure!" repeated Boots, staring. "What on earth are you doing in this show? What's up? Look here, if this is a raid——"

"Don't be a silly ass!" interrupted McClure impatiently. "If we were on a raid, do you think we'd wake you up and warn you about it? Reggie Pitt asked me to come over—he thought you fellows would be cut up if you were left out."

"Left out? Left out of what?"

"The rescue party."

"What rescue party?"

"We're going down to Moat Hollow——"

"Moat Hollow!"

"Oh, my hat!" groaned McClure. "What's this—a giddy game? I'd better wait a minute until you're fully awake. You're like a giddy parrot!"

Buster's mind cleared rapidly.

"Moat Hollow!" he muttered. "Yes, by George! We're game for anything like that. Jolly decent of Reg to remember us," he added warmly. "But what's the exact game? What's this rescue party, anyhow?"

While the energetic Boots slipped out of bed, McClure put him in possession of the main facts. And J.B.B. clapped him on the back with enthusiasm.

"Jolly good!" he exclaimed briskly. "You Ancient House chaps might have turned the tables down at Moat Hollow, but

In order to make the thing absolutely certain you came to us, eh?"

"Rats!" said McClure. "We don't need you at all!"

"Ahem!" coughed Boots. "Well, anyhow, our gang will make assurance doubly sure. Shake up Bray and Denny, and Crooks and that crowd. The more the merrier. If they start objecting, lug all the bedclothes off."

Not wishing to start a riot, McClure refrained from this drastic method. He went from bed to bed cautiously. Boots was doing the same thing, but he employed all his usual energetic bustle. Bob Christine, finding himself deprived of his pillow and bolster wondered what on earth had happened.

Others were served in the same way—Yorke, Talmadge, Clapson, Oldfield. Within a couple of minutes the entire dormitory was humming and buzzing like a disturbed wasps' nest.

But the Modern House juniors were as keen as mustard on the expedition. A few weaklings were dubious about taking risks, and they were allowed to remain in bed. Only volunteers were required. And there were plenty of these.

By the time they crept downstairs out into the dark Triangle, Reginald Pitt and his men were gathering behind the shrubbery. And by now the initial excitement had died down, and the juniors were tensely quiet.

Breaking bounds after lights-out was a serious business. There was a certain amount of safety in numbers, of course, for if this general exodus was spotted and brought to the Head's knowledge, he could hardly flog the best part of the Fourth. But even a gating was to be avoided if possible. The juniors didn't fancy having their half-holidays docked for the rest of the term.

Complete success crowned the adventure so far.

No alarm had been given, and there was now little chance of one. The juniors would have been somewhat startled if they could have glanced behind the curtains of one of the upper windows. Two figures were standing there peering out into the night.

"Over half the Fourth, I should imagine," murmured one figure.

"Look here, we can't stand idly by——"

"We're asleep!" interrupted Fenton calmly. "We're both sound asleep, Arthur, and we don't know a thing about this little affair. Understand? This is one of those rare occasions when we can wink with a clear conscience."

It was like Edgar Fenton, the popular captain of St. Frank's, to take this broad-minded view. He was one of the greatest sticklers for discipline the school had ever known, but he never forgot the all-important fact that he had once been a junior him-

self, and he knew that there is an exception to every rule.

This was one of those exceptions.

"But, I say!" protested Morrow. "Breaking bounds like this, you know. Why, it's disgraceful! I sympathise with the chaps, of course—they're doing it all in a good cause——"

"Then we can go to bed peacefully," interrupted Fenton. "Young Hamilton is in charge of this affair—you know, Nipper. He'll see that the juniors get back to bed quietly, Arthur. There must be some very special reason for the whole business, or Nipper wouldn't be here."

The two prefects watched for a few minutes longer, and then prepared for bed. Both Edgar Fenton and Arthur Morrow knew the facts concerning Mr. Grimesby Creepe's unfortunate pupils—and all their sympathies were with the rebellious boys. They felt that they could afford to close their eyes to this escapade.

And the Fourth, in the meantime, concentrated in the playing fields. The two contingents joined forces, and both Reggie Pitt and Buster Boots placed themselves unreservedly under Nipper's command.

"You're in charge of this game, old man," declared Pitt. "Trot out the orders, and we'll pass 'em along to the troops!"

"That's the idea," agreed Buster promptly.

And Nipper proceeded to trot out the orders.

CHAPTER VII.

MAKING CERTAIN.



"FIRE-ESCAPES," said Nipper thoughtfully.

"Eh?"

"Hose-pipes——"

"What?"

"They're the things we need just now," went on Nipper. "Fire-escapes and hose-pipes. If this raid's going to be a success, we want to get into Moat Hollow at the first rush. And unless we take the proper means, we shall be driven back."

"That's what I'm thinking," said Reggie. "When the rebels were in command of Moat Hollow they declared that they could hold off any attack. What with the moat, and the battlements, a comparatively small force can hold the place. Even Creepe and his six monitors are a pretty formidable garrison."

"And they've got tons of ammunition, too," added Buster Boots. "The roof is piled with the stuff, isn't it?"

Nipper nodded.

"Yes, we had everything ready," he replied. "Bags of soot, clods of earth, pails of water, and goodness knows what. Old Creepe made such a coup that he's grabbed everything intact."

"Good gad!" said Archie. "Then the dashed insect can absolutely use your am-

munition against us? I say, that's somewhat overripe, if you grasp what I mean! Dashed near the ragged edge, what?"

"It all depends, Archie," replied Nipper. "If we surround the school, and try to cross the moat, and break through the barricades— Well, with all our numbers, we shouldn't win. Tommy Watson and I superintended the manufacture of those barricades, and I can give you my word they're strong. We're in a rummy position."

"Huh! I should think we are!" growled Handforth. "You go and build barricades, prepare tons of fighting material, and old Creepe collars the lot! It simply means that we've got to fight against our own defences! That's a fine thing, ain't it?"

"My dear chap, it's no good grumbling," said Nipper patiently. "The only thing is to face the fact—and I think we can overcome the difficulty in one swoop. Don't forget what I just said about the fire-escapes. If we can open the shed, we shall be all right."

"My hat!" said Pitt. "You mean the St. Frank's Fire Brigade?"

"Exactly," replied Nipper. "Fellows have always said that the fire brigade was a mere farce and a waste of good time. The Fifth and Sixth have grumbled enough, anyhow."

"They would!" said Boots. "They're the firemen!"

"And they've had to put in a regular weekly practice," chuckled Nipper. "I expect it becomes a bit irksome in the long run. But we won't bother the seniors, we'll quietly pinch the fire-engine and the two escapes, and trot them down to Moat Hollow."

"Hear, hear!"

"Jolly good idea!"

"Absolutely!"

Nipper's scheme was approved unanimously. It offered a simple method of defeating the enemy. Reggie Pitt pictured the coming scene. The alarm, the invaders swarming round the school, the defenders hurling their ammunition. And then the fire-hose would get busy, and the escapes would be rushed into position. The prospect was an exciting one.

Breaking into the shed was no great trouble.

The place was locked up, of course, but to a crowd of determined juniors this drawback was a detail. The shed was situated just at the rear of the Modern House, conveniently screened by trees and bushes. A spade from the tool-shed did the trick.

With one heave, Nipper forced the door open, smashing the lock. And five minutes later the entire fire-fighting apparatus was outside—on its way across the damp grass of the playing fields.

The juniors were entering into the spirit of the thing with energy. There were a dozen fellows to each fire-escape, and another dozen pushing and pulling the hand-operated fire-engine.

Except for the rattle of a wheel or an unguarded shout, no noise was made. And so far there had been no alarm. The masters obviously knew nothing whatever about this night escapade.

By the time the fire apparatus was on the other side of the playing fields, the juniors felt secure. They were well on the job now, and all fear of detection had passed.

One after another, the wagons were pushed through a gateway into the lane. And then, feeling that noise didn't matter now, the entire rescue party raced down the lane at a dangerous speed, to the accompaniment of gasps, shouts, and crunching wheels.

With a fine sweep, the noisy procession rounded the bend and pulled up with much commotion in front of the big gates of Moat Hollow. Nipper had already pointed out that it would be useless to attempt secrecy. The only method was to smash into the school grounds in one swoop.

And the rescue party took Nipper at his word.

Handforth was in charge of the leading fire-escape. It was a heavy, lumbering wagon, and the dozen fellows in charge of it were pushing vigorously.

"Don't stop, you asses!" roared Handforth, as the fire-escape slowed down. "Charge the gates! It's the only way—smash straight through! We can't mess about on a job like this!"

Less excited, the juniors might have hesitated. But the fever of the attack was upon them, and with renewed efforts they sent the wagon charging full tilt into the heavy double gates.

Crash!

With a terrific noise, the gates were burst asunder at the first blow. They swept open, and the fire-escape was rushed through. And that sound sent a thrill of hope through the defeated rebels within.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE GREAT RAID!



MR. GRIMESBY CREEPE suffered a double shock.

That crash, echoing through the night, told of significant doings without. There could be only one explanation. And all the schoolmaster's air of gloating triumph vanished.

Barely two minutes earlier, the first blow had been delivered.

And Fryer, the monitor, was the one who had dealt it. Fryer had been left a prisoner in the cellar, having been thrust down into the depths by Nipper and Archie.

They had left him securely bound and helpless. But Kirby, the chief monitor, ventured outside after Mr. Creepe had got the school under control. Kirby was feeling exuberant.

Everything had gone beautifully. Nipper

was a prisoner in the gymnasium cellar, and all the Moat Hollow boys were again under Mr. Creepe's sway. The rebellion, in fact, was over. The affair had fizzled out like a damp squib. The barring-out was a frost.

So Kirby, entering the gym. with a springy step, was somewhat astonished when he failed to hear any response to his call. The gymnasium appeared to be deserted.

"Fryer!" called Kirby sharply. "Huh! Where's the fool gone to? The Head distinctly told him to stay here——"

Kirby reached the cellar door, and flung it open.

"You down there, Fryer?" he asked, staring into the darkness.

A muffled kind of sound answered him, and Kirby jumped. Then he realised that the sound must have been caused by Nipper—who, of course, was bound up and gagged. Still, he'd go down and have a look, just to make sure.

He went down. There, propped against one of the walls, he found Fryer. And Fryer was in no sweet temper.

"What the deuce——" began Kirby, pulling off the other's muffler.

"They bunked!" gasped Fryer thickly.

"They?"

"Yes, Nipper, and——and—— Oh, I don't know!" panted Fryer. "There was another chap. He attacked me from behind, and bowled me over before I could do anything," he added lyingly.

"Well, I'm hanged!" said Kirby.

Fryer gave him a dreadfully untruthful account of the occurrence. He failed to explain that Archie Glenthorne had fought him face to face, and had beaten him in a clean scrap. Fryer's account of the affair was that a hulking brute of a fellow had smashed him from the rear.

"It doesn't matter about that—the thing's over now!" interrupted Kirby harshly. "Nipper's gone—and you can bet your boots that he's getting help of some kind. Ten to one, he's gone to that infernal school!"

"What are we going to do?" muttered Fryer, as he dropped his bonds. "How's everything indoors? Did Mr. Creepe——"

"All the kids are under control again," broke in Kirby curtly. "We're in full command—— But, look here, we can't stop here talking. I'd better rush in and tell Mr. Creepe what's happened. He'll go blue and green in the face when he hears this! You confounded fool! What's the good of leaving you in charge of anything?"

"How on earth could I help——"

But Kirby wouldn't listen. He rushed indoors, leaving Fryer to follow at his leisure. But Fryer was only just behind, for the gloomy surroundings were not to his liking. There was something sinister and forbidding about the Moat Hollow grounds at dead of night.

Mr. Creepe received the news with an evil frown.

The schoolmaster had been triumphant. His loose, flabby face was alight with un-

pleasant joy—until Kirby broke the news. The twenty-four Moat Hollow boys, crouching in their seats in the cold schoolroom, sat listening with awed attention. And one heart, at least, gave a wild leap. Tommy Watson was thrilled.

"I knew it! he muttered feverishly. "Old Nipper's got away! Good egg! I knew he'd do the trick!"

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Creepe, as the school buzzed. "What's this you said, Kirby? What's this? That infernal boy has gone? How? When? How did he get away? Where's Fryer? Where's that fool—— Oh, there you are!" added Mr. Creepe, seeing Fryer in the doorway.

"It wasn't my fault!" growled Fryer. "I was attacked——"

"Nonsense!" shouted Mr. Creepe. "You deliberately——"

And at this point Mr. Creepe paused. His colour faded somewhat, and his face grew slightly more flabby. He stood tense and rigid.

"Anything wrong, sir?" asked Kirby curiously.

"Keep your mouth shut!" snarled Mr. Creepe. "Listen! Listen!"

The schoolroom became deadly silent. No boy dared to move. There was not even the shuffle of a foot, or the creak of a form. And on the night air came a curious, far-away uproar. There could be no mistaking the sound—or, to be exact, conglomeration of sounds.

The crunch of wheels, the shouts of many voices, the clatter of feet on the stony road.

"Do you hear?" breathed Mr. Creepe huskily.

"It's those St. Frank's chaps, sir," muttered Kirby. "I knew that Nipper would go for them—— They're here already! We shall have to look alive if we're going to defend ourselves——"

Crash!

The sound came with startling distinctness—a dull, splintering roar. And then, immediately afterwards, the loud crunch of wheels, the shouts of many boys, and kindred sounds.

"Keep order here!" roared Mr. Creepe. "Keep order, I say!"

He rushed out, mounted the stairs heavily, and rushed across to the first landing window. Flinging it up, he gazed out. The grounds of Moat Hollow were literally swarming with invaders!

CHAPTER IX.

THE ASSAULT.



H ANDFORTH danced about excitedly. "Now then—up with the ladder!" he roared. "Come on, you slackers! Everything depends on speed!"

Church and McClure obeyed orders with

alacrity, and nearly a dozen others were equally eager. The big fire-escape was swung round, and the extending ladders were raised higher and higher.

"Hurrah!"

"Go it, you chaps!"

"We'll soon be in!"

At another angle of the building the second fire-escape was being erected, in charge of Buster Boots and a crowd of Modern House fellows. And Reggie Pitt was superintending the fire-engine. Nipper stood by, watching. He preferred to leave everything to the Fourth. This was their picnic.

The supply hose was dropped into the moat, and the pump handles were manned by Jack Grey, De Valerie, Archie Glen-thorne, Armstrong, Trotwood, and a number of others.

"Now then—all together!" yelled Pitt.

The pumpers started work in earnest. A moment later the hose in Pitt's hand spouted forth a solid stream of water. Pitt swung the nozzle round, and his eyes gleamed.

Mr. Grimesby Creepe was still standing at the open landing window. The schoolmaster was staggered by the sheer determination of this attack. It was something he had never bargained for. And he stood at the window, stunned by the immensity of the disaster. Just when he had won an overwhelming victory, too! Obviously, Mr. Creepe had indulged in that popular pastime of counting his chickens before they were hatched.

Reggie Pitt swung the hose round, and his aim was steady.

Swoooooosh!

The stream out of the hose struck Mr. Creepe in the midriff, so to speak—a full-bodied, full-flavoured dose of muddy moat water. The schoolmaster gracefully vanished. As a matter of fact, the force of the water was so great that he was knocked over backwards into the middle of the corridor. He picked himself up, drenched to the skin. And his enthusiasm for fighting had been greatly dampened.

He picked himself up, and fled. Not that this was really necessary, for the stream of water ceased, Pitt having diverted it elsewhere.

"That's one for his nob!" he grinned. "All right, you fellows—you can ease off a bit. By the way things are going we may not need the hose at all. But it's just as well to have it in working order."

In the meantime, the fire-escapes were in position. Moat Hollow was not such a very high building, and there was no delicate adjusting to be done. The ladders were reared up, and rested against the parapet of the flat section of the roof.

Nipper now came into action.

He climbed up the nearest ladder, following a number of Fourth-Formers, and with more Fourth-Formers behind him. At

the same time a stream of juniors poured up the ladder.

"Hurrah!"

"Come on, you chaps—we've won!"

Out with the tyrants!"

Mr. Creepe, inside, was suffering tortures. He had really and truly believed himself to be master of the situation, and his short-lived triumph was galling in the extreme.

He rushed down, leaving a trail of muddy water in his rear, shouting at the top of his voice.

"Kirby!" he bellowed. "Tarkington! Fryer! Roberts! To the roof—to the roof! These cursed boys are swarming in—"

"Let 'em swarm!" said Kirby rebelliously. "I'm fed up with it! No more fighting for me!"

"Same here!" growled Tarkington.

"Do you dare to disobey me?" shrieked Mr. Creepe.

"You're beaten, so why can't you realise it?" shouted Kirby furiously. "I knew it all along—I knew we couldn't hold the place! And if you think we're going to fight this confounded horde, you've made a mistake!"

"You—you—"

Words utterly failed the schoolmaster. He had been half afraid that his monitors would turn against him in a crisis, and it was obvious that his fears were only too well founded.

A tumultuous noise from upstairs announced the fact that the rescuers were in. They came pouring downstairs in a flood. Nipper was well in the lead, anxious to take the brunt of any fighting that might be on the boards. Handforth was with him.

The invaders swept over the school in all directions. And Mr. Creepe, looking about him wildly, sought for some method to escape. He had vivid recollections of being thrown into the moat, and he had no desire to undergo that experience again.

Escape was imperative—and every second was of importance. Yet it seemed that escape would be difficult, for the moat had to be crossed, and a door had to be opened as a preliminary. And all the doors and windows were barricaded!

Mr. Grimesby Creepe and his monitors were caught like rats in a trap. In the schoolmaster's egotistical way, he had omitted to pave the road for escape!

CHAPTER X.

THE ORDER OF THE BOOT!



THE tumult increased as the invading flood swept down from the upper floors.

In the schoolroom, the Moat Hollow boys were excited and awed. They believed that the tables were to be turned

again, but the uncertainty of the whole position left them helpless.

Mr. Creepe and his monitors had gone, leaving the school-room deserted. This fact in itself was significant. But most of the boys were reluctant to venture out.

"It's all right—they're whacked!" shouted Tommy Watson. "Nipper's done the trick somehow—he's brought the St. Frank's chaps here! Come on, you duffers! Let's rush out and join the fun!"

But only Jevons and two or three others joined Tommy Watson as he made for the door. In the meantime, Mr. Creepe was rapidly making up his mind, assisted in this process by his clamouring monitors.

"We've got to clear out!" panted Kirby. "They'll be on us in a minute, and then we shall be chucked in that moat again! I knew what would happen if we tried this game on."

"We all knew!" snapped Tarkington. "It was a fool's idea!"

Mr. Creepe quivered.

"Hold your tongue!" he snarled. "There is time yet—there is still hope! If only you boys will show some strength, we may yet drive these young hooligans out! We must not give in—"

"You'd better think again!" interrupted Kirby roughly. "We're not going to fight this mob, so don't you believe it! Come on, Tarky—all the rest of you, too! We've got to slide out pretty quick!"

"Hark!" muttered Fryer. "They're nearly on us!"

The noise and confusion in the upper part of the house was tremendous.

"Are you mad?" shouted Mr. Creepe. "We are trapped! There is no escape! We must fight, I tell you! All the doors are barricaded, and all the windows are barred—"

"Yes, but there's the drain under the scullery floor!" interrupted Kirby sharply. "We came in that way, and we can leave by the same route!" "I'm not going to wait until I'm grabbed by these mad young idiots!"

All the other monitors agreed, and there was a general movement towards the scullery. And Mr. Creepe, deserted by his entire bodyguard, had no alternative but to follow. In spite of his rage, he realised that he could do nothing single-handed.

But a check awaited the fleeing garrison.

The scullery was reached, but it was not such an easy matter to get down the shaft into the drainage tunnel. The big flagstone refused to come up at the first pull. It had somehow got stuck. It frequently happens on such occasions that these delays occur. And before the fugitives could make a second attempt, the enemy swarmed upon them.

Nipper and Handforth led the rush, but Nipper pulled up short.

"Hold on, you fellows!" he shouted. "They're all here—we've got them trapped! No need for fighting unless they start it."

"Look here—" began Handforth hotly.

But Nipper silenced him with a quick glance. Then he turned to Mr. Grimesby Creepe, who was standing in the centre of the scullery, pale, grim, and with rather a wild expression in his eyes. The monitors were further away, having retreated into a corner.

"Well, Mr. Creepe, the affair's over," said Nipper. "You got the upper hand for a brief hour, but I shall now require you to leave. I hate violence, so if you care to go quietly—"

"You hate violence!" shouted Mr. Creepe thickly. "You have the audacity to tell me that, after breaking into my property like a set of hired ruffians! By heavens! You shall pay for this—"

"Under ordinary circumstances, Mr. Creepe, our action would be insupportable," interrupted Nipper quietly. "But we are dealing with a tyrant. You had better leave here as soon as possible."

"You infernal young hound—"

"You won't improve matters by abusing me!" said Nipper. "I took charge of this rebellion to defeat you, Mr. Creepe, and I'm going through with it. The longer you stay here, the greater your peril. I can't answer for these St. Frank's chaps—and I think they're fairly itching to get their fingers on you."

Mr. Creepe took a deep breath.

"I will go!" he said, with a gulp. "I will take my monitors, and leave the building. But remember—"

Nipper took no notice of his threats. Instead, he requested some of the juniors to remove the barricades from the rear door, and put the little bridge across the moat.

This was soon accomplished, and then the beaten garrison was escorted to the rear door, and allowed to depart unmolested. Handforth watched Mr. Creepe and his monitors go away with many regrets. He was disgusted. He had been hoping for better things.

"Here's a jolly tame finish," he said sourly. "We haven't even had the pleasure of chucking the rotters into the moat! You're a fine leader, Nipper!" he added with scorn.

Nipper chuckled.

"There's nothing heroic in taking advantage of our strength, Handy," he replied. "Our only object was to recover the position, and we've done it. Creepe & Co. are back in their old place, and Moat Hollow is once again in the hands of the rebels. What more do we want?"

"Nipper's right!" said Reggie Pitt. "We don't want to do anything too drastic. And now that the affair's over, we'd better slide back to our dormitories as soon as possible."

"What rot!" said Handforth glumly.

But it was the only wise course. Having finished their job, the Fourth-Formers had no object in remaining. Nipper was confident that there would be no more mis-

adventures. Mr. Creepe would never be able to trick the rebels again.

So the St. Frank's contingent, having done so well, set off back to the school, taking the fire-fighting apparatus with them. Upon the whole, they were feeling thoroughly satisfied with the night's work.

And Moat Hollow assumed its former calm.

CHAPTER XI.

THE LAST STRAW.



MR. GRIMESBY CREEPE was moody and morose.

He sat in the gymnasium on the edge of a box, with the heat from the big stove radiating round him. The schoolmaster made a strange picture in the ruddy glow from the fire.

His clothing had dried on him, and, with his unshaven chin, his unnaturally burning eyes, and his untidy condition, he presented a picture of hopeless misery. He plied his quill toothpick subconsciously, and a brooding silence hung over the gym.

Kirby and the other monitors were standing apart, in a group. They were talking in low voices, and discussing the situation. They were tired of the whole business, and were, in fact, making plans to desert their chief as soon as the morning came.

"It's no good staying here—Creepe's beaten!" muttered Kirby, for the tenth time. "He doesn't seem to realise it, the old fool, but he is. We'd better clear out before there are any close inquiries."

"Clear out?" repeated Fryer. "Where to?"

"Home!" said Kirby briefly.

"I haven't got a home," muttered Fryer.

"That's unlucky for you, then," said Kirby. "In any case, we can't be bothered with your troubles. My idea is to take the first train in the morning and get well out of this before the crash comes."

"That's my idea, too," exclaimed Tarkington. "I don't expect my people will be overjoyed to see me, but they'd rather do that than have me mixed up in this rotten scandal. With old Creepe whacked to the wide, all the facts'll come out, and we're liable to get it in the neck."

"Yes, we'll all clear out by the first train," said Roberts.

Mr. Creepe turned his head.

"Can't you keep quiet?" he snapped, glowering. "You do nothing but talk, talk,

talk! What are you plotting? What are you scheming? Some infernal treachery, I'll be bound! You miserable curs! But for your weakness, there would be no such trouble as this!"

"We're fed up!" retorted Kirby aggressively.

Mr. Creepe rose to his feet. He advanced towards the monitors with a strange look in his burning eyes. Knowing him as they did, the monitors recognised the danger signal. But Kirby was reckless—he had decided to burn his boats, and availed himself of the opportunity to speak with perfect frankness.

"So you are fed up?" repeated Mr. Creepe, bringing his heavy frame to a standstill and glaring at the monitors. "I have heard that before, Kirby—I am tired of hearing it. You are a fool—you understand? But I was a bigger fool ever to trust you!" he added bitterly.

"I am glad you know your own name!" said Kirby.

"By Heaven! You had better be careful, boy!" exclaimed the schoolmaster, his voice thick and shaky. "You'd better be careful! Don't goad me too far, Kirby! I am in no mood for your insolence!"

Kirby laughed tauntingly.

"Who cares for your paltry threats?" he sneered. "Without us you couldn't have carried on this school at all! School, eh? It's been nothing else but a prison—a rotten sweat shop, where all the chaps worked at your filthy money-making schemes! It's a good thing you're whacked! And you'll end up in prison——"

"Go easy!" muttered Tarkington nervously.

Mr. Creepe was indeed looking dangerous.

"Listen to me!" he snarled. "If you boys had stood by me at the very beginning there would have been no rebellion at all! If you had helped me wholeheartedly this trouble would never have come upon us. I have suffered enough at your hands, and I am not prepared to listen to these insults! Be silent, or I shall not be answerable for what I do!"

Kirby laughed in his face.

"Do you think we're afraid of you?" he roared. "And you've been telling lies, too! We did stand by you at the beginning—we did the best we could! But how the blazes can we fight against a great crowd——"

"Keep silent!" shouted Mr. Creepe fiercely.

"I won't, you old swindler!" yelled Kirby, now thoroughly furious. "We've kept your rotten secrets till we're sick of 'em! We've gone about the village painting you white, and all the time you're as black as pitch! A common burglar is a gentleman compared to you——"

"You—you——"

Mr. Creepe could utter no words. His control snapped. A deep, alarming flush

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suffused his face, all the more extraordinary after his recent pallor. With a sideways bound he grabbed up an exercising club—a dangerous weapon in the hands of an angry man. The light glistened on the polished, varnished wood as Mr. Creepe swung the club round.

"Look out!" gasped Tarkington hoarsely.

"Don't be a fool!" snapped Kirby. "I'm not afraid of him!"

All the same, he dodged, but his movement was too slow. The club swung round in Mr. Creepe's grip, and there was a sickening thud as the weapon struck Kirby on the head. But for his timely dodging movement, the monitor would have been brained by that blow.

As it was, he fell to the ground in an inert heap, without a sound. Mr. Creepe bent over him, and flung the club away.

"You insolent young whelp!" snarled the schoolmaster, beyond all control. "I'll show you! I'll teach you! Take that—"

He delivered a kick in the unconscious monitor's ribs which brought forth a terrifying grunt. He kicked again, this time with the other foot, and the blow was even more deadly, for it caught Kirby in the head.

"Stop!" panted Tarkington wildly. "You'll kill him!"

CHAPTER XII.

HIS OWN MEDICINE.



ALL the monitors were scared out of their wits.

They had seen Mr. Grimesby Creepe in many bad tempers, but they had never seen him in such a mad, uncontrollable rage as this. It was appalling to witness. The schoolmaster was literally foaming at the mouth.



"What the deuce——" began Kirby, pulling off the other's muffler.

"They've bunked!" gasped Fryer thickly.

"Stop?" he shouted, with a wild movement. "Who'll tell me to stop? I'm going to make this young fool shriek for mercy! Am I to be defied and insulted with impunity?"

He whirled round again, and prepared to deliver another kick. His heavy boot, in fact, was drawn back in readiness to deliver a smashing drive into Kirby's very face—a blow which would have battered the unconscious bully's features into pulp.

"Stop him!" yelled Tarkington madly.

He rushed forward, and flung Mr. Creepe off his balance. The kick went wild, and the schoolmaster reeled aside. He flung himself at Tarkington like a madman.

"Help!" gasped Tarkington.

The other monitors were ready enough now. This fighting had overcome their initial scruples. They hurled themselves at Mr. Creepe with all the fury of long-pent-up hatred. Their true feelings were released in a flood. They literally pounced.

And Mr. Creepe burned all his boats by cursing, swearing, screaming, and threatening. He did everything to goad the monitors on to further excesses. A complete collapse might have saved him. If only he had admitted himself beaten, the monitors would have calmed down. But Mr. Creepe was like a wild man, and struggled ceaselessly.

"Rope him up!" yelled Roberts. "Rope him up the same way as he roped up the kids!"

"Yes, by Jove!" panted Tarkington. "That's the idea! We'll strip him, tie him up, and give him some of his own medicine! His own horsewhip's up the corner!"

"Yes, that's the idea!" chorused the others.

They were thoroughly aroused, and reckless to a degree. They didn't care what they did now. All their animal instincts were to the fore. Coarse bullies at the best, they gave full rein to their natural bent.

In next to no time, Mr. Grimesby Creepe was stripped to the waist. Ropes were fastened round his wrists, and he was hauled up. He had ceased to scream and shout now, for his voice had cracked. He merely panted, but continued his vile abuse and foul language.

The ends of the ropes were swung over the beams overhead, and Mr. Creepe was hauled clear of the floor. In just the same way as he had treated his own victims, he was being treated by his monitors. It was truly a case of poetic justice.

"Let-me-whip-him!"

The enraged monitors turned, and saw Kirby struggling up into a sitting position. The head monitor had recovered during the scrap, and for a time he had watched with dull, unseeing eyes. But now he grasped the full significance of the preparations.

"Thank goodness you ain't killed!" muttered Tarkington.

Kirby staggered to his feet uncertainly. He winced, and a spasm of pain shot over his face. There was a dull ache in his ribs, and his head felt twice its normal size. The blow from the club, and the subsequent kick, had left him more than dazed.

And he was dangerous. His one desire was to attack this brute who had made him suffer so much. The other monitors would have been well advised to thrust Kirby back. But they had always looked

to him for the lead—and they left the lead to him now.

"Give me the whip!" croaked Kirby between his teeth.

He swayed as he took the wicked-looking horsewhip. And Mr. Grimesby Creepe uttered a gurgling cry of terror. He could see the insane look in Kirby's eye, and his heart nearly stopped beating.

"Stop!" he panted. "You are mad! Don't touch me——"

"Yes, I'm mad!" panted Kirby, slashing the whip round. "Take that, you cur! You'd kick me, would you? You'd smash into me with a club? By glory! I'll make you suffer! I'll make you smart!"

Hiss!

The whip sang through the air viciously, and the next second Mr. Grimesby Creepe uttered a wild, despairing screech. Across his back lay a red, burning weal. And the agony of it made the schoolmaster contort himself grotesquely as he hung there from the ropes.

Slash! Slash! Slash!

The whip performed its deadly work. Kirby was recovering his strength with every thrust, and his blows were deadly. Within a few moments Mr. Creepe's back was a ghastly, sickening sight. It was strange indeed that his punishment should be meted out by his own monitors.

And, foul though this punishment was, it could not be denied that it was well deserved. For the man was being treated in exactly the same way as he had treated too many of his helpless victims. He was suffering the same tortures; he was learning a lesson that would burn itself into the brain for all time.

"Ease up!" said Fryer nervously. "You'll kill him, Kirby!"

"Yes, go easy, old man!" panted Tarkington.

Slash! Slash! Slash!

Kirby went on with insane, relentless force. And Tarkington was the first one to notice that Mr. Creepe had become limp. He ceased to jerk as the whip coiled round him. He hung there, inert and awful. His jaw had dropped, and his eyes were half open.

"You fool!" screamed Tarkington. "You've killed him!"

He and the other monitors flung themselves on Kirby, and forced him away. The whip was wrenched out of his hand. Only for a moment did he struggle. Then he fell back, staring at the result of his handiwork with wild, frightened eyes.

"I—I didn't mean to——" he began huskily.

Then he shuddered, and fell into a limp heap, scared out of his wits.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE FLIGHT.



FOR a full minute nobody moved.

The situation was too dreadful. In the heat of the moment, this awful thing had been done, and now that it was too

late, the full realisation came upon the monitors. Mr. Creepe, his squat, hunched body hanging so limply, was a terrifying spectacle. The monitors were afraid to look at him—horrified to even glance at his back.

Tarkington was the first to speak.

"We—we'd better clear out!" he muttered nervously. "We can't wait until the morning; we must go now! They'll arrest us—"

"Don't be a fool!" snarled Kirby, pulling himself together. "We must cut him down—"

"No, no!" panted Fryer, white to the lips. "Don't touch it!"

"You silly idiot—he's not dead!" said Kirby, taking a grip on himself. "He's only fainted—just the same as he's made the kids faint. Don't be such cowards; help me to cut him down."

The other monitors were slightly encouraged, and although they were still scared stiff, they helped Kirby to cut the ropes, and lower Mr. Creepe to the floor.

"What did I tell you?" said Kirby, as an unconscious groan escaped the schoolmaster. "He's alive! He'll be conscious again in twenty minutes! Shove him on that pile of sacks in the corner!"

Mr. Creepe was carried over and deposited on the sacks. But even Kirby didn't dare to make any close examination. He reeled away from the corner without any delay.

"We'd better get out of this!" he said thickly.

"How?" asked Tarkington, in a panic. "Where can we go to? There aren't any trains—it's no good walking—"

"Wait a minute; we've got to think!" interrupted Kirby. "I'm all dazed; my head's throbbing like thunder. I want some fresh air. Let's get out of here, anyway!"

They were only too glad to leave the gymnasium. Outside, the night was cool and breezy. Stars were shining in a fairly clear sky, and everything was now quiet and peaceful.

The school building lay dark and forbidding on the other side of the moat. But as the monitors moved away from the gymnasium they caught sight of one or two figures on the roof, outlined against the sky.

The rebels were on the watch again. Everything was now in its former state. The sentries were at their posts, and a strict watch was being kept. The St. Frank's contingent by this time had retired

to their dormitories for some well-earned rest.

"That's better!" said Kirby softly.

The cool air helped him a great deal. The confusion left his brain, and he was able to think more clearly. His ribs still ached, and his head was racked with pain. He had no remorseful thoughts; he was glad that he had given Mr. Grimesby Creepe a taste of his own medicine. For months Kirby had longed for this hour.

But he had sense enough to realise that the penalty would be severe. It would be no good waiting till the morning—departure must be at once. And Tarkington and the others were just as eager to get away as he was.

They were still convinced that Mr. Creepe was either dead or dying, and they were scared out of their wits. Their one desire was to put as many miles between them and Moat Hollow as possible.

Kirby had done the actual flogging, but they had all helped. In fact, the very flogging itself had been their own idea—Kirby had only joined in after Mr. Creepe had been tied up and stripped. So it was necessary for the whole six to make themselves scarce.

"What can we do?" asked Tarkington gruffly. "My hat! Things are in a fine mess now. We shall have the police here in the morning—"

"Shut up!" interrupted Kirby harshly. "They can't prove anything; there'll be nothing to show who did the flogging—"

"But we shall be gone, and they're bound to suspect us," said Roberts.

"They can suspect us, yes, but that's all it'll amount to," replied Kirby. "They won't be able to prove that we did the thing. In any case, we shall be miles away—in London, I hope."

"We can't get to London, you fool!" said Tarkington impatiently. "There's no train until nearly breakfast time—"

"But there's a car," interrupted Kirby.

"A car?"

"Creepe's two-seater."

"You don't mean—"

"Yes, I do," said Kirby. "Why shouldn't we take it? I can drive, and everything's ready. I filled the petrol-tank up only yesterday, in case old Creepe should want to bolt. There'll be room for the six of us in it if we squash up a bit, and we'll be in London by eight o'clock."

"By Jove! You've hit it!"

"Yes, let's take the car!"

"Couldn't do better!"

Kirby's idea attracted the other monitors. It afforded a quick way out of the trouble, and the prospect of being in London by breakfast time appealed to the fugitives.

Like shadows, they went to the garage, a small outbuilding just within the big gates. They didn't much care whether they were

heard or not, but they took every precaution. The car was pushed out, and then, at the last moment, the heavy gates were swung back. After being smashed open they had been temporarily fastened, so there were no difficulties here.

Once in the road the engine was started. The monitors piled themselves into the little car, and the flight commenced.

CHAPTER XIV.

STARTLING NEWS.



"**A**NYTHING to report?" asked Nipper crisply.

He had just appeared on the roof, and Tommy Watson and Jevons turned from the parapet. It

was early morning, and full daylight. The sun was shining with real spring warmth.

"No, there's nothing doing yet," said Tommy Watson. "Can't make it out, either. I thought old Creepe would have showed himself before now. There's no sign of the monitors——"

"I expect they're all asleep," said Jevons.

"That's about the size of it," agreed Nipper. "I've got an idea, though, that Creepe has gone. Remember how we heard the car during the night? I think he's thrown up the sponge and cleared off."

"If he has, how do we stand?" asked Jevons.

Nipper leaned against the parapet, looking thoughtful.

"I don't quite know," he replied slowly. "If Creepe's gone, the fight's naturally over. But I don't quite see——"

"As it happens, the problem was not one that needed any attention. For it was being solved by other methods. Nipper paused in the middle of his sentence as he saw the big gates shaking.

"Hallo! Old Creepe's coming back, by the look of it," said Watson quickly. "By Jove! I wonder if he's brought a gang of roughs with him?"

"Perhaps he's been to Bannington to fetch help!" suggested Jevons.

Their doubts, however, were set at rest a moment later. For the gates were thrust open and some unexpected figures marched into the school grounds. First and foremost came the uniformed figure of Inspector Jameson, of the Bannington police. Behind him were two constables carrying a stretcher, and then three or four gentlemen of grave aspect who looked like public officials of some kind. One, apparently, was a doctor, since he carried a small valise.

Through the open gate the surprised juniors caught sight of two motor-cars. One was covered, and a red cross could be seen on the side of it.

"An ambulance!" ejaculated Nipper. "What on earth——"

"They're a bit late, aren't they?" grunted Watson. "They must have heard something about the scrap, and thought we needed help. I say, what rot! Just like old Jameson to butt in when he's not wanted!"

Other juniors were looking over the parapet now. The advent of these visitors had quickly got round, and there were faces at all the front windows. The situation was rather difficult.

"Hey!" shouted the police-inspector. "Who's in charge here?"

"I am," replied Nipper promptly. "How are you, inspector? Haven't seen you for months!"

"Bless my soul! It's Mr. Nelson Lee's young lad!" exclaimed Inspector Jameson. "I'd no idea—— You'd better come down, young man, and open the door. We want to get in."

Nipper became suspicious.

"Sorry, inspector, but there's nothing doing in that line," he replied smoothly. "We're holding this place against all invaders, and we can't even allow you to——"

"Now then! Now then!" interrupted the inspector angrily. "That won't do, Master Nipper. You can't defy the law like this. Mr. Creepe's either dead or dying, and we've brought an ambulance——"

"Dead or dying!" gasped Nipper. "You've been fooled, inspector. We didn't touch him—we let him go unmolested!"

By this time the whole school was buzzing, and the Moat Hollow boys were keenly interested in the scene. The gentlemen with Inspector Jameson were growing more and more impatient.

"I'm not accusing you of any violence," called up the inspector. "Six boys were caught in a motor-car at Helmford early this morning. They were monitors of this school——"

"Oh! So it was Kirby & Co. who left in the middle of the night?"

"Yes, after nearly murdering their master," retorted Jameson. "Now will you come down and open the door? This foolishness is over—we've come here to make a full investigation."

For a moment Nipper hesitated. Apparently some startling things had been going on without his knowledge. To learn that the monitors were in the hands of the police, and that Mr. Creepe was half murdered were indeed startling items of news.

"All right—I'll come straight down," said Nipper crisply.

As he moved away from the parapet he paused again. His attention had been attracted by a strange figure behind the gymnasium. He had caught sight of it at the corner, and he stood there, staring.

Mr. Grimesby Creepe was apparently very much alive, for it was he who emerged from behind the gym. He was a wild, dishevelled figure—a figure with only a rough blanket over his shoulders, with his hair tangled, and his face distorted with agony and hatred.

He ran out, swaying.

"You!" he croaked, pointing up at Nipper. "I've got to thank you for this! Curse you! You've brought all this ruin upon me!"

The police officers and the others turned, startled. They made a move towards the frenzied schoolmaster. But at the same moment Mr. Creepe wrenched something from one of his pockets, and levelled it.

"But I'll be even!" he screamed. "I'll be even!"

Crack!

A shot rang out on the morning air like a snap of a whip. A film of smoke hovered near Mr. Creepe, and Nipper jerked violently sideways, lost his balance, and toppled headlong over the parapet.

CHAPTER XV.

FREED FROM BONDAGE.



SPLASH!

Nipper fell into the moat like a stone, and instantly a babel of voices broke loose. The inspector and his men rushed up to Mr. Creepe, and seized

him just as he was swaying over. The blanket slipped, revealing the maddened schoolmaster's bare back.

"Good heavens!" muttered the inspector, with a shudder. "Quick! That stretcher! Strap him in if necessary——"

"He's shot Nipper!" came a shout from the parapet.

Tommy Watson was leaning perilously over—until, indeed, it seemed that he would plunge into the moat, too.

"Nipper!" he shouted despairingly. "Oh, quick—quick! He was shot——"

"It's all right—I'm not hurt!" gasped Nipper, as he struck out for the bank.

"Lend a hand, there! Thanks!"

He was hauled out, dripping.

"I lost my balance—that's all!" he panted. "I heard the bullet sing past my ear, and I started pretty badly. I must have slipped, or something. It's all right—I can soon change."

"Thank goodness you're not hurt, lad!" said the police doctor.

"Hurrah!"

A wild kind of cheer went up from the Moat Hollow boys. Tommy Watson was so relieved that he hardly knew what to do for a moment. Many others were rushing downstairs to tear away the barricades, and to get the main bridge across.

The most dull-witted boy realised that the siege was over. With the police in possession, and Mr. Creepe under arrest, there could be no further rebellion. Without a doubt the schoolmaster was at the end of his tether, and a charge of attempted murder against him was a certain sequel to this early morning scene.

The barricades were soon down, and the bridge was pushed across. The police and the other officials took charge. Nipper hurried in to change into some dry clothes, and Tommy Watson accompanied him.

"What's happened?" panted Watson excitedly.

"I had a few words with one of those men, and it looks pretty bad," replied Nipper, as he dragged off his wet clothes. "Ugh! That moat's as muddy as a ditch——"

"You had an awfully narrow escape!" said Tommy gravely.

"I've had narrower," replied Nipper. "Never mind that now. I was having a word with one of those men, and it seems that Kirby and his crowd tried to escape in Creepe's motor-car. They bashed into a lamp-post in Helmford, I understand, and they were all taken to the lock-up."

"My goodness!"

"The Helmford police thought they were drunk at first, but Kirby, who was driving, was only a bit dizzy—he'd had a nasty bash on the head——"

"Yes, but how——"

"Kirby tried to make out that everything was all right, but the other monitors lost their nerve, and blurted out the whole story."

"What story?"

"Why, there was a fearful bust-up here in the night," said Nipper, removing his shorts. "My hat! I'm absolutely muddy. I'd better slip into the bath—it doesn't matter about cold water. About that bust-up. Kirby horsewhipped Creepe until he fainted——"

"That's good hearing, anyhow!" said Watson approvingly.

"Yes, but I think Kirby overdid it," said Nipper. "The fellow had some excuse—he was clubbed by that brute, and then kicked on the head afterwards. Anyhow, Tommy, we've won! It's all over bar shouting!"

"You think so?" asked Watson dubiously.

"It's a cert!" said Nipper. "There's going to be an official inquiry, and the whole truth'll come out—just what we've been aiming for all the time. Creepe'll be lucky if he gets off with less than penal servitude. As for all the chaps, they'll be sent home as soon as possible. We've done the trick, Tommy!"

"Good egg!" said Watson fervently.

But even now he couldn't quite realise it. When he and Nipper went down twenty minutes later, they found the preliminary inquiry over. The investigators had seen and heard quite sufficient to convince them

that this school had been a disgrace to the countryside.

The Moat Hollow boys were ordered to get themselves ready—they were to be taken straight into Barnington and placed in the care of the local educational authorities—until further inquiries could be made, and till they could be sent home. Their period of bondage was over—they were free!

Watson was included in the order, but Nipper intervened. He mentioned that he and Tommy were old friends, and that they would be the guests of Dr. Stafford for a day or two—for Nipper was quite certain that the Headmaster of St. Frank's would welcome them, as they were both Old Boys. Old Boys were always cordially received at St. Frank's. And in the case of Nipper and Tommy Watson the Head's hospitality would be more than usually warm.

An hour later—and it was even then only just about breakfast-time—Moat Hollow was a deserted, derelict spot. It had only one guardian—a solitary policeman on duty in the hall.

Mr. Creepe had been removed to hospital, and the only prospect in front of him was a trial at the local assizes. His liberated victims were enjoying the first-fruits of their freedom.

And Nipper and Tommy Watson marched gaily to St. Frank's.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BEST NEWS OF ALL.



EDWARD OSWALD
HANDFORTH
glanced at his
watch.

"There's plenty of time," he declared, as he looked up at the school clock. "Hallo!

The clock's three minutes slow!"

"It isn't your watch that's fast, by any chance?" asked Church.

"My watch never goes fast—it's reliable to a second," replied Handforth curtly. "Anyhow, we've got plenty of time to get down to Moat Hollow and back before lessons. I want to see what's going on—"

"We'd better see Pitt about it first," said McClure.

The chums of Study D were just near the fountain in the Triangle. It was such a glorious morning, indeed, that most of the fellows were out and about. School would start all too soon—and, somehow, school always seemed more irksome when the weather was sunny.

"Well, I'm blessed!" ejaculated Church abruptly.

He was staring at the gateway. Tommy Watson and Nipper had just arrived, arm in arm. They were smiling, cheerful, and apparently in the gayest of spirits. They stode up briskly.

"Hallo! Good-morning!" said Nipper, with a cheerful grin. "We've come here to stay for a day or two—guests of the Head."

"Guests of the Head!" said Handforth blankly.

"He hasn't exactly invited us yet, but he will do as soon as he knows the facts," replied Nipper sweetly. "But why the dead fish expression? I've never seen you look so much like a cold cod!"

Handforth & Co. recovered their voices.

"But—but what about the rebellion at Moat Hollow?" yelled Handforth.

"It's over!"

"Over?"

"A thing of the past—a relic of a bygone age!" said Nipper calmly. "Creepe has not only been horsewhipped, but he's in hospital, and when he comes out he'll go in the dock! His monitors are also in the hands of the police—although I expect they'll soon get freed. Anyhow, we've won the day!"

"Are you rotting?" demanded Handforth grimly.

"I may sometimes joke, and I may occasionally jest, but I never rot!" replied Nipper, with a smile. "Hallo, Reggie! Morning, Archie! How goes it, Buster? Here, I say—Whoa!"

Handforth & Co. were not allowed to have Nipper and Watson to themselves. A whole crowd of fellows came rushing excitedly round. And before twenty minutes had elapsed the entire school was excitedly talking about the recent happenings at Moat Hollow.

The Fourth could hardly believe that the excitement was all over. But they patted themselves on the back with some force—realising that their night escapade had provided the crucial turning-point. It was the St. Frank's Fourth, after all, which had brought about the defeat of the tyrant.

And then came the best news of all.

It didn't arrive immediately, but some little time after the mid-morning interval, when the fellows had gone back to their lessons. Nipper had fully explained the situation to the Head, and the Head, as anticipated, had invited the pair to stay under his roof for a day or two.

Watson was too happy for words. As he strolled in the Triangle with Nipper, he felt that only one thing more could add to his joy. He had been freed from Moat Hollow, but his future was as uncertain as ever.

"It's all the worse now, too," remarked Watson. "I mean, there's some talk of you coming back next term, Nipper. Well, I shall be shoved off to some other rotten school—"

And then the miracle happened.

A car drove into the Triangle, and out of it stepped no less a person than Mr. Benjamin Watson. Tommy stood staring for a

moment with startled eyes, and then he rushed forward.

"Uncle Ben!" he shouted gladly.

"So here you are!" said Uncle Ben cheerfully. "I went to Moat Hollow for you—and was sent up here by a policeman! What on earth——"

"There's been a bit of excitement, sir," said Nipper. "Moat Hollow is closed—and Mr. Grimesby Creepe has brought his career as a schoolmaster to a sudden finish."

"This is amazing," said Mr. Watson. "I came to see you, Tom—I've brought good news——"

"About—about dad?" asked Watson breathlessly.

"Yes, the best of all news," replied Uncle Ben. "I had a cable yesterday from your father, and although I don't need to go into any details, I can tell you that his Australian properties have suddenly increased in value. Valuable mineral discoveries, I believe——"

"And — and are mother and father coming back?" asked Watson eagerly.

"They're on the way now—and they ought to be in London within a fortnight," replied Uncle Ben, smiling. "They couldn't turn up at a better time—right in the middle of the Easter holidays."

Watson looked round dazedly, his eyes shining.

"Perhaps I shall be able to come back to



Hiss !
The whip sang through the air viciously, and the next second Mr. Grimesby Creepe uttered a wild, despairing screech.

St. Frank's!" he breathed, with a little gulp in his throat. "Oh, Uncle Ben——"

"It's all right, Tom—you'll certainly be at St. Frank's when the summer term starts," smiled Uncle Ben.

"And I shouldn't be surprised if I'm here, too," murmured Nipper softly.

THE END.

NEXT WEEK!—

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CHAPTER XLVI.

THE SECOND TRAP.

"**S**PLENDID!" said Nelson Lee, in a tone of satisfaction. "Couldn't have been better, Lennard! Slip the handcuffs upon him quickly, and we'll give him into the charge of Mr. Langford and his son!"

The chief inspector nodded.

"I'll handcuff him all right!" he grinned, suiting the action to the word. "By glory, this is a coup, if you like! I'm anxious to see the fellow's features——"

"Plenty of time for that!" cut in Nelson Lee briskly. "Don't forget the second part of the programme, Lennard! That, if anything, is more important than this!"

"Yes, rather—so it is!" agreed the official. "I wonder whether those chaps of mine have got the professor all right? I don't think they bungled the business—— Ah, here he is!"

Two of the plain-clothes men came hurrying up to the window at that moment, and Lennard saw that they were half-carrying a prisoner between them. He was the black-bearded companion of "red mask," and he, too, was now securely manacled.

"We got him all right, sir!" said one of the policeman, addressing Lennard. "He was taken completely by surprise, and we got the bracelets on him before he knew what was up!"

"Good, sergeant!" said the chief inspector gleefully. "Bring him in here! I want you to attend to him and this other beauty while Mr. Lee and I see to things outside. Mr. Langford and his son will help you to guard them!"

The sergeant nodded, and at once lifted the prisoner through the wide-open library window, followed by his companion. Then the pair of them grasped a prisoner apiece and kept a tight grip upon them.

Nelson Lee walked up to the black-whiskered man and quickly raised his hand.

"Excuse me, professor!" he said, jerking the black beard from Zingrave's chin. "I require this disguise for my own personal use, and I am quite sure that you will not be sorry to discard it! Mr. Lennard and myself have quite a lot to attend to outside!"

The one-time Chief of the League of the Green Triangle scowled evilly, but made no reply. He was feeling tremendously angry at the turn events had taken, for he had been priding himself upon the absolute secrecy of his arrangements.

Now, like a bolt from the blue, he found himself in the hands of the police—handcuffed like a common cracksman! The degradation was too terrible for words, and the professor preserved a sullen silence.

Nelson Lee, who had long since discarded his Chinese disguise, now attached Zingrave's beard to his own chin, and vaulted out of the window, followed by the chief inspector. They hurried across the drive to where the criminals' motor-car was standing, and here, they found several of the plain-clothes men waiting for further instructions.

"Any sign of Kerner and his gang?" asked Lennard briskly, addressing one of the men.

"Not yet, sir," was the answer.

"Good!" said the chief inspector. "You men had better conceal yourselves again, and wait for the next signal! Get busy as soon as you hear it, and don't let a single man make his escape!"

The plain-clothes policemen disappeared as if by magic, leaving Nelson Lee and Lennard standing by the side of the car. The detective was looking thoughtfully along the gloomy road, and there was a frown upon his forehead.

"I hope there has been no hitch in Nipper's arrangements," he said, with an anxious note in his voice. "It's quite evident that the youngster has carried out his part,

Lennard—otherwise we should have had Kerner and his men here some time ago."

"Yes, that's clear enough," agreed Lennard. "But I shouldn't worry, Lee. Nipper isn't the sort of fellow to get himself into hot water, I know! He must have accomplished wonders to delay Kerner as he has done, but he worked the trick all right! He's welcome to make his appearance at any time he likes now; we're ready for him!"

Lee nodded absently, and continued to gaze along the dark road. He had instructed Nipper to delay Kerner and his men as long as possible without exciting their suspicions—in order to gain sufficient time to effect the arrest of Zingrave and his companion.

This had been successfully accomplished, and it now remained to rope the rascally financier into the net. Nelson Lee was hoping to do this with comparatively little trouble, and he knew that it would be possible if only Kerner arrived within the next few minutes.

Nipper's non-appearance was causing the detective no little anxiety, but as he looked into the darkness he saw a minute point of light rapidly hurrying towards him. It was a single glimmer, and Lee concluded that it heralded a cyclist.

He was right; for a few seconds later the rider came dashing up to Pine Lodge, and almost fell from his machine as he caught sight of Nelson Lee and the chief inspector. The cyclist was Nipper, and he was almost out of breath from his strenuous efforts.

He recognised his master at once, in spite of the beard, and he gasped out his news.

"Kerner and his gang will be here in a couple of ticks, guv'nor!" he panted. "I managed to make a gash in one of the tyres of their car, and I doctored the valve of the spare wheel-tyre so that they couldn't use it! They've been patching up the tube for the last twenty minutes; but they've done now! I waited until I saw them getting ready to re-enter the car, and then hurried on here to give you the tip!"

Nelson Lee patted his assistant upon the back heartily.

"You have done exceedingly well, young 'un," he exclaimed. "Zingrave and his companion have been arrested, and we're only waiting for Kerner's arrival to complete the night's work!"

Nipper was delighted to hear the news, and he and the chief inspector, at a word from Nelson Lee, went into the grounds of the Lodge—Nipper dragging his bicycle after him. Here they concealed themselves amongst the evergreens, while the famous detective took up his position behind the Langford machine.

Meanwhile, Mr. Max Kerner—almost foaming at the mouth on account of the delays he had experienced—was hurrying along towards Pine Lodge, intent upon seizing the wonderful apparatus which he coveted so earnestly.

His one fear was that he would be too late to intercept Zingrave and his partner before

they had finished their task at the Lodge, and he urged the chauffeur of his car to make all possible haste.

And as the vehicle drew near to its destination Kerner gave vent to an exclamation of satisfaction, for his keen eyes plainly discerned the figure of a black-bearded man in the act of operating the Langford machine!

He was in time, after all!

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE IDENTITY OF "MEPHISTOPHELES."



"STOP!"

The sharply hissed order smote upon the ears of Kerner's chauffeur abruptly, and he brought the financier's car to a standstill.

"Come along, Berger!" said Max Kerner, alighting from the car, and addressing his henchman brusquely. "Get your men ready! By the look of things, we shall be just in time to carry out our purpose! It's a lucky thing for us that Zingrave has been here so long!"

The scoundrelly financier, of course, was under the impression that Professor Zingrave was even now engaged in the task of committing the burglary at Pine Lodge—and this was precisely what Nelson Lee had arranged.

By adopting this measure, the detective had reckoned to dispose of Zingrave and the red-cloaked man before Kerner put in an appearance; and his plans—thanks to Nipper's activities—had gone through without the slightest hitch.

It was not often that Nelson Lee had such a completely triumphant fulfilment of his arrangements, and the detective was highly elated. Even as he stood upon the professor's motor-car, apparently working the Langford apparatus, he was quite aware of the approach of Kerner and his men, but he took care to show no sign that he had observed their presence.

And the financier was completely deceived.

Stealthily and silently, he and his men drew nearer to Pine Lodge, and when they had reached a spot about ten yards distant, Kerner himself gave the order to take decisive action.

"Now!" he exclaimed tensely. "Grab Zingrave first, and then get hold of the machine!"

Berger, who was leading the raiding party, suddenly made a dive for Nelson Lee, and he received the surprise of his life when he unexpectedly found himself staring down the barrel of a revolver. The weapon was held in a rock-steady grip, and a calm voice sounded uncommonly determined as it smote upon Berger's astonished ears.

"You have made a little mistake on this occasion, Berger!" said Nelson Lee calmly, recognising the man as the one he had seen

in Kerner's library. "I know that you expected to see Professor Zingrave here—but he is under arrest!"

Berger's mouth opened and closed helplessly, and before he could bring himself to the point of articulation, he was roughly seized and handcuffed by Lennard's men.

At the same instant Kerner himself was grasped by the burly chief inspector, while the other members of the financier's little gang were effectively dealt with by the rest of the policemen. The tables had been turned in the most complete manner possible, and every one of the criminals was captured without the least sign of trouble.

It had been so rapid that there had been no time for fighting; the police had simply stepped out from their places of concealment, and had overpowered Kerner and his gang before they knew what was happening.

"Very neat, eh, Mr. Kerner?" asked Lennard, as he snapped the bracelets upon the financier's wrists. "You're under arrest upon a charge of conspiracy and attempted murder—to say nothing of attempted robbery! By glory, we caught you completely unawares, and I fancy it'll take you some considerable time to get over your surprise!"

The financier could do nothing but gasp impotently, and it was evident that Lennard's words were correct. Kerner's surprise and consternation were complete, and he was absolutely flabbergasted.

Just at the moment of his triumph, he found himself arrested—just as Zingrave had done!

And, like the wily professor, Kerner remained silent and allowed himself to be marshalled towards the police car in company with his men. Lennard directed a sergeant and the majority of the plain-clothes men to take the prisoners away at once, for there was no point in delaying their removal to the police-station.

The chief inspector rubbed his hands together as they went off, and turned a smiling face to Nelson Lee.

"A nice little bunch!" he commented. "Thank goodness the stunt came off all right, Lee! Strictly speaking, we've got young Nipper to thank for our success, and I'm the first to admit it! Congratulations, young 'un!"

Nipper grinned.

"Don't thank me, Mr. Lennard!" he exclaimed. "I only carried out the gov'nor's orders! But I seem to have been missing all the fun, by the look of things! What about Zingrave and that red-cloaked merchant—where are they?"

"In the library of the Lodge!" said Lennard. "We're just going in to unmask the man and have a look at his face!"

By the time they re-entered the library they found that Mr. Jasper Hemming had come downstairs again, and was awaiting an explanation of all that had occurred. He was gazing at the wrecked safe in wonderment and awe, and he approached Nelson Lee with an angry glitter in his eyes.

"What is the meaning of this, Mr. Lee?" he asked. "You distinctly told me that my property would remain untouched——"

"The contents of the safe are quite intact, Mr. Hemming," said Lee quietly. "The door of the safe was damaged before we could prevent it. But that is a mere detail——"

"Detail be hanged!" exploded Hemming violently. "The loss will have to be made good! I won't be the loser——"

"I fancy you are scarcely the man to talk about loss, Mr. Hemming!" cut in Nelson Lee crisply. "I have an idea that you have been responsible for a good deal of what another individual has lost!"

Mr. Hemming turned purple.

"What—what do you mean, Mr. Lee?" he demanded angrily. "Are you accusing me of being a robber, or what?"

"I am not accusing you at all," answered the detective. "That, I think, can be safely left to another! I merely suggested that it was scarcely fitting for you, at a time like this, to mention the paltry damage which has been done to your safe!"

Hemming pursed his lips, and remained silent, and the other occupants of the library looked at him in astonishment. This little altercation between him and Nelson Lee had been quite unlooked for, and they wondered what it could mean.

But they were soon to learn.

Professor Zingrave and his red-cloaked companion were standing between two of the plain-clothes men, securely handcuffed, and Nelson Lee walked towards them with a little smile upon his clear-cut features. He had removed the black beard, and was himself again.

"I fancy that you are about to meet a very old friend of yours, Mr. Langford," he said, turning to the scientist. "You, I believe, are in a position to know our friend 'Mephistopheles' better than anyone else who is present, and I shall be surprised if you fail to recognise him!"

Mr. Langford was taken aback, and he looked at the detective in unfeigned surprise.

"I recognise him, Mr. Lee?" he exclaimed incredulously. "That, surely, is out of the question! I have never had any dealings with criminals in all my life——"

"Not knowingly, of course," cut in Lee, with a chuckle. "Nevertheless, I think you will admit that you know this man quite intimately!"

As he spoke, the famous criminologist pulled the red rubber mask from the face of the red-cloaked man, and revealed his features to the startled gaze of those in the library.

A great gasp of astonishment came from between the lips of Mr. Roger Langford as he recognised the man, and he stepped back as if he had been struck.

Then he stood staring at the unmasked scoundrel, his lips wide open, and his eyes almost starting from his head.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

NELSON LEE ELUCIDATES.



"DR. GREGORY MORTON!" gasped Mr. Langford, at last. "Dr. Gregory Morton—the man I thought was my staunchest friend! Good heavens!"

The scientist's surprise was equally shared by his son Harry, who could scarcely believe the evidence of his eyes. He had had no suspicion that Morton could possibly have been implicated in this business, and he looked from his father to Morton, and from Morton to Lee.

"Great Scott! This is amazing!" he muttered. "Dr. Morton a thief! I—I can scarcely credit such a thing!"

The surprise in the library seemed to be general, and even Nipper was forced to admit the unexpectedness of this denouement.

He turned to his master with a puzzled frown.

"Do you mean to say that you guessed that Dr. Morton was at the bottom of all this, guv'nor?" he asked. "Did you know that he was the red-cloaked man?"

Nelson Lee nodded.

"Certainly!" he replied. "I have known that Dr. Morton was the principal actor in this affair from the start!"

"How?" asked Nipper curiously.

"He gave himself away when he came to Mr. Langford's house by his bandaged finger!" said Nelson Lee. "You remember how we discovered that piece of skin in the waste-paper basket, Nipper?"

"Great guns!" exclaimed Nipper, with a nod. "In that empty office opposite Barlow's!"

"Exactly!" said the criminologist. "That piece of skin must have caused a fairly considerable wound, and when Dr. Morton displayed a bandaged finger, the inference was pretty obvious! But that was only one point out of many which led me to suspect him, Nipper. I don't think he will deny that I am right—or that he is an old criminal whose real name is William Stockton!"

All eyes were now turned to the discomfited scoundrel, who hung his head in a shame-faced manner. He did not look at all like the usual shifty-eyed criminal, and there was something in his face which commanded attention.

"You are right, Mr. Lee—perfectly right!" he said, after a moment's silence. "You have been far too clever for me, and I was a fool to think that I could get the better of you. All my efforts have been in vain, by the look of things, and I have simply wasted my time and energies."

"You have!" agreed the detective. "It was a clever dodge of yours to attempt to lay the whole blame upon Mr. Max Kerner

—but you overlooked the rather obvious fact that you were the only man who was in a position to know of Mr. Langford's apparatus. When I learned that you were in his complete confidence, and that he had telephoned to you on the night when his machine was completed, it did not need a great amount of brain-work to associate you with the kidnapping of your friend—especially when I saw your wounded finger! You stood practically self-condemned!"

Mr. Roger Langford looked at the criminal with a sad expression in his eyes, and shook his head slowly.

"I would not have believed this of you, Morton, if you had not admitted it in my hearing," he exclaimed, with a little break in his voice. "I—I thought you were the best friend I had, and I would have trusted you with my very life. To think that a man could have been so misled is appalling, and I scarcely know what to think. Why did you do it, man? Why on earth did you act in this insane manner?"

"Because he's a crook, dad—that's why!" said Harry disdainfully.

Dr. Morton—or William Stockton, as his real name was—looked round miserably.

"You're right, Harry—you're right!" he admitted. "But I'm not quite so black as you think, as I hope to convince you! I must have been mad to attempt to accomplish what I set out to do, just as I was insane enough to believe that I could pit my wits against those of Mr. Lee! Why, after I had wrecked his racing car, I even went to the length of taking him to an old ruined Abbey, and locking him and Nipper in one of the dungeons! By so doing, I hoped to dispose of them until I had completed my plans, and I was astonished to see them—free and active—when I paid that visit to Cambridge Terrace!"

"Quite so—I observed your start of guilty surprise!" cut in the detective, with a nod. "You had a very strong motive for taking the completed machine, did you not—a stronger motive than a mere wish to possess it?"

Stockton laughed.

"I had no desire to possess the machine, Mr. Lee!" he exclaimed. "I only wanted it for a short time. For months and months I was preparing my plans, and I arranged to bring off my coup the very instant Mr. Langford's apparatus was finished. Now I can see that I was altogether too hasty—I should have waited for a spell before helping myself to the machine. But I couldn't—I couldn't! My impatience was overmastering!"

Nelson Lee nodded thoughtfully.

"I think I can understand," he murmured. "The coup you refer to was the punishment of your three enemies, eh?"

Stockton looked at the detective keenly.

"I can see that you know a great deal more than I suspected, Mr. Lee," he exclaimed. "But you are right again! It

is amazing to me how you have obtained your knowledge! How, for instance, did you know that I had arranged to visit this house to-night?"

The famous detective smiled.

"That is very simply answered," he exclaimed. "I overheard your conversation with Professor Zingrave last night—at your house in George Street, Euston Road! The information I then obtained was altogether too good to miss, and I lost no time in arranging this little trap—for both you and Zingrave!"

of the mark, for I have stolen nothing whatever!"

Stockton spoke with intense feeling, and the occupants of the library looked at him in surprise.

"I have been actuated throughout with but one desire—one motive!" he went on passionately. "Every action of mine has been carefully studied with one object in view—and that object was revenge!"

Stockton snapped out the last word in a defiant manner, and held up his head almost proudly as he uttered it.



As he spoke, the famous criminologist pulled the red rubber mask from the face of the red-cloaked man, and revealed his features to the startled gaze of those in the library.

Stockton looked at Nelson Lee admiringly. "You are to be greatly congratulated!" he exclaimed, with genuine feeling. "I take off my hat to you, Mr. Lee! You have been right in every one of your inferences—but you have missed the main cause of my apparently insane behaviour. Do you think that I associated myself with Professor Zingrave just for the pleasure of committing robberies? Do you think that I stole money and valuables just for the sake of material gain? If you do, you are exceedingly wide

CHAPTER XLIX.

A REMARKABLE STORY.



"REVENGE!" he repeated, looking at his hearers fearlessly. "For years

I have been thirsting for revenge, and I have almost obtained it! But for Mr.

Lee's interference I should have completed my task to-night—but now it is too late!"

Stockton paused, and then resumed his story.

"But I think I had better explain matters a little," he said. "Perhaps you all think that I'm a madman, but I'm far from being mad, although I've got plenty of cause. Four years ago I was a hunted criminal, and I escaped from this country and made my way to the Yukon. There I acquired a rich gold-mine from a man named Paterson, and I will admit right away that I swindled him shamefully. The mine was called 'Satan's Fang,' after some curiously-shaped rocks in the vicinity, and it was exceedingly rich. But I had no money with which to work it, and I confided in three of my friends—Mr. Samuel Barlow, Mr. Harold Lexington and Mr. Jasper Hemming—the man who owns this house. That was the worst day's work I ever did, for I found that I had placed myself in the power of three of the greatest scoundrels unhung."

Stockton paused again, and glared ferociously at Hemming, who was looking anything but pleased at the disclosures which were being made. The other members of his audience were frankly absorbed in his story, and showed their interest upon their faces.

"Don't you dare refer to me as a scoundrel!" exclaimed Hemming, with the colour rising to his face. "I'll have you—"

"Be quiet!" snapped Stockton disdainfully. "I'm explaining the position to these gentlemen, and I don't want your interference. Well, to resume," he added, facing the assembled company once more. "I offered the three men I have mentioned a half share in the mine if they would come in with me, and they agreed readily. But, instead of keeping faith with me, what did they do? They promptly attempted to kill me, in order to obtain a third share each of the proceeds, instead of a third of their legitimate half share!"

"Good gracious!" ejaculated Mr. Langford. "The scoundrels!"

"They were scoundrels, and no mistake!" agreed Stockton. "They tried to murder me, as I said, and they actually left me for dead in a lonely snowdrift. But by a lucky chance I was found with a spark of life still remaining in my frozen body, and nursed back to health, a slow process, which took well over a year. When I finally recovered and was well enough to go out into the world again, I learned that Satan's Fang had yielded up a rich harvest to Barlow, Lexington, and Hemming, and that they had all sailed home to England. So at the first opportunity I followed them here, and soon learned that all three of the men had bought or established paying businesses in London, with their ill-gotten gains."

Stockton spoke with a tremendous amount of feeling, and it was evident to his hearers

that the treatment he had received had soured and embittered him.

"I determined to have my revenge," he went on quickly, "and as a preliminary move I paid a visit to all three of the men who had robbed me, and demanded the return of my money. As I had expected, all three of them laughed in my face, and told me to go to blazes. They knew that I could not prove my claims against them, and so they thought they could ignore my demands. But I am not so easily swerved from my purpose, and I set about making my plans at once."

Again the queerly garbed criminal paused for a brief space, during which he cast a venomous look in the direction of the cringing Hemming.

"I crossed the Atlantic in the personality of Dr. Gregory Morton," continued Stockton, "and during the voyage I became acquainted with Mr. Langford. We became friends, and I saw that Mr. Langford's machine would prove a valuable asset to me. So I rented a room opposite Barlow's, and another opposite Lexington's, in readiness for the fulfilment of my revenge. Unfortunately, I had an accident with some corrosive acid in the Cannon Street office, and I burnt a large piece of skin from my finger—the piece which Mr. Lee has referred to, and which has led to my undoing."

"Marvellous!" exclaimed Harry Langford. "It's really extraordinary how Mr. Lee made his discoveries!"

"It is!" agreed Stockton. "I should have realised that at the outset. But I was only thinking of my own affair, and the accomplishment of my revenge. Your father, Harry, thinking me his staunch friend, telephoned me when his machine was finished, and I set out at once for Cambridge Terrace with Professor Zingrave, who had just escaped from Portmoor, and who had come to me for protection. You see, I knew Zingrave in the old days, and I agreed to a partnership with him. The arrangement was that he should assist me to crush my three enemies on condition that he was allowed to have the use of Mr. Langford's apparatus for a clear month afterwards. At the end of that time the machine was to be returned uninjured to Mr. Langford, a thing upon which I insisted. Zingrave was quite agreeable, saying that during the month he could make himself a rich man for the rest of his life."

For the first time the professor spoke, and he confirmed Stockton's statements.

"Quite true," he agreed, in his silky voice. "But I'm afraid that little arrangement will have to be postponed for a time—thanks to you, Mr. Nelson Lee! During the whole of my criminal career I have been continually thwarted by you, and now you have scored another triumph over me. It's

a hard world for some of us, but no doubt we all have our day!"

The detective smiled, and listened to Stockton's resumed story.

"We took Mr. Langford to the house at Putney, and treated him as kindly as possible," he said. "It was my intention to reward him handsomely for the treatment he had suffered, in addition to restoring his machine to him, but that cannot be now. However, we've all got the satisfaction of knowing that Langford's apparatus has been preserved for England, which would not have been the case if Kerner had seized it. That man was almost crazy to get hold of the machine, and he would have done so but for me."

Nelson Lee nodded.

"That is true, Stockton," he agreed. "Kerner, I believe, would have moved Heaven and earth to achieve his object, and you certainly scored over him when you appropriated Mr. Langford's amazing contrivance. All the same, your action was wrong—very wrong indeed."

The detective spoke in a tone which indicated that he had a certain amount of sympathy for Stockton, and this feeling was shared by several other occupants of the library.

The man was not wholly bad; that was quite clear.

CHAPTER L.

ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.



MR. WILLIAM STOCKTON'S remarkable story had thrown a great flood of light upon the various mysteries which had proved so baffling, and a

little later he was taken away by the chief inspector, together with Professor Zingrave.

Stockton's criminal acts could not be overlooked, of course, and his arrest was inevitable.

But he was not destined to be alone in facing his trial, for a little later the three men who had so grievously wronged him were also taken into custody, and charged with the attempted murder of Stockton. They all confessed their guilt, and agreed to disgorge the money they had received from the sale of the Satan's Fang mine.

The mine itself, as Stockton had stated, had been obtained by fraud from its original owner, and Nelson Lee, at Stockton's special request, succeeded in tracing the widow of the deceased Mr. Paterson, and in restoring to her her husband's money.

By this action, Stockton had proved himself to be thoroughly repentant, and he undertook to lead a straight and honest

life when the time came for him to be released from prison. In passing, it may be stated here that he kept his word to the letter, and became a perfectly honourable citizen of London, and a really staunch friend of both Mr. Roger Langford and his son.

Kerner, of course, was given a very severe sentence, for he had not only been guilty of conspiracy and attempted robbery, but had endeavoured to take the life of Nelson Lee as well.

As for Langford's amazingly efficient apparatus—the machine which produced the "invisible grip"—Nelson Lee advised the scientist to sell it forthwith to the British Government, to whom it would prove to be a most valuable asset. Its possibilities for purposes of war were immense and far-reaching, for there was scarcely anything which could not be accomplished by it.

Langford acted upon the detective's advice, and was agreeably surprised to find himself a comparatively rich man almost at once. Moreover, he was invited to accept the management of a Government factory for the manufacture of larger models of his machine—huge models which would be capable of repelling and destroying any invaders who might threaten our shores.

For the "invisible grip" could be made to operate over long distances, and would thus be capable of sinking warships and bringing down aeroplanes.

And so the strange case ended.

Upon the whole, it had terminated in a very satisfactory manner for all concerned, for Nelson Lee and Nipper had scored another brilliant triumph. Chief Detective-Inspector Lennard had been highly complimented by the Commissioners, and the public were greatly relieved to learn that the notorious Professor Cyrus Zingrave was once more safely housed in Portmoor Prison.

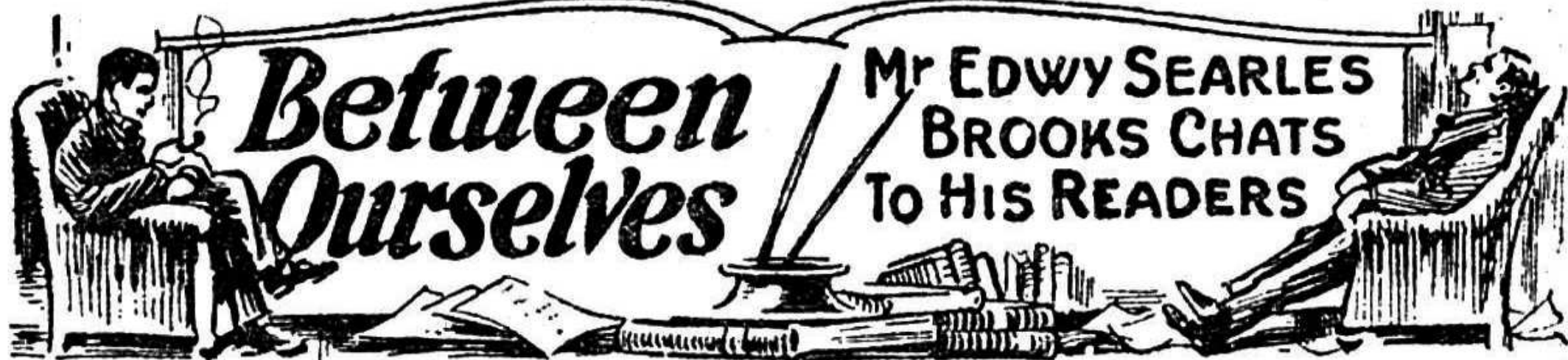
And Mr. Roger Langford was not ungrateful for the service which Nelson Lee had rendered, and he acknowledged his debt in an exceedingly practical manner—begging the detective to accept a "fat" cheque, and pressing upon Nipper a very handsome present in the shape of a smart little two-seater.

Needless to say, the gifts were accepted in the spirit in which they were given—Nipper voting the scientist to be a "regular stunner."

"This is what I call something like a present," said Nipper enthusiastically, as he gazed admiringly at the little car. "She's a beauty, guv'nor, and I think we'd better buzz off for a ride right away. What do you say?"

And Nelson Lee, by way of answer, promptly seated himself beside his young assistant.

THE END.



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

Owing to pressure of space—as I think the Editor has pointed out—some of my last week's Comments were unavoidably held over. They follow immediately below this paragraph, and you'll find my usual acknowledgement of letters some way further down. Last week I was discussing the summer stories, and I told you that while the majority of readers are inclined to favour a tropical adventure series, there are still others who would like a series about camping or caravanning. If I take the boys away for a long adventure on the Amazon, or at the South Pole, or in the South Sea Islands, or in China, there'll still be many readers who haven't had what they wanted. And if there isn't any tropical series, with Lord Dorrimore and Umlosi, I might just as well prepare for an untimely end forthwith. For there are bound to be hosts of readers after my blood.

So what on earth is to be done?

Well, as I am anxious to enjoy life for some time longer, I must certainly find some way out of the difficulty. And it struck me that it might be possible to please EVERYBODY. This sounds absolutely impossible, I know, and I dare say it is impossible. But in this life one can only try. Better to have tried and failed, than never to have tried at all! What I'm thinking about doing (although, mind you, I haven't decided anything yet) is to write an English holiday series immediately following the Whitsun number. Then, when the real vacation commences, somewhere about the middle of July, the boys can go away on their tropical adventure, with Umlosi and Lord Dorrimore and all the rest of it. So all sections of readers would get what they liked. Mind you, this is only just a tentative idea of mine, and when I

write the stories they may be quite different. But I don't think so. I'm only saying this so that I shall be on the safe side! I'm not going to have any of you writing to me and accusing me of having let you down!

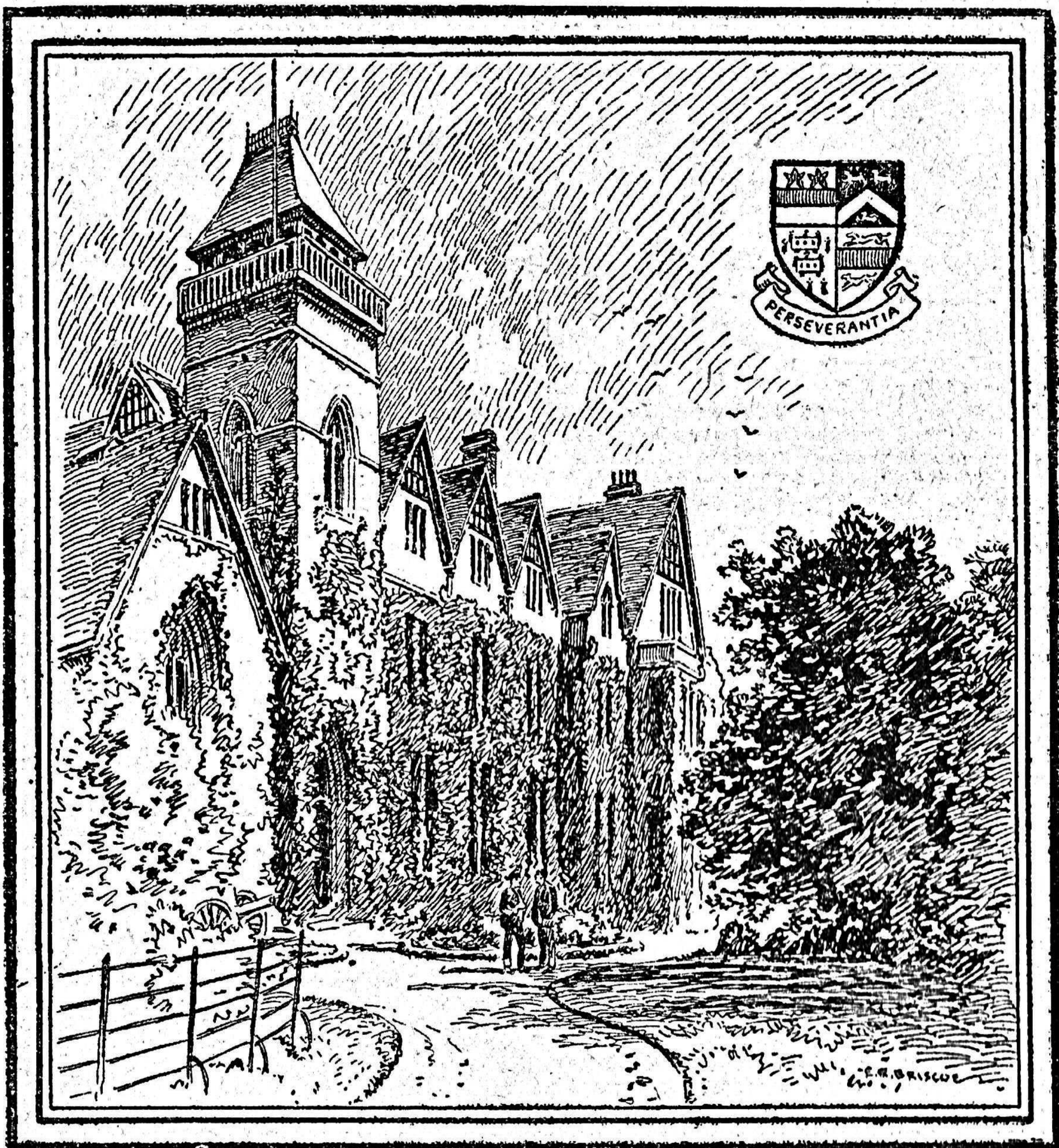
F. W. raises another question. What an impatient lot you are! And you never forget anything, do you? About this map of St. Frank's and district. F. W. wants to know when it is coming out. Perhaps he and a lot more of you believe that the Editor has forgotten the map, and doesn't mean to do anything further in the affair. Well, you're wrong. I won't say the map is already being drawn, because it isn't. There's a lot of preliminary work to be done that none of you seem to realise.

This new map isn't going to be a bare plan, but something infinitely more ambitious. We want to get every place of interest on this map—every building of note that has ever been mentioned in the stories—lanes, woods, villages, and so forth. And if this was hurriedly done something would be forgotten, and mistakes might possibly occur. The Editor is a very thorough man, so he'd rather keep you waiting and give you something good than publish the map at once and have it incomplete. In fact—I might as well bring it out bluntly—it's quite on the cards that you'll have to wait until the autumn.

And I'll tell you why. If the map isn't ready for publication pretty soon, it'll be too late to start it, for it is going to be a kind of a serial. By this I mean that it will be published in sections, and when you have got them all complete you can carefully cut them out, paste them on a big background, and have a large, complete map. That's the scheme as it stands at present. So, you see, it's big. And it may be necessary to postpone the first section of the map until the summer holiday stories are over. I hope you won't mind, but the Editor and I are determined to make this map something very special, and the longer we are over it the better it'll be.

Thanks for your interesting letter, William Frazer. I have mentioned that matter to

(Continued on page 31.)

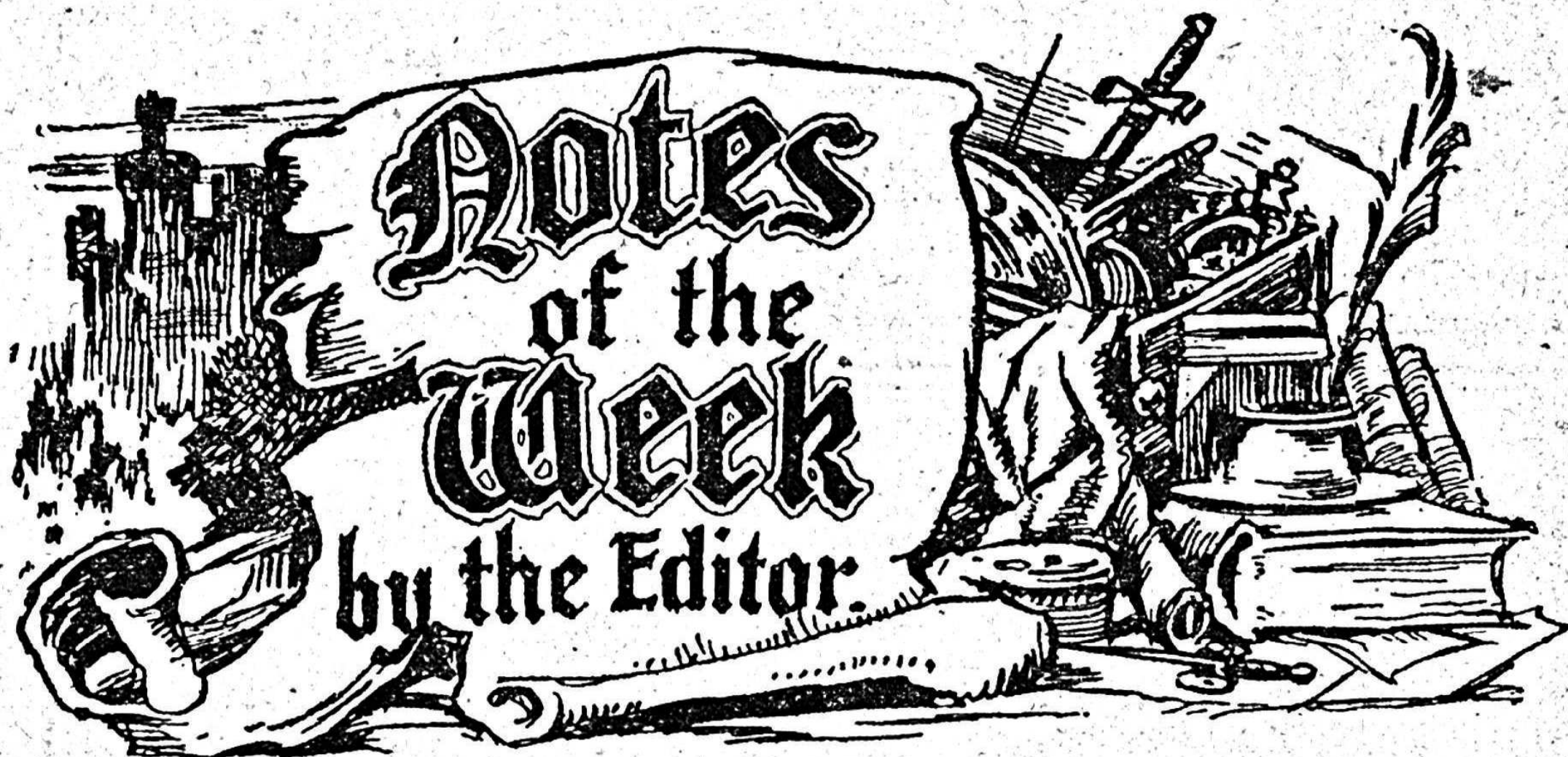


OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS SERIES OF ART SKETCHES.

No. 71.—SOLIHULL SCHOOL.

Solihull School dates back to the Eighteenth Century, and became a Public school in 1923. Situated on the main road between London and Birmingham, it is surrounded by commodious playing fields, where

hockey are played. There are 340 boys at the school, of whom about 100 are boarders. Two-thirds of the school belong to the O.T.C., which goes to camp with other Public schools every August.



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

My dear Chums,

Next week this little chat of mine will be discontinued until the autumn, along with the adventures of Trackett Grim. The "In Reply to Yours" and "How to Do It" features will also not appear, although only until the week after next, and after that they will be published every alternate week. The "Who's Who" and "Portrait Gallery" is being continued, but not altogether on two pages. Under the new arrangement, each boy's portrait, with notes underneath, will appear on separate pages throughout the book. As I explained last week, the Editor of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY has been obliged to cut down my allowance of pages for the Mag. in order to make room for a much longer account of the happenings at the Old School, and to publish a fine new adventure serial by William Murray about India. Though the Mag. will be much smaller in size, it will continue as part of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY throughout the summer season. In the autumn, however, I hope to make it once more a complete little paper of its own, in its new position in the centre of the "N.L.L."

THE NEW ST. FRANK'S MAG.

This is going to be something very different to what we have done before. I think I referred to it once just before Christmas. The pages will be half the size of the present ones, and will be printed downwards from the existing inside margin, the type being set at right-angles to the page you are now reading. By tearing out the leaves, cutting them where directed, and doubling them over, you can bind them into a neat little volume. The articles and stories will be short and snappy, and I hope to introduce into the Mag. many new and novel features.

IN THE MEANTIME.

But autumn is a long way off, and much can happen between now and then. At St. Frank's, anyway, there is sure to be plenty doing. And then, during the summer holidays, I expect most of the Fourth Form will be globe-trotting again. No one knows yet whether Nelson Lee or Lord Dorrimore has planned anything. There are all sorts of rumours, of course, from China to Peru. Last year, you remember, we explored the Great Sahara and discovered an old Roman city. It was on this trip that we lost Nelson Lee. But before the summer holidays come along, I hear that the Fourth Form will be going out camping for a week or two with the Boy Scout contingent. That will be about the middle of June.

APRIL FOOLS' DAY.

Next week it behoves every boy to be on his guard, for the practical joker is probably already hatching plots for April 1. I have a feeling that we shall witness some exceptional fun this coming Fools' Day. So look out and don't be caught.

THE EASTER HOLIDAYS.

The Easter holidays are close at hand, and the fellows here are planning trips to London and elsewhere. Our busy chronicler, who writes up our adventures every week for THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, will doubtless keep you well-informed as to our programme, and how we eventually spend the holiday.

CRICKET AT ST. FRANK'S.

Weather permitting, there will be plenty of cricket this summer at St. Frank's. Arrangements are being made to give a special long account of our important matches in THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY.

I must now bid you all farewell for a few months, trusting you will keep in touch with the Old School through the "N.L.L."

Your old chum,

REGGIE PITT.



The YELLOW TERROR!

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

By EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH

(CONCLUSION.) CHAPTER XVII.

RESCUED FROM THE CHINN-WAGGERS.

TRACKETT GRIM was in the torture-chamber.

It was an awful-looking hole, with a whacking great idol at one end, and instruments of torture all over the place. Trackett Grim was fixed in a kind of rack, with steel bands round his arms and ankles. He'd been in a few holes in his life, but never in such an awful mess as this.

One of the Chinese torturers was heating a few irons, and another Chink was sharpening a few knives on a grindstone. And Splinter, who was squinting through a crack in the wall, didn't know what the dickens to do.

As far as he could see, Trackett Grim was booked. First of all, he was going to have holes bored in him, then he was going to be stretched a bit, and finally carved up. Splinter had heard about Chinese torture, and a few of his hairs went grey on the spot.

And then, just as he was giving up all hope, Trackett Grim proved that he was the most wonderful detective in all the world. What did he do? With one terrific heave, he burst his bonds, the cords round his wrists and ankles snapping like cotton.

Then, with a yell, he grabbed one of the red-hot pokers, and whirled it round his head.

"Out of the way, you rotters!" he roared. "I'll show you who's master! If you think you can diddle me, you've made a bloomer! I've come here to find Mr. Theophilus Twiddle, and I'm jolly well going to find him!"

The Chinamen scattered all over the place, and Trackett Grim rushed into the temple. And there, bound on a stone slab in front of the idol, lay his client. (If this sounds a bit hurried, don't blame me—I've

got to squash it in somehow.—AUTHOR). With a yell of triumph, Trackett Grim ran forward. He slung Mr. Twiddle on his back and bolted!

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TRIUMPH OF TRACKETT GRIM.

RUNNING the gauntlet of scores and hundreds of Tong-men, Trackett Grim fled down the High Street of Zam-Buk-Too. Splinter was hard at his heels, and although Trackett Grim was burdened by Mr. Twiddle, Splinter found it hard to keep pace with him. And they were so finely trained that they raced all the Chinamen, and arrived at the station just as a train was going out.

Trackett Grim wrenched open the door of a first-class compartment, and they all bundled in. The Chinamen swarmed on the platform, brandishing knives.

"Too late!" cried Splinter despairingly. But he was wrong. The Chinese Tong-men stood on the platform, gnashing their teeth with helpless rage. For they only had third-class tickets, and couldn't follow! And before they could go and change the tickets, the train had gone.

"Safe!" breathed Mr. Twiddle. "Safe at last, thanks to your wonderful detective powers, Mr. Grim!"

And so Trackett Grim and Splinter triumphed again. They got to Shanghai without any further adventure, took the first boat home, and as soon as they got to London, they went into a Lyons restaurant and had a good feed. Even an egg on toast was ripping after the awful Chinese food.

Trackett Grim received a cheque for ten thousand pounds from Mr. Twiddle, and so the case was a jolly big success, in spite of the fact that I've had to bring it to an end long before I meant to.

THE END.



OUR PORTRAIT GALLERY

SERIES 2—

No. 9.—CHRISTOPHER (JUICY) LEMON.

A prominent member of Willy Handforth's special "Co." Juicy is generally rather grubby, wears a pleasant smile, and is always ready to follow Willy into any brand of mischief which is brewing. He is a blind follower, never asking questions, but is willing to go headlong into unknown perils with reckless indifference. When not engaged in more serious affairs of life, such as ragging and indulging in feeds, he devotes a certain amount of time to fretwork. In this art he is fairly skilful.

No. 10.—CYRIL HARPER.

A Modern House fag, and by no means a general favourite. Cyril is sometimes known in the Third as "the grinning ape," owing to his habit of hunching up his shoulders and laughing in the most inane fashion at nothing whatever. He is several kinds of a dunce, but it pleases him to butt into everybody's business, and make out that he knows everything. On the average, he gets sat on about ten times a day for pushing himself in where he isn't wanted. But in spite of all rebuffs, he always comes up grinning.



CHRISTOPHER
LEMON.



CYRIL HARPER.

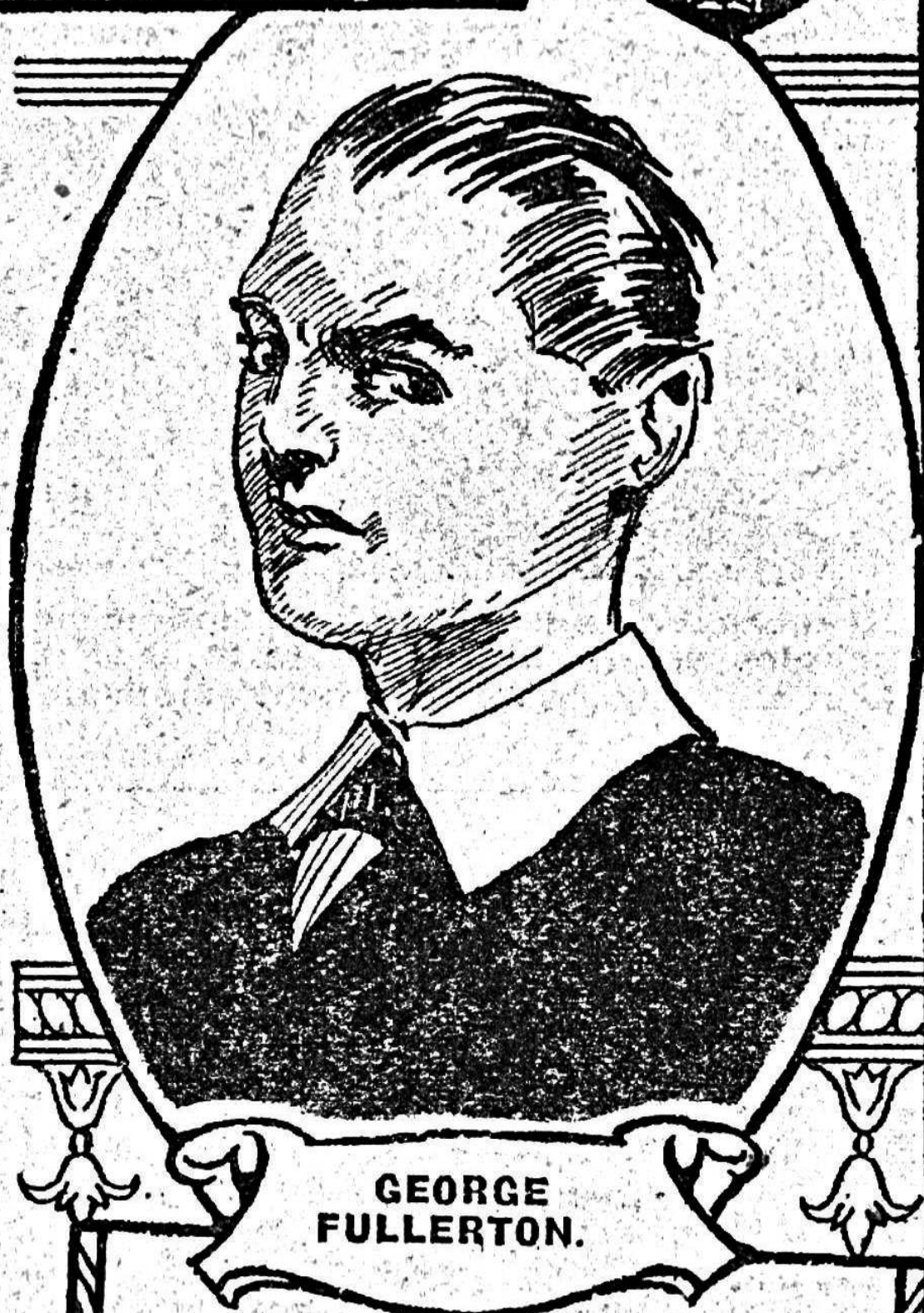
AND WHO'S WHO



THIRD FORM

No. 11.—GEORGE FULLERTON.

The scamp of the Third. A dark, dandified junior, old enough to be in the Fourth. He generally apes Fullwood, which is all the more remarkable, in view of the fact that their names are somewhat similar. Fullerton likes to be thought of as a "gay dog," and he is always talking in a big way about "winners," and the latest brand of cigarettes, and so forth. But in the Third he has little opportunity for indulging his fancy in these directions. With Willy in command, Fullerton is kept firmly in check.



GEORGE
FULLERTON.

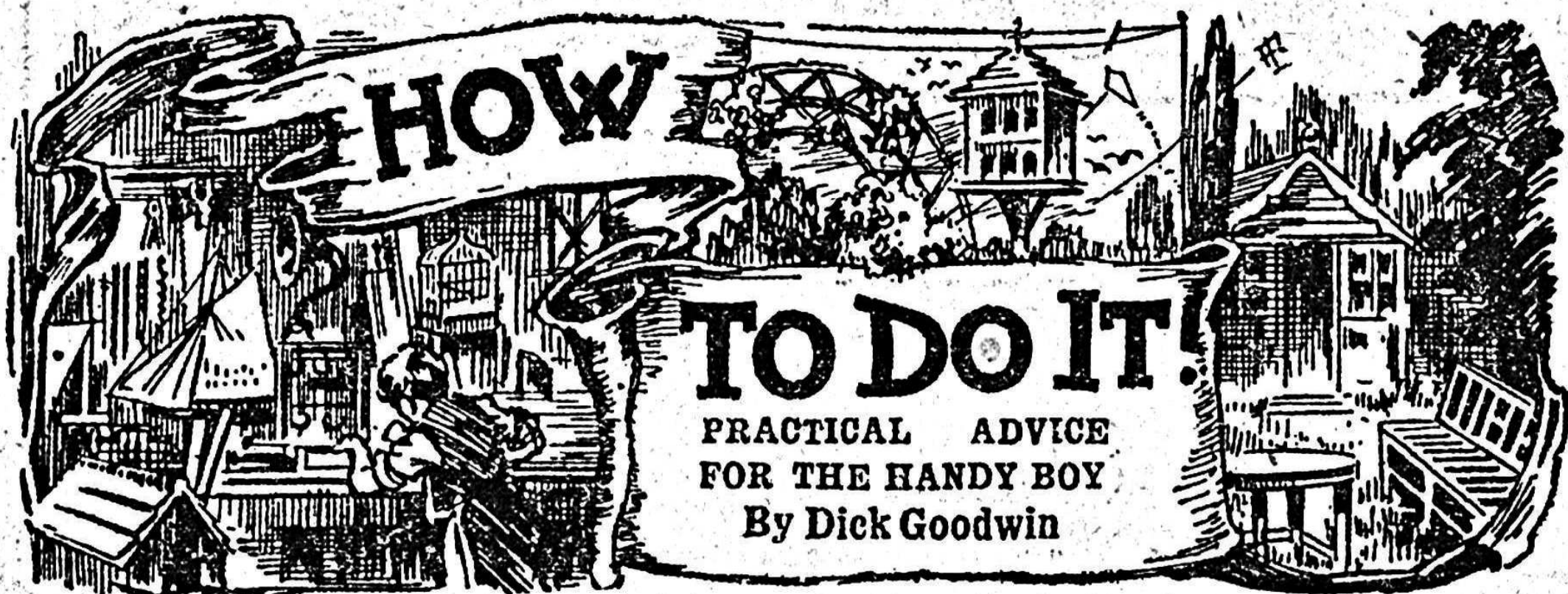
No. 12.—ALFRED CONROY (Conroy Minimus).

One of the Third's most disreputable members. His two brothers, Conroy major, of the Sixth, and Conroy minor, of the Fourth, always like to forget that their young brother Freddie really exists. It pains them that he should be at St. Frank's. Conroy major, in fact, generally refuses to acknowledge him except in strict private. For Freddie is not only inky in the extreme, but he is untidy, always in trouble, and seems to have little or no brain capacity. But he is quite harmless, which is at least something.



ALFRED CONROY
(Conroy Minimus).

NOTE.—The ages of Third Form boys vary between twelve and fourteen.



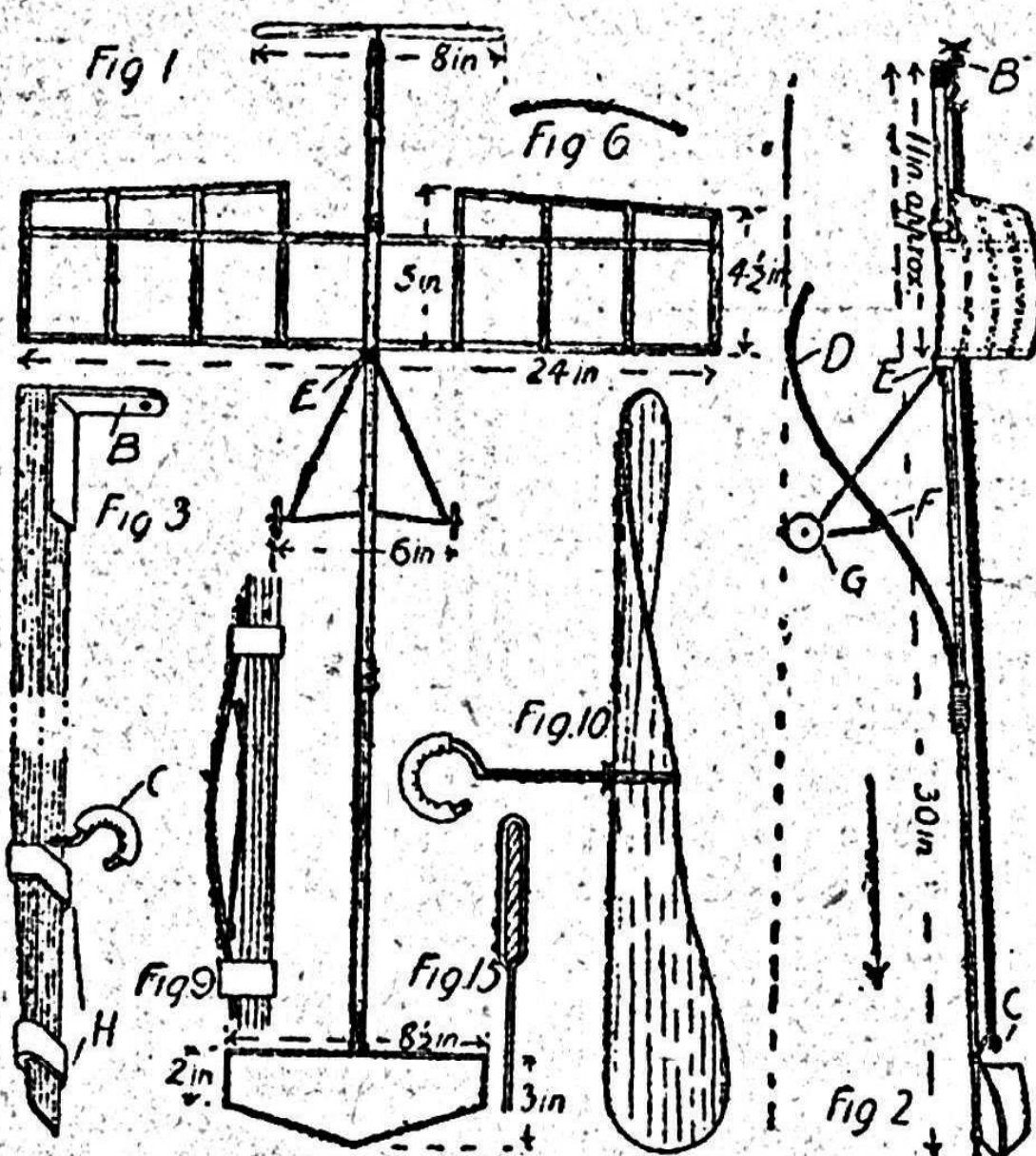
Readers who wish to ask questions or make suggestions regarding these articles are invited to write to Dick Goodwin, c/o The Editor, The Nelson Lee Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HOW TO MAKE MODEL AEROPLANES

THERE are many kinds of model aeroplanes which can be easily made and can be depended upon to fly; but the workmanship must be neat and the material selected with care if any length of service is to be obtained from the model. As a suitable subject for a beginning, the monoplane illustrated in plan at Fig. 1, and side view at Fig. 2, will be found very suitable, the parts are not difficult to make, and the whole of it can be packed in a shallow box measuring 30 ins. by 9 ins. by 2 ins. The single propeller model is not such a long distance flier as those fitted with two propellers, but it is easier to make, and it does not matter so much if it gets broken in the preliminary flights.

THE FRAMEWORK.

The main member of the framework or fuselage A should be made of straight-grained spruce, the wood should be free from knots, and if there is any difficulty in getting the spruce,



yellow pine, light mahogany, or any other perfectly straight wood, can be used. Plane up a length to 30 ins. by 5-16 in. wide and $\frac{1}{8}$ in. thick. Taper one end which will be the front to $\frac{1}{8}$ in. from a distance of 3 in. The propeller bracket (B) is made of hard rolled brass 5-16 in. wide, $\frac{1}{8}$ in. long, and $\frac{1}{8}$ in. high. a $\frac{1}{8}$ in. hole is drilled at the top, and when placed in position as at Fig. 3, the bracket is secured with strong linen thread and coated with glue. The front rubber hook (C) is made from a screw hook covered with rubber tube as at Fig. 3. The skid (D) is made from a piece of

ash or bamboo, 18 ins. by 5-16 in. by $\frac{1}{8}$ in., and shaped by heating it over a bunsen flame or in boiling water or steam, and leaving it to dry in a frame as at Fig. 4. It is lashed to the main member as shown with linen thread glued.

THE CHASSIS.

The framework for the chassis is shown at Fig. 5, it is composed of Nos. 16 and 18 gauge piano wire. The two long legs of the thinner

wire are about 7 in. long, but to allow for the bend at the top, as at E, a piece 15 ins. will be required. The two lower legs are shaped from a piece 7 ins. long. It will be seen that the joints are wired together—flower wire is useful—but they should be touched with solder as well. A thin piece of sheet brass or tin should be bent over and soldered as at F. Two small wheels are attached to the ends of the lower legs at G, they can be kept in place with a small blob of solder.

THE MAIN PLANE.

A stiff wood should be used for the framework, birch or bamboo will do. The material should be planed to 1-16 in. The main spars are 5-16 in. wide and 24 ins. long, the ribs are 3-16 in. wide, and taper from 5 in. to 4½ ins. long. The two long spars are 3¼ in. apart and the ribs are equally spaced; but, before this is done, each of the ribs should be bent to the approximate curve as shown in Fig 6. This is done by heat. The joints are glued and bradded with fine gimp pins as at Fig. 7. The two halves of the plane are bent to a dihedral angle, the tips being 2½ ins. higher than the centre, heat is again used to obtain this effect. The framework can be covered with proofed silk, obtainable from dealers in model making materials, or vegetable parchment, or ordinary silk proofed with a weak solution of seccotine, celluloid dissolved in amyl-acetate, or diluted rubber solution can be utilised. The material is attached with seccotine and stretched as tightly

as possible, leaving the ribs on top if a single layer of material is used.

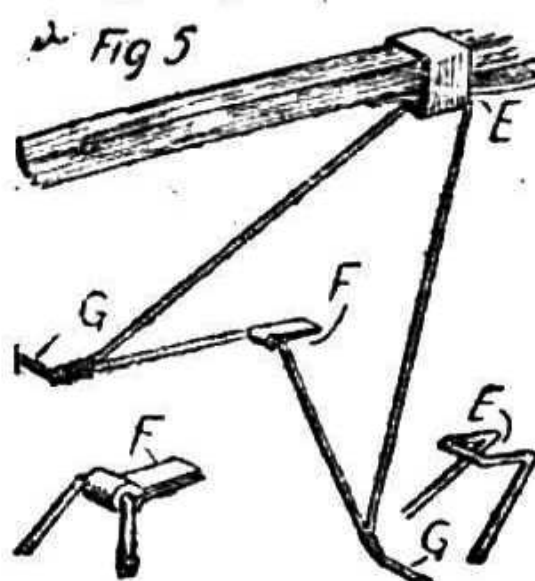
THE ELEVATING PLANE.

As shown at Fig 8, the elevating plane is made of piano wire, No. 20 gauge. It is 8½ in long, 3 ins. in the centre and 2 ins. at the ends. The centre rib is curved ¼ in., the front loop is raised ½ in., but the rear loop is level with the framework. The silk or other covering should be sewn on if possible, as it can be stretched so much easier. The plane is bent upwards at the ends to the same dihedral angle as the main plane. The two planes are attached to the main member with sleeves or sockets made of thin brass or tin, as at H, Fig. 3; these are attached direct for the elevating plane, but the main plane is kept in position with a strip of 1-16 by 5-16 wood clipped at the ends with the sockets, as at Fig. 9, the front one also holding the top of the chassis as at Fig. 5.

The lower portion of the chassis is attached to the skid with a sleeve in the same way. The advantage of this kind of fastening is that it allows of easy adjustment and portability.

THE PROPELLOR.

Any kind of propellor can be used if of about 8 ins. diameter and a pitch of from 12 to 14 ins. The easiest type of propellor, shown at Fig. 10, is made of 1-16 in. wood, veneer is admirably adapted for this purpose as the wood is better if it is close grained. The blade should be about 1½ in. wide in the rectangular shape, as at Fig. 11, it should then be curved as at Fig. 12 or Fig. 13, and then fitted in a frame made as



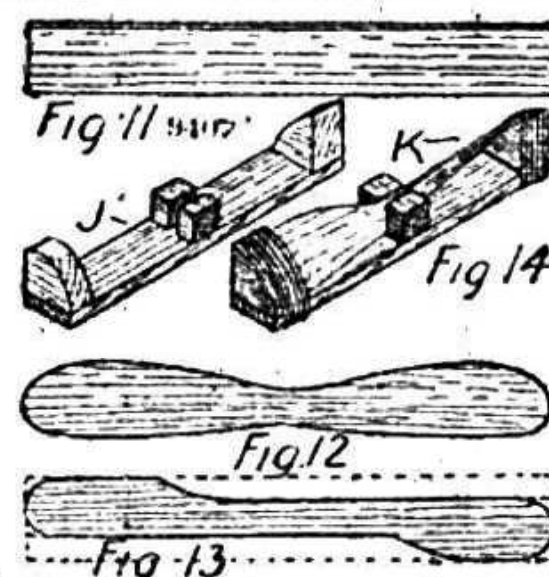
at J, Fig. 14. The angle of the curve should be about 45° to give the necessary pitch, and the end blocks should be opposed as shown. The blade is heated and then lashed to the frame, as at K, but it is important to get the wood sufficiently heated to allow it to bend easily.

The finished propellor, as at Fig. 15, is mounted with a stiff piano-wire shaft, one end being fastened over and soldered to hold the wood, and the other bent and covered with rubber tube as shown at Fig. 10. A small bead should be slipped on to form a bearing.

THE MOTIVE POWER.

Eight strands of 3-16 in. strip elastic will be required for the drive; this is capable, if the rubber is of good quality, of taking 500 turns, and will keep the model in the air for considerably over a minute. As it takes a little time

to wind up a propeller 500 times, it is an advantage to use a winder, one can be adapted from an egg-beater by removing one of the revolving arms and soldering a suitable clip to attach to the propellor. The position of the model on the ground is shown at Fig. 16,



the propellor is fully wound and held tightly, the model placed on the ground, and then the propellor is allowed to revolve. After necessary adjustments the model should fly straight and cover several hundred yards.

**THE SECOND OF THESE ARTICLES
ON MODEL AEROPLANES WILL
APPEAR THE WEEK AFTER NEXT.**

IN REPLY to YOURS



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

LOTAAD MIGHTY (Aylesbury): Who's the best sketcher in the Fourth? Well, I'm the best black-and-blue artist, if any of the fatheads ask for it!

J. LOCK (Gunnislake): I've got a bit of bad news for you, my lad. After this week the Mag. won't be worth reading. Can you guess why? No T.G.!

HAROLD WHITELEY (Hull): I don't think much of your taste! Fancy taking an interest in tiddlers and goldfish! Even Willy doesn't!

SLIP (Southall): I must be jolly important in your eyes—I don't think! You only write to me when you've got nothing better to do!

IRENE (Cricklewood): Thanks for calling me too wonderful for words. I must be, as there are only eight words in the whole of your letter!

C. MAYNE (Boulder City, West Australia): Don't ask silly questions! Everybody knows that T.G. is the greatest detective! Haven't I ALWAYS said so?

ERNEST TARTER (Paddington, Sydney, N.S.W.): Fancy you wondering why Study D is noisy! You ought to see the way Church and McClure go on! I'm always doing my best to stop them, but it's a sheer impossibility!

IVY CAMERON (Gilgandra, N.S.W.): Why should we come to Australia? They're going to have the Test Matches over here next year.

OSWALD EDWARD GARDEN (N. Hobart, Tasmania): A one-valve wireless set costs about seven pounds, all complete, here. Can't give you any idea of the freight.

Correspondence Answered by Edward Oswald Handforth

ERIC HASSALL (Moss Vale, N.S.W.): There's no accounting for what Willy does. But he's not interested in spiders now. I saw him with a couple of toads yesterday!

TWO MERE GIRLS (Sydney, N.S.W.): I'm not so sure about that "mere." It strikes me you're a pair of tartars! All the same, I'll have you for pals.

JACK SKEAHN (Brisbane, Queensland): The only part about me that's hard is my fist.

VINCENT LAWLOR (Melbourne): Sorry to hear you twisted your sinews, and can't write properly. Where did you twist 'em—in the leg?

ALGERNON BASIL LESLIE CHARLES LEE (Eastleigh): Don't you worry about coming to St. Frank's to protect Willy. You want to protect everybody else from him.

A READER (Sefton Park): If you can't write me something better than that collection of tosh, you'd better spend your 1½d. on some new riddles.

FRANK H. GOODSON (Tring): So you typed your letter because you'd expire if you had to write it? What about me? I nearly expired on reading it!

CONNIE (Nottingham): I'm generally down on pencilled letters, but yours was so nice that I don't care if you write in pencil again.

AGNES (Liverpool): I've remembered you to Willy and Reggie, but the fatheads say they don't remember you at all! Fancy being so careless!

ARTHUR H. & L. E. OAKLEY (Bethnal Green): I shan't answer you, L. E., because you had the sauce to crumple Arthur's letter, and I can't answer Arthur's because it's too crumpled to read. That's what you get for messing about!

AN OLD READER (Barnet): Just line to say that your postcard was a proper dud.

KENNETH EWIN (Ilford): Of course you're worth replying to! You're only ten, but, by George, you're a jolly sensible little chap! You and I are fast pals!

H. W. VAN KEENEN (Parow, S. Africa): On my word of honour, St. Frank's and all of us here are just as real as I am myself. I wouldn't tell you a fib.

(Continued on page iii of cover.)

(Continued from page 30.)

the Editor, and more than that I cannot do. Of course, I agree with you wholeheartedly.

Awfully good of you, Freestater, to point out that mistake. I like my readers to prod me up now and again. You called it a misprint, and accused the printers of putting "Mr. Kirby," when it should have been "Mr. Creepe." As it happens, the printers were quite blameless. It was my mistake, and I take all the responsibility. But it wasn't a very big offence, was it? And because I admit my guilt in this instance, please don't accuse me always—the printers DO make a misprint now and again. But I'm glad to receive your little criticism, as it shows me that you read with great care.

I'm afraid your optimism is too great, "ARDNJXYZ." You want some back numbers, and you ask me to reply the week following the receipt of your letter. Impossible, old chap! By the time this is printed, it will be more like six weeks, and I haven't held your answer back, either. But how in the world can I comply with your request when you don't give me your name and address? Trot them along, please, and I'll do what I can.

Letters received: Redskin Ern* (Hale), J. H. Sinclair (Easingwold), William Neale (Plaistow), A. Cecil Case (Acton), Gib. S.E. (Gibraltar), C.D.S. (Risca), Leslie Martin (Earlsfield), E.S. (Pinner), Atta Boy (Oldham), J. Casley (Bristol), K. Willott* (Isleworth), M. Williams (Baden, Austria), Edwin Francis Ebborn (Mount Leyshon, Australia), R. Turk (Canning Town), D.W.* (Teignmouth), Edward O. Hagan* (Dublin), G. Burgess (Selsey), T. C. Jones (Brecon), Warren E. Morgan (Bluntisham), S. (London), Sidney Cohen (Leeds), J.T. (Sheffield), C. F. Kinings (Birmingham), W. A. P. Waldron (Tuam), H. Posner* (Bow), A Loyal Reader (Camberwell), Jack Brown (Nottingham), H. Meek* (Cardiff), R. Javan* (St. Heliers, Jersey), Walter H. Lait* (Studley), J. Walters (Brondesbury), John A. Franklin (Rusholme), Larry Brown (Hailsham), Ada Woods (Nottingham), Red (Finsbury Park), E. A. Quin (North Kensington), S. J. Ward (Bluntisham).

Although I'm acknowledging quite a few letters above, I find that only a few of them contain queries or statements which are likely to interest the majority. They chiefly concern the summer holiday stories and the League—and those matters I have already discussed. Still, I've got to write something, and I daresay I shall find one or two subjects which will be of fairly general interest. Anyhow, read a bit more

of this, and if you don't like it, you can skip the rest. I wouldn't dream of asking you to read a lot of paragraphs of dry old stuff.

The number of "THE RIDDLE OF DEMON'S GAP," J. H. Sinclair, is 388—week ending November 11th, 1922.

I am very much afraid I can't give you the advice you ask for, Gib. S.E. I haven't got an earthly idea whether you ought to know shorthand and typewriting as a qualification for the job you mentioned. Ask me something about the Old Paper, or about my stories, and I'll answer you. But I'm not an encyclopedia, you know!

I've got a letter in front of me now which I haven't acknowledged above because it was really sent to the Editor—and which the Editor, with his usual courtesy, has gracefully answered. It's from a disgusted reader named J. A. Randall, and perhaps this may catch his eye. I'm mentioning it because I think the matter is of general interest.

Well, anyhow, J. A. Randall, in this letter to the Editor, says that he has been sadly disappointed with the recent stories, and that he "can only describe them as impossible, highly-coloured, utter rot." Furthermore, he wants to know what is the matter with me for writing such rubbish, and he goes on to say that he has never read such trash in his life before. Well, although this letter gave me a bit of a knock, I'm not going to say that I'm pale with misery. Most of the letters I get are quite in the opposite strain, and far from giving me "swelled head," they have spurred me on to do the very best I can. I don't think I'm conceited, and so I receive such criticisms as J. A. Randall's with perfect composure—because, whatever the merits or demerits of my work, I am certain that it cannot truthfully be called "utter rot" and "trash."

It seems that J. A. Randall's main complaint is that I depart from the ordinary hum-drum round of everyday life in my plots, and in my stories generally. J. A. Randall takes exception to Moat Hollow School, to Mr. Grimesby Creepe, to Dr. Karnak, to the Moor View girls, to Mr. Travers Earle's land yacht, to the White Giants, and to the New Anglians—and to everything, in fact, that has a bit of an imaginative touch. J. A. Randall wants my stories to be confined solely to everyday happenings.

Well, here's the point—and this is why I am still smiling—my critical reader does not characterise my work as "utter rot" on account of the actual writing, but because the situations don't suit him. But do we really want to read about the hum-

drum daily round? Supposing I wrote my stories in that way? Somehow, I fancy they would lack interest. At all events, nothing gives me greater pleasure, when I want to enjoy an hour's reading, than to pick up a highly imaginative story—such as the works of Rider Haggard, or Conan Doyle, or H. G. Wells. If these celebrated gentlemen had clung to the happenings of everyday life, I doubt if they would have become celebrated. In my small, humble way, I strive to make my yarns as interesting as possible—even at the expense, sometimes, of strict probability. And I've got an idea that the majority of you are hand in glove with me. When it comes to a little bit of imagination, we're as thick as thieves, aren't we? So let's tell J. A. Randall to go and eat coke, eh?

Thanks for your interesting letter, M. Williams, of Vienna. You want to know how on earth I manage to write all my stories? Well, that's rather a tall order. And I don't know that I can answer it—because, sometimes I don't exactly know how I write them myself. I suppose I am something like an actor who has to appear every night whether he feels like it or not. The Old Paper is published every week, and so I've got to do a story every week—and there you are. If I'm a little bit off colour, the yarn may perhaps suffer (that's why you come across one now and again that may not be quite up to the mark). So I hope you'll let me off lightly if a bit of grit slips into the cogs once in a while.

I wonder how many of you buy your copies? "A Loyal Reader" tells me that he knew ten boys who read the Old Paper, but not one of them bought it! That's a bit ragged at the edge, isn't it—as Archie would say? I hope there aren't a great many like these luke-warm enthusiasts! This loyal reader further tells me that these ten readers were supplied by a friend of his, and that his copy came back in a somewhat grubby condition—which isn't at all surprising. Anyhow, he got fed up with it, and stopped the supply. And now three of the ten buy the paper for themselves. It seems to me that this sort of thing wants seriously looking into.

I want to say a few words to all readers who are now perusing this on the cheap. That is to say, I am now only addressing those who "scrounge" their copies from some good-natured pal. If you really think the Old Paper is worth reading, surely it is worth buying. And if you want to do me a good turn, and help the Old Paper to get better and better, why not start buying it yourselves from now onwards—and hand on your copy every week to somebody who doesn't read it at all? For example, we'll say that you lend it to "A" for three weeks running, and at end of that time he

becomes a regular reader. Well, let "A" buy it for himself after that, and you pass your copy on to "B," and so on. Just a little friendly co-operation of that kind will do more good than heaps of advertisements, and the bigger our circulation gets, the better will the Old Paper become. Now, then, what about it? Don't throw this aside, and forget—just prove your loyalty by doing as I ask.

Now, next week there are going to be some big alterations.

In the first place, the school story is going to be at least ten pages longer—and that's practically half as long again. You've all been asking for it, and next week you'll get it—and every week afterwards, too. As for the Magazine, this will naturally dwindle a bit, and it won't be in the same form, either. We shall still have the Portrait Gallery, and one or two of the other important items, but now that the summer is coming on, the Mag. won't be so essential.

But I can promise you that the Magazine will blossom out again into full glory in the autumn, and in all probability it will be placed in the middle of the book, so that it can be detached, and kept quite separate. And I can now definitely state that the Map won't appear until the autumn.

What's that? Grumbling? Now, look here! Don't be so jolly impatient! I've already told you that the Editor and I want this Map to be a top-holer, and it isn't a thing that can be got out in a week, or two weeks—or even two months. If it's any consolation, I'll tell you this—the Map is going to be the best thing of its kind that's ever been done, and it'll be worth waiting for.

Oh, wait a minute. I'm not replying to any special reader now, but some of you have asked if Dr. Stafford, and Mr. Stokes, Irene Manners and Company, Josh Cuttle, Tubbs, etc., will be included in the Portrait Gallery. Well, as far as I know at present, EVERYBODY of interest will figure in the Portrait Gallery. This means that the masters and some of the servants, Fifth and Sixth Formers, the prefects, and many characters outside the School, will have their portraits given—these outside characters including, of course, the Moor View girls, the Vicar of Bellton, Farmer Holt, Mr. Binks, and so forth. Needless to add, such celebrities as Lord Dorrimore and Umlosi will have their places. When the Editor started this Portrait Gallery he intended it to be the most complete Portrait Gallery ever published in any paper, and you can rely upon him to do it properly. But it all takes time, and they'll appear, four every week, until they are finished.

IN REPLY TO YOURS.

(Continued from ST. FRANK'S MAGAZINE, page 8.)

MARGARET WATCHORN (Nottingham): I shall look out for that other letter you've promised me. Yes; my stories are so ripping that they've ripped them right out!

L. BOOTH (Barking): It's very kind of you to send me No. 112 for E. Stroud, and Church is going to send it out to Australia as soon as he gets time.

P. WORRIDGE (Oxford): The piece of your mind you've handed forth hasn't disturbed my peace of mind in the least. You can keep the rest—you need it!

W. A. P. WALDRON (Tunam): Thanks for Cross Word Puzzle; but all my time is filled up in solving puzzles that I shall take first prizes for.

ALBERT WELFARE (Llanon): What's the idea of mistaking me for the Publisher? I only just saved your bob from Church and McClure in time.

MAY ROBINSON (Northfleet): Fancy asking me to find you a pen-friend in London! Aren't there plenty of people in Northfleet? It's not the Sahara!

SMITH THOMPSON (Bradford): It took me hours to read that rotten letter of yours, and then Church found out that it was all backwards.

HERBERT THOMPSON (Bradford): I held your letter in front of the fire, and it blew in. It doesn't matter, anyway—I'll bet it wasn't worth reading.

H. POSNER (Bow): Your brother's a chump. Too old to read the paper at sixteen, eh? He wouldn't be too old if he was ninety-six! Tell him that from me.

CHERUB (Forest Gate): You put "Eva" at the top of your letter, so I'll bet you're not a cherub at all. I'm awfully sorry for your brother's fountain-pen!

BERNARD W. (Richmond): You're one of my pals! You must be, because you like T.G. stories. Hold on! So "In Quest of Gold" was piffle, eh? You rotter!

DOUGLAS WATSON (W.10): If you think I look like a monkey or a gorilla, you bounder, you'd better go to the Zoo and find out your mistake!

TED (Finsbury Park): You must be a bloodthirsty chap. Fancy telling me to batter Church and McClure about! I'm surprised at you!

A. R. DESMOND (Scarborough): I am glad you told me that that sketch is "nothing to what you can do." I don't believe you could draw a cork out of a bottle!

RALPH SEWELL (St. Ives): It's a good thing you don't expect half a column, because you're only having two or three lines. So we're both pleased!

R. FAIRCHILD (Thornton Heath): If anybody else tells you that the Old Paper is a children's journal, just you force them to read it for a week or two!

O. W. NILSEN (Seaham Harbour): Thanks for the photograph of your engine. You must be a brainy chap! As far as I can see, it's nearly as good as I could make it!

FRED NILSSON (Bundaberg, Australia): Well, that's jolly queer! The last chap I answered has got the same name as you, only spelt differently. Fancy!

ELSIE NILSSON (Bundaberg): Please tell Fred I'm sorry I couldn't get his answer in. And now I'm blessed if I can get yours in, either!

ROY MacGREGOR (Mortdale, N.S.W.): You may be an old reader, but you can't spoof me. Fourteen years ago the Old Paper wasn't in existence. And I don't believe you were, either!

M. H. N. D. R. (Melbourne): Sorry you weren't in the mood to "print propley." It seems to me you weren't in the mood to spell properly, either.

P. J. COOK (Knights, S. Africa): It's no good asking me to excuse your writing, old man. I've tried it, and I can't read a word of it!

FLORA (Fisk Hoek, S. Africa): I should think you're not the only S.A. correspondent! You Colonial readers are about the most enthusiastic of all.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: As the fine weather will be coming along soon, I shan't have much spare time. So in future I shan't be able to answer all letters. You can still write if you like, but I can't guarantee a reply, or even an acknowledgment. But if it happens to be wet now and again, I shall probably fill in the time by answering a few letters which strike me as being the most sensible. Still, as I've already said, you're quite at liberty to write as much as you like, and as often as you like. I shall always be jolly pleased to hear from all of you.

TED.



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