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THE
**JUNGLE
BARRING-OUT**

A vivid long complete story of the feud in the Congo, featuring the famous Boys of St.-Frank's.

New Series No. 65.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

July 30th, 1927.



“Come on!” roared Lord Dorrimore. The Moor View girls and their rescuers swept towards the open doorway like an avalanche, and a few moments later they were all safely inside. They had escaped from Lorenzo and his guards by a matter of seconds!

Defying the Slave-driver!The Gorilla-God!

By EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

The Boys of St. Frank's, Irene & Co., and Lord Dorrimore in a full-of-thrills yarn among the cannibals of the Congo jungle.

CHAPTER 1.

Holding the Fort!

"LOOK!" whispered Tommy Watson tensely. "There's something moving over there. Over to the right, near those palms!"

"Your imagination, old man," murmured Nipper.

"I tell you——" Watson broke off, and rubbed his eyes. "I believe you're right," he added wearily. "This darkness is so jolly tricky. I could have sworn I saw something just now."

They continued to crouch near the barricaded window, peering out into the intense gloom of the African night. The silence was disturbed only by the whisperings from within the fortress, and by the rustling of the palms and other trees outside. A gentle wind was coming down the long Kalala valley, and in the distance the twinkling lights of Otto Lorenzo's bungalow could be seen.

And then, of course, there was the constant and continuous murmur of the waterfall,

but everybody's ears had grown so accustomed to that sound that it did not seem to break into the silence. The waterfall was some little distance away, and it provided the power-station with its essential driving force.

Somebody shouldered his way to the window.

"Anything doing yet?" asked Handforth, yawning.

"I thought you were asleep, Handy," said Nipper.

"I can't sleep," growled Edward Oswald. "Every time I doze off I wake up with a start, thinking about Irene and those other girls. We've defied Lorenzo, and we've pinched his power-station, and we're using it as a fortress. But the girls are still prisoners."

"And something's got to be done," agreed Nipper. "What's more, it must be done at once—within the next hour. Dawn will be here before two hours have passed, and we can't leave the girls in Lorenzo's hands over to-morrow. It isn't to be thought of."

"Yes, but what can we do?" asked Watson gruffly. "It's all very well to talk about getting busy, but how can we help? We're hemmed in here—defending this corrugated iron place against Lorenzo's blacks. If we go out, we shall only be recaptured. And that won't help the girls at all, will it?"

"There's no reason why we should be recaptured," said Nipper slowly.

He fell into silence, and the other remained thoughtful, too. Their position was in no way enviable. True, they had revolted, and were defying the half-breed slaver. But would they be able to maintain their stand?

At one of the other windows stood Lord Dorrimore and Umlosi. Nelson Lee was on the roof, with a powerful searchlight at his hand—ready to be switched on at the sign of trouble.

There were fifteen in the party, all told—a dozen St. Frank's fellows, in addition to the three men. Browne of the Fifth was the only senior in the party, and Willy Handforth, of the Third, was the only fag. The other ten belonged to the Remove, and consisted of Nipper & Co., Handforth & Co., Archie Glenthorne, Johnny Onions, Harry Gresham, and Alec Duncan.

Lord Dorrimore, cheerfully out for big game, had fallen into the hands of a German-Portuguese half-breed—a murderous rascal who ran these immense rubber plantations in the jungle wilds, and who employed nothing but slave labour.

Dorrie and all his friends had seen too much of the slave plantations for Otto Lorenzo's liking, and so he had made them into slaves, too.

But they weren't so easily subdued. The boys had escaped from their night quarters, had seized Lorenzo's power-station, and were holding it. Nelson Lee, Dorrie, and Umlosi had joined them. But Irene & Co., of the Moor View School, were still prisoners in the slaver's hands.

"I'm not sure that we did right in grabbing this place, and barricading it," murmured Tommy Watson, after a long silence. "Once we were free, we ought to have escaped from the plantations altogether. As it is, there's precious little chance of defying Lorenzo for good. He's bound to recapture us sooner or later—and then he'll torture us worse than ever."

Nipper shook his head.

"It sounds easy, Tommy; but what about the electrified rivers?" he asked. "These plantations of Lorenzo's are surrounded by swiftly-flowing streams, and there's a powerful electric cable on the bed of each. The water's deadly—as we have good reason to know. How could we have swum across?"

"Couldn't we have made a rough bridge?"

"I dare say we could," admitted Nipper. "But what about afterwards? It would be suicide to travel through these game-infested forests without a rifle, or without tents or stores. No; our only course was to grab a strategic position, and fortify it. As for

what happens afterwards, we shall have to leave that in the lap of the gods."

Nipper had spoken truly. Any dash for the outer forest would have been fraught with deadly peril. In fact, such a move would have been tantamount to suicide.

Lorenzo had stolen their tents, their stores, and every scrap of their personal property. These plantations were tucked away in a particularly wild region, and there were wandering bands of the Oturi tribe in various parts of the great forest. These Oturis were Lorenzo's henchmen, and could only be regarded by Dorrie's party as deadly enemies. Even the Sansissi, usually friendly, were incensed just now—and so were the Arkazoli. To attempt to reach civilisation without plenty of arms would be fatal. The only weapons they had were the few guns they had found in the power-house.



CHAPTER 2.

A Desperate Mission!

"HERE'S the factory—that dark blob over there," Nipper said softly. "The girl's quarters are quite close by, and there's plenty of cover between this spot and that for us to risk it."

"You—you mean a rescue-party?" asked Handforth breathlessly.

"Yes! It's got to be done."

"But we don't know which hut the girls are in," objected Tommy Watson. "We might search a dozen—"

"That's not a difficult point," interrupted Nipper. "Willy knows the exact hut. Didn't he escape first? Didn't he find the girls, and have a word with them?"

"By George! That's right!" murmured Handforth. "My minor spoke with Irene, and she told him everything. Like his giddy cheek, of course! Where is he? Let's wake him up."

"Hold on!" said Nipper. "We want to decide on the plan first. Don't you fellows realise the terrible possibilities! I've been in a fever of fear for the past two or three hours, if you want to know the truth."

"Fear?" repeated Watson. "You!"

"Yes, me!" growled Nipper. "What do you think I am—superhuman? I'm in a blue funk about the girls—and that's the truth! Why Lorenzo hasn't taken advantage of his tremendous opportunity is beyond me. I can only think that he's too inflamed by rage to realise the nature of the weapon he holds."

"Weapon?" said Handforth. "What weapon?"

"Six weapons, in fact," said Nipper. "Those girls!"

"Are you calling them weapons, you ass?"

"Yes and in this way, Handy," muttered Nipper tensely. "If Lorenzo only threatens

to torture the girls, we shall have to surrender. Don't you understand?"

"Torture them!" said Handforth, horrified.

"My dear chap, this man is madly anxious about his rotten power-station—he's afraid that we shall ruin it—and he wants to get us out," said Nipper. "Supposing he threatens to flog Irene & Co. unless we give ourselves up?"

"Then we shall have to give ourselves up!" said Handforth promptly.

"Of course," agreed Nipper. "Any other alternative is unthinkable. We can't allow him to flog the girls, or to harm them in any way. And he's bound to think of the wheeze sooner or later. It's so obvious—it's such a powerful lever. But so far he hasn't utilised it. My idea is for us to rescue the girls before Lorenzo can take advantage of the thing."

"Where's Mr. Lee?" demanded Handforth fiercely. "We must go at once! Even now that blackguard might be— Oh, crumbs! The thought of it! Let's sneak out without telling anybody—let's go—"

"Steady, young 'un—steady!" came Nelson Lee's voice from the darkness. "I quite agree with this plan, and it has my full support. Indeed, I have come to you with the especial purpose of suggesting it."

"You'll let us go, guv'nor?" asked Nipper eagerly.

"Somebody must go," replied Lee quietly. "To leave the girls in Lorenzo's power is out of the question. While they are separated from us we have no security whatever—and they, to be Irish, have less. Neither Dorrie nor I can leave our posts, but Umlosi can be spared. He and six of you must make this venture."

"Good egg!" said Handforth excitedly. "I can be in it, can't I?"

"I'm not so sure, Handforth," replied Lee gravely.

"Oh, but—"

"This task will call for silence of movement, and absolute secrecy," said Nelson Lee. "Your impulsiveness is well known, Handforth—your whisper is famous. I am afraid you must be left behind. We need you here, in any case."

Handforth was filled with distress.

"But it's for the girls, sir!" he pleaded. "I swear I'll keep quiet. I swear I'll obey orders! Let me go, sir!"

"It may be deadly dangerous—"

"I don't care about that, sir," interrupted Handforth. "Please!"

He was so earnest that Nelson Lee hadn't the heart to refuse.

"Very well, then," he said. "In case there is any fighting, you will be a useful member of the party. The others can either volunteer, or I will leave you to choose them, Nipper. Be off as soon as you can, and we pray that you will be successful."

"We've just got to be successful, guv'nor," said Nipper quietly. "We mustn't consider any other possibility. But hadn't we better arrange a signal?"

"I was thinking very much the same thing," nodded Lee. "We shall be on the watch for you, and we will admit you quietly and unobtrusively if possible. But in case you have to run for it, you had better take this revolver. Fire two quick shots, and I shall know that your plight is desperate."

"We won't stay to fight unless we're hemmed in, sir," said Nipper. "We'll make a run for home. So if you hear those two shots, have the door ready, so that we can rush straight in."

It was a simple enough plan, but it served. Indeed, no other precautions were possible. Only six of them could go, in addition to Umlosi, for the whole garrison only numbered fifteen. And there was a great amount of risk attached to the whole undertaking.

The fortress itself would be in great danger while the raiders were absent, and the raiders themselves would stand in imminent risk of recapture. The next half-hour was likely to be exciting.

The party was made up of Nipper, Tommy Watson, Handforth, Church, McClure, and Willy. The others were compelled to remain behind, much as they would have liked to go. Umlosi, of course, was ready, too, and much might depend upon his quickness of eye, and his great strength.

"We go to rescue the young white maidens, my master," rumbled the great Kutana chief. "Wau! Without them, we return not. There can be no failure!"

"That's the spirit, old man!" said Nelson Lee.

"We'll expect you back within the hour," added Lord Dorrimore. "Umlosi, old scout, remember what this means to all of us. If you come back with the white maidens we shall be able to snap our fingers at Lorenzo. But if you fail—"

"'Tis idle, N'Kose, to speak thus!" interrupted Umlosi. "Have I not said that there can be no failure? We come back successful, or we come back not at all!"

"By George! And so say all of us!" declared Handforth. "Where's Willy? He's got to act as the guide, so everything depends upon him."

The Third-Former nodded.

"It might be a good idea to get off, instead of wasting time in jawing," he said calmly. "If the rest of you chaps are ready, we'll make a move. With luck, we ought to be back within twenty minutes. Keep an eye open for us, won't you, Dorrie?"



CHAPTER 3.

Lorenzo Decides!

TTO LORENZO set his glass down with such force that it splintered to pieces on the table.

"What can we do, Popodos?" he demanded

harshly. "These accursed boys have defied me for hours. It seems that they'll defy me for days! And I can do nothing! They've got me helpless!"

His companion shrugged his shoulders.

"Yet there must be a way, boss," he said. "I guess these young guys have put one over on us for to-night, but if you're the man I think you are, they'll soon be back in chains."

"But how?" snarled Lorenzo. "How? We can't attack the power-station without fear of damage to the whole plant. And it mustn't be damaged, Popodos! My whole plantation depends upon the electricity. We must be careful—we must deal with this thing cautiously."

The two men were sitting in Lorenzo's living-room, in his bungalow. The electric light which gleamed over the table seemed to mock at them. For it was only available by the gracious permission of the besieged garrison. At any moment it might snap out, and Lorenzo would be able to do nothing to re-establish it.

The half-breed was a big, coarse, greasy ruffian, with a face which revealed every evil instinct. The other man was his chief overseer—a Greek who had been born in the East Side of New York, and who had sought refuge in this wild spot because he was wanted by the police of two continents. Here, in Lorenzo's employ, he was safe. He was being paid big money, and the life suited him.

"We've tried everything," went on Lorenzo savagely. "We set our men against the building, and they were beaten back. And when we hurled the slaves in great numbers against these accursed boys, they were still the masters."

"You've got to hand it to them, boss," said Popodos. "That was a cute scheme to electrify the corrugated iron walls. I guess that Lee guy knows something about electricity. We can't go near the blamed place without getting four or five hundred volts into us. It's not good enough."

"We can do nothing," snapped the half-breed. "My guards are in terror. They're afraid to go anywhere near the building. I don't know what we can do. It took me years to get that plant into this country."

"It sure was a big proposition," nodded the Greek.

"Years!" went on Lorenzo thickly. "Section by section—sometimes disguised. Over three-parts of the stuff came in as grub. I can't risk any shooting. A stray bullet might destroy a vital unit."

The situation was indeed aggravating.

Here was this slaver, with two or three scores of guards at his command, and hundreds of slaves to obey him, and yet he could do nothing against this handful of determined rebels.

"It was a clever game to seize the power-station," said Lorenzo fiercely. "Any other place would have been easy to deal with. There are guns in there, too—guns and

ammunition. Curse them, Popodos! They've even got a searchlight, so that we can spring no surprise."

"If we could only get hold of one of the young demons, we could put him in the middle of a bonfire, in full sight, and threaten to set light to it unless they all surrendered," said Popodos. "But they're too cute. They won't give us any chance of that sort."

"When I get them in my hands, I'll crush them!" said Lorenzo passionately. "I'll smash them completely, Popodos! Not one shall live! And their treatment will be special—very special. I have my own methods, and I'll give the rest of the slaves a treat for once. Yes, I'll strike terror into their hearts for the remainder of their black lives! They'll see things—"

Crash!

Popodos had sprung to his feet, and a whisky bottle fell to the floor and broke, swilling its contents in a big pool.

"You infernal fool!" snarled Lorenzo. "What the—"

"Boss, I've got an idea!" said Popodos tensely. "Why didn't we think of it before? Say, we're crazy to have missed it!"

"Missed what?" shouted the other. "Can't you speak? Must you stand there goggling at me? What is this plan? No good, I'll wager!"

But the Greek was smiling in an evil, cunning way.

"If you wasn't so set on driving the kids out, you'd have thought of it yourself," he said. "Listen, boss! We can get that crowd out without firing a shot—without using a man. We can get them all out and put them in chains—"

"Fool!" shouted Lorenzo. "What do you mean?"

"Why, the girls!" said Popodos, grinning. Lorenzo started.

"The girls!" he echoed.

"Sure thing!" said Popodos calmly. "Six of 'em! What's going to happen if we parade the little bunch in front of the power-house? What's going to happen if we give these young guys an ultimatum? Either they surrender, or—"

"We are mad!" interrupted Lorenzo excitedly. "All this time wasted, and we did not think of it! There is nothing easier—nothing more certain! We have them, Popodos! These fools think highly of their womenfolk, and they'll never let them suffer. Yes, yes! We'll wait until daylight," he went on cunningly. "Yes, daylight. There's no hurry. There's no hurry now. We'll let them think they've beaten us—and then, just as the sun is rising, we'll make a spectacular little scene."

"Bring out the girls and flog them, eh?" asked Popodos.

Lorenzo shook a fat hand.

"It might serve, but we won't leave it to chance," he replied. "We won't flog them, Popodos. That's not effective enough. We'll bring them all out in a row, bound and blindfolded, in full sight of the power-

station windows. I'll have a squad of my guards, and then I'll tell these rebels that their girl companions are being shot at sunrise as a reprisal."

"That's great!" said Popodos, grinning. "And will you shoot 'em?"

"Will it be necessary?" asked the slaver contemptuously. "These Britishers will make any terms if I promise to spare those lives. They'll surrender unconditionally. We've got them, Popodos. Let us go straight to the hut and drag them out. It will soon be dawn. We might as well prepare. I want to be doing something."

The half-breed's mood was now entirely different. His savage temper had gone. He was smiling with gloating triumph. He could see himself in full command once again, and he was pondering over the punishment that he would inflict upon these defiant schoolboy slaves!

CHAPTER 4.

Quick Work!



"LOOK out!" whispered Willy tensely.

He dropped flat on the ground, and hardly dared to breathe. Six other

forms did precisely the same thing, and there was no indication that anything living was lurking in the tall grass.

Even Handforth managed to efface himself. For once in his life he was silent and cautious. The safety of Irene & Co. was at stake, and he knew that this was no ordinary schoolboy escapade. In all truth, it was a matter of life and death. And at such times Handforth was capable of big things.

They were crouching near the big factory, the irregular range of buildings where Lorenzo's raw rubber was put through various processes, and prepared for shipment.

Two of the big Nubian guards came by, one carrying a lantern. If necessary, Umlosi and his young companions were prepared to pounce on these men and render them helpless. But the pair went by and noticed nothing.

"All is well," murmured Umlosi at length, "let us proceed."

"Yes, and the sooner the better," muttered Nipper. "There seem to be plenty of men about, even now. If we get through we shall be jolly lucky. But it all depends on quietness and speed."

They had met with singular good fortune so far.

Slipping out into the darkness from the power-station, they had melted into the gloom beyond. They half expected to run into parties of Lorenzo's guards. The whole enterprise was fraught with hideous danger, for capture would mean something worse than death. Not one of those youngsters remained ignorant of the truth.

But they were of stout heart, and they rigorously thrust aside all possibility of failure. They were making a bold bid to rescue the girls. They had to succeed. There was no other possible thought.

Umlosi was leading, with Willy close beside him. Nipper came next, with Handforth and the others close behind. Nipper was the only one armed, and his revolver was merely for the purpose of signalling, should such a desperate expedient be necessary.

Willy's presence was necessary, for he was the only one who had seen Irene & Co. since Lorenzo had taken them all as slaves. The Moor View girls had been placed among the native women—flung into a hut by night, and forced to work in the factory by day.

And Willy had managed to have a word with two of the girls, and they had told him exactly where their quarters were.

"We're getting nearer!" murmured Willy, after they had covered another twenty yards. "There's no guard in sight, and everything seems quiet. See those rough old huts away there to the left. We want the second one."

"Let us hope, young master, that the maidens will be within," whispered Umlosi. "I will be bad, indeed, if thou hast made a mistake, or if the maidens have been taken elsewhere."

The tension was greater now, for they were within sight of their objective, and they were all filled with anxiety. Everything would depend upon the next few minutes.

Like shadows they stole past the first hut, and then came to a halt at the door of the second one. There were many trees just at the rear, and the night wind was rustling through the foliage. The sound was welcome, since it tended to drown any noise that the rescuers might create.

"This is luck!" murmured Nipper exultantly. "It's not a corrugated iron door, like the others. It's of wood, and there's no lock. Only these big bolts."

"Pull them back!" urged Handforth.

"Quiet, old man—quiet!" panted Nipper.

With care he drew the bolts. The others kept a close watch up and down, but there seemed to be no prospect of disturbance. They had the spot entirely to themselves.

At last the door was free, and it creaked slightly as Nipper pulled it open.

"Anybody in here?" he whispered, peering into the blackness within.

"Oh!" came a breathless whisper. "Who—who is that?"

It was the voice of Doris Berkeley.

"Doris!" murmured Willy. "It's us, we've come to—"

"Renie—Renie!" came Doris' voice. "They're here—the boys are here! They've come to rescue us."

"Keep quiet!" urged Nipper, in agony. "For heaven's sake, keep quiet!"

Figures came crowding to the door—the dim, ghostly figures of the girls in their sadly soiled white attire. They had been compelled to languish in this wretched hut, just the same as the hapless negroes.

"What's been happening?" asked Irene excitedly. "Oh, tell us! We've heard shouts and all sorts of—"

"We can't stop now!" interrupted Willy. "There are seven of us, including Umlosi. Are you girls all here?"

"Yes—all six," said Mary Summers breathlessly.

"Good egg!" said Handforth jubilantly. "Come on—quick! My only hat! We've done the trick! We've got them!"

"Cave!" came Tommy Watson's urgent voice. "Look! There are a crowd of men coming here! We're too late to get away!"

They twirled round, staring with anxious eyes. Their hearts were throbbing madly. Without any preliminary notice, a dozen men had come swinging round from behind one of the store buildings. They were perilously near by, and they were carrying lanterns. Lorenzo himself was leading.

"Hey!" came a shout, in an alarmed tone. "Who's that?"

"They've seen us!" gasped Watson.

It was true enough. The enemy had appeared so suddenly that there had been no time to take cover. They were only a hundred yards off, and it was no time for hesitation.

"Come on!" yelled Nipper. "No good dodging into cover now. Let's make a run for it!"

"Hurrah!" bellowed Handforth, overjoyed at the liberation of his pent-up excitement.

"Come on, girls! Run for your lives!"

"Do thou make all speed!" urged Umlosi.

"I will give battle to these dogs!"

"No, no!" shouted Nipper. "We'll all run together!"

Crack! Crack!

Twice in succession Nipper fired his revolver, the prearranged signal. And then they all ran. They ran helter-skelter, the girls needing no urging. They knew very little of the actual facts, for they had been imprisoned throughout the earlier excitement. But this was evidently a bid for liberty, and they seized it on the flash.

And as they ran, so Lorenzo and his men flew in pursuit.

"They've escaped!" shouted the half-breed furiously. "These accursed boys have set them free! Shoot them, Popodos! Where's your gun, you fool? Where's your gun?"

Crack! Crack! Crack!

The Greek fired wildly, and it was a merciful fact that he could take no aim while running at top speed. Lorenzo himself had brought a rifle with him, and it was useless to him while running.

His rage was a hundred times greater than ever. A minute before he had been filled with gloating satisfaction. His problem was solved—he knew how to defeat the rebels.

And now, in a flash, he saw the end of his hopes.

The girls had got free, and were being snatched away from him just as he had been about to commence his preparations. In vain he urged his men to run faster, but they

could never hope to outstrip those fleet youngsters.

It was a wild race, with death as the penalty for lagging!



CHAPTER 5.

A Tragic Discovery!

LORD DORRIMORE started abruptly.

"Gad!" he exclaimed.

"Did you hear? Two shots, Lee! They've been

spotted, without a doubt!"

"Yes, I heard!" said Nelson Lee in agony.

"Heaven help them! Will they be able to get back, Dorrie? I'm afraid—terribly afraid!"

Browne of the Fifth sprang forward.

"The doors, brothers!" he shouted. "Let us have the doors ready, in case they win through!"

Everybody in the fortress rushed to the barricaded doors, and willing hands pulled down the obstructions. All had heard that signal, and they were sickened by the significance of it.

"Hadn't you better dash on the roof, an' get that searchlight goin'?" asked Lord Dorrimore quickly. "They may need the light—"

"It's the last thing I should do, Dorrie!" interrupted Lee. "They need no light to guide them here. It might help the enemy far more than the boys. We can only be ready to give them a hand if they win their way to the doors."

"Hadn't we better go out, sir—all of us?" shouted Gresham. "If they're recaptured, we might as well be recaptured, too!"

"Absolutely!" said Archie Glenthorne. "Tally-ho, you chappies! On the ball, what! Remove to the rescue!"

"Hurrah!"

They were about to sweep outside, but Lee, at the window, gave a shout of warning.

"Wait—wait!" he thundered. "They're here!"

Dim figures were speeding up out of the gloom—and further behind there were other figures. It was clear that the raiders were well ahead of their pursuers, and there seemed every chance that they might get home in time. It would be madness for the garrison to go out, and risk everything.

It had been touch and go.

The boys and girls were coming along at a tremendous pace, Handforth shouting with wild excitement, and the others doing their best to assist the girls. Umlosi, much to his disgust, was in the party, too. Only his love for Lord Dorrimore and the boys led him to act in this way. Never before had he run from the enemy. Sooner would he have died fighting.

But there was no disgrace in this flight.

To stay and give battle would indeed be suicide. But to run might mean safety for them all. There were fully thirty of the



As the two big Nubian guards came in sight, the St. Frank's boys and Umlosi dropped noiselessly into the long grass. Their hearts seemed to hammer within them as they saw that one of the guards was carrying a lantern. Would they be seen?

guards now in pursuit, for others had come up, and were joining in the hunt. In the darkness, none of the fugitives knew whether the enemy was gaining or losing. They ran with every ounce of speed, and prayed that they would reach their objective in time.

And Irene & Co. needed no assisting. Their own feet were as fleet as any of the others.

"We're here!" roared Handforth. "Hurrah! We've done it!"

"The doors—the doors!" shouted Watson.

"Come on—they're open!" came a chorus of excited yells.

"By glory, the girls are here!" sang out Lord Dorrimore. "Oh, good men! They've done the trick, Lee! Come on, young 'uns! You're beatin' 'em by miles!"

There was a wild rush.

They came through the open doorway like an avalanche, and were caught by those inside. At last they were all in, and Umlosi himself helped to slam the doors into position again. They were of corrugated iron, and they slid into place with a shriek of metallic defiance.

Clang! Clang!

The fastenings were rammed home, and the barricades hurled into place again. And outside the enemy threw itself helplessly against the closed doors. They had arrived ten seconds too late!

"Beaten 'em, by George!" panted Handforth, with a gulp. "We're in!"

"We knew you'd do it!" said Duncan. "Oh, this is too good to be true! We're all here now—all the whole crowd of us!"

"Rather!" said Handforth. "We've got all the girls!"

"Oh, my heart!" said Doris. "I thought it was going to stop just now! Isn't it glorious to be free again!"

"I can't believe it!" murmured Tessa Love.

"But what's happened?" asked Irene. "Where are we? And how have you fellows managed to—"

"We'll tell you all about it in a minute or two, young lady!" said Lord Dorrimore briskly. "Stand clear there, everybody! Look after the girls, you boys! We're goin' to switch the juice on. We can't have all this row!"

The enemy was making a terrific onslaught, and Nelson Lee felt that a strong dose of electricity would be beneficial. He pressed a switch, and the centre corrugated iron walls were charged with current.

The attackers fell away, shouting with fear. Lorenzo himself was like a man demented. He had seen the boys and girls escaping from his guards—he had seen them tear into the power-station, and he had seen the doors slammed hard. His only chance of enforcing a surrender had gone. The man was like a maniac.

And it only goaded him more when he heard the exultant cheering from within, and when he saw his men falling back from those electrified walls, writhing from the effects of the shock. To get anywhere near was impossible. To storm the place was beyond his power.

"Well done, boys—well done!" said Nelson Lee enthusiastically. "I dared not hope that you would succeed. So Willy was right, eh?"

"Rather, sir," said Handforth. "Trust my minor! He knew where to lead us. Where is he, by the way? Willy, my lad!"

There came no reply from Willy.

"Isn't he here?" shouted Handforth. "I thought he came in with the rest of us! Willy!"

"He's not here!" gasped Tommy Watson. "And where's Nipper? I haven't seen Nipper since we rushed in!"

"Nipper!" yelled a dozen anxious voices. "Willy!"

But neither replied—and with a flood of acute consternation the garrison realised that Nipper and Willy Handforth had not come in with the rest. Until that moment, everybody had assumed that all were present. In the darkness it had been impossible to see.

"Gad, they're not here!" said Lord Dorri-more, with a catch in his voice. "Doesn't anybody know what became of them? Weren't they with the rest of you boys and girls as you were running?"

"Nipper was beside me when I saw him last—helping Mary along," said Watson, in anguish. "Didn't you see him, Mary?"

"I don't know!" replied Mary Summers helplessly. "There was somebody beside me, but it was all such a rush that I can't remember. It was all dark, and——"

"Wau! Let me venture forth again, N'Kose!" said Umlosi. "Had I but known that these two were not with us, I would have held back. I have failed, and I deserve naught but death for this. Let me go, my father, so that I may seek——"

"It's no good, old man," interrupted Dorrie. "They must have been captured by this time, an' there's no sense in gettin' yourself in the same fix. It's just luck! An' we were all rejoicin' so much, too! It just shows you the folly of counting your chickens before they're hatched!"

The joy of a minute ago had gone.

This tragic discovery had hit everybody like a blow. Nipper and Willy had not come in with the others—and it could only mean that they had fallen into the hands of the enemy!



CHAPTER 6.

Cut Off!

BUT the situation wasn't so grave as the garrison believed.

Nipper and Willy Handforth had been left behind, it was true, but as yet they had not fallen into the hands of the slaver. They were, as a matter of fact, lying full length at the bottom of a weed-choked gully, listening to the tumultuous sounds of the pursuit.

The reason for their isolation was simple.

Willy had accidentally fallen into the gully, knowing nothing of its presence until he had

actually tripped up. And by the merest chance Nipper had caught a glimpse of the fag tumbling over.

Unknown to any of the others, Nipper had swerved, and had paused, intending to give Willy a hand. It had been a most unselfish act on his part, for it had involved the risk of capture.

Indeed, so close had the pursuit been that Nipper had been obliged to crouch low, hidden amidst the weeds. When seconds counted, there was no hope of making good the lost time.

And so the pair had remained behind, and the pursuers had rushed past without any knowledge of these two unfortunates.

"Crumbs!" breathed Willy at last. "I thought it was our birthday that time! The luck's still with us, though! They didn't even spot us!"

Nipper was raising himself up, and peering into the gloom.

"The others have got in, too—including the girls!" he said thankfully. "Listen to those cheers!"

"They sound like joybells!" said Willy calmly. "I say, it was awfully decent of you to turn back, Nipper. You shouldn't have done it, you ass! We're both cut off now!"

"Rats!" said Nipper softly. "I thought you were injured, perhaps. It's easy enough to rick your ankle in one of these confounded gullies. It's a kind of a dry ditch."

"Not so dry, either," said Willy. "My knees are digging into the mud, and I've only got about eight hundred and ninety-two insects crawling over me, including a choice selection of scorpions. We do see life, don't we?"

"Better dry up," whispered Nipper. "Some of those rotten Nubians are still close at hand. We're safe as long as we lie doggo here. We'd better wait until the excitement's over."

Neither of them were scared.

They had escaped detection, and Lorenzo's men were obviously totally unaware of their failure to reach the fortress. So there would be no search for them and as long as they acted with caution they had no cause for alarm.

"I expect they'll be pretty worried about us—particularly the gov'nor?" whispered Nipper after a while. "They'll think we've got collared, and they'll be tearing their giddy hair."

"That doesn't matter," said Willy. "All the more joy when we do show up. They'll treat us like conquering heroes. They expect we're dead by this time, I'll bet. Think of Ted's face when he finds that we've come back to life. Poor old Ted!" he added gently. "He's probably having a pretty rough time of it over me."

"Yes, we ought to get in as soon as we can," said Nipper anxiously. "But we can't approach yet—there are scores of those beggars round the power-house, and it would be madness to go near."

So they remained where they were. It was a great satisfaction to realise that the others

had all got safely "home." True, they couldn't see much, but their ears gave them all the proof they needed. The wild cheers from the fortress and the ravings of Lorenzo, were eloquent enough.

Lights were still gleaming near the power-station, and dark figures were moving about. Nipper could even detect the coarse, bulky figure of the slaver.

"I'll tell you what!" said Willy suddenly.

"Got an idea?"

"Rather!" said Willy, with a chuckle. "The girls are all in, and we can't follow them just yet, so what about improving the shining hour?"

"If you'll explain yourself, you young ass, I might be able to understand you," growled Nipper.

"Well, what about making hay while the sun shines?" asked Willy. "In other words, Lorenzo's bungalow isn't far off, and we could fill in the next half hour by a little profitable investigation. What about it? Shall we go and see what there is to be seen? You never know—we might run up against a plate of sandwiches!"

Nipper grunted.

"Thinking of your tummy, eh?" he asked tartly.

"If you'll tell me something better to think of, I'll oblige," said Willy. "Feeding on excitement is all very well, but it's not sustaining enough for me. I could eat dog biscuits just now. And Lorenzo's bungalow seems to be a pretty promising field of search. We can't join the others yet, and these insects are worrying me. Besides, why remain still while we can do something so much better?"

Nipper was a cautious youngster, but the idea of raiding the slaver's bungalow appealed strongly to his imagination. It was just like Willy's nerve to suggest such a thing.

"Game?" asked Willy softly.

"Yes, you young ass!" muttered Nipper. "But I'm not thinking about grub. There may be something else we can lay our hands on—something more valuable than grub."

"Impossible," said Willy. "There isn't anything more valuable."

"Well, come on—but we shall have to go easy," murmured Nipper. "They've set a kind of guard round the power-house, and we're barred. Do you notice how quiet everything is, too? No more cheers now!"

"They're just telling themselves what must have happened to us," nodded Willy. "They're mourning our loss. Still, as we're not lost, why worry? We shall have to buck up because it'll be dawn in about three-quarters of an hour, and we ought to be in before then. It looks so bad to roll home with the milk!"

They cautiously raised themselves out of the gully, and crept away towards Lorenzo's bungalow. In that direction there were no signs of the enemy. The slave-guards were still concentrated near the power-station, and Lorenzo was there, too—still crazy with helpless rage.

And while Nipper and Willy were indeed mourned as lost, they were coolly and cheer-

fully creeping through the darkness towards the slaver's dwelling. They didn't know what they were likely to discover there, but the game certainly seemed worth a trial. In any case, it was better to do this than to remain idle.

Nipper cast one or two anxious glances at the sky, but as yet there was no sign of the approaching dawn. They had no means of telling the time, and they had to guess at the approximate hour. And naturally, they guessed wrong.

So much had happened on this eventful night that it seemed to be going on for ever. Yet, had they only known it, the dawn was quite a long way off yet. One event had followed so closely on the heels of another that minutes had seemed like hours.

"Here we are!" whispered Willy, grinning.

They were near the wide veranda, and no sound came from the bungalow. Lights were gleaming in one or two of the rooms, but it was obvious that the place was temporarily deserted.

"Jolly obliging, I must say," went on Willy. "Old Lorenzo has not only left the front door open for us, but half the windows as well. Come on—let's walk in!"

CHAPTER 7.

Lorenzo Gets Annoyed!



HERE was something exhilarating in this unexpected adventure. Nipper was imbued with the same spirit as Willy and they

both crept over the veranda and slid noiselessly into one of the rooms—taking care to crouch low, so that their figures would not be seen.

It was a risk—a big risk. But it might be worth it. Anyhow, the pair were ready to face any trouble that might come along. Nipper had a revolver with him, and this gave him much comfort. In a dire extremity, he would not hesitate to use it.

They found themselves in a comfortable sitting-room—an untidy apartment, with big sprawling cane chairs, and littered tables. It was a room which spoke eloquently of its purpose. Without question, this was the apartment which Lorenzo generally used. There was a smashed glass on the central table, and a shattered whisky bottle on the floor. Against one wall there was a crude sideboard, and there were bookshelves in a corner, with an assortment of well-thumbed volumes.

"So this is His Ugliness' den, eh?" said Willy, looking round. "Do my eyes deceive me, or are they biscuits on the sideboard? Ye gods and little fishes! Real, genuine biscuits! Why aren't my pockets larger?"

But Nipper paid no attention.

He was looking across to the other side of the room, and his eyes were gleaming

with a sudden excitement. There was something resting on a bamboo side-table, and it claimed all Nipper's attention.

"Never mind the biscuits, Willy!" he muttered. "Look here! My only hat! What do you make of this?"

Willy stared.

"It's a Lewis-gun!" he said promptly.

"No, it isn't," said Nipper. "It's something like one, but it's smaller. I believe it's German, too—not that that matters to us. It's a machine-gun, and there's a spool of ammunition with it. Two or three spools, in fact. My son, this is ours!"

"By Jingo, rather!" said Willy. "A machine-gun like that might come in jolly handy for defensive purposes. But wouldn't it be a good idea to do a bit of quick exploring, and discover the larder?"

"Don't think so much of your inside!" growled Nipper. "You're getting as bad as Fatty Little."

"Rats!" said Willy. "I'm not thinking of my inside, you chump. What about the girls? They'll need some food, won't they?"

Nipper looked grave.

"We shall all need food," he replied. "We can't carry sufficient to feed a score of us, can we?"

"Half a loaf's better than no bread," replied Willy promptly. "Besides, we might be able to find some meat extract, or something. That's concentrated, anyway—and sustaining, too. Let's have a look round and locate——"

"Look out!" interrupted Nipper keenly. "They're coming!"

"Oh, corks!"

They both stood stock still, their hearts thumping. A loud voice had made itself heard in the distance the voice of Lorenzo. He was shouting to somebody—which was lucky. For it gave the intruders ample warning. They prepared to make a swift exit.

"Can't go by the window," said Nipper. "We shall be spotted. What about that door behind you, Willy? If we dodge through there, we shall get to the rear, I expect, and then we can nip out."

"After raiding the larder," murmured Willy.

They opened the door and slid noiselessly through into the darkness. Nipper closed the door after him, and heard it click. He found himself bumping into Willy.

"Get a move on!" he whispered.

"I don't want to be classed as a pessimist, but this is one of life's little tragedies," said Willy sadly. "Nipper, old man, we've made a horrible bloomer. This is a cupboard!"

"A what?" gasped Nipper.

"Absolutely a cupboard," said Willy. "I thought it was a passage, but there's nothing but a blank wall in front of me. I suppose this is what they'd call a trap? The enemy approaches, and we can neither advance nor retreat. What a life!"

Nipper said nothing. The situation was far more grave than Willy's tone indicated—

not that the fag was under any misapprehension. The truth was only too obvious. They had entered a cupboard, and there was no possible passage through it into the other part of the building. And it was too late to retreat.

Voices were already audible.

"Listen!" muttered Nipper tensely. "There's one chance in a thousand that they won't open this door. It's up to us to keep absolutely still. If they do open it—my gun's ready."

"That's a comfort, anyway," murmured Willy.

"Hush!"

The voices were now so close that the pair caught their breath in. They half-expected to see the cupboard door flung open. A chair scraped, and there was the clinking of glass. They could hear somebody breathing heavily, followed by a gurgling sound.

"Pig!" breathed Willy. "That's old Lorenzo drinking. Sounds like the last gallon of bath-water going down the plug-hole."

"Quiet, you hopeless young idiot!" hissed Nipper.

"He can't hear us—he's making too much noise," said Willy. "I say, supposing we spring out and grab him?"

Nipper made no reply to this facetious suggestion. He wasn't feeling scared, but he was undoubtedly alarmed. They had rashly walked into a trap, and there was a chance that they would never get out of it.

And it wasn't as if their own safety alone was at stake. If Lorenzo seized them, he would unquestionably use them in order to enforce the surrender of the whole party. So the safety of all depended upon the luck of these two.

The chair creaked noisily, and there came another sound of clinking glass. The slaver was obviously soothing his nerves by recourse to raw spirits. If he had only known that two of his schoolboy slaves were just behind that cupboard door!

"Where the thunder are you, Popodos?" shouted Lorenzo suddenly. "Why can't you come here? I want to talk to you."

Another footstep sounded, and once again there was the rattle of glass, accompanied by the gurgling of liquid. A long-drawn-out murmur of satisfaction followed.

"Gosh, that's just what I needed, boss!" said another voice.

"Never mind what you needed!" exclaimed Lorenzo harshly. "These boys have defied me again! They've won another trick, Popodos!"

"They're a smart lot," said the other. "You've got to hand to them, boss. Smartest bunch of kids I ever come across. The way they got those girls into the power-station was pretty slick. And we couldn't do a thing! Looks like we're done, doesn't it?"

"Done!" shouted Lorenzo furiously. "I'll show you whether I'm done! When people defy my will, I crush them! Do you understand me, you fool? I crush them utterly!"

CHAPTER 8.

Useful Information!



WILLY placed his mouth close to Nipper's ear. "That other chap sounded like an American," he murmured. "I say, we're pretty lucky, when you come to think of it. We might hear something good while we're bottled up in here."

"Then listen — and don't whisper," breathed Nipper. "I'm not anxious to be crushed utterly."

"Oh, he's only a windbag!" said Willy contemptuously.

All the same, he dried up. There wasn't much risk in carrying on this whispered conversation, but it was just as well to be on the safe side. Lorenzo was not in a cheerful mood.

"Yes, Popodos, I crush them!" he repeated. "Never have I been defied with success. In the past men have tried to rebel against my will. Always I have smashed them. And do you think I am to be beaten by this infernal gang of schoolboys and schoolgirls?"

"They're making a good show so far, anyway," said Popodos.

"Bah! They have seized the power-station, otherwise I could kill them all!" snarled Lorenzo. "I dare not use firearms, for fear of doing damage to the valuable plant. But their triumph will be brief, my friend. Very brief! Soon I shall show them my power."

"It's a bit awkward," said Popodos thoughtfully. "Only two men there—two white men, anyway—and these blamed boys. And yet they're playing blazes with us! I can't see what we can do, boss!"

"Then I'll tell you," said the slaver. "There is only one thing, Popodos. There is only one way. I must bring K'laba into this."

"K'laba, the Oturi chief!"

"You shall start at dawn for the Oturi country," went on Lorenzo. "You shall take a message from me, Popodos. K'laba is a black scoundrel, and I distrust him. But he has learned to obey me. He knows that disobedience means trouble. He shall come here with five hundred of his warriors. If necessary, a thousand. I'll have these dogs out of that power-station, my friend! I'll drive them out by sheer weight of numbers!"

"K'laba will want a big price," said Popodos doubtfully.

"He shall have a big price," retorted Lorenzo. "I know the price, too, my friend. Money? No, these Oturi scum will get no money from me. But I fancy the price will suit them well. In return for their services they shall have the prisoners."

The Greek uttered an exclamation.

"They'll kill them!" he said sharply.

"Do I care?" snarled Lorenzo. "All the better. Let them be killed—let them be treated as K'laba pleases. There will be big

celebrations, Popodos. It will be a pleasant sight, eh?"

"Say, is it necessary?" asked the other. "Surely we can shift these guys without calling in a mob of howling savages? They'll go mad, boss, if you give them these white youngsters. Say, haven't you seen the Oturi when they get on the job?"

"I've seen them—and I know what will happen," replied Lorenzo. "Have I not said that my methods are certain? I shall crush these rebels, Popodos. And my other slaves will be much impressed. After everything is over, they will be very meek. There will be no more revolts."

Lorenzo laughed savagely.

"Sounds cheerful, doesn't it?" whispered Willy into Nipper's ear. "I don't believe in this scheme for supplying free food to the savages. The Oturi are cannibals, aren't they? It's the stock-pot for us!"

"Keep quiet, you young ass!" breathed Nipper.

He made no pretence of his anxiety. Otto Lorenzo was in a position to command the entire Oturi tribe. At his orders they would come. And K'laba, the rascally old chief, was a savage of the worst type, even worse than Bofebi, the wily chief of the Sansissi, with whom the St. Frank's expedition had come in contact before. And when these Oturi were allowed to have their head, they were as bad as any of the cannibals of a bygone generation.

Nipper could foresee what might happen.

With hundreds of these blacks thrown into the attack, the frail fortress could never hold out. Recapture was certain. But there would be no more slavery for them. They would be handed over to the Oturi as a reward. The rest of the picture was too much for the imagination.

"There is something else," went on Lorenzo. "See, Popodos, in this cupboard. I have something which I have not shown you yet. You will be quite surprised, I think."

"I think he will!" murmured Willy tensely. "Got your gun ready?"

"Yes," muttered Nipper, between his teeth.

They heard Lorenzo's chair creak, and a moment later there was a heavy footstep. The cupboard! The slaver was coming straight there, and concealment would be at an end. The hidden juniors had not expected a crisis so speedily as this.

Nipper had his revolver in readiness, his finger on the trigger. There was a wild chance that a couple of shots might keep the brutes back for a minute. A sudden rush, and the pair would be outside in the darkness. It would all depend upon the luck.

For a moment Nipper thought it would be as well to forestall Lorenzo, and rush out. But he hesitated, and while he hesitated there came the sound of a door being opened.

"Here we are, my friend," said Lorenzo. "Look at these!"

Nipper made a faint, choking sound. The reaction was overwhelming for a moment.

Lorenzo had gone to another cupboard altogether.

"Fireworks!" said Popodos, in surprise.

"Only a small box," said Lorenzo. "They came in two months ago, and I have kept them here. See! Rockets, maroons, coloured fire, and such-like nonsense. But our slaves have never seen fireworks, Popodos. Magic, eh? We'll impress them with our great magic. It is just as well to have a few such things at hand. These blacks are brainless at the best. The smallest thing will impress them."

"It's sure a good idea," agree Popodos. "But you'd best keep this junk until the Oturi have done their stuff. If you don't, they'll all quit before the job's through."

"Afterwards—afterwards," said Lorenzo softly. "First, the Oturi will come, then the celebrations. You understand? Then K'laba will take his scum away, and there'll be no British schoolboys or schoolgirls left. A fire-work display to impress our own blacks, and there'll be no more trouble. I have it all planned, Popodos."

"You're a great guy, boss," said Popodos admiringly.

"I am not to be defied and flouted," snapped the half-breed. "Come, we will go to your quarters now, and you shall prepare for a start within the hour. Our friends in the power-house will have a quiet time for a day or so. Let them! They'll think I have given up the struggle. They'll be hungry, too—very hungry. There'll be very little fight in them when the Oturi swoop down."

"But there's still the juice," said Popodos doubtfully. "K'laba's lot won't take nicely to those electrified walls, I'm figuring. What are you going to do about that, boss?"

Lorenzo chuckled.

"I have a plan," he replied. "There'll be no electricity soon, Popodos. Trust me to know what to do!"

Their voices died away, and complete silence followed.

"Well," said Willy, "now we know!"

CHAPTER 9.

Before the Dawn.



NIPPER drew his breath in very deliberately.

"Yes, now we know!" he said tensely. "This brute means to drive us out and hand us over to the cannibals. That'll mean something worse than death, Willy."

"Lorenzo hasn't won yet!" retorted Willy calmly. "He doesn't know that we've got hold of his plans, does he? Forewarned is forearmed! That makes all the difference!"

"It does," admitted Nipper. "Come on! We'd better get out of here while we still have the chance. If there's enough darkness left we'll make a dash for the power-station and get in. We've done quite enough roaming for one night, my son."

"But it's been worth it," said Willy. "Pity we can't stay behind and raid the larder,

but it might be too risky. I say, what did he mean about the electricity? How can he cut it off? All the controls are inside the fortress."

"He's evidently got some rotten scheme in his mind," growled Nipper. "We're going to have a big fight with this brute, Willy. And all the odds are on his side."

Nipper cautiously opened the door, and they found themselves in the room once more. Both of them were streaming with perspiration, for the heat of that cupboard had been overpowering.

"Good egg!" muttered Willy. "It's still as dark as pitch! My hat! I've never known such a long night!"

"It's just the same as any other night, but it seems longer," said Nipper. "Hold on! Where's that other cupboard? I'd like to have a look at those fireworks. I'm interested in them, my lad—very interested."

"Great Scott! You mean——"

"I rather think they'll be useful," nodded Nipper. "What did Popodos say? Better not bring them out until the Oturi are gone! If they can scare the slaves, they can scare the cannibals! Any advantage of this sort must be grabbed with both hands."

"By jingo!" breathed Willy. "Brains! I didn't think you had such a large supply of them, old son."

Nipper was opening the door of a small cupboard on the other side of the room. And a moment later he brought forth a long wooden box. One glance inside was sufficient. It was filled with rockets, Roman candles, squibs, and such like.

"By jingo, they'll be useful!" said Willy breathlessly.

"They may save all our lives!" replied Nipper, with a sober note in his voice. "You grab this, Willy—it's not too heavy. I'll collar the machine-gun and the ammunition. It'll be a struggle to get back, and we shall have to pray for luck. But we're not going empty-handed!"

"Better than all the grub!" said Willy, nodding.

They were both tensely excited.

The prizes they were taking were of unimaginable value. The fireworks were even more precious than the machine-gun. For these savages had never seen fireworks—and it was for that very reason that Lorenzo had imported them into his plantation.

The slaver was planning to drive the rebels out by sheer force of numbers. But the possession of those fireworks might make all the difference to the success of his scheme! The safety of the entire party depended upon Nipper and Willy getting back into the fold.

They started out under great difficulties, too.

The machine-gun and the ammunition weighed anything up to half a hundred-weight. The gun itself was not more than twenty pounds, but Nipper had collared every drum of cartridges, too, and there were many.

That box of fireworks was no light parcel, either. But Willy manfully shouldered it.

Once across the veranda, they made a quick run across to the shelter of the palms and the tropical bushes, and then crouched down, waiting and listening. But their exit had evidently passed unseen. There was no alarm. Everything was quiet and still. It was difficult for them to realise that they had not been in the bungalow for more than twenty minutes.

"It can't last," said Nipper breathlessly. "We'll never be able to get back without throwing these things away, Willy. It'll be a rush at the end—and even then we may be collared."

"Hallo!" said Willy. "I thought you were an optimist?"

"So I am, but——"

"Rats!" said Willy. "Luck's with us tonight. And when the luck begins well, it ends well. Old Lorenzo is too busy to bother us now—and none of his guards know that we're out on the razzle. We'll get back safely enough, you mark my words."

"I hope you're right!" said Nipper fervently.

They progressed rapidly. Without doubt, the luck was really with them. They heard voices in the distance occasionally, but none of Lorenzo's guards were on the alert. They had received orders to ignore the power-station, and the majority of them were busily engaged in rounding up the scattered slaves.

Nipper and Willy progressed by a series of quick, twenty-yard hops. They would run, and then crouch down again. Then they would venture upon another hop. And so they grow nearer and nearer to the objective.

"It's like going across No Man's Land to the home trenches, after a raid," murmured Willy breathlessly. "Thank goodness we haven't any barbed wire entanglements to get through! Well, we get some sport in this place, anyway! There's nothing like excitement!"

They ventured upon another run, and this took them to the edge of the trees near the power-station. There was a big clearing in front, and the corrugated iron buildings stood out dimly in the gloom. Not a light was showing, and there were even no voices to be heard.

"This is going to be the difficult bit," said Nipper anxiously. "We shall have to make one run for it, Willy; and the distance is well over a hundred yards. Think you can manage it with that box?"

"Watch me!" retorted Willy.

"Look here, we'd better settle on a plan," went on Nipper. "If we're not spotted, we'll keep quiet. But if any of the guards see us, we'll throw caution to the winds, and yell out. Then there'll be just a chance that they'll have the door open for us. And be careful of the corrugated iron wall—it might be electrified."

"You needn't remind me about that," said Willy. "I don't want to die just yet, thanks! All ready?"

"Yes!" said Nipper. "Come on!"

They broke from cover, and ran across the big space, staggering heavily under their loads. And then a chorus of shouts arose—from a party of Lorenzo's men who had been hidden by the trees.

"That's done it!" roared Willy. "They're after us!"

"Hi!" yelled Nipper. "Rescue, St. Frank's! We're coming! Open the doors for us!"

Crack! Crack!

In spite of his heavy load, he still gripped his revolver, and he fired twice in quick succession. The bullets harmlessly struck the ground, but the Nubians fell back, momentarily checked. From further afield came a roar in Lorenzo's voice.

The pair rushed on, and even now there was no certainty that they would win.



CHAPTER 10.

Umlosi's Big Idea.

MINUTE prior to that tense run, the occupants of the power-station were in a mournful mood.

Nobody was asleep. In spite of their utter weariness, the uncertain fate of Nipper and Willy Handforth had driven sleep from the heaviest eyes. The garrison was divided into several dismal groups, and there was only one subject of conversation.

What had happened to the missing pair?

Lorenzo had given no sign—and this, in itself, was significant. Nelson Lee was in an agony of worry, although he had done his best to cheer up his companions.

If Lorenzo had captured Nipper and Willy, why hadn't he announced the fact? Why hadn't he gloatingly come forward, threatening all sorts of horrors unless the entire party surrendered?

The answer seemed only too obvious. Nipper and Willy must have been slain—and so Lorenzo had no lever to wield. Their death meant nothing to him. Alive, they would have been valuable, but dead they were useless.

Then, too, there was the continued suspense. Was Lorenzo preparing another attack? Some thought he had given it up, but others were expecting an onslaught. Amid much tension, sleep was impossible.

Poor Handforth was in a terrible state of worry, and Church and McClure could do nothing to console him. Words, indeed, seemed an intrusion upon his misery.

His younger brother was one of the missing! And the arrogant Edward Oswald seemed shrunken and wasted. He stood at one of the windows, staring out unseeingly. Twice he had frenziedly shouted for the others to get up a rescue-party, but he had been compelled to realise that any such move would have been madness. They had rescued the girls—at the cost of two lives!

Sir Montie Tregellis-West and Tommy Watson were in anguish too, for Nipper was their staunchest chum. They, too, were unable to speak. They could frame no words to express their misery.

And then came that sudden commotion!

Handforth, standing at the window, with Church and McClure on either side of him, saw two dim figures in the gloom. A chorus of shouts arose—shouts in the native tongue.

"My hat!" gasped Church. "It's another attack!"

For one second there was a tense silence. And a voice came out of the darkness—from one of those running figures.

"That's done it!" it roared. "They're after us!"

Handforth jumped a foot into the air.

"My minor!" he shouted chokingly.

"Listen!" yelled Watson. "There's Nipper, too!"

"Hurrah!"

"They're safe—they're safe!"

In a second, pandemonium reigned. Nelson Lee, almost unable to believe his ears, rushed to the barricaded doors, with half a dozen helpers at hand. Irene and Doris were among them, and they helped vigorously as the barricades were torn down, and the doors wrenched open.

With a shrieking of rusty metal, the sliding door on one side was pulled back. Willy Handforth almost fell into the power-station, his heavy box crashing over and hitting Watson and Gresham heavily. But such was the excitement that neither of them noticed any pain. But afterwards they found that they were badly bruised and grazed.

Nipper came in on Willy's heels, and they were both grabbed by the excited crowd, and the little breath that was left in them was promptly squeezed out.

The doors were crashed to again, and the pursuing guards were kept out in the nick of time. But these men did not display any relish for close contact with the ironwork. They had had a taste of it before—and they fell back as the door was closed.

"Willy!" Handforth was roaring. "You—you young bounder! We thought you were dead!"

"I am—nearly!" gasped Willy. "Chuck it, Ted! If you keep thumping me like this I shall peg out in earnest!"

"Oh, we made sure you were dead!" cried Irene.

"Nipper, old man!" muttered Watson huskily

"Dear old boy, this is too good to be true," said Sir Montie. "Begad! Where did you get to? Why didn't you—"

"Steady, all of you!" interrupted Nelson Lee gently. "Let them have some breath. Good lad, Nipper!"

"Hallo, guv'nor!" panted Nipper. "We're both O.K."

That was all they said—but no other words were necessary. Lord Dorrimore, however, was just as excited as the juniors, and he was cheering with the rest.

There was every reason to cheer. The whole party was now intact—with every member of it within this fortress. It made a tremendous difference. They could defy the slaver with absolute impunity.

"There's nothing much to explain," said Nipper, when he had got some of his breath back. "In the first rush we fell into a sort of gully, and it was too late to get out. We had to wait until—"

"Rats!" interrupted Willy. "I fell down the gully, and you came back to lend me a hand—although it might have meant King-don Come for both of us!"

"Anyhow, we were left," said Nipper hastily. "And as we couldn't get near the power-station, we did a bit of exploring. It was Willy's idea to raid Lorenzo's bungalow—"

"By George!" interrupted Handforth blankly. "Is that what you've been doing?"

"We had a pretty exciting time, too," said Willy. "Still, we got away with a machine-gun and a box of fireworks, so we didn't do so badly. And we overheard some big news, too. According to Lorenzo, there's going to be some warm work before long."

Nipper explained in more detail, while all the others listened enthralled. Nelson Lee and Dorrie were considerably startled—so much so that his lordship lost all his enthusiasm.

"This looks infernally bad, Lee!" he muttered. "The Oturis—eh? If K'laba and his savages are let loose on us— Well, I don't exactly like to picture what the result might be."

"Did Lorenzo know that you had overheard this?" asked Lee, turning to Nipper.

"No, guv'nor. We got out on the quiet."

"But Lorenzo will know that somebody has been there," said Lee thoughtfully. "When he misses the fireworks and the machine-gun he'll begin to guess, perhaps. Not that it will make any difference to his plan. I imagine that he will go straight ahead with it."

"But he can't get us out of here, sir," said Handforth. "What difference does it make about the Oturis? They're only a lot of savages, and they'll be just as scared of the electricity as Lorenzo's own men. And there are the fireworks, too."

Nelson Lee made no reply. If he answered truthfully, he could do nothing but sound a pessimistic note, and he had no desire to make matters worse than they actually were.

He took Lord Dorrimore aside, and Unlooi was with them, too.

"This is bad news," he said gravely. "Lorenzo evidently has some plan to cut off the electricity supply."

"But he can't," said Dorrie. "The controls are all in here."

"Yes, but the source of supply is at the waterfall, the power being conveyed to the motors," replied Lee. "If Lorenzo is prepared to dismantle his mechanism, the current will be gone—except for the store in the batteries, which won't last long. And these



Lord Dorrimore flung a stone at the lantern, shattering the glass. The Nubian guards halted, and in the confusion that followed Nipper placed the phosphorous sheet over his head. He looked a ghostly sight as he flung his arms wildly in the air, and the guards yelled in terror ere they ran.

Oturis are the worst savages in the whole Congo region. The prospect looks bad."

"N'Kose, let me speak," rumbled Umlosi, taking hold of Lord Dorrimore's arm. "Perchance I have a suggestion that might be of good use."

"Carry on, old man," said Dorrie. "All suggestions gratefully received."

"Then, my father, let me steal forth while the night is still with us," said Umlosi. "Let me begone ere the dawn comes. Alone, I can reach the devil-river, and then press on to the land of my own people. Wau! Then will I return with my warriors, and these dogs shall be dealt with!"

CHAPTER 11.

Umlosi's Mission!



NELSON LEE and Dorrie were impressed.

"The idea is sound, good friend, but what of the perils?" asked Lee gently. "You must go alone, without stores—without food, even! How can you reach the Kutana country under such conditions?"

"I know the forest, Umtagati," replied Umlosi. "I am strong once more—I fear not the beasts that roam. Let me go forth, and I will reach the land of the Kutanas even as Lorenzo's agent reaches the Oturi country. And while the dogs of K'laba are preparing to march, so will my warriors prepare."

"By gad, there's somethin' in it!" said Dorrimore eagerly. "It's not much further

to Kutanalanda than it is to K'laba's town. And this Popodos brute won't be in a desperate hurry. At least, he won't rush things as quickly as Umlosi could. In the meantime, we shall be left alone, and there's a chance that the Kutanas will arrive in time."

"It's the only possible hope we have," agreed Nelson Lee. "With all my heart, Umlosi, I commend this plan of yours, and let us thank you for the unselfish spirit in which you have offered—"

"Nay, my master, these are idle words," interrupted Umlosi. "Mayhap I shall fall by the way, or find myself in the hands of these jackals. Let us not rejoice until the mission has been accomplished. But willingly do I go. If perchance I reach Zenobu, then will I return with a thousand warriors strong."

"Just a minute," said Nelson Lee. "There's the Kalala River to be crossed, and it is charged with electricity. It is better for us to keep the current switched through to those cables. How long will it take you to reach the river?"

"Less than half an hour, my master."

"Then you must wait until the half-hour is sped if you reach the bank sooner," replied Lee. "For half an hour after you have gone I will switch off the current, making it possible for you to swim it in safety. This can be done within ten minutes—"

"Two minutes, more likely," said Dorrie.

"We must allow a safe margin," said Lee. "At the end of the ten minutes I will switch on again. And then we must wait, Umlosi—we must wait in complete ignorance until you return."

"Rather a pity we can't think of some

signal," said Lord Dorrimore, frowning. "If only Umlosi could give some sign after he's safely across, it would make us more comfortable. By gad, a rocket! That's it! One of those rockets that the boys brought back with 'em."

"Thou meanest the wondrous sticks of fire which hurl themselves into the sky with many bangs and much coloured light?" asked Umlosi. "Have I not seen these things, N'Kose? I will take one, and discharge it after I have safely crossed the river. Then will you know that I am on my way."

"It's a good idea in another direction, too," said Nelson Lee. "Lorenzo is bound to see the rocket, and he will probably assume that the missing stuff was seized by some of the demoralised slaves, and that they have escaped from the valley with it. Lorenzo will then be led to believe that we know nothing of his plans, for he will not guess that this conversation was overheard."

There was no further discussion. Indeed, there was nothing to talk about. Every minute was precious, since the night was nearly over. One last warning was given to Umlosi. As he had no watch, and would have to guess at the time, Lee handed him a short metal rod. The end of this was partially insulated.

"Test the water before entering, Umlosi," said Nelson Lee. "Hold this end with the wrappings upon it. I have prepared it in readiness. If you feel nothing, the water will be safe. But if your hand tingles when you dip the rod into the river, then wait, and test again."

"I will remember, Umtagati," said the Kutana chief.

And with that he went. There was scarcely a word of good-bye, for the boys were urged not to make any demonstration, lest enemy ears should catch the sounds.

Umlosi's mission was a desperate one—with all the odds against him. But he went with a light heart, with a calm, firm determination to win through. The lives of his beloved friends depended upon his success. Furthermore, most of Lorenzo's slaves belonged to the Kutana tribe, so Umlosi's responsibility was great.

He slipped away like a shadow, and none saw him after he had left the power-station. He just merged into the blackness of that hour before the dawn.

"Why can't we switch off that river current altogether?" asked Dorrie. "Wouldn't it be better to finish with it? Why play Lorenzo's game? Why not store up all the juice we can?"

"That's just the trouble," replied Lee. "We're liable to store up too much. Do you realise that I haven't had time to examine these dynamos? And until daylight I cannot do so, for it is too risky to switch any of the lights on. There is an immense voltage being generated here, and it must be released. To stop discharging current into the river for even ten minutes may be risky, but it must be done."

"You know best," said Dorrie. "I know as much about electricity as I know about the moon. If you say it's O.K., I'm satisfied."

In the meantime, many of the other members of the garrison were snatching some sleep again. And outside in the darkness Otto Lorenzo was making the night hideous by further explosions of temper.

This night was a bad one for him, indeed! He had discovered the disappearance of those precious fireworks and the machine-gun. Popodos and a strong party of bearers had gone on their urgent mission, and Lorenzo was alone.

He jumped to the immediate conclusion that the schoolboys were responsible, and, of course, he guessed the truth. They were like a nightmare to him. Whichever way he turned he could see their handiwork.

He determined to act at once.

He wouldn't wait until the Oturi came. Why should he? He had a new plan now—a scheme which would probably win success for him without the aid of the savages. A runner could be sent after Popodos, and bring him back.

Lorenzo was subject to these fits of mad rage, during which he was apt to act rashly. He had made his careful plans, and now he was already altering them. But he had his wits about him enough to know that even if this subsidiary plan failed, the Oturis would still be available.

And within twenty minutes he was massing every available man round the powerhouse, and, by a singular coincidence, he ordered an attack at the exact expiration of Umlosi's half-hour!

It was a pure chance, but it meant much.

CHAPTER 12.

What the Dawn Brought



"LOOK out!" shouted Dorrie. "They're comin' again!"

"All hands to the defences!" yelled Handforth. "They're commencing another attack!"

The rest were awake in a moment. This was unexpected. Even Lee was surprised, for he had understood from Nipper that nothing was to be done until the Oturis were on the scene.

Dorrie was in the power-station, but Lee had gone up to the roof, to make some adjustments to the searchlight.

"The old rotter must have discovered that we raided his bungalow!" panted Nipper. "He's doing this in one of his mad moments."

"They're coming!" roared Handforth. "Where's the switch? Stand back from the windows, you chaps! We've got to electrify the walls!"

Handforth rushed across towards the great switchboard and grabbed at one of the switches and slung it down.

"Good heavens!" shouted Dorrie hoarsely.

"It's all right, sir, I——"

"You don't know what you've done!" shouted his lordship, grabbing the switch and pulling it up. "Umlosi! And it's exactly the time he should be swimming the river! Handy, Handy! What have you done?"

"Eh?" gasped Handforth. "I—I didn't——"

Lee came pushing up.

"What's wrong?" he asked sharply.

"Why, I pulled the switch down to electrify the walls, sir!" panted Handforth, "but Dorrie seems to think——"

"Which switch?" asked Lee hoarsely.

"This one, sir."

"That one!" panted Lee. "Did you push it right over?"

"Yes, sir. I——"

"Then you made a terrible blunder Handforth!" interrupted the detective. "A blunder that may well be tragic for us all. That switch and this other one are those which control the river cables. You may have killed Umlosi while he was swimming the stream."

Handforth was as pale as a sheet.

"Killed Umlosi!" he muttered. "But—but I thought it was the switch for the walls, sir!"

"I am not blaming you, my boy—you acted for the best, I dare say," interrupted Lee huskily. "But until we receive Umlosi's signal, we shall be in perpetual doubt. The current had only been switched off for three minutes, and if Umlosi had started his swim nothing could have saved him from electrocution. Let us pray that he was delayed."

There was no time for any further talk, for the blacks were swarming round with improvised battering-rams, attempting to smash their way through the defences.

Nelson Lee had now pulled the right switches down, and everybody within the building was standing clear of the walls. But there were drawbacks to this policy.

None of the defenders could see what was going on, since it was dangerous to approach the windows. And if this battering-ram offensive continued it might prove successful. The electricity was no good against such methods.

So Lee switched off, and gave the order for more drastic action.

"We've got to defend the lives of these boys and girls, Dorrie," he said grimly. "I can manage this machine-gun. I've examined it, and the operation of it is simple. You take one of the rifles."

"Let me have one, too!" urged Nipper.

"Let me——"

Crash!

The whole building shook with the devastating shock of a charge from the enemy. The doors buckled and sagged under the tremendous strain, and were badly damaged and weakened.

"Another charge like that, and they'll be in," said Nipper.

He took one of the rifles and went to a

window. Outside, the dawn was just breaking, and the figures of the attackers were plainly in view. Fifty men were coming up with a huge log, with the intention of hurling it against the doors.

"Let them have it, Dorrie!" snapped Lee. "No, you girls—keep back! Don't come to the windows; this will be no sight for you!"

Crack, crack, crack!

Both Lord Dorrimore and Nipper were firing, but even under these perilous conditions they could not bring themselves to aim to kill. They remembered that these blacks were being sent to the attack by Lorenzo. Some of them, perhaps, were the unfortunate slaves.

So every shot was aimed low, and the oncoming charge wavered as two or three of the men fell out, yelling with pain.

Zurrrrrh!

And then the machine-gun started—a shattering, racketting roar. In one minute Lee had swept the entire front of the power-station with his fire. The attackers dropped their battering-ram and fled in every direction. A dozen were left writhing on the ground.

"Hurrah, they're beaten off!"

If Lorenzo had had any doubts regarding those missing articles, they were now set at rest. The sound of that machine-gun was eloquent. He knew what had become of it.

And as the new day became lighter the enemy gave up the fight. Lorenzo was withdrawing his men in order to reorganise them. He could plainly see that the garrison was determined. These rebels were prepared to use every method in order to withstand the attacks.

"Well, that's another bit of excitement over," said Lord Dorrimore. "It didn't last long, but it was pretty warm. This infernal Lorenzo doesn't give us much rest, does he?"

"And yet we need rest, Dorrie," muttered Lee. "Look at these unhappy youngsters! They all need a long sleep. Heaven knows what will come of this terrible business!"

"And we haven't had Umlosi's signal yet," said Dorrie gravely.

"I was thinking exactly the same thing," muttered Lee.

Over in one of the corners Church and McClure were doing their utmost to console their leader. But Handforth was haggard and wretched. Seldom had his chums seen him so affected.

"Why haven't we had the signal?" he was asking. "Umlosi's dead! If he wasn't, that rocket would have been fired long ago. He's dead, and I killed him!"

"Don't be an ass, Handy," muttered Church. "You didn't know——"

"I was a fool to interfere!" said Handforth miserably. "I'm always making these blunders! Sometimes I've sloshed you chaps for calling me a muddler, but you were right! I'm nothing but a reckless, ram-headed fool!"

"You're not, Handy!"

"I ought to know what I am!" said Handforth fiercely. "I've killed Umlosi by my

idiocy. Look here, I can't stand this! I can't stick here and put up with this suspense. I've got to go out and find Umlosi! I've got to——"

"Hold still, you chump!" said Church angrily. "It'll mean death if you go out! It's daylight now!"

"I don't care!" said Handforth stubbornly. "Don't I deserve it? I've killed Umlosi by my criminal folly, and it's up to me to——"

"It's up to you to stay here, Ted," interrupted Willy. "Calm yourself, old man. If you go out you won't be killed—you'll be captured alive. And Lorenzo will use you to make us surrender. You can't do it. You've got to stay here. Umlosi's signal might come at any minute."

"It's too late now," muttered Edward Oswald. "The very fact that we haven't had the signal proves that the poor old boy is dead! Oh, why was I so mad? Why couldn't I have left it to Mr. Lee to control the switch-board? I'm always butting in—always interfering and making a mess of things!"

And neither Willy nor anybody else could console him.

CHAPTER 13.

Lorenzo's New Game!



BOOM—BOOM!

Everybody was staggered by that sudden, unexpected explosion. It was sharp and penetrating, and the corrugated iron of the power-house rattled and shook with the force of it.

"The signal!" gasped Church excitedly.

"But—but that wasn't a rocket!" said Handforth, a wild light of hope leaping into his eyes. "It was too near. It couldn't have been——"

"No, it wasn't the rocket," interrupted Nipper.

"Then I don't care what it was!" muttered Handforth dully.

But the others did. Nelson Lee was glancing at Dorrie in the dim dawnlight, and his eyes were grave and his lips were pursed.

"What was it?" asked his lordship

"Does it need any guesswork?" said Lee, with an eloquent gesture towards the great motors. "They're still, Dorrie. The shaft is out of action. Lorenzo has blown up the driving apparatus at the waterfall."

"Blown it up!"

"It sounded like it, didn't it?" asked Lee. "The man's in such a rage that he's reckless enough for anything. He is obsessed by the determination to recapture us at any cost. There's something deadly about this brute."

"He's certainly a sticker!" growled his lordship. "He doesn't give us any rest, if that's what you mean."

"You see, the apparatus at the other end of this driving shaft is probably quite crude," went on Nelson Lee. "It can be easily replaced. But every atom of machinery

in this building is of immense value, for if destroyed it cannot be made good. Looking at the situation from Lorenzo's point of view, we must confess that we are a nasty thorn in his side."

"I hope we are!" said Dorrie savagely.

"We have disorganised his entire bag of tricks," continued Lee. "His slaves are at sixes and sevens, his factory idle, and the whole work of his plantation at a standstill. And he knows that he can get nothing going again until we are recaptured. So he's going all out to smash us."

Lord Dorrimore nodded.

"When you come to think of it, we ought to be pretty proud of ourselves," he said whimsically. "Hang it, considerin' what a handful we are, we've given the old blighter a good run for his money. An' we're not finished yet, either. We're still holdin' the fort, an' I see no reason why we should throw up the sponge."

"We'll fight to the last ditch," replied Lee quietly. "If we don't fight, we shall die just the same. It's the girls I'm thinking of. Dorrie, we can't keep this up—we can't let these girls fall into the hands of these devils."

He broke off abruptly, and shrugged his shoulders.

"But of what use to talk?" he went on. "It's no good saying what we can do, or what we can't do. I'm afraid I'm getting worried. The situation is such that we must take whatever comes."

Nipper looked at Lee anxiously.

"Why hasn't Umlosi sent that rocket, sir?" he asked, in a whisper. "Do you think he's really dead?"

"I don't know what to think," replied Lee. "But nothing can alter the fact that Handforth switched on the current at the worst possible moment. It will be tragic if poor Umlosi died then."

"And about this juice, sir?" went on Nipper. "What good has Lorenzo done himself by destroying the water-wheel, or whatever contrivance there is. How will that help him?"

"I don't want to alarm you, Nipper, but it will spell defeat for us—that's all," replied Lee, in a low voice. "Lorenzo knows that the battering-ram method would have been too costly. We have proved that we are prepared to shoot, and he doesn't want to lose all his men. But, now that there is no fear of the electricity, he can get his blacks to close quarters with us. One united rush, and they'll be all round these walls—so close that our weapons will be useless."

"And then they'll smash in—ch?" muttered Nipper. "That's lively!"

"Not a particularly cheerin' dawn," said Dorrie. "Well, we've had one excitin' night, anyway, an' we shall remember it for the rest of our lives. By the look of it, we shan't have a chance to remember it long."

Nelson Lee's theory was perfectly correct.

The driving power at the waterfall was

quite crude, and Lorenzo had had no compunction in blowing it up. In a calmer moment he would have set his men to work to disconnect it. But that would have meant the loss of two or three hours, and Lorenzo was so maddened by the rebels' defiance that he wanted to crush them at once.

And the attack that the garrison expected was now developing. It came with overwhelming swiftness and force.

From three quarters the enemy swept up. There were hundreds of men engaged in this onslaught, and the end seemed inevitable. Nothing could save the brave little fortress from falling now.

Most of these attackers were slaves—forced to obey orders, under penalty of death. And Lorenzo cunningly arranged matters so that none but slaves should make the frontal onslaught.

"The hounds!" said Lee furiously. "Do you see, Dorrie? Not one of his murderous Nubians! We can't fire on these wretched tools! It would be nothing but murder!"

"But, man alive, they'll sweep us out!"

"They'll sweep us out whether we fire or not," replied Lee quietly. "Listen! They're attacking at the rear, too! And at the ends of the building! We're surrounded, Dorrie!"

"Only a matter of minutes before they smash in," muttered his lordship.

The noise was absolutely deafening.

Men with hatchets and picks were beating at the corrugated iron, and the din was so deafening that the ears of the garrison were numbed. It was confusing in its intensity.

One minute—perhaps two minutes—and then the end would swiftly come. Once a breach was made, the blacks would pour in, and those twenty white people would be once again in the hands of the slaver.

This jungle barring-out had lasted a single night, but there seemed no hope that it would continue into the coming day.

Clang, clang, clang!

In the midst of the shattering noise, Nipper rushed up to Nelson Lee, and grabbed him.

"Guv'nor!" he gasped. "What about the fireworks?"

"The fireworks!" echoed Lee.

"We can't fire among these slaves because it would be murder!" shouted Nipper. "But the fireworks are harmless. And they'll be even more effective than rifle-shots! Why not light squibs and Roman candles and throw them through the windows?"

Nelson Lee decided on the flash.

"It's a chance!" he said. "We'll do it!"



CHAPTER 14.

Touch and Go!

THE scene within that power-station was one that none of the defenders would ever forget.

Irene & Co. were standing near one of the big dynamos, pale but

brave. They could do nothing to help. Even the St. Frank's fellows were just as idle. They could only stand there, and listen to the grim sounds of the slaver's myrmidons as they sought to smash a way through the obstinate metal sheets.

Handforth was the only one, perhaps, who felt a tinge of relief.

"Well, nothing matters now," he said dully. "Even if Umlosi had got through it wouldn't have made any difference. We shall all be dead within ten minutes. So what's the odds?"

"That's no consolation," said Church huskily.

He stared out through the nearest window, and could see the struggling figures of the slaves just outside, as they attempted to force the barricades away. Beyond, the sky was now lightening rapidly, and a couple of palm-trees in Church's direct line of vision were waving in the early morning breeze.

And then, suddenly, Church stiffened.

"Look!" he said fiercely, grabbing at Handforth's arm. "Look there!"

"What the——"

"Don't you see?" screamed Church.

The light outside was far from strong, and the sky between those two palm-trees was seared by a line of fire which rose higher and higher into the air. It went up in a great arc—and over there lay the Kalala River!

Boom!

Even above the clattering roar of the iron came a sharp, deafening detonation—the explosion of a powerful maroon. If it had sounded distinctly within the building, it had been ten times more audible outside.

A puff of smoke hung in the sky, and now a dozen dazzling coloured lights shot out in a spray.

"The signal!" shouted Handforth. "Umlosi's signal!"

"He's safe!" gasped McClure. "He got across, then!"

Handforth seemed to go demented.

"Then I didn't kill him!" he roared, his face flushing. "Old Umlosi's safe! And he's on his way to fetch the Kutanas to our rescue! Hurrah!"

"Handy—Handy!" breathed Church. "Don't cheer like that! It's glorious to know that Umlosi is safe, but what's the good? It'll be two days before he can get back, and——"

He broke off, aware of some dramatic change.

Outside the clattering and hammering had ceased. The air was filled with wild cries of terror. Scores of those unhappy slaves were pointing frenziedly into the sky—at those coloured stars. Others were running away, too demented with terror to care what happened to them.

The blacks were frightened by that sign in the sky. They had never seen anything like it before, and their terror was pitiful. To add to the confusion, other fireworks were now going.



The grotesquely painted cannibals poured through the door and windows in a seething mass. The St. Frank's party fought and struggled desperately. They knew that if they were captured they were doomed!

For Nelson Lee and Dorrie had instantly seized the chance.

Lighted squibs were being hurled out into the open, followed by roaring Roman candles and pyramids of flaring red and green fire. All this would have been much more effective in the pitch darkness, but the results were gratifying enough, even in the grey light of the new day.

The attackers were bolting. Even the Nubians were unable to steel their nerves against this dramatic surprise. They were as scared as any of the slaves. All were rushing away, helter-skelter, as though the power-station was occupied by demons.

And Lorenzo was helpless.

Once again he had been within an ace of success, and failed. And he knew, in his heart, that the threat of death—torture itself—would never make these niggers attack the power-station again. To them it had become a place of ju-ju and witchcraft.

"They've bolted, sir," said Nipper huskily. "Yes, and we have to thank your keen wits for the merciful respite," replied Nelson Lee. "It was the fireworks that did the trick—"

"No, fear, gov'nor!" interrupted Nipper. "They helped, but Umlosi's signal was the real cause. The blacks were frightened by those coloured lights in the sky, and our fireworks added the finishing touch. I say, pretty ripping about Umlosi, isn't it?"

"Has he really got safely away?" asked Irene eagerly.

"Of course," replied Nipper. "He gave the signal."

"An' that means he's safely across the river, an' startin' off for the Kutana country," said Lord Dorrimore, with quiet satisfaction. "I thought it was queer that the old beggar had given no sign. I couldn't believe that he was dead. Of course, he must have been delayed on his way to the river, an' he didn't attempt to cross it until after Lorenzo blew up the drivin' apparatus."

"We needn't conjecture on that point, Dorrie," said Nelson Lee. "It is enough to know that Umlosi is safe, and on his way to fetch help. The only doubt that now remains is—can we hold out?"

"You bet we can, sir!" retorted Nipper.

"Absolutely!"

"Rather, sir!"

"We've got to hold out!" said Handforth simply.

"Well, there's no fear of another attack to-day," continued Lee, with heartfelt relief. "Quite apart from the fact that Lorenzo's men are terrified and disorganised, he would never be mad enough to attack in broad daylight."

"No; we're all right for the next twelve hours," said Dorrie. "You girls had better curl yourselves up, an' get some sleep. Sorry we can't offer you much in the way of accommodation, but—"

"This concrete floor will suit me," said Mary Summers, smiling.



The grotesquely painted cannibals poured the party fought and struggled desperately.

"Me, too," agreed Tessa. "I can sleep on spikes!"

"You boys had better turn in, too," advised Nelson Lee. "Just drop down where you are—you won't need any blankets. In about an hour's time this place will be as hot as an oven, if I'm any prophet."

Nobody felt inclined to discuss the situation. This sudden peace had come unexpectedly, and they were all feeling weak at the dramatic reaction. Instead of being forced out of their stronghold, prisoners once more, they still held the "citadel." And sleep seemed to be the only matter worth considering. After their terrible hours of strenuous activity, they were far more worn out than they had believed.

Within three minutes, everybody except Nelson Lee and Dorrie were asleep. It was almost tragic to look at them—huddled in every conceivable position, against the walls, against the machinery, or sprawling flat on the floor.



windows in a seething mass. The St. Frank's they were captured they were doomed!

Happily, there was a plentiful supply of water, for there were two or three well-filled tanks of it within the building. The fact that it was warm and somewhat stagnant was a minor point. This was no time to be particular.

And, after all, the conditions within this building were idyllic compared to the noise-some huts which had been their quarters while in Lorenzo's hands.

A lull had come. How long would it last?

CHAPTER 15.

Ways and Means.



NIPPER stretched himself, and sat up to find his face beaded with perspiration. The burning sunlight was slanting in dazingly through the windows.

"Phew!" he whistled. "What's the temperature in here? Is it time for the joints to come out of the oven?"

"Frightfully glad to see you awake, dear old boy," said Sir Montie Tregellis-West. "Have a go at the gargle. Excuse the goblet, but Lorenzo forgot to provide us with his special gold plate."

"Water!" murmured Nipper. "The very thing I need!"

He took the goblet--to be exact, a buckled tin can--and drank deeply. Then he rose to his feet, stretched himself again, and glanced out through the nearest window.

Not a soul was in sight, and the valley was sweltering with the burning, blistering heat of the tropical afternoon. Inside the power-station, the air was utterly stifling. But nobody had complained.

Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore were both sound asleep some distance away, and William Napoleon Browne was in temporary charge, with instructions to awaken the whole garrison at the first suspicious sign.

Irene & Co. were still slumbering. They had been given the entire end of the building, and it was tacitly agreed that this section should be theirs.

"I am glad to see you are awake, brothers," said Browne genially. "All is quiet, and Brother Lorenzo has apparently retired to his own chamber, to drown his sorrows in whisky or slumber--probably both."

"We must have been asleep for hours," said Nipper.

"Roughly, seven or eight," replied Browne. "An inadequate dose, I will confess, but sufficient for the time being. If you will arouse Brothers Handforth, Watson, and two or three others, I have a proposition to make."

"Yes, it's time they were roused," agreed Nipper. "There are all sorts of things we can do while this daylight lasts. What about that old wire in the corner? Couldn't we risk working outside, and fixing up some entanglements? Lorenzo won't interfere in broad daylight."

"Begad! That's a good suggestion, old boy," said Sir Montie. "There are lots of iron rods, too. We might rig up some useful defences."

"Anyhow, they would help to hold back a charge," said Nipper.

Watson, Handforth, and the other juniors were soon awakened. After drinks all round they pronounced themselves wonderfully refreshed. Archie, indeed, declared that his tissues were as robust as ever again.

"And now," said Handforth, "what about grub?"

"Oh, dry up!" groaned Church, holding his middle. "We've all decided to taboo the subject of grub. We haven't tasted any decent food for days. The stuff Lorenzo gave us was poison."

"Even that was better than nothing!" said Gresham.

"Food, brothers, is, after all, an evil thing," said Browne smoothly. "Any doctor will assure you that food is the cause of ninety per cent of human ills. Let us rejoice, therefore, that we have none of the stuff. A few days of fasting will have such beneficial effects that we shall scarcely recognise ourselves."

"That's all very well——" began Watson.

"Moreover, there is something much more important to be discussed," continued Browne. "We have here a number of loose iron sheets—inartistic but useful," he went on, indicating some rusty sheets of corrugated iron. "There is much that we can do with these simple articles."

"For defensive purposes?" asked Nipper.

"Well, not exactly," replied Browne. "It has occurred to me that it might be gallant on our part if we rig up these screens as a partition across the far end of the building—thus providing a sort of rest-room and shelter for the girls."

"By George, that's a good idea!" said Handforth, nodding. "It won't take us long to do that. And afterwards we can get busy on the defences."

He was right for once. Within half an hour a very creditable partition had been erected, and although Irene & Co. said little they were grateful enough for the thoughtful act.

"I don't know about you boys rigging up any of that wire," said Nelson Lee, who was now awake, and in full charge of things. "Lorenzo might have scouts out, and waiting to snipe us. We can't take any risks like that. Wait until I have been up to the roof to do some scouting."

They waited, and indulged in a wash in the meantime. In one corner of the powerhouse there was a tiny little wooden structure, and it even contained a wash-basin.

"No need to grumble at this accommodation," said Nipper with a grin. "We've everything complete in here—private compartments, washing facilities, and——"

"Everything except grub," said Watson pointedly.

"We'll think about the grub later," replied Nipper. "I've got an idea about that. Something's got to be done, anyhow. It's all very well for Browne to jaw about fasting, but that's not good enough."

Nelson Lee reported that there were no Nubians in sight. Indeed, the whole of Lorenzo's plantations seemed to be idle. This was only natural. With his electricity supply stopped, his factory was out of action, and he had probably rounded up the slaves, and had locked them in their quarters. Every-

thing was at a standstill until he had got rid of these rebels.

For two hours, indeed, the boys were able to go out in batches, working at the hasty defences. Wire entanglements were rigged up, and Willy even ventured to swarm up one of the neighbouring palm-trees. It was worth it, too, for he returned with four splendid coconuts.

They were duly shared out, but, unfortunately, they only served to whet the appetites of the hungry garrison. Some of the fellows wanted to raid the other palms, but they were too far distant.

When the evening came there was still no indication of the enemy, and it was generally felt that there would be no danger that night.

Lorenzo was waiting.

He was biding his time. Popodos had gone to fetch the Oturi warriors, and nothing would be done until they arrived.

"Then you don't think there'll be any excitement to-night, gov'nor?" asked Nipper, as he stood looking out of one of the windows.

"I rather fancy that Lorenzo has decided to leave us alone for a bit," replied Lee. "We're too big a handful for his slaves to tackle. I should like to utilise the time, but I can see no chance. If we leave this stronghold we shall be in a worse fix than ever. So we must stay—and pray that Umlosi will arrive before the Oturis can drive us out and wreak their will upon us."

"Umlosi will do it, sir," said Nipper confidently.

But Lee wasn't so sure. He said nothing. He had no desire to sound a pessimistic note. But he knew that Umlosi had much further to travel than Popodos—and it would be necessary, too, for him to organise his Kutana warriors. The Oturis were probably ready for an immediate march.

With the coming of night there was a welcome storm—a truly tropical downpour, accompanied by vivid lightning and deafening thunder. But the rain was doubly welcome to the besieged garrison, for it cooled the air, and also provided them with an ample supply of fresh water.

And Nipper tackled the food question.

"Look here, gov'nor," he said firmly. "We've got to get some grub, so why not have a shot at it as soon as this storm's over? I want your permission for six of us to slip out on a raid."

"Is it worth the risk, young 'un?" asked Lee doubtfully.

"Nothing venture, nothing win, sir," retorted Nipper. "There's a big store-shed only two hundred yards away, and although it only may contain crude rubber, there's a chance that we shall find some food there. And I've got an idea, too."

Lee listened while the idea was propounded.

"It sounds good," he said dryly. "All right, Nipper—I think you can go ahead."

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CHAPTER 16.

The Raiding Party.



WILLY HANDFORTH stood back and eyed the thing critically.

"Think it'll be effective?" he asked.

"Wait until it's finished," replied Nipper calmly.

He was busily engaged on smearing a pungent-smelling paste over a ragged sheet of thin canvas. That paste had been made from the contents of two or three fireworks. It was, indeed, a rough-and-ready sort of phosphorus preparation.

"As soon as this is dry, it'll be beautifully luminous," declared Nipper. "I've tried it before—and I know. But I don't think the effect will last long, so we shall have to buck up on this raiding business."

"Who's going to wear the ghost make-up?" asked Dora Manners.

"Nobody—unless we're in a tight corner," replied Nipper. "This is only a precautionary measure. We're going to sneak out, and make for those store-sheds. If all goes well, we shan't use this canvas at all. But if we're confronted by any of Lorenzo's guards, we'll conjure up a ghost. They're a superstitious lot, and it might do the trick."

"I'm goin' on this stunt, too," said Lord Dorrimore firmly. "Leave it to us, girls! These infernal young beggars tried to keep me out of it, but I wasn't havin' any. I shall carry two revolvers, an' a pocketful of cannon-crackers, so we ought to be fairly safe."

"I don't think these precautions are necessary at all," said Handforth impatiently. "We haven't seen a sign of the enemy since this morning, and I don't think Lorenzo means to make any more attacks. If we only had the nerve we could walk out just as we are, and help ourselves to anything."

"You may be right, Handy, but there's no sense in taking things for granted," replied Nipper. "Caution doesn't cost anything."

Ten minutes later, while the storm was still rumbling in the distance, six dim figures stole away into the night. The sky was overcast, and the whole valley was utterly black. The conditions were ideal for an enterprise of this kind.

Lord Dorrimore and Nipper led the way, with Tommy Watson, Browne, and Gresham just behind. Handforth brought up the rear.

The adventure was more hazardous than the raiders made themselves believe. But they were all confident. And Nelson Lee, back in the power-station, knew that food was a very important item. Unless some was obtained very quickly, the effects would be serious. These healthy schoolboys would lose their powers of resistance if their stomachs remained empty. Any kind of food would suffice in an emergency like this.

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As it happened, the raiders were glad of their precautionary measures. At first it seemed that they were to enjoy the immunity that Handforth had outlined. They didn't meet a soul, and even when they arrived at the first of the store-sheds they were still undisturbed. But not for one moment had they relaxed their vigilance. They crept up like spirits of the night.

And then, without any preliminary warning, a force of twelve great Nubians swung round the end of the building, and advanced towards them. And the leading man was carrying a lighted lantern.

It was necessary to act on the flash.

Dorrie flung a stone—with unerring aim. It struck the lantern, shattered the glass, and extinguished the flame. The Nubians halted, momentarily at a loss. None of them had seen the raiders yet, and it had seemed to the lantern-holder that the glass had shattered of its own accord.

And in that brief spell of confusion Nipper whipped the canvas sheet over his head and advanced, flinging out his arms.

The effect was certainly startling.

In the darkness the oncoming figure stood out in a strange, luminous halo. It was a ghostly enough sight, and looked terrifying to the eyes of the slave-guards, who all caught sight of it at the same moment. They stood stock-still, speechless and startled.

And Nipper uttered a hollow sort of moan, and leapt wildly into the air.

It was enough. The guards turned in every direction and fled. They were filled with utter terror. This, surely, was an evil spirit—a visitant from the realms of the ghosts!

"Good man!" murmured Dorrie. "Now's our chance!"

Nipper removed his "cloak" and quickly folded it.

"You stay out here, Handy, and give the alarm if those beggars come back!" he muttered. "We shan't be long——"

"Rats!" interrupted Handforth. "I'm coming, too!"

"You fathead! We shall be back in a minute."

They didn't give Handforth any time to argue. Speeding into the store-shed, they struck a match and looked eagerly round. A light was absolutely necessary, and they had to risk the chance of being surprised.

"What's this?" asked Watson eagerly.

Nipper held his match close to a pile of sacks. The top one was unfastened. The sacks weren't very clean-looking or inviting, and it seemed probable that they would contain animal food.

But one glance made Nipper's eyes sparkle. "Beans!" he muttered triumphantly.

"Beans?" gasped Watson. "My favourite food!"

Indeed, beans at that moment seemed to be everybody's favourite food. Dorrie seized the sack and swung it on his shoulder.

"This is no time for formalities," he said briskly. "Two of you chaps grab one of the other sacks, if you can manage it—they're too heavy for one—an' we'll stagger off. The way to do a thing like this successfully is to do it quickly."

"Grab hold!" said Watson breathlessly.

He and one of the others reeled out of the shed, carrying a second sack. Nipper followed soon afterwards, staggering under a heavy load. And no attempt was made to creep now.

They ran for it—as straight as they could go for the power-station. Eager eyes were watching for them—eager ears listening. And a chorus of excited whispers went up when the dim figures of the raiders were seen returning.

"All serene!" sang out Dorrie. "No casualties, an' we've brought the goods!"

"Hurrah! They've found some grub!"

"Beans!" panted Tommy Watson victoriously.

A chorus of delighted joy went up. What food could be better than beans? The most sumptuous banquet ever devised seemed unappetising compared to the prospective feast.

They all got safely in, and there was no alarm. The door was closed and barricaded, and the garrison gathered round the spoils.

"Two sacks of beans," grinned Dorrie. "Haven't you often told me, Lee, that beans

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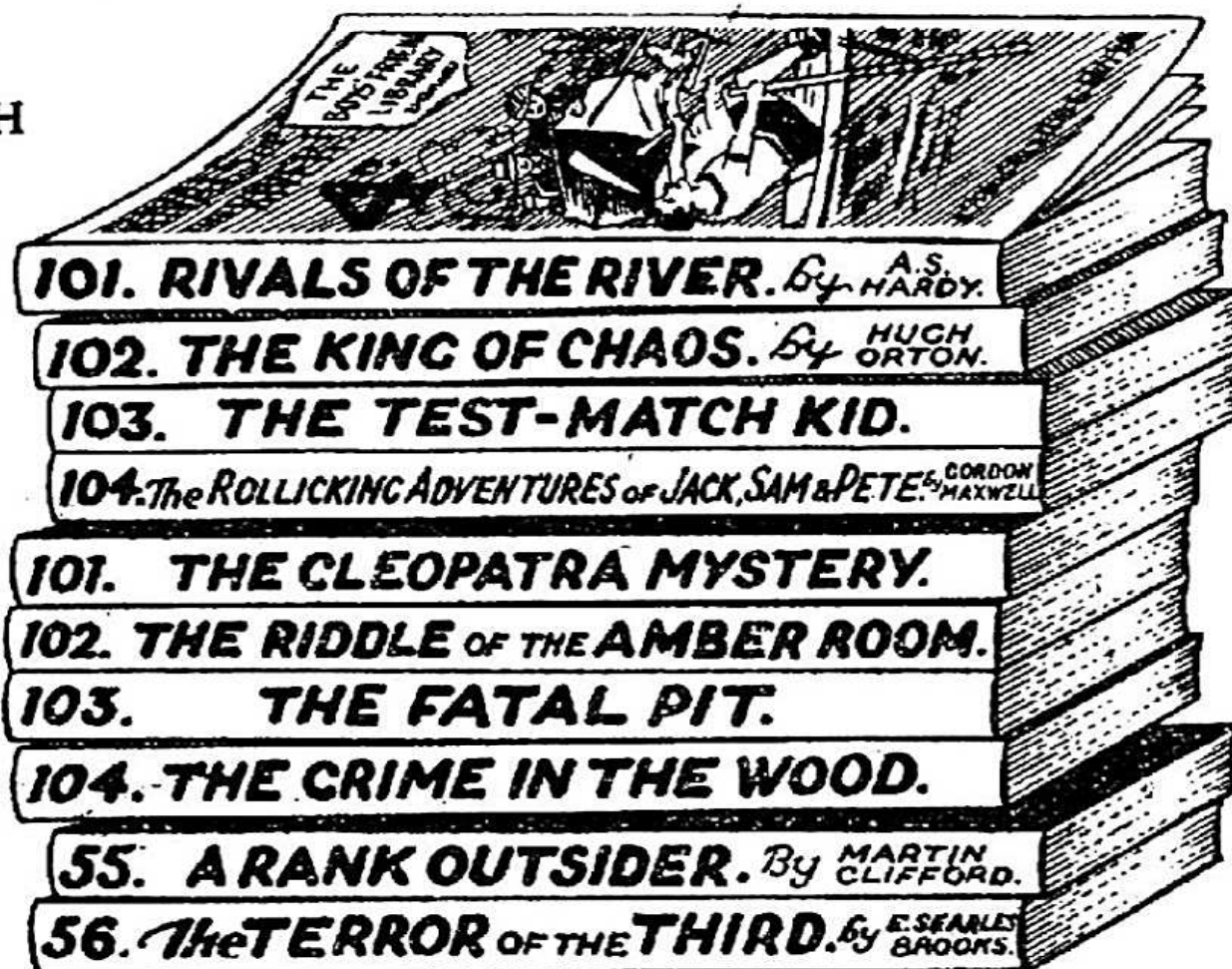
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are bunged full of proteins and vitamins an' things?"

"Never mind what they're bunged full of, Dorrie," chuckled Nelson Lee. "You couldn't have found a better foodstuff. We can easily light a fire, and there are plenty of cans we can use as saucepans. Beans are a highly nutritive food, and they possess the added advantage of being satisfying. We shan't starve while we have these."

"Hallo!" came a shout from Handforth. "What the dickens have you got, Nipper? What are those great things?"

Nipper set down two huge, oddly-shaped burdens.

"Beans are all very well, but they go better with meat," he said coolly. "I spotted some chunks of smoked meat hanging from some hooks, so I grabbed two of them. I believe it's deer flesh, or antelope, or something. Who cares? It's meat—and it'll go first-class with the beans!"

And there was further rejoicing. Supper that night was apparently going to be a regal one!



CHAPTER 17.

The Drums of Menace!

NETTO LORENZO strode out of his bungalow with an evil glint in his eyes. He was dressed with unusual care, and he had just shaved. He was almost looking smart. And there was no doubt that he was looking confident.

"Not much longer to wait now," he murmured gloatingly. "I was a fool to take any action until I could use effective methods. But I shall be able to use them this evening. Oh, yes!"

He strolled towards the power-station.

Once or twice a quick scowl came into his face as he glanced at his idle factory, and as he looked across at the deserted rubber plantations. But he recovered his good-humour when he remembered that his revenge would soon be a reality.

It was midday, and the heat was as stifling as ever. Within the power-station a meal was in progress—the third meal of tough smoked meat and boiled beans. The fare didn't taste quite so good as it had tasted at the previous night's feast—but it was still appetising, nevertheless. It was food, and it was wholesome food. More than that the rebels could not reasonably expect.

"Here comes old Lorenzo, sir!" sang out Duncan, who was on watch at one of the windows.

"Has he his men with him?" asked Lee sharply.

"No, sir—he's all alone, and he's swaggering along as though he'd just come into a fortune," replied Duncan. "What shall we do? Chuck a few cannon-crackers at him?"

The meal was forgotten, and everybody crowded to the windows. Lorenzo was at a

standstill now, in the shade of one of the palms. He seemed to be contemplating the scene, and he was lighting a cheroot.

"The rotter doesn't seem to be afraid of our bullets," said Handforth gruffly. "Like his nerve to take it for granted that we shan't fire on him. He's within range, isn't he?"

"I'd like to pot the beggar!" said Dorrie, with a glare. "Of all the scum on this earth, he's the blackest! But he knows jolly well that we won't fire at him. He knows that's not our custom."

Lorenzo, in fact, came closer, and did not halt until he was twenty paces off. And then he stuck his thumbs into his armholes, set his legs apart, and contemplated the fortress.

"Think you're safe, eh?" he called out mockingly. "Thought I'd come along to see how you were getting on. How are you going for food? Just say the word, and I'll send some supplies in."

"Rats!" roared Handforth. "We've plenty of food—better food than you supplied us with, you blackguard!"

Lorenzo seemed in no way put out.

"So that accounts for the missing sacks of beans and the meat?" he said coolly. "Well, you will have your fling, I suppose. Enjoy yourselves while you can—it won't last very long. You'll soon hear the Oturi drums, and I think you'll know what that sound means. Lord Dorrimore will, at any rate."

"There might be some other drums!" said Dorrie, under his breath.

Lorenzo was beginning to enjoy himself.

"As a matter of fact," he went on, "my friends of the Oturi tribe will be here this evening, and it may interest you to know that they're a bloodthirsty lot. Keen on human sacrifices. Never satisfied unless they're sacrificing somebody or other. White people for choice."

The slaver laughed loudly at his own grim pleasantry.

"Very pretty, these wire entanglements," he went on, indicating the defences. "Pity they should be useless, though. Have you ever seen the Oturi warriors when they attack? No? Then there is a treat for you. A wonderful sight, my friends—a terrifying sight. But don't be alarmed. They won't kill you. Oh, no! They'll be at a very great pains to take you alive, and they'll be quite disappointed if anybody gets injured even. You see, they'll want you later—at the ceremonial festivities."

He laughed more loudly than ever, and turned on his heel. He walked away amid a chorus of derisive jeers from the St. Frank's fellows. But Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore were finding it hard to conceal their gravity.

"The hound means it," whispered Lee. "He's going to set the Oturi on us, and give us to them as a reward after we have been captured."

"Even Lorenzo couldn't do it," muttered Lord Dorrimore huskily.

"You know these Oturi, Dorrie, don't you?"

"Man alive, don't you know them?" asked his lordship, in agony. "Didn't they capture

us once before? Weren't we in their hands when Lorenzo came and took us away?"

"Yes—and he regrets it now, I'll warrant."

"These savages are the worst in this part of Africa," said his lordship. "They've always been wild and savage. Now an' again they have been subdued, but only on the surface. Actually, they're as cannibalistic as ever—the most atrocious orgies of the lesser-known Congo region always take place in the Oturi country. They're devils, Lee—absolute devils!"

And Lorenzo had hired these blacks to capture the schoolboys and schoolgirls! He had promised to hand them over to the Oturi as a reward—to be treated in any manner that the savages pleased!

The prospect was so appalling that none had cared to think of it. Since the previous night a sort of false sense of security had dwelt with them. It seemed impossible that there could be any real peril in this quiet valley.

But Lorenzo's words had given rise to new thoughts. When would those drums be heard? Was it true that the dreaded Oturi would be on the scene that evening? The respite had not been long, and when the hostilities recommenced they would be more deadly than ever before.

That much was certain. But the rest had had one excellent effect, at all events. The boys and girls were filled with a new stamina. Their long periods of sleep, and the plain, wholesome food had filled them full of beans in more senses than one. They were much better prepared for any grim ordeal than they had been before.

And there was always the thought of Umlosi to stir their blood.

It was only natural that a great deal of talk should have been indulged in concerning the possibilities of the immediate future. And the general view was that, if the Oturis came, Umlosi and his men would also be on hand to give battle to these cannibals.

"There's nothing to worry about," declared Handforth, for the fiftieth time. "Doesn't Umlosi know our position? Of course he does! And you can bet he'll rush things along at top speed, and get back here before the Oturi can do any harm to us."

"The best of it is, Lorenzo doesn't know that Umlosi has gone for help," said Church. "That's where we've got the pull on him."

And during the afternoon the garrison pretended to be at ease. The St. Frank's fellows kept assuring the girls that the period of tension would soon be over, and that Lorenzo would get his deserts. The girls, in their turn, scoffed at the idea of any further peril.

And then, as the sun was getting lower in the sky, a sound came to the ears of the look-outs at the windows. Nipper and Tregellis-West were at one window, and they both heard a faint, far-away throbbing. It seemed to rise and fall on the hot afternoon air, and died away into a quivering silence. Then it would come again.

"What is it?" asked Montie at last.

"The drums!" muttered Nipper. "Lorenzo

was right, then! He told us we should hear the Oturi drums. They're coming, Montie—they're getting nearer!"

CHAPTER 18.

The Entry of the Oturi!



MHROB—throb—throb!

An hour passed, and there was no longer any guess-work about the cause of that rising and falling throbbing sound. It came continuously on the air—maddeningly insistent.

And now it was much more distinct.

At times the actual beating of the drums could be heard. Near the power-station the scene was empty. There were none of Lorenzo's men within a mile of the place. Even the bungalow, just visible in the distance, peeping out from among the trees, seemed to be deserted.

"They're miles off yet," said Gresham, with a queer little shake in his voice. "I wish they wouldn't keep on like this, though! It gets on my nerves!"

"How do we know that these drums are the enemy's?" asked Handforth obstinately. "They may be Umlosi's men. Perhaps they're sounding the drums to cheer us up—to show us that they're getting nearer."

"You needn't have any of those cheery ideas, old man," said Nipper quietly. "Dorrie knows the drums of the Oturi, and he recognises them. The Kutanas have their own customs."

"A different way of beating, you mean?" asked Watson.

"Perhaps," said Nipper. "I didn't ask Dorrie much. But he says they're the Oturi drums—and that's enough to satisfy me."

"My hat! I'd rather something happen than have this awful inactivity go on. It's enough to drive a chap dotty!"

Handforth grunted.

"Well, if these are the Oturi drums, we shall soon hear the Kutana drums," he said stubbornly. "I know that old Umlosi won't let us down. Not likely! If you fellows haven't got any faith in him, I have!"

Lord Dorrimore moved away from the window, and found Nelson Lee alone, busily engaged in cleaning a rifle.

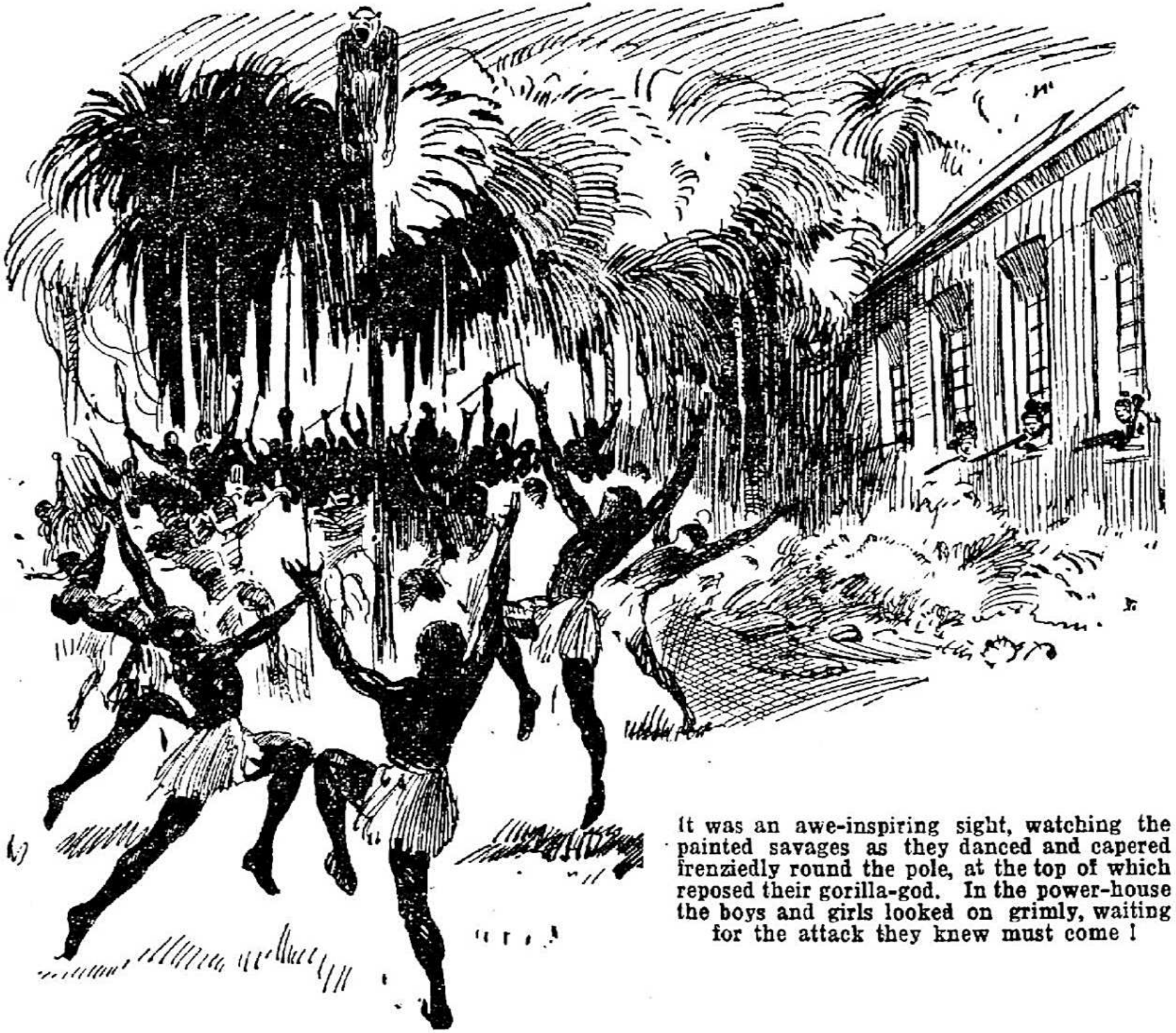
"I can't stand it," said Dorrie gruffly.

"Can't stand what?"

"Why, those youngsters—particularly Handforth," said his lordship. "The poor chap seems to think that Umlosi will turn up in time to save us, an' I haven't the heart to disillusion him."

"Many of them think the same thing," nodded Lee.

"An' yet it's impossible," said Dorrie, shaking his head. "No matter how Umlosi rushed things—no matter how much he speeded up—he couldn't get back here from Kutaland until the day after to-morrow



It was an awe-inspiring sight, watching the painted savages as they danced and capered frenziedly round the pole, at the top of which reposed their gorilla-god. In the power-house the boys and girls looked on grimly, waiting for the attack they knew must come!

at the earliest minute. You know that, Lee."

"I fear it, at all events," said Lee slowly.

"I didn't expect these devilish cannibals until to-morrow," went on Dorrie, frowning. "Perhaps it's only a preliminary party, an' they're soundin' these drums just to scare us. I expect the main force is on the way. They won't attack us to-night."

Nelson Lee smiled rather wistfully.

"You're trying to fool yourself in the same way as the boys, Dorrie," he said quietly. "You know well enough they'll be here to-night, and you can't bring yourself to imagine what the result will be."

"By gad, I can't!" said his lordship harshly. "It's too ghastly!"

He went back to the window, and noted that everybody was talking in hushed whispers. There was no reason why they should, but they all seemed instinctively to feel that the hour of terror was rapidly approaching.

The sound of the drums was louder than ever, and yet there was no sign of the enemy. The valley, as far as the eye could see, remained peaceful. Occasionally a figure would leisurely appear in the distance, but it could scarcely be said that there was any appearance of excitement in Lorenzo's domain.

"I don't believe it's the Oturis at all," said Watson at last. "Some other tribe, I expect. They're on the other side of the river, working their way through the forest. There's no need for us to worry."

But they all worried more than ever!

The short evening came, and then darkness fell. The usual battle with the mosquitoes followed. The air seemed particularly heavy with insects to-night. Their humming and buzzing was continuous. But not many of the rebels were even conscious of them.

They only knew that the drum-beating had abruptly ceased, and that an ominous silence had fallen. The darkness dwelt over everything. There was no moon, and even the stars were obscured. The whole valley was like pitch.

And then, after another hour of this tension, the drums started again—now alarmingly close. They seemed to be only a mile distant, and they were accompanied by queer, unearthly sounds.

"They're in the valley now," said Nipper grimly. "They're coming straight down—By Jove! Look there! I knew they couldn't be far off! Look at that glare in the distance!"

The sky was becoming lurid with flickering

light, and it grew more and more intense as the minutes sped by.

There was almost silence in the power-station now. Hardly anybody spoke. The windows were crowded, and all eyes were watching. And, after what seemed to be an interminable wait, the new arrivals were seen.

They came into sight across the open ground down the valley. There were hundreds of flaring torches, carried by painted, befeathered savages. It was no orderly march, but a mad, frenzied sort of dance. These brutes were working themselves up into a fearful state of murderous excitement.

"Oh, look at them!" murmured Irene, with a catch in her voice.

"They're coming straight here, too!" said Handforth. "By George! It can't mean that we're going to be driven out! We'll fight—we'll hold the fort against them all! St. Frank's for ever!"

"Hurrah!"

But it was a feeble cheer.

And on came the Oturi warriors, with K'laba, the chief, leading the way. Otto Lorenzo had kept his word! He had brought his cannibal friends to help him, and there was no doubt as to their savagery.

In spite of the deadly menace of the approaching hordes the watchers were fascinated. There was something wildly fearsome about this advance. It was so grotesque—so reminiscent of stories they had read in travel books. Somehow they seemed to be detached, and it was difficult for them to realise that they were down on the programme as the star turn!

Among the leading Oturis were fifty men in a long, double file. They were carrying an enormously long pole—the trunk of a great tree apparently. But it had been smoothed until it was as highly polished as glass, and at first the juniors thought that it was going to be used as a battering-ram.

But they were wrong in this assumption.

For presently the blacks formed a tremendous circle, with the flaming torches all round. It was an impressive picture, and there was something horribly significant in the fact that the power-station had been so far ignored.

All these preliminaries were taking place in full sight of the rebel stronghold, and it was clear to Nelson Lee that Lorenzo had planned this deliberately. He was letting them see the nature and the strength of his allied force.

In the flaring torchlight the great pole was slowly raised, hundreds of hands assisting in the task. A great hole had been already dug, and the pole was set up in this, and a mound formed at its base.

"What's it for, sir?" asked Nipper wonderingly.

"Can't you see the grotesque figure at the top?" asked Lee quietly. "It's the gorilla-god of the Oturis!"



CHAPTER 19.

A New Hope!

THE gorilla-god of the Oturis! The juniors could see, now that they had been told, that a hideous creature was perched on the very summit of the pole. Right at the top there was a miniature platform, and on this stood the gorilla-god, just as though it were alive, and looking down upon the wild scene.

But for the fact that the creature was so still, one might have believed that it lived. It stood in a crouching attitude, with arms outstretched. A great gorilla—a monstrous atrocity. And this was the "god" that the Oturis worshipped! There was something repulsive in the thought. One almost shuddered at it.

And still the power-station was ignored.

Further torches were brought, and the Oturis were now beginning a kind of slow and systematic dance round the hideous Ju-Ju. There must have been five or six hundred of them, but certainly no more. The watchers however, received the impression that there were thousands. These painted blacks were swarming everywhere, and, although large numbers of them were dancing, others were rushing hither and thither carrying new torches, brushwood and various other things.

All this was happening within half a mile of the power-house, in a great, cleared section of grassland. Now and again some of the brutes would come quite close to the stronghold, but they did not even look at it. They seemed to be unaware that this was to be the object of their attacks.

"There's some fiendish object in this," said Dorrimore gruffly. "Lorenzo's idea, I suppose. He's doing it to terrify us—to reduce the morale of these boys and girls."

"I believe you're right," said Nelson Lee. "And if it goes on much longer, Dorrie, it will succeed. The suspense of this scene is getting beyond all endurance."

Curiously enough, Lorenzo was speaking in very much the same strain to Popodos, the Greek. They were standing well out of sight of the power-station, watching the lurid scene. Lorenzo had already spoken with K'laba, and K'laba was gloating. The talk he had heard had been good talk.

"They'll do the job all right, Popodos," Lorenzo was saying. "They've stuck up their infernal ju-ju, and I've promised them that these rebels shall be theirs—to deal with as they choose."

"They'll torture them," said Popodos slowly.

"I want them tortured!" snarled Lorenzo, with a sudden flash of rage. "I want to see them suffer, my friend! K'laba has longed all his life to make a white sacrifice to his gorilla god. And now I have given him twenty white sacrifices. Do you wonder that he's mad with excitement? And his men, too! Look at them, Popodos! Do you

NEXT WEDNESDAY!

“THE GORILLA-GOD’S MAGIC!”

The St. Frank’s holiday party, surrounded by a twenty-foot-high wall of blazing wood, awaiting a terrible death!

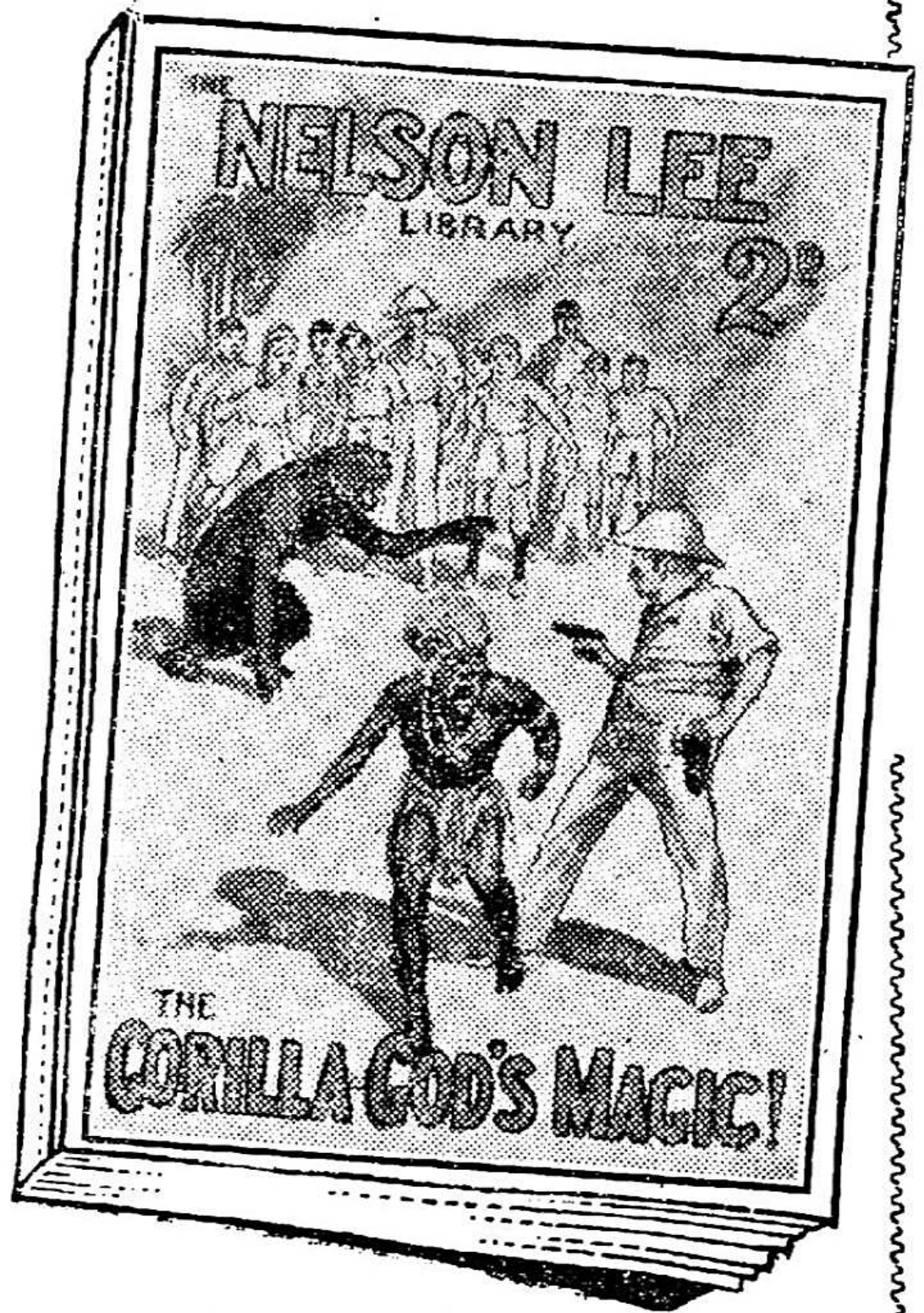
Outside that fiery wall, a horde of frenzied cannibals!

The situation seems absolutely hopeless—until Nelson Lee has an idea, and Johnny Onions, the boy acrobat, carries it out!

Read all about it in next week’s grand long story—a yarn that will thrill you from beginning to end!

“BUCKING UP OLD ALGY!”

Another amusing instalment of Archie Glenthorne’s novel serial.



ORDER IN ADVANCE!

think they'll fail to dig these rats out of their hole?"

"If they're wise," said Popodos, "they'll shoot themselves before the Oturi break through."

"Shoot themselves!" sneered Lorenzo. "That isn't their way, you fool! These British don't give in! They don't admit they're beaten—even when it's too late. No, they won't shoot themselves, Popodos. Make no mistake. There'll be sport to-night—good sport!"

Even the Greek, hardened criminal though he was, shivered slightly as he looked at the half-breed's bloated, evil face. It wasn't the face of a sane man. More than once Popodos had suspected that his employer was subject to fits of real insanity.

"They're at it now," went on Lorenzo, pointing. "Look at the way they're dancing round the circle! And no sign of warfare! But it'll come, Popodos—it'll come when K'laba gives the arranged signal. Let them get into a bigger frenzy first. The wilder the better!"

In the power-station, the watchers were still fascinated.

"I can't understand it," murmured Tessa

Love. "I thought they were going to attack us. And yet they haven't been near, and they don't seem to know we're here. What does it mean?"

"Don't ask me, old girl," said Johnny Onions, as he pressed Tessa's arm. "But there's something at the back of it, you can bet. They're just preparing—getting themselves worked up to the right pitch."

"I expect they'll stop presently," said Doris. "Then they'll suddenly get excited again, and Lorenzo will come, and he'll set them to attack us. Then we shall have some excitement."

"But we shan't be beaten!" said Handforth grimly.

"I wish I could believe it, Ted," murmured Irene.

"Believe it!" echoed Handforth. "We've got to believe it! We've got a machine-gun here—rifles—and fireworks! If these beasts come too near, we'll jolly well show them something!"

But even to himself, Handforth sounded unconvincing. It was ridiculous on the face of it. How could there be any chance? With over five hundred frenzied savages making the attack, the ultimate result would

The Enemy Pounces!



be inevitable. Some of the blacks might go down in the first rush, but the majority would escape.

"Our only possible chance is that they'll use the wrong tactics," muttered Lee, as he watched. "If they attempt to get us out by a succession of assaults, we might win, Dorrie."

"Just what I was thinkin'," said his lordship. "We can wipe out the first bunch, an' perhaps the second, too, an' that'll drive some of the spirit out of the rest. Even these dance-intoxicated savages are liable to get windy if they see their pals fallin'. It sobers them down, an' when they're sober they're just a lot of cattle."

"But there's no chance of it—eh?" asked Lee.

"Not a ghost," said Dorrie frankly. "They won't be fools enough to make any mistake about us. I don't like that gorilla, either. There's somethin' pretty ugly about it. I've got an idea that we're on the programme as human sacrifices."

"Hush! Don't let the youngsters hear you!"

"Dear old man, they've been talkin' in the same way themselves," said his lordship. "If only we could do somethin'!" he added impatiently. "It's this confounded inactivity that 'gets' me!"

Nelson Lee was looking grave and tense.

"Exactly, Dorrie," he murmured. "But is there anything we can do? It seems madness for us to remain here with the certainty of being taken."

"Man alive, what are you suggestin'?"

"Well, it occurred to me that we might be able to make a bid for freedom," said Lee softly. "Such a thing was utterly impossible until now, because we should never have got away. But all eyes are centred on this dancing orgy. Even Lorenzo and his men are off their guard. You see, they look upon us as certain game."

"Yes, but—"

"I know it's an absolutely forlorn hope," interrupted Lee. "There's only one chance in a million that we shall succeed. I've got an idea about the waterfall. There are caves beneath it."

"How do you know that?"

"I saw them when I was working under Lorenzo's slave-drivers," said Lee grimly. "I generally keep my eyes open, Dorrie. Well, if we could get out now—without being observed by anybody—there's a slim chance that we might find refuge in those caves, and—"

"An' when these devils rush the power-station, they'll find it empty—eh?" said his lordship tensely. "Good glory, Lee, it's a toppin' scheme! As you say, we couldn't have attempted it before, because somebody would have seen us. Lorenzo's men have been on the watch day and night. But now they're havin' a look at the circus, an' we're forgotten. Let's get out now—this very instant!"

NELSON LEE was uncertain for a moment.

One glance outside showed him that the dance round the ju-ju pole was becoming more frenzied and abandoned than ever. Nearly all the Oturi warriors were engaged in it now. They were capering in the most fiendish manner, and uttering shrill, discordant cries. The tom-toms were beating louder than ever, and the whole scene was like some nightmare.

Now, if ever, was the moment to steal away.

But Nelson Lee hesitated. He hated the idea of giving these youngsters a glimmer of hope that might well be snuffed out at the beginning. It would be so tragic if they thought there was a chance of escape only to fall into the enemy's hands after all.

Afterwards, Lee was thankful indeed that he had hesitated.

A man of swift, decisive action, it wasn't his way to hesitate, and some instinct now told him that he had better keep his tongue still. The wisdom of this was eloquently proved a second later.

For K'laba, suddenly swinging out of the centre of the great circle, ran heavily towards the power-station. He halted, flinging both his arms up, and his screaming voice rose above the general din.

The effect was startling.

As though by magic the war dance ceased, and those hundreds of savages swept out of the clearing, and came in a dense mob towards the fortress. Many of them were still carrying torches, and they made a fearsome sight.

"Gad!" gasped Dorrie. "We're too late!"

"It was a hopeless idea, anyhow," muttered Lee. "Thank Heaven I didn't say anything to the youngsters, Dorrie! I should only have made them hope—and there's no hope!"

He suddenly thrust out his jaw.

"But we'll go under gamely!" he went on, his voice becoming fierce and vibrant. "Get your rifle, Dorrie! Boys, take every weapon you can, and use it. Fire as many shots as you're capable of. It's life or death now—and we'll go down fighting!"

"Hurrah!"

"We won't let them take us, sir!"

"Never!"

In a moment the garrison was completely changed. The listlessness had vanished, and every St. Frank's fellow was tense with excitement. Now that definite action had come, the horror left as though by the waving of a wand.

It was to be a fight—and they would defend this fortress to the last breath!

Irene & Co. felt strangely out of it. They wanted to help in the defence work, too, but they had enough sense to realise that there was only room for a certain number at those

windows—and that certain number had to operate the rifles and revolvers.

On came the Oturi horde, yelling, screaming, and doing everything possible to strike terror into their victims' hearts.

Crack, crack, crack!

The rifles were already beginning to spit, and then came a deadly zurrh as Nelson Lee got his machine-gun into action, and Lee did not aim low now. He aimed to kill. These savages were worse than the beasts of the forest, and their intentions were too ghastly to think of.

The leading Oturi fell, writhing, screaming, and blocking the way for those who followed. Many men stumbled, and for a moment the mob wavered and hesitated.

Crack, crack! Zurrh!

It was good to see the faces of those school-boys—eager, haggard, but devoid of actual fear. Not one of them pretended that he was indifferent. They all knew that the situation was desperate, and their hearts were thumping madly.

Again the front ranks broke and fell. The mad screaming was not quite so loud, and many of the Oturis were stricken with sudden fear. They had been led to believe that their victims were defenceless, and here they were meeting with a deadly resistance!

And now came another phase.

Sizzling masses of coloured fire came hurtling into their midst. Roman candles shot into the air, exploding with puffing roars, and sending forth silver fire and coloured lights. Many fell to the ground at once, and these caused greater confusion than ever.

The Oturis wavered again, halted, and fell back.

"Hurrah! They're whacked!" thundered Handforth. "Let 'em have it, you chaps! We're not taken yet!"

"No fear!"

"We'll hold the fort against these yelling demons!"

Another cheer rang out, and more of those precious fireworks were flung out through the open windows.

"Wait—wait!" shouted Lee. "Save the rest, boys! They'll make another attack soon, and we want to preserve our ammunition!"

In the distance, Lorenzo was beset by a sudden doubt. He hadn't expected this check. He had believed that the first rush would be all-conquering. K'laba was approaching him.

"Lord, what means this?" he asked, scowling sullenly. "Did you not say that these white boys were powerless? Did you not guarantee that none of my warriors would fall? This is bad! I like it not, lord."

"Fool!" snarled Lorenzo, speaking in the same Swahili dialect. "These boys are but a handful. Send your warriors again, and let them not falter. One rush will be sufficient. Obey!"

K'laba, who was utterly under the half-breed's will, turned, and gave orders to his men. A great deal of the frenzy had left

them, but they were now enraged. They were mad with the lust for blood—for revenge. But for the shouted warnings of their chief, they were prepared to kill their prospective victims at the first moment of contact.

"Look out!" shouted Nipper. "Here they come again!"

The garrison prepared itself, and the same dreadful minute of excitement was repeated. But this time the enemy did not falter. In their hundreds they came sweeping on. Some fell, but the rush was so quick that it was impossible to check the charge.

To make matters worse, Lee's machine-gun jammed—it jammed at the crucial moment—and he flung it down hopelessly. Outside, the savages were beating on the iron walls, shouting and screaming and making the night unutterably hideous.

"Crumbs!" said Nipper breathlessly. "They've got us now!"

"Absolutely, laddie!" panted Archie Glenthorpe. "But if one of these frightful blighters attempts to grab me I shall absolutely refuse to allow it. I mean to say, a Glenthorpe goes down fighting. He isn't taken prisoner! Absolutely not!"

"Hear, hear!" shouted Handforth. "If they take us prisoners, we are doomed for torture. Let's all go under fighting, you chaps!"

"Hear, hear!"

Hardly any of the fellows knew what they were saying. The din was deafening, and the confusion was increasing. In fact, the end came so swiftly that the defenders could hardly realise it.

Those grotesque painted forms came pouring through the windows. The barricades were thrust aside, the weakened doors were smashed open, and the Oturi swept in in their hundreds.

For perhaps five minutes the scene was one of unutterable confusion. One junior knew nothing of the fate of his companions. All were fighting, struggling, and all believed that he, or she, was the last one alive.

And then the truth became known.

In the glaring torchlight Dorrie's holiday party learned that none had fallen—none even injured. They were held by these cruel savages, and led out, dazed and bewildered by their frantic fighting.

And thus they were led off in triumph to the foot of the Ju-Ju pole—facing a fate that none dared to picture. They were in the hands of a terrible tribe, and Lorenzo, the slaver, was content to stand by and watch them sacrificed!

If there was one faint hope in any of those youthful breasts it concerned Umlosi and his fine Kutana warriors. Would Umlosi come? Would he be in time to save them?

THE END.

(Next week's yarn, entitled "The Gorilla-God's Magic!" is a real thriller. Make sure you don't miss it by ordering your copy of the NELSON LEE LIBRARY now!)

CHINESE CUSTOMS.

A Remarkable Article Dealing with Modern Life in China.

The Tartars.

OF the numerous races which inhabit China the two chief are the Manchu Tartars and the Chinese. The Tartar is in many points superior to the Chinese, and as a rule is easily distinguished even by his appearance. He possesses more decided features, is more alert in his movements, and has more courage.

The Tartars are excellent horsemen and great archers. They also perform many exercises and play many games to keep themselves fit and increase their muscular powers.

Yet feats of war are not the most admired abilities in China. Knowledge is the most enviable attainment. The lowest civil mandarin feels a thorough contempt for the highest military mandarin, because the active life of the latter precludes him from following up those peculiar studies which can raise a Chinese from the state of a peasant to that of the highest in the land.

The Chinese despise the intellectual capacities of the Tartars.

Letting Their Nails Grow.

The remarkable length to which the Chinese of both sexes allow their nails to grow is supposed to be a sign of rank or literary occupation, because the nails would be broken by any laborious work.

For this purpose, they are kept carefully oiled to prevent them from being brittle, and are further preserved by being enclosed in tubes which slip over the ends of the fingers. These tubes are sometimes of bamboo, sometimes of silver, and a few of the most precious minerals.

The dress of the Chinese varies greatly according to the rank of the individual and the season of the year. The dress of a mandarin or noble is really marvellous, so great is the richness of material and beauty of work.

It is not, however, the richness of dress which denotes rank among the Chinese. The symbol of social standing is simply a "button," about as large as a marble, which is placed on the apex of the cap.

Buttons for Brains.

The different colours and materials of the buttons designate the rank, and the highest of all is a red coral button.

These buttons can only be gained by passing through a series of examinations, and can neither be purchased nor given by favour. No candidate for a high rank button is permitted to compete unless he can show a certificate that has been gained for the rank immediately below it.

The examinations are conducted in a building expressly made for the purpose. It has double walls between which sentries are continually passing. The gates are watched in the strictest manner, and each candidate is locked in a tiny cell, after having undergone the strictest search in order to ascertain that he has not carried any scrap of writing which might help him in the examination.

The examiners themselves are conveyed from a distance, and surrounded by troops, so that no one can approach them. The examiners are not allowed to see the original passages written by the candidates, but only copies made by the official scribes.

Still Trying at Eighty.

When they have passed a paper as satisfactory, the original is produced, the two compared, and not until then does anyone know the name of the writer, which has been pasted between two leaves.

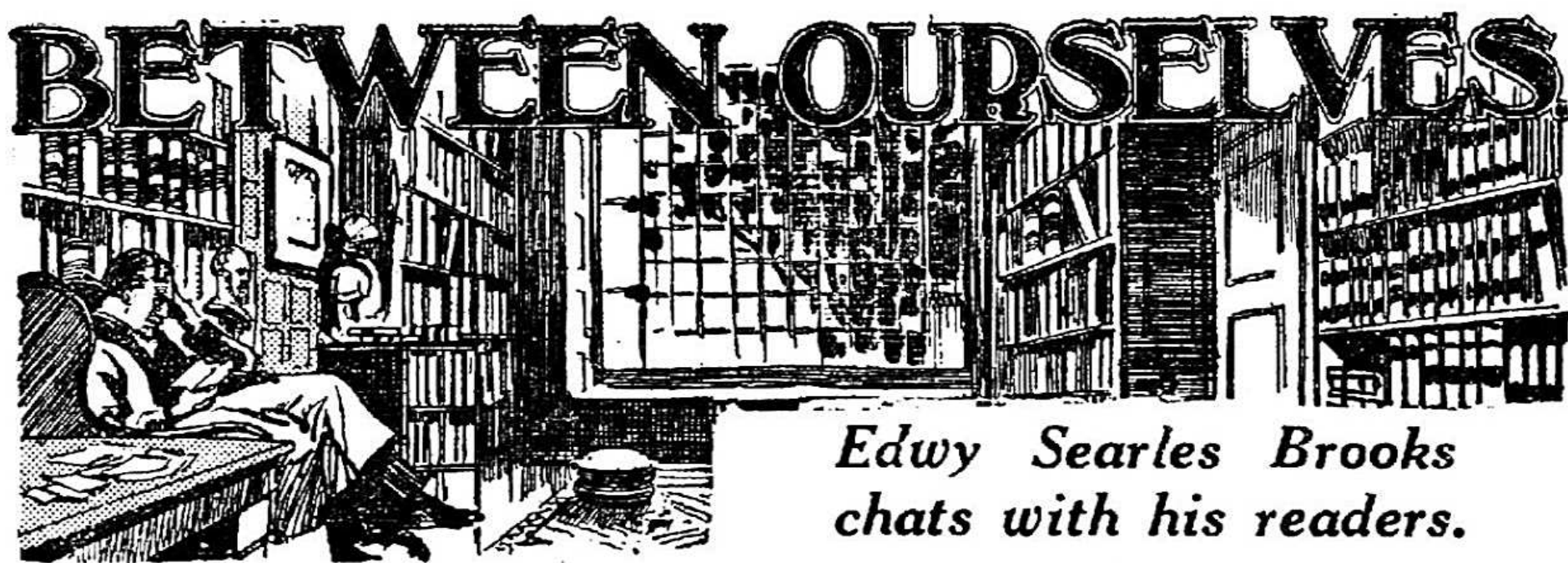
The Chinese have good reason to be ambitious of the honours of the button, as even the very lowest button exempts them from arrest by the police.

Candidates who fail will enter year after year until they are greyheaded. In Foochow, at one examination, nine candidates were over eighty years of age, and two over ninety. In Ho-nan, there were thirteen candidates over eighty, and one over ninety. In Anhwei, there were actually thirty-five candidates over eighty, and eighteen over ninety.

A Feather in His Cap.

There is a law that should a man attend the examinations annually until he is eighty years of age, and still be unable to pass, he is invested with honorary degree, and may wear the button and official dress.

The very highest posts in the kingdom are denoted by a peacock's feather, which falls down the side of the cap. The gradations in rank of the feather-wearers are marked by the number of "eyes" in the ornament, a feather with three eyes denoting a rank only inferior to that of the ruler of the country.



*Edwy Searles Brooks
chats with his readers.*

*NOTE.—If any reader writes to me, I shall be pleased to comment upon such remarks as are likely to interest the majority. All letters should be addressed to EDWY SEARLES BROOKS, c/o The Editor, THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, LONDON, E.C.4. Every letter will have my personal attention, and all will be acknowledged in these columns. But please note that the acknowledgments cannot appear for at least six weeks after the letters reach my hands. Letters of very special merit will be distinguished by a star—thus *—against the sender's name. Communications which indicate writer's age are naturally easier for me to answer. My photo exchange offer (mine—autographed—for yours, but yours first, please!) is still open.—E. S. B.*

NOW, look here. About this offer of mine to send my autographed photo in exchange for "any old snapshot" of you. I can see that I shall have to be a little more explicit. And I thought I had made it plain enough, too. But some of you readers are a bit like old Handy—you've taken my remark too literally. When I say "any old snapshot," I mean it in the sense that the expression is generally used. I don't mind, for example, a snapshot that is a bit grubby, or one that includes a pal, or a sister, or parents, or anybody else, for that matter. But I *do* draw the line at snapshots that were taken during infancy. You may not believe it, but two or three hopeful readers have sent me photographs of themselves when they were babies in arms! Well, of course, this sort of thing is a bit too steep. I wonder what those readers would think if I sent them a snap of myself in return, revealing me in the full glory of a velvet knickerbocker suit, and mounted on a rocking-horse? I don't mind a photo that is one year—or even two years—old, but I don't think you ought to send me one dated earlier than this. Best of all, I like up-to-date photographs—particularly as I am sending, in return, one of my own very latest portraits.

* * *

N. Baigent (Lymington), Stanley Ellis (Manchester), Ben Verwey (Wellington, S. A.), W. Lister (Blackpool), John Dunbar (Highbridge), Charles Dainty (Edinburgh), Gordon McGregor (Newcastle-on-Tyne), George Gardener (Romford), "R. P."* (Dover), Arthur C. Waller (E. Melbourne), Allen Neilson (Harris Park, N.S.W.), "Horatius"* (Manor Park), "The Iron Horse" (Battersea), Alex. Wilks (Cheltenham), Cecil Hands (Birmingham), R. Radmore (Woodlands, Hants.), Bert Le Cocq (Alderney, C.I.), W. G. Marsh (Islington), V. M. Grossmann* (Seaford), Alan C. Robinson (Walthamstow).

* * *

Joining the League, Stanley Ellis, is the simplest thing in the world. You tell me that you have lent lots of back numbers to friends of yours—but that isn't any good. What you have to do is to buy one extra copy of the current issue, and give it away. Give it to anybody who isn't a reader. Just get him (or her) to fill his (or her) name in (on the form provided), and then send this form, with the one out of your own copy, to the Chief Officer. What can be easier?

* * *

Any big stationer or printer, W. Lister, will bind your "Nelson Lees" for you, and the charges for this kind of work depend upon the quality of the binding. You ought to get quite a good cloth binding for two shillings or half-a-crown.

* * *

The Moor View girls first appeared in No. 436 (Old Series), and the story was called "A Rod of Iron," Gordon McGregor. I rather think it is out of print now, however, as it was dated October 13th, 1923.

* * *

I don't agree with you, "R. P." Your sarcastic suggestion that we should call the Old Paper by the name "Irene's Weekly"

merely indicates that you are lacking in a sense of humour. I don't think many readers will agree with you that the Moor View girls are featured too much in St. Frank's stories. I will quote a sentence of your letter: "I feel assured that if you put the matter to the vote, you would find that the Moor View girls are *not wanted at all.*" Well, there it is, "R. P."—I've put it to the vote. I quite agree that the majority of my readers are boys—but I certainly don't agree that boys dislike reading about girls now and again. The chapters of "Roman Gold" to which you refer—where Browne and Stevens pay great attention to Irene's sister—were written in a humorous vein, without the slightest intention of creating a love interest. But you don't seem to have noticed the humour. I hope all the other readers aren't like you! You go on to say: "I am properly up the pole about it." Well, old man, I rather agree with you there, although I don't think you mean what I mean. You say that I spoil the whole of my stories nowadays by bringing in the girls. Well, I don't agree with you.

* * *

My remarks at the beginning of this chat, Cecil Hands, will answer the question you ask. Yes, that photograph of yourself, including your cousin, will do splendidly—providing you aren't in your perambulator.

* * *

Laurence Stanley Elliott (East Ham), Winifred Stevens (Leytonstone), R. A. J. A. Gleeson (Limerick), Fred Griffin (Nottingham), F. Laurence Murdin* (Northampton), "Peggie"* (North Shields), Eric Jackson (Liverpool), Geoffrey B. Grimaldi (Manchester), "Jean"* (Widnes), "Sarcastic"* (Oldham), L. Strachan** (Forest Hill), S. Tall (Bristol), John Clay (N. Camberwell), Maurice Bourne* (Okehampton), C. Tucker (Westbury), S. H. Sutton (Tidal Basin), "Geoff. F. P." (S. Croydon), Muriel Tremayne* (Rochdale), A. W. Cowgill (Leeds), Geraldine Donovan* (Wellington, N.Z.).

* * *

There are exceptions to every rule, "Jean," and I shouldn't think of "ticking off" anybody for writing to me in pencil if they are in hospital. I'm not quite so hard-hearted as that. I have stated in these pages that it is a bad habit to write letters in pencil—and so it is, if the writer is hale and hearty, and too lazy to use pen and ink. Being in hospital is quite a different matter. I can stand as many of your letters as you wish to send me—and I could also stand that photograph you speak of. Hurry up, and let me have it in exchange for mine.

* * *

Here's a letter that struck me as being rather humorous, and I feel inclined to quote

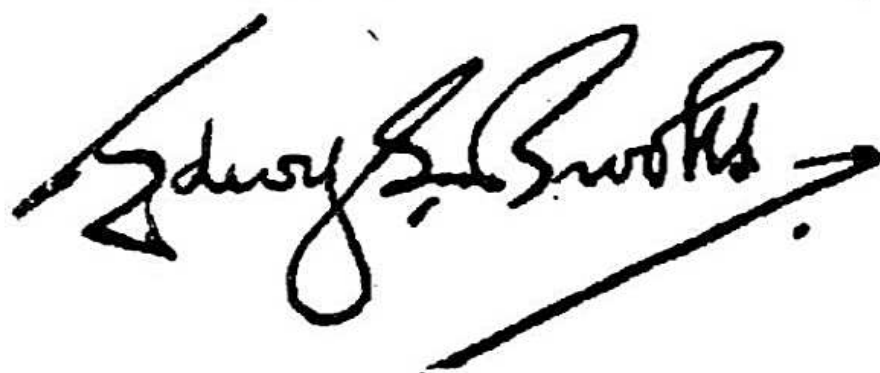
it in full, as it deals with the Moor View girls, and also the subject of writing in pencil. It comes from Oldham, and here it is: "Dear Brooks,—No excuse for pencil; it's a waste of ink, writing to you. You don't answer them. Hear a saxophone played before you run it down. You don't know what you are talking about. Why don't you introduce more girls? We haven't had enough of them, have we, you poor fish? The 'Nelson Lee Library' is a boys' paper. Introduce some more storms that can wreck a camp—they are quite possible in England, I don't think. Brighten your ideas up a bit—you're getting awful lately. I think it's time you retired. Answer this if you can. Yours, SARCASTIC." What about it, you Oldham readers? "Sarcastic" will notice that I have given him a star. Don't you think he deserves one? Look at the amount of lines he has enabled me to fill.

* * *

I hope you are enjoying the Summer Series, L. Strachan. To quote a part of your letter: "Travelling is calculated to broaden the mind. The majority of young people like to travel, and if we cannot travel in reality we can do so in our reading. I can honestly say that I have never met with such good literature as contained in the 'Nelson Lee.' The stories instil us with a sense of justice and fairness. Just the same as bad literature can ruin a person, good literature acts in the reverse way, and I will always say that the 'Nelson Lee' contains the very best." Thanks, old man! I always do try to make my yarns true to life, and when I take my characters into a strange corner of the world, I make sure that my facts are correct. Now and again, perhaps, I may make a mistake—I should be a pretty wonderful sort of fellow if I never made a blunder!—but I know that when I do make these mistakes I am forgiven.

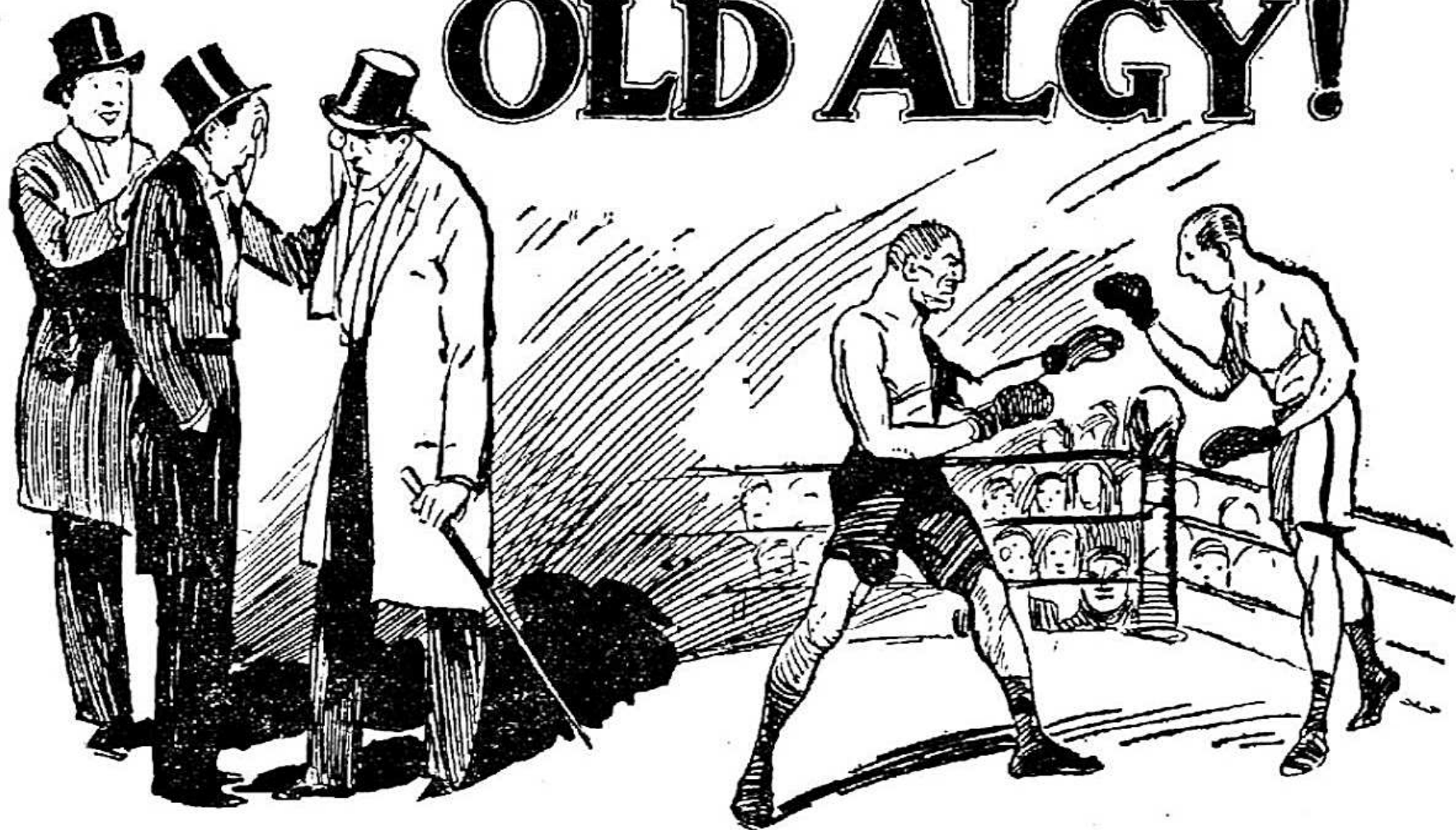
* * *

Here is a bit of a letter from Muriel Tremayne, and I rather think it forms a reply to "R. P.," and "Sarcastic," above: "I am certain that I should never weary of reading tales that bring boy and girl friendships so closely together. I hope that Irene & Co. will be in your stories as much as possible, without giving any trouble to those fellows who regard our sex with sour faces." That's the style, Muriel! I rather think we can take it that those fellows are very much in the minority, eh? I am jolly well sure of it—because I know that the mass of my readers are sportsmen.



Archie As An Author!Our Unique Serial!

BUCKING UP OLD ALGY!



By ARCHIE GLENTHORNE.

WHAT HAPPENED LAST WEEK:

Algernon Fitzpercy receives a great shock when his Uncle George tells him that he will have to earn his own living.

He goes to the Blackfriars Boxing Palace with his two special friends, Lord Bibbington—known as Bibbles—and the Hon. Eustace Caxton, to see the fight between Young Algy, an unknown boxer, and Liverpool Luke.

Young Algy is unable to fight, and Algernon Fitzpercy takes his place. He does quite well

—so well that Bill Huggins—the injured boxer's manager—offers to train him. Algy accepts, but is dismayed when he learns that the training quarters are situated at Barton Priory, for that is where his stern Aunt Martha and Uncle George live! During a training spin, he meets Aunt Martha, after a little accident. She does not recognise him, but orders him to go home with her, to receive attention.

(Now read on.)

Old Algy's Busy Morning!

UNDER no circo. or conditions could this be called Algy's lucky day. Absolutely not. The poor old egg was feeling pretty pipped as he legged it towards the good old Manor, with Aunt Martha on the off side.

I mean to say, it was pretty frightful for the poor old cheese. In the dire extremity of the moment—in other words, owing to the fact that Uncle George had cut off the good old allowance in its prime—Algy had felt compelled to get something going. And it had seemed to him a ripe sort of scheme to accept Bill Huggins' offer to go into training, with the prospect of a big fight—with vast dubloons attached thereto—in the middle distance.

But it wasn't panning out quite so pricelessly.

In the first place, it had come as a stab in the gizzard to Algy when he discovered that Bill's training quarters were at Barton Priory, the very village where Uncle George and Aunt Martha lived.

There was some sort of general idea that old Algy was down in Aunt Martha's will. And if she ever discovered that he was training as a boxer she would grab the old fountain-pen, yell for the family lawyer, and strike Algy's name out of the document.

And here was old Algy, on his very first morning at Bill's training quarters, staggering towards the Manor with Aunt Martha by his side. The only really bright spot in an otherwise foul situation was that Aunt Martha didn't know him. But Algy had an idea that he couldn't keep it up for long.

Sooner or later, she would recognise him—and then the fat would be in the fire.

In a way, Algy was feeling rather grateful to that ditch. He was so clotted with mud that his manly features were practically obliterated. But after he had had a bath, and so forth, it would no longer be possible to keep up the deception. So Algy regarded his immediate future with misgiving and gloomy foreboding.

And there was old Bill Huggins, too. What about Bill? Before long Bill would come on the scene, asking all sorts of questions. It didn't matter which way Algy looked, he could only see disaster.

Once or twice old Algy thought about making a break for it. But every time he found Aunt Martha's gaze focussed upon him like a couple of X-rays. And the poor blighter couldn't gather up enough courage for the job. So at last they went through the gateway of the good old Manor, and proceeded to walk up the drive. And then, with a kind of yelp, Algy leapt into the air.

I mean, he had a frightfully big surprise. For, sauntering across the lawn, were old Bibbles and the Hon. Eustace!

Aunt Martha seemed rather pleased to see them, too. Of course, they were always welcome in the old homestead. Well, I mean, one of them was Lord Bibbington, and the other was the Hon. Eustace Caxton—the son of a peer. And as Aunt Martha was by way of being a bit of a snob, she always welcomed lads who came of the blood stock.

And it seemed to her that they might make themselves useful for once in their lives.

The poor chappies did their best to dodge behind a rose-bush as soon as they saw her, but it was too late. She bore down upon them like a tank going into action.

"I am pleased," she remarked, "to observe that you dear boys have adopted the policy of early rising."

"Oh, rather!" blithered Bibbles.

"It is rather a pity that Algy is not here, so that you could set him a good example," went on Aunt Martha—without knowing that Bibbles and the Hon. Eustace had come down to Barton Priory especially to be near dear old Algy. As a matter of fact, they were up particularly early, as they had an idea that chappies training to be boxers usually arose with the good old sun.

But the lads weren't listening to Aunt Martha at all. They were looking at old Algy—and wondering what this blot on the landscape actually was.

Rallying Round Old Algy!

OF course, Bibbles and Eustace thought the whole thing too utterly utter for words. Aunt Martha was actually asking them to escort this mouldy w yfarer indoors, and to assist him with his ablutions, and then lend him some of

their clothes. It wasn't merely thick—it was a species of outrage.

But, after all, Aunt Martha was the hostess, and they couldn't very well hold forth in the manner that the situation indicated.

"What-ho! Rather!" said Eustace, pretending to be frightfully bucked. "Leave him to us, Mrs. Battersby."

Did I ever mention that Uncle George was cursed by the name of Battersby? Not, really, that there's anything wrong with the good old name. I mean, lots of really stout chappies are named Battersby, in all probability. But there it was.

"I'm sure I can rely upon you dear boys to treat this unhappy fellow with due care," said Aunt Martha. "I do not quite know what has happened, but it is evident that he has met with an accident."

"Oh, absolutely!" said Bibbles, nodding.

"Moreover, he has saved Christopher Columbus's life," went on Aunt Martha kindly. "A brave action—a piece of wonderful heroism. And I wish to reward him in a fitting manner. After he has tidied himself, and is wearing presentable clothing, be good enough to bring him to me."

And so old Algy was led off, with Bibbles on one side and Eustace on the other—both of these lads keeping their distance well. There was something about old Algy which displeased them. They were rather fastidious blighters, in a way, and Algy's appearance gave them a pain.

"A bit near the edge, what?" murmured Bibbles, as they flowed away. "I mean to say, shoving his ghastly article upon us!"

"You frightful chumps!" hissed Algy. "Don't you know me?"

"Good gad!" said Eustace, halting in his tracks and staring at Algy. "You don't absolutely mean to say—"

"Yes, rather!" breathed Algy. "Absolutely! Aunt Martha doesn't suspect a thing—and I can give you my word that I was considerably bucked when I saw you two old beans. It's up to you to save my life, laddies!"

"Great Scott! It's Algy!" breathed Bibbles wonderingly.

"Take me up to one of the bath-rooms, old boys, and let me get this foulness from my person," said Algy earnestly. "And, whatever you do, don't let Aunt Martha know who I am."

Briefly he explained the circumstances. By the time he had finished, they were indoors and locked in the bath-room. Bibbles and Eustace were inclined to grin somewhat when they heard the full yarn. It struck them as being priceless in the extreme.

"A dashed silly thing to do—to dive into that ditch," said Bibbles. "What was the precise idea, Algy?"

"I didn't know the ditch was there, you grinning chump," said Algy, peeved. "I mean, I was into the foul thing before I knew anything about it. Anything, if you can understand me, to escape from Aunt Martha. If she knows that I'm training as

a boxer, I shall be unstuck. She's got the most frightful ideas about boxing, and all that. One of these old-fashioned creatures."

"Well, there's nothing to worry about, old boy," said Eustace. "As soon as we've draped you in some dry clothes, we'll smuggle you out—"

"But Aunt Martha's got eyes like telescopes," protested Algy. "I mean, you'll never be able to do it, laddies! She's bound to be on the watch, and as soon as she catches sight of me—"

"You'll have to disguise yourself," said Bibbles brightly.

"Eh? I mean, what?" said Algy, staring.

"Why not?" went on Bibbles. "Don't you remember that rag we had here some months ago? Amateur theatricals, and all that sort of stuff. Well, I know where all the wigs and whiskers and whatnots are kept. Just as we left them, as a matter of fact."

Algy stared at him with a wild sort of hope in his eyes.

"Bibby, old cheese, how do you think of these things?" he asked wonderingly. "It's a brain-wave! I'll dress up with whiskers and various embellishments, and Aunt Martha won't know me from Adam!"

Bill Huggins on the Scent!

IN the meantime, various things were happening outside on the terrace.

To be exact, Bill Huggins blew in.

Well, he didn't precisely blow in—because it would need a kind of cyclone to shift a hefty blighter like Bill. Just an expression, if you get my meaning. What really happened was that Bill came striding up the drive, and he happened to catch sight of Aunt Martha on the terrace. So Bill, who was a man who believed in getting straight to the point, marched across the lawn, and wasn't very particular about treading on one or two flower-beds en route. Aunt Martha watched him with large quantities of incense. No, that doesn't sound right, somehow. What I mean is, she was frightfully incensed. Rummy language, ours!

Well, there it was. Bill came charging up with the light of battle in his optics. Of course, the old lad was harbouring all sorts of unjust suspicions about Algy. Bill thought that the poor old chump had trickled off home, as it were. As soon as Bill had missed Algy, he had assumed that the lad had decided that the boxing game wasn't everything it had been cracked up to be, and had deserted the force. So Bill had come along to find out all about it. Because, don't you see, Bill was pretty certain that Algy would make a ripping boxer, and Bill was after a big fight, with a hefty purse attached to it.

So when Bill came up to Aunt Martha, he gave her a sort of straight look, right in the centre of the vision. Bill wasn't in the

least afraid of Aunt Martha. She had a weakening effect on most chappies—but not on Bill.

"Where," says Bill, "is that dashed Algy?" Or words, that is, to that effect.

"How dare you?" says Aunt Martha, giving him the cold eye. "Who are you, my man? What do you mean by forcing your way in here and inquiring for my nephew in that low, familiar tone?"

"My name's Huggins—Bill Huggins," says Bill grimly. "I'm training Algy for a fight—"

"For a what?" screams Aunt Martha.

"I'm training him for a big fifteen-round contest at the London Sporting Club," went on Bill. "And I don't want any nonsense, neither! I brought Algy down here—"

"Oh!" interrupted Aunt Martha, drawing herself up, and looking at Bill with considerable ferocity. "So you, sir, are the boxer person? You are the man who has established these—these disreputable training quarters near Mr. Battersby's property? I would like you to know that I have complained to the Urban Council, and—"

"I didn't come here to hear your troubles, ma'am!" interrupted Bill. "Algy has run off, and—"

"You villain!" said Aunt Martha hotly, and with various glares. "You rogue! I mean, you frightful fright, how dare you? I regard you as a blot on the landscape! Boxing is a cruel, callous business. I won't listen to you. Not another word, sir!"

"There's no need to get excited, missus—"

"Not another word!" yelled Aunt Martha, with more vim than ever. "Leave these premises! Go! In other words, scoot!"

I'm not absolutely sure that I'm using the exact words, but I dare say that you'll gather the trend. As a matter of fact, I believe Aunt Martha used different expressions to these, but I expect they'll do. After all, a chappie can't be too precise, can he? And as long as you gather the trend, everything will be all serene.

Of course, Bill was decidedly pipped. Not to say peeved. There was certainly something about Aunt Martha which gave him a pain between the middle ribs. She wasn't the sort of woman you could argue with. Absolutely not. Bill tried it on, but it was about as useful as arguing with an untamed mustang of the prairies.

"Look here, ma'am, I don't want any quarrel with you," says Bill. "Algy has skipped—and I want him back. See? He's in training, at my camp, and I don't want—"

"Stuff and nonsense!" interrupted Aunt Martha fiercely. "Nonsense and stuff! I'll have the police on you if you come here with any more of these preposterous stories! I mean to say, what absolute rot! How dare you suggest that my nephew is training to be a common boxer? Shoo! Shoo! Go away, you bad man!"

Old Bill began to realise that Algy had

been right about Aunt Martha, after all. And it struck him as highly improbable that Algy was really here. Surely the lad wouldn't come to the presence of this female of his own accord? So Bill gave it up, and legged it for the road.

Taking all in all, the position didn't seem to be very much better.

Uncle George Says Something!

TOPPING!" said Bibbles admiringly. "Absolutely priceless!" observed Eustace.

They were gazing at old Algy. There he was, the dear old boy, with whiskers and everything. A brainy sort of disguise, in fact. It was true that the whiskers were slightly lopsided, but not so that you would really notice. Anyhow, Algy stood a good chance of getting away from the Manor without being recognised. And that was all he cared about.

"Now, Algy, the scheme is simple," said Eustace. "We'll trickle out, and engage Aunt Martha in a little idle chatter. You skid through the back door, and make various detours among the vegetables in the kitchen garden until you get to the lane. Once you're out of the dragon's stronghold, you'll be safe."

"Oh, rather!" said Algy. "But I've got a frightful fear that Aunt Martha will spot me, don't you know?"

"Not while we're about, laddie," said Bibbles. "You buzz off!"

So Algy buzzed.

And, do you know, he hadn't gone half-way across the kitchen garden before he ran bang slap into Uncle George. Absolutely! A frightful sort of shock for Algy, when you come to think of it. There he was, escaping from Aunt Martha, and who should he run into but Uncle George!

"Upon my soul!" said Uncle George, staring at Algy with considerable concentration.

"What-ho!" said Algy hastily. "Having a look round the lettuces and radishes, what?"

And, thinking of nothing better to say, he pushed on.

Uncle George gave him another stare, and let him go. Algy was frightfully bucked when he found that Uncle George wasn't following. Obviously, the old boy had been deceived by those whiskery hedges round Algy's chin. In due course Algy reached the lane, and proceeded to evaporate into the horizon.

Meanwhile, Bibbles and Eustace had been collared by Aunt Martha in the hall. She was looking hot and angry, and the lads had a sort of suspicion that an awkward five minutes was about to chime.

"I have just been insulted by a most villainous character!" said Aunt Martha. "A man named Huggins—the villain who is in charge of the boxing establishment."

"Great gad!" said Bibbles bleakly.

"And this man had the audacity to tell me that Algy is training to be a boxer!" went on Aunt Martha. "How dare he! What absolute nonsense!"

"Oh, rather!" said Eustace. "I mean, what priceless rot!"

And then a sudden idea came to him—one of those brainwave things.

"Oh, but just a moment, Mrs. Battersby!" he went on. "I suppose you don't know that there's a pretty famous boxer known as Young Algy, what? Same name as your nephew, if you understand me."

Aunt Martha saw daylight. At least, she thought she saw it. Eustace's statement was perfectly true. Now and again, Eustace found it possible to speak the truth, don't you know. But, naturally, Aunt Martha took it for granted that Bill had been referring to a different Algy to her nephew.

"Of course, that explains it," she said. "How ridiculous! I shall see the local policeman after breakfast, and I shall request him to have a severe word with this Mr.—Mr. Huggins! By the way, where is the brave stranger?"

"Oh, he went!" said Bibbles hastily.

"He went?" repeated Aunt Martha.

"Absolutely!" said Bibby.

And Aunt Martha had to be satisfied with that.

Much to the relief of Bibbles and Eustace, they were allowed to go, and they proceeded to trickle round towards the old cabbage-patch.

And who should they run into but Uncle George.

"What is the meaning of this?" he asked. "Not five minutes ago I passed Algy on this path—Algy, disguised with whiskers! He probably thought that he had fooled me, but—"

"Great pip!" bleated Eustace. "Do you mean to say that you recognised him?"

"What-ho!" said Uncle George.

Uncle George was grinning like a Cheshire cheese.

"Great!" he chortled. "So Algy is bucking up at last!"

The lads stared at him wonderingly.

"And if Algy really succeeds in entering a big fight, I shall be the happiest of men!" went on Uncle George. "I've always said that the boy had something in him—and it is quite clear that I was right. We'll keep this a secret, my boys—quite a secret! And if Algy wins this big fight of his I'll take him into my business."

And so there it was. Bibbles and Eustace were frightfully bucked about it all. While Aunt Martha was kept in ignorance of the game, Uncle George was as pleased as a sandboy. So it really seemed that old Algy's luck was about to turn.

(Wait until next week, and then see what happens at the Big Fight! I mean, old Algy's future depends upon it, and Uncle George means to get a ringside seat!)



THE
CHIEF OFFICER'S CHAT.

All **LETTERS** in reference to the League should be addressed to the Chief Officer, The St. Frank's League, c/o THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House, Farringdon St., London, E.C.4. Enquiries which need an immediate answer should be accompanied by a stamped and addressed envelope.

Joining the Army.

A HAMPTON chum asks where he should apply, as he wants to join the Army. He should get across to his nearest depot—at Hounslow—where men are accepted for all regiments.

A Compliment for Mr. Brooks!

G. Roscoe, of Edge Hill, is interested in a cycling club. Those keen about it may like to know that his address is 52, Tunnel Road, Edge Hill, Liverpool. This correspondent weighs in with a thumping compliment for Mr. Brooks. I quote his remarks: "I will tell you what I think about Mr. Brooks' stories. They are the best, finest, healthiest, most humorous, most wonderful, most active stories of school life that I, for one, have ever read!"

Bothered by a Bully!

A Nottingham correspondent asks me what he ought to do about a pal—or somebody who is supposed to be a pal—who hangs about him. The ways of this intruder are not nice. He is a bully, utterly selfish, and an arrant coward. In short, he is a rotter. My Nottingham chum has the remedy in his own hands. He had better tell the nuisance to clear out—and see that he does so.

A Bunch of Queries.

A Manchester correspondent asks me why postage stamps are sometimes perforated in the middle. I think the practice has dropped out now. Sometimes this was done for advertising purposes, and occasionally to prevent the stamps being used by those who ought to pay for their own.

This chum inquires about the oldest roads in England. The subject is a vast one. There are the Roman roads, some of which are in use to-day. Many lie buried. A friend of mine has a section of road, dating from Tiberius, in his back garden.

Then there are the old Saxon ways—sometimes these were just cattle tracks, others just the widened bridle paths from settlement to settlement; still others were the old routes of the pilgrims across England from York to Oxford, and Winchester to Canterbury.

The whole thing is worth close study. There are "ways"—some of which are con-

cealed these days by the silt of ages and the growth of forest—which ran across country from coast to coast.

Thin Arms.

A Bradford pal need not worry because his arms are thin. He says he has a punch-ball—it is in constant use—boxing-gloves, and Indian clubs, but though he takes plenty of exercise, and includes football, cricket, and tennis in his programme, his arms remain thin, and he is troubled about it. He has strong legs.

It strikes me his nery doubt about the thickness of his arms is just a mare's nest. He is, on his own showing, as fit as a fiddle. Then, again, he is short—4 ft. 9 in. As likely as not he is intended to be a member of the short army—and a jolly good army, too!

Should He Go To America?

I am asked by a loyal reader if he should close with an offer he has had to go to the United States. He does not tell me what he is doing at home, whether his position is good, etc., nor what his responsibilities are. A fellow who is wanted to help keep the home together must think twice before quitting, however attractive an overseas offer may sound. On the other hand, if my chum is independent, and if the chance abroad is really good, he might do well to take it.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

G. S. Hills, 6, Cannon Hill Road, Balsall Heath, Birmingham, wishes to hear from all Birmingham readers, and to join a club in or near his district.

Philip Adams, 16, 5th Avenue, Fazakerley, near Liverpool, wishes to correspond with readers interested in sports photos.

B. Crown, 71, Grafton Street, Fitzroy Square, London, W., wishes to purchase Nos. 513, 500, 503, 501, 497-8-9, 495, 481, 473, 475-6 of the "N.L.L."

E. A. Mittelholzer, Coburg Street, New Amsterdam, Berbice, British Guiana, has back numbers of the "N.L.L.," 479-568, to sell.

C. Goldstein, 148, Queen's Park Road,

(Continued on next page.)

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED.

(Continued from previous page.)

Brighton, wishes to correspond with Scouts anywhere, particularly abroad.

H. Green, 56, Boston Place, Dorset Square, Marylebone, London, N.W.1, wishes to hear from readers in his district who will help form a camping club.

I. Goldman, 109, West End Lane, West Hampstead, London, N.W.6, wishes to hear from readers overseas to exchange stamps, also from readers at home interested in stamps, cigarette cards and sport.

Geo. W. Collins, 71, Peabody Estate, Clerkenwell, London, E.C.1, wishes to hear from readers interested in chemical experiments.

Ian C. Black, 4, Oakland Road, West Jesmond, Newcastle-on-Tyne, wishes to correspond with readers (especially Scouts) interested in Pitman's shorthand.

Charles John Mead, 18, Ambrose Road, Clifton Wood, Clifton, Bristol, wishes to get in touch with members in his district.

Conrad Basson, 83, Longfellow Street, East London, South Africa, wishes to hear from readers anywhere, especially Dutch or English; also readers in France. He wishes to sell old numbers "N.L.L." (old series) from 404. He would also like to hear from an O.O. in his part of the world.

Norman Sealey, 251, Northumberland Road, Southampton, wishes to correspond with readers overseas. All letters answered.

W. J. Perkins, 2, Clare Street, St. Heliers, Jersey, Channel Islands, wishes to hear from readers interested in Meccano clockwork motors, etc.

Harry Rhodes, 86, Tramere Road, Earlsfield, London, S.W.18, is forming a club, and would like to hear from readers interested in the Wandsworth, Tooting and Earlsfield area.

C. Leopond, "Nant Guyon," Station Road, Thorpe Bay, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, would like to hear from readers in Australia.

D. Staynes, 60, Finborough Road, West Brompton, London, S.W.10, wishes to hear from a reader who has the whole of the old series, "N.L.L.," Nos. 1-516.

A. L. Ardley, 39, Ledsam Street, Ladywood, Birmingham, wishes to correspond with readers anywhere, preferably overseas. Interested in stamp-collecting, and postcards of geographical interest, also in astronomy and the French language.

Smith Thompson, 40, Gale Street, Princeville, Bradford, wishes to hear from readers on sports and matters of general interest. He has back numbers of the "N.L.L." He especially wishes to hear from readers in Tasmania, Cornwall, and Burton-on-Trent.

S. J. Felstead, 53, Westbourne Road, Barnsbury, London, N.7, wishes to correspond with readers.

James Hair, 24, Ibrox Street, Glasgow, would like to hear from readers in all parts of the British Empire. All letters answered.

(Continued on next page.)

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(Continued from previous page).

Ernest Bolland, jun., 44, Cartmell Terrace, **Darlington**, Durham, would like to hear from readers in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa on any subject.

H. McMahon, 50, Long Street, West Broken Hill, N. S. Wales, **Australia**, wishes to hear from readers anywhere. All letters answered.

Pte. T. Walters, No. 5613398, M.G. Platoon, 1st Devons, Shanghai Defence Force, **Shanghai**, would like to hear from readers in any part of the world.

Frank Rolfe, 100, Euston Road, **London**, wishes to correspond with anybody interested in fretwork.

A. Broughton, 104, Warmsworth Road, Ballig, **Doncaster**, Yorks, would like to hear from readers in his district with a view to forming a sport-in-general club.

Mervyn E. Stephens, 14, Lansdown Place, Clifton, **Bristol**, wishes to correspond with

other members in his district and in Weston-super-Mare or suburbs.

B. B. Brewet, 2, Orchard Lodge, Nether Street, Finchley, **London, N.3**, would like to hear from members in his district with a view to forming a club.

W. S. Hawken, 17, St. Austell Street, **Truro**, Cornwall, wants to hear from members interested in Pitman's shorthand, book-keeping or commerce. He will exchange views and give advice.

J. Reeve, 38, Parchmore Road, **Thornton Heath**, Surrey, wishes to obtain copies of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY (old series) from the start.

Joseph Carter, 12, Hamshire Street, Southsea, **Portsmouth**, Hants, would like to correspond with a member of the League living in Australia or Africa.

A. L. Moxom, 59, Manor Drive, **Leeds**, would like to hear from readers who have NELSON LEE LIBRARIES before No. 386 for sale.



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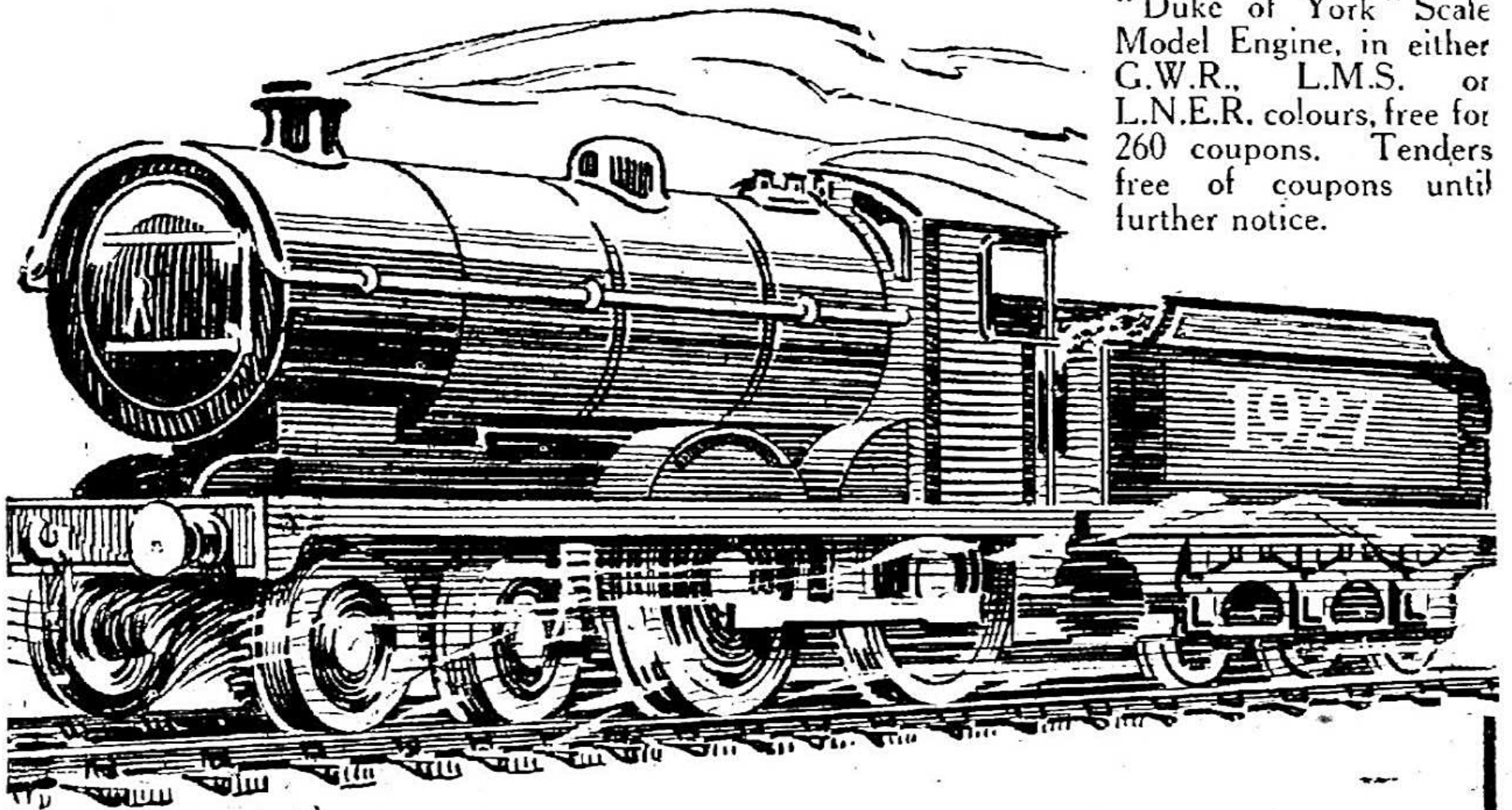
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