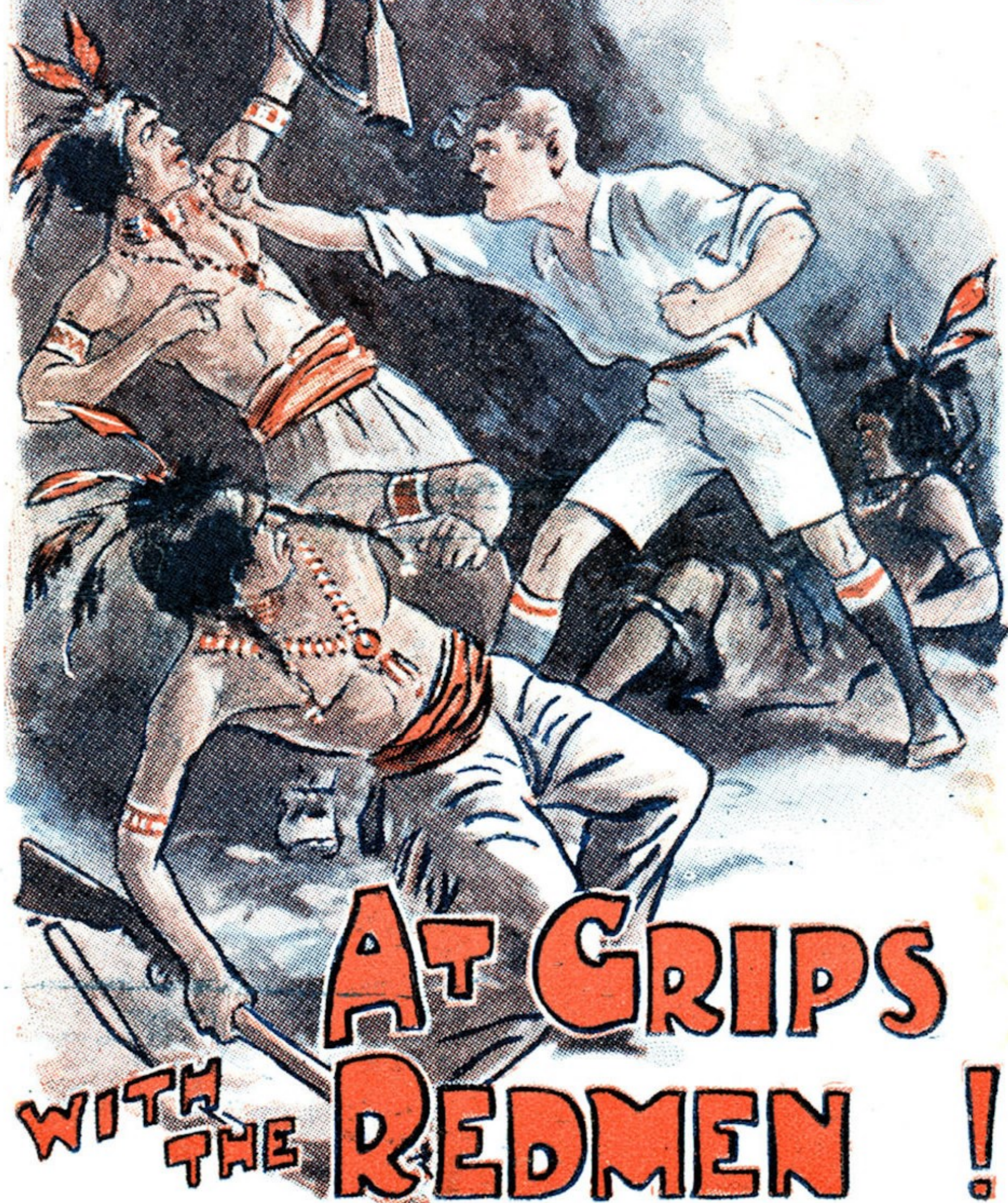


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AT GRIPS
WITH THE REDMEN !

A gripping long complete yarn of schoolboy adventure, featuring the cheery chums of St. Frank's.

New Series No. 173.

OUT ON WEDNESDAY.

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AT GRIPS WITH THE REDMEN !



By

EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

CHAPTER 1.

The Redskin Peril!

PING!

"Another arrow!" said Nipper. "The beggars won't show themselves, but they let fly an arrow every now and again!"

"Who cares?" asked Handforth contemptuously. "They can't fire directly at us, and it's impossible for them to take any aim. I can't understand why Mr. Lee doesn't order an attack."

"That's because you don't realise the position, Handy," said Nipper quietly. "It's worse than you think."

"Rats!" said the leader of Study D. "We're only up against a crowd of Redskins. They're a mouldy lot, anyhow, and we're all armed with rifles, and we've got plenty of ammunition. If they want to fight, why shouldn't we give them one?"

There was, after all, a certain amount of common-sense in Handforth's argument. The Apaches had been the aggressors in the first place, and any battle which now developed would be entirely of their own making.

Trapped in a cave from which there is no escape save through a barrier of fire! The smoke pouring in, slowly suffocating the occupants; the heat becoming unbearable. Such is the awful plight of the St. Frank's adventurers this week!

But Nelson Lee—as Nipper well knew—was reluctant to precipitate any bloodshed. It was all very well for Handforth to talk of “mouldy Indians,” but it was an established fact that hundreds of Apaches were massing at the end of the ravine. They were young bucks, all of them—off the reservation without authority, and probably without the knowledge of the older men. And, even in these modern days, the Indians—inflamed as they now were—could be a very real menace.

The St. Frank's holiday party was up in the mountains of Arizona, near the edge of the great Chichon Mesa—a great tableland of barren desert, where there was nothing but the lava rocks and the sand and the snakes and lizards. It was a wild, sinister place, flaming hot in the day-time, and bitterly cold by night.



Civilisation was a long way behind; Circle City was the nearest town of any size, and Circle City might as well have been a thousand miles away for all the hope there was of communicating with any of its inhabitants.

There had already been some excitement with the Indians, and it was because of this that the present situation had arisen.

Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore had gone forward from the main camp accompanied only by Umlosi and Hookey Webb and old Dicky Siggers, the desert rat. They had gone to search for Hookey Webb's gold. Hookey was an old sailor, and home in England he had told some of the St. Frank's fellows a remarkable story of a great gold strike on the Arizona Desert.

He and a prospector had found this gold forty years ago, and, in a fight with the Indians, the prospector had been fatally wounded. Webb had never been able to return to the scene of that discovery—until now. He was a sailor, and nobody had believed his story; nobody had agreed to "grub-stake" an expedition to such a wild region. In fact, everybody had taken it for granted that Hookey Webb was slightly wrong in the head.

But Lord Dorrimore, finding that the St. Frank's fellows were keen on the trip, had willingly financed it. Thus it was that a number of St. Frank's fellows were here, in Arizona—and a representative number of Moor View girls were also in the party.

The girls, daringly following Nelson Lee into this wild region—leaving the main camp by a subterfuge—had encountered the Indians. It had only been the quickness and astuteness of the schoolboys which had saved Irene & Co. from capture.

Now the entire party had joined forces, for some of the boys had fetched Nelson Lee and the men back, and they were all in this grim ravine, with the Indians waiting outside.

Many parts of Arizona are rough and barren; and it would have been difficult to find a more wild spot than this one, on the edge of the Chichon Mesa.

It was a country of blazing heat—a country of rugged grandeur, with cliffs of white and yellow and purple and black. Cliffs that descended abruptly and mysteriously. There were gorges and canyons and ravines; an indescribable chaos of jagged, fearsome rock.

The St. Frank's party, at the moment, was in the midst of these wild gorges, for the basin of the Pronto Creek had been left behind. This was the trail for the true Mesa.

It was night now, although the dawn would not be long in coming. Nobody slept, for it was anticipated that the Indians would make an attempt to attack this comparatively small party of whites. The Apaches were inflamed; they were furious because the schoolboys had

tricked them. And, for some mysterious reason, they resented the presence of these white people in these gorges, so near to the boundary line of the great Blue Mountain Reservation.

According to all the maps, Lord Dorrimore's party had not penetrated any of the true Indian territory; yet the Apaches were sullen and angry. They had already guessed that these white people had come searching for gold, and perhaps it was this very fact which had aroused their fury.

THE situation was rather peculiar.

The Indians themselves were gathering in a big canyon, near by.

Down at the base of the ugly crags there was a strip of real beauty. For along the floor of the canyon ran a shallow creek, and on either side there were green banks, with cottonwood trees, cherry, and pine. There was magic in this water, in such a dry, desert region. It converted the barrenness into verdant glory. There was candlewood and sage-brush in plenty, and there were giant cactus and other growths. By daylight the canyon floor was brilliant with scarlet, pink, orange, and crimson blossoms. There were cedars, and just near the spot where the narrow ravine joined the canyon there was a sycamore thicket. And all about this verdure were the walls of lava and limestone, with the desert stretching away beyond.

The ravine, wherein was the St. Frank's holiday party, was a smaller edition of the canyon, for a little brook meandered down its centre. And here, too, there were trees in plenty, and bushes and flowers and grass.

A kind of camp, rough and ready, had been made in the widest point of the ravine, and Nelson Lee had insisted upon the girls rolling themselves in blankets. Not that the girls slept. Everybody was on the alert; everybody was expecting trouble from the Indians.

There was every reason for these fears, too. Now and again a rifle shot would ring out from the fork at the end of the ravine. Occasionally, too, an arrow would come dropping from apparently nowhere. The Indians had not yet dared to make any general attack, but they were letting fly with a rifle-shot or an arrow occasionally.

There was no camp-fire, for this would have made an excellent mark for the watching Redskins. The schoolboys and schoolgirls had been told to keep back near to the cliffs. Nelson Lee and the other

men formed a kind of barrier between the young people and the end of the ravine. A rough kind of barricade had been made, of sticks and brushwood and rocks, and the men were crouching behind this, their weapons ready.

For it was impossible to retreat. This ravine was a trap. It was narrow and deep, with smooth rock walls up which no human being could possibly hope to climb.

And there was no exit at the other end. It was a *cul de sac*—a blind alley amidst these mountain passes. There was only one exit, and this exit was being guarded by a horde of excited Redskins!

"Reckon thar's goin' to be some fireworks purty soon, pardners," Dicky Siggers was saying, as he stretched his gaunt, leathery frame. "Them Injuns have got the fever. Ain't I seen 'em like it before? I'm figgerin' that they'll make a sudden rush."

"We're ready for them," said Lord Dorrimore grimly.

"It'll be all right if we can scare 'em off," said Siggers. "But I ain't so sure that they'll be scared. Looks like they're in an ugly mood."

"Have they ever broken out of the reservation before?"

"Not lately, mister, but I kin remember the time when these Injuns was allus breakin' loose," said the old desert man. "I know these parts as well as I know the palm o' my right hand. Every crick—every canyon—every chunk o' rock. An' I guess I know the boundary-line o' the Apache Reservation, too. These durned

critturs are miles off their land. Thar's somethin' almighty strange about it. No sooner does a white man show hisself in any o' these canyons than the Injuns come an' order him away."

"But, hang it, a white man won't take orders from an Indian," protested Dorrie.

"Not from an Indian, pardner—but from a score of Indians," replied Siggers significantly. "It's mighty unhealthy to argue

with a bunch o' Redskins when they're on the warpath. I've known many a prospector come hiking out o' these hills after he's met with a bunch of Indians. I figger that his scalp gits kinder prickly, an' he has a hunch that he'd best quit."

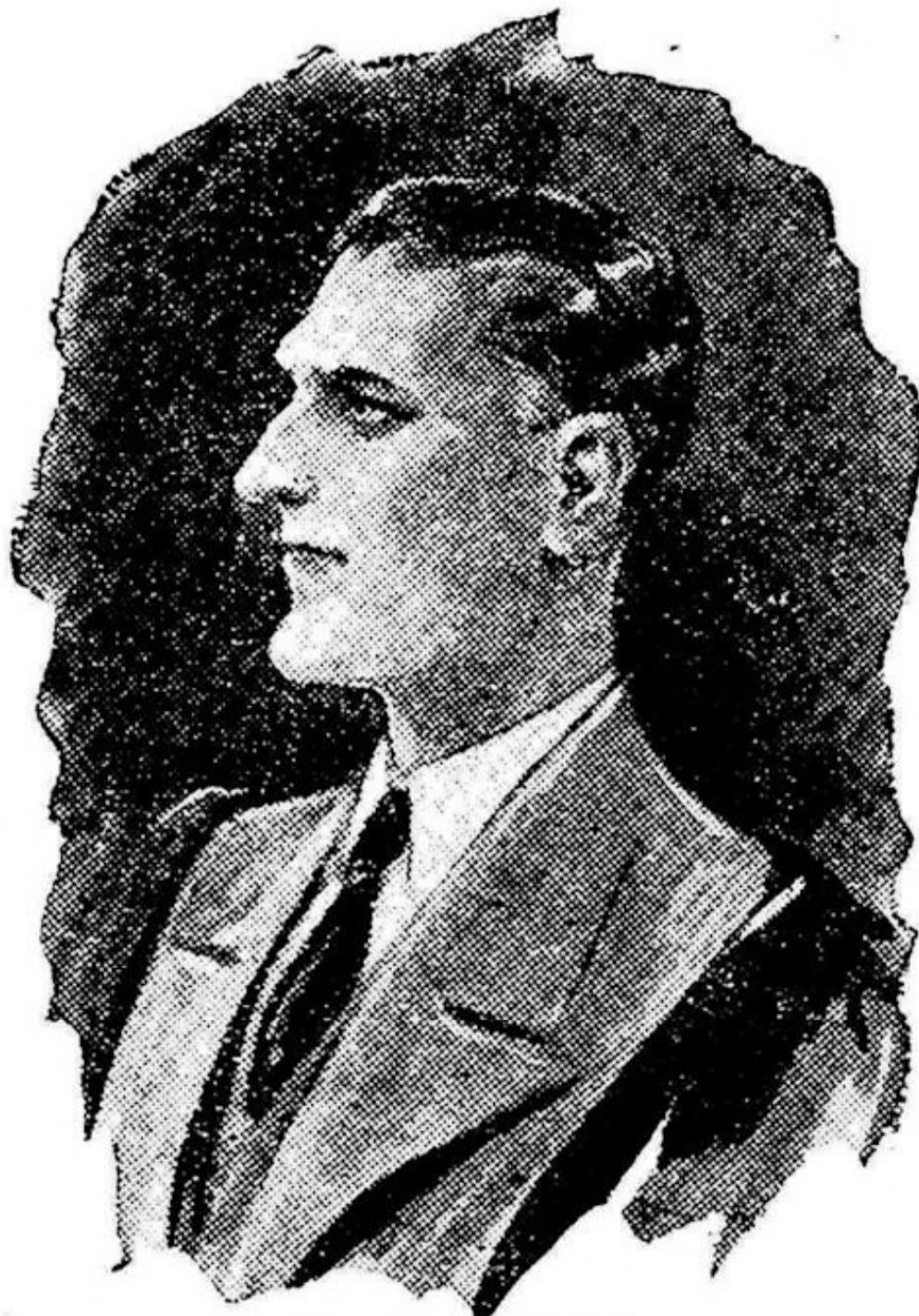
"Why doesn't the Government do something?" asked Lee.

"The Gover'mint?" repeated the Arizona rat. "Aw, listen! Do you think the Gover'mint kin send soldiers every time a few Indians git fresh with a white man? Besides, whar's the evidence? If the soldiers go into the reservation an' make inquiries, the old Chiefs are ready to swear that none o' the tribe hev ever left the reservation. It's mighty difficult, mister, to deal w' Redskins."

"Well, you ought to know," said Dorrie. "You've lived in this part of the country long enough."

"You said it!" agreed Siggers, nodding. "If a white man refuses to take any notice o' these Redskins, they either steal his entire outfit, so that he dies o' thirst in the desert, or they kill him out of hand."

WHO'S WHO AT ST. FRANK'S.



NELSON LEE.

The popular Housemaster of the Ancient House at St. Frank's, and he is also the guardian of Nipper. He was formerly a world-famous private detective. Just the man to have in the time of a crisis. Amazingly clever; a born leader of men.

A black shadow seemed to materialise from the gloom of the night. For a moment, Lee and Dorrie gripped their rifles, and their fingers trembled on the triggers. The black shadow was noiseless and mysterious.

"Wau!" came a low rumble. "I am returned, N'Kose."

"You silly hunk of coal!" growled Dorrie. "I was nearly emptying this gun into your carcase! Why didn't you speak sooner? I might have filled you with lead!"

Umlosi, the giant Kutana chieftain, slipped over a barrier of rocks and joined the other men. He was naked, except for a strip of dark cloth round his middle. His only weapon was his huge, formidable spear.

"Thou art not rash enough, my father, to kill me thus," he murmured. "I bring word of much activity, N'Kose. These dogs of Redskins are preparing for an attack."

"Do you know this for certain, Umlosi?" said Lee sharply.

"Have I not been to the end of the ravine?" replied Umlosi. "Have I not crept to within a bare ten yards of these jackals? They saw me not, and they heard me not. But I saw them, Umtagati, and although I heard their uncouth tongues I understood not what they said. Yet I could tell that they mean mischief. Large numbers of them are preparing to creep into the ravine. It is their plan, methinks, to make a sudden rush, so that in the confusion we shall be overwhelmed."

"Good man, Umlosi!" said Lord Dorri-more, patting that broad black back. "We knew that you would do good work if we sent you scouting. Well, if these Indians attack, we'll be ready for them."

"'Twill be a great fight, N'Kose," said Umlosi. "But my heart bleeds when I think of the young white masters and the young white maidens. For, fight as we will, kill as many of these jackals as we may, I fear that we shall be overwhelmed in real earnest. For these Indians are massing in great numbers, and when they attack it will be a swift and deadly battle, with the odds all against us!"

CHAPTER 2.

The Apache Attack!

UMLOSI'S words were alarming. He was a great warrior, and, as a general rule, he was optimistic regarding the result of any battle. For him to prophesy that the

Indians would wipe them all out was indeed a sure sign that the Redskins were preparing for a deadly attack.

Umlosi knew the nature of this trap—he knew that there was no exit from this ravine. It was difficult to employ any strategy. There would be a rush, a fight, and the end would be swift.

Not that he was apprehensive of the result. If he could be in the thick of the battle, and account for a number of these Indians before he, himself, went down, he would be satisfied.

Indeed, Umlosi was positively revelling in the thought of the coming scrap. It would be an affair after his own heart.

"Seems funny we can't do nothin'," remarked old Hookey Webb. "Pity if we're wiped out by a lot o' Injuns! Arter we've got almost to the gold, too! Makes me feel pretty uncomfortable, gents, seein' as 'ow it was through me that you come 'ere."

"You've got nothing to reproach yourself with, Hookey," said Nelson Lee. "You weren't to know that the Indians would be so hostile. Indeed, it is almost incredible that such an adventure as this could happen to-day."

"'Tain't usual, mind," put in Siggers. "The Injuns ain't broke out like this not once durin' the last ten years. I'm figgerin' that it must be somethin' special. Seems to me thar's a superstition tacked onto that gold, an' the Injuns reckon we're goin' ter bring bad luck, or somethin' like that. Or else they've got trail fever, an' jest can't help themselves. Thar's no gettin' ter the bottom of an Injun's mind."

"I can't use a gun—not with me only havin' one 'and," said Hookey. "But, by thunder, I'll show 'em I'm full o' fight if you give me a chunk o' wood. I don't want to be out o' this scrap, gents."

"That's the spirit, Hookey!" said Nelson Lee. "Still, I think you'd better remain in the background. Not that there will be any fight—such as Umlosi suggests."

"Whadya mean, sir?" asked Hookey. "Don't you think them Injuns is goin' to attack?"

He pointed vaguely with the hook which did duty for a left hand.

"They'll attack all right—Umlosi doesn't make mistakes of that kind," replied Lee. "But we shan't be here to meet the attack. It would be sheer folly to engage in such an encounter."

"Wau!" rumbled Umlosi. "What sayest thou, Umtagati? This fight will be a good fight!"

"How many Indians do you think there are, Umlosi?" broke in Lee.

"Perchance a hundred, but methinks more are coming," replied Umlosi. "For did I not see strange flares up in the hills, beyond?"

"A hundred," said Lee thoughtfully. "That may mean two hundred. Dorrie, we should be crazy if we attempted to meet this attack. There are five of us men, and a number of schoolboys and schoolgirls. The boys, at a pinch, might be able to use the rifles—they are all armed, anyhow. But do you suppose for a moment that we could stem this tide of savage humanity?"

"Frankly, I don't!" admitted Dorrie. "But, by the Lord Harry, it would be a priceless sort of scrap while it lasted!"

"And a massacre at the finish," said Lee grimly. "No; we mustn't let these Apaches beat us in that way!"

OVER by the rock wall, Nipper was talking with Handforth and Reggie Pitt and Archie Glenthorne, and some of the other St. Frank's juniors. Comparatively near by, Irene Manners and Doris Berkeley were whispering together with their girl chums. And they all knew that something big was imminent.

"It'll be dawn soon," Handforth was saying, as he glanced up at the slit of sky visible beyond the crags.

"I wonder if we shall see it?" asked Church.

"The dawn?"

"Yes," said Church. "I believe these Indians are going to attack——"

"Let 'em!" broke in Handforth. "Who cares? We're ready, aren't we?"

"We're ready, old man, but this place isn't ideal for a fight," said Nipper. "If they sweep into this ravine, we shall be caught like rats in a trap. You don't seem to realise that we're hopelessly outnumbered."

"One white chap is worth a dozen Indians!" replied Handforth promptly.

"In daylight, perhaps," said Nipper. "But in this darkness there'll be tremendous confusion if an attack really develops."

"I can't believe it, dear old boys," said Archie Glenthorne. "I mean, dash it, in these days, you know! Indians, and all that sort of thing! Frightfully improb., what?"

"Improbable or not, the Indians are getting ready for business, Archie," said Nipper.

"Oh, rather!" agreed Archie. "But do you think they'll actually biff into us, as it were? I mean, the twentieth century, what? Wireless and talkies and Atlantic flights and all that sort of thing! These dashed Indians are more or less civilised nowadays. I've always understood that this going on the war-path business was considered rather out of date."

"The circumstances are exceptional, Archie," put in Reggie Pitt. "These Indians know that we're after the gold, and for some reason they're mighty scared that we shall get it. They don't want it for themselves, and they don't want us to have it. Perhaps they're afraid that if gold is discovered near their reservation, a town will spring up here, and then they won't be able to have the run of these hills and canyons and ravines."

"There may be something in that theory," said Nipper, nodding. "Not that it really matters why the Indians are hostile. They are hostile, and there's a big lot of trouble brewing."

"Let it brew!" grunted Handforth. "I'm beginning to wish that something



would happen—and happen quickly, too! I'm fed up with waiting. There's nothing for us to worry about, anyhow; we can hold the Redskins off, and we've got plenty of water in this ravine. There's not much food, I'll admit, but we can scrape along for a day or two——"

"Unfortunately, Handy, you're wrong about the water," said Nipper. "And water, in a country like this, is vital. If we're bottled up in this ravine, we shall die of thirst in a comparatively short time, and a swift attack, with sudden death in the middle of it, would be better than that!"

"You're dotty!" said Handforth, staring. "What about the stream?"

"There's a stream in this ravine, but the water isn't drinkable," said Nipper.

"Mr. Lee told me so, only half an hour ago. The water is too full of lime—it's poisonous. It's alkali. The creek in the canyon is all right, but this brook here is just about as useful to us as the exhaust from a chemical factory!"

A figure loomed out of the gloom.

"It's all right—only me!" came a familiar voice. "Just a word with you youngsters. We're going to make a move, and it's got to be done quietly!"

The newcomer was Lord Dorrimore, and the schoolboys and schoolgirls crowded round him.

"What is it, Dorrie?" asked Nipper eagerly.

"Well, you might as well know that the Indians are getting ready to wipe us out," said Lord Dorrimore. "Infernally cheeky of them, but there it is."

"We're going to make a fight for it, aren't we, sir?" asked Handforth.

"No."

"What!"

"If we make a fight for it, we're bound to lose," said Dorrie. "And, after all, as Lee says, there's no sense in sacrificing ourselves for nothing. We're outnumbered four or five to one, and it's a mighty good thing for us that the Indians have held back as long as they have. We've got a chance to dish them."

"What is it, sir?"

"What are we going to do, Dorrie?"

"Out with it, sir!"

They pressed round, more eager than ever.

"It's nothing much," said Dorrie. "Mr. Lee has spotted a ledge, ten or twelve feet up the cliff, on the other side of the ravine. Hookey and old Siggers and Mr. Lee are making a kind of ladder now, and as soon as it's ready the girls are going up on to that ledge, and the boys next."

"But what's the good of getting there, sir?" asked Harry Gresham.

"Every good," said Dorrie. "If we're not mistaken, there's a big cave at the back of the ledge, and if we can all get into that we shall be comparatively safe. You see? We shall be well above the Indians, and if they attempt to storm the ledge we shall have all the advantage. Umlosi's tearing his hair because there won't be any hand-to-hand fighting, but Mr. Lee and I rather think that we'd like to keep on living."

NELSON LEE'S plan was a simple, but effective, one.

Having heard Umlosi's report, Lee was convinced that any attempt to stem the Redskin attack would

be fraught with peril. The Indians would sweep on, and annihilate the entire party. They were inflamed—they were reckless—and they were filled with the lust of killing.

If they once came sweeping into this ravine, it would be impossible to keep them back. The foremost ranks, no doubt, would be shot down, but the others would press on, and the defenders would then be overwhelmed. Why give the Indians the satisfaction of winning?

Nelson Lee had seen that ledge, practically twelve feet above the ravine floor, and it was a comparatively short task for him and the other men to make a crude ladder.

As soon as it was completed, Lee himself climbed up, and he was gratified to find that the ledge went back deeply into the limestone cliff. There was, indeed, a vast opening there—a cave which extended back for a considerable distance.

There was no time for Lee to explore it thoroughly. He only wanted to satisfy himself that there was sufficient room for the entire party. He found that there was room for a party treble the size. So he descended, and word was given that the girls should immediately climb up to the ledge.

"Why should we go first?" asked Mary Summers rebelliously.

"Steady, old girl," said Irene. "Yesterday we thought that we were very clever, didn't we? We followed Mr. Lee, and all this trouble has resulted. The boys had to get us out of difficulty, and we've been shown that we girls are pretty useless when it comes to an adventure of this kind. It's up to us to obey orders now."

"Yes, rather!" murmured some of the other schoolgirls.

"My hat! I suppose you're right!" admitted Mary.

They all climbed the improvised ladder, and like shadows they crept back to the base of the ledge, where they could dimly see the low entrance of the cave. They had been warned to make no sound—to refrain from even whispering.

Dicky Siggers and Hookey Webb, in the meantime, were making a great noise chopping down some bushes—the idea being to distract the attention of any Indians who might be on the watch.

"Women and children first," breathed Handforth. "You Third-Formers go next. You're children!"

"Fathead!" said Willy, his younger brother. "I'm not going until you silly Removites have cleared off."



In the distance the inflamed Redskins were preparing for the attack. Within a few minutes now they would come charging down upon the hopelessly outnumbered St. Frank's party. Quickly Nelson Lee descended the ladder and motioned the girls and boys to enter the cave. Little did they realise that they were entering, not a place of refuge, but what was to become a veritable death-trap.

"Yes, you are, Willy," said Nelson Lee grimly. "You're going now."

"Oh, if you say so, sir, of course!" murmured Willy promptly.

The boys went up as quickly as possible, and then, finally, came the men.

Only just in the nick of time, too!

For scarcely more than ten minutes elapsed before the silence of the night was converted into a wild, hideous tumult.

From the end of the ravine came a great stamping of running feet. Wild yells filled the air. Rifle shots rang out; arrows came hissing through the air. And the Indians—scores of them—charged towards the spot where they imagined the white people to be.

"By glory, Lee, you were right!" muttered Dorrie, as he watched. "Look at 'em! Hundreds! I don't suppose we should have lasted for more than a couple of minutes! A brainy idea of yours—this! We're out of their way, anyhow."

"For the moment the situation is saved,

Dorrie; but what of the next move?" asked Lee soberly. "We mustn't disguise from ourselves that we are in an ugly mess!"

CHAPTER 3.

Besieged!

"OH! Isn't it awful?" murmured Irene, putting her hands to her ears.

"They don't sound human," said Sylvia Glenn, in horror.

They felt rather faint when they thought of what might have happened to them had they not climbed up on to this ledge. There was no mistake about the intentions of the Apaches; they were out for blood, and they were mad with rage at finding their prey gone.

If the night had been hideous before, it was now indescribable. The air was filled with wild shouts, and the whole

floor of the ravine was filled with the figures of the Redskins. Some of them were on foot, others were riding their ponies.

Handforth, of course, had wanted to fire on the enemy, and Dorrie had been eager to have some pot-shots, too. But Lee's policy was best. He ordered them all to keep quiet, and to remain within the confines of the cave. It was better that the Indians should be puzzled regarding the disappearance of the whites. There was no need to draw the Apaches' fire.

Not that the secret of the cave was kept for long.

As dawn was breaking, and as the copper-skinned horde came trailing back from the inner end of the ravine, the dodge was spotted. Nobody knew how the Indians had discovered the secret; but, suddenly, a score of arrows came clattering against the rock of the ledge; bullets spattered grimly on the rock walls.

"They can't do us no harm," said old Hookey. "We ain't in the line o' fire—an' they're rotten shots, anyhow."

"Might as well give 'em a taste o' somethin', eh?" said Siggers. "They've spotted us, so thar's no sense in holdin' our fire. Let 'em have it, pards!"

"I'm all for it!" agreed Lord Dorrie.

"Yes, certainly," said Lee, at once. "The Indians attacked first, and it would be wise, perhaps, for us to show them that we are quite ready for them."

THAT ledge of rock, twelve feet from the ground, sloped very sharply backwards, so that it formed a natural kind of trench. Lying full length on the rock, Lee and Dorrie and the others could look down upon the ravine, and they were in little or no danger from any chance rifle shots or arrows. The rock formed an excellent barricade.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

There was something different in the sharp reports of the white men's rifles. They were modern weapons of the best type, whereas the Indians only possessed a few old-fashioned weapons. There was something very businesslike and deadly about the bark of these other firearms. The reports were followed by screams and howls.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

The rifles spoke again, and there were more shrieks and yells. Two or three Indians fell, writhing and screaming. Perhaps they had not bargained for this retaliation.

But the die was cast now.

There had been bloodshed, and these Redskins, hot with the lust of killing, would do everything in their power to overwhelm their foes.

However, that taste of lead had the desired effect.

Before the dawn had fully come, the Indians had completely retired from the ravine. Not a single one was left; even the wounded and the dead had been carried away. When the sun peeped over the hills, it shed its golden light on to a scene of peace and stillness. There were no indications of the recent trouble in the ravine. A great many of the bushes were trampled down, of course, but the place did not closely resemble a battle-field. The Indians themselves had returned to the main canyon, where, no doubt, they were holding a council of war.

"This is on'y the beginnin' of it," said old Siggers. "These young bucks won't leave us alone fer long. Like as not, they're off their reservation without leave. They've raised Cain now, an' the chances are that they'll send some messengers into the reservation for reinforcements."

"Do you think the older men will agree with this sort of thing?" asked Lee.

"They'll sure be skeered at first," said Siggers, "but after they've heard that some o' the young 'uns hev bin killed, they'll likely git the trail fever, too. The squaws will egg 'em on, sure as daylight."

"The squaws?" said Dorrie. "Don't you think that the women will try to stop the whole affair?"

"Not they!" said the old prospector. "They're wuss than the men! When they hear that some o' their men-folk hev got killed, they'll inflame the rest. I don't reckon there'll be much doin' durin' the day, but I'm a rattlesnake if thar ain't a tidy hullabaloo when darkness comes agin."

"Well, we shall have a bit of a rest, anyhow," said Dorrie.

"Sure thing!" nodded Siggers. "Guess we kin do with it, too. A bit o' sleep wouldn't do us any harm. Them young folks oughter be sleepin' right now. No sense in them bein' deprived of it."

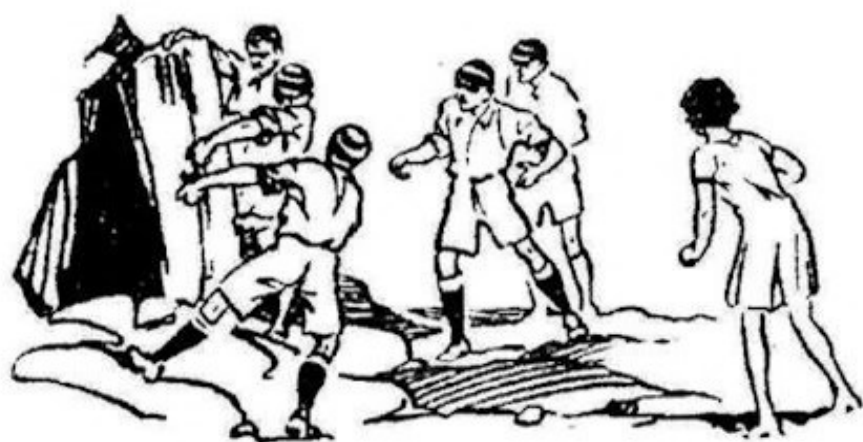
"Better go and have a word with 'em, Lee," said Dorrie. "We can look after this ledge—and keep our eyes open. I think Siggers is right. The Indians won't cause any trouble now that daylight has come. They'll wait until to-night."

AND this certainly seemed to be the case. As the sun grew higher, and the day became hotter, one might have supposed that there were no Indians within a hundred miles. They had retired completely; but it was grimly evident that the enemy was on the look-out.

For once, when Dorrie recklessly stood upright, a couple of arrows came hissing out of nowhere, and a rifle shot rang out. The Redskins had posted snipers amongst the rocks.

"Oh, it's just as well to know what they're doing," said Dorrie, as he sought cover again.

In the meantime, Nelson Lee was ex-



ploring the cave. It was big, it was roomy, and there was a number of smaller caves opening out from it. But, as far as Lee could find, there was no possible method of escape.

If the ravine was a trap, so was this cave. Its only advantage was that it was well above the ground level, and it was protected by the rocks. In this way the white party had some measure of advantage. The cave was like a kind of fortress, and, even though the refugees were besieged, they might be able to hold out for quite a long time.

One of the smaller caves was given entirely to the girls; and here, after they had received Lee's assurance that nothing exciting was likely to happen during the day, Irene & Co. went to sleep. They needed that sleep badly, too. They had had a tiring day, and they had been up all night. As a consequence, they slept soundly until the evening.

It was just the same with the St. Frank's fellows.

They were tired out, and not one of them awakened until the sun was setting. Lee and Dorrie and the other men had slept in turns, a constant watch being kept. But nothing had happened; the Indians had not shown themselves once. They were evidently waiting until night-fall, as Dicky Siggers had prophesied.

However, in the evening, something did happen. A large number of mounted Indians appeared at the end of the ravine, and they came galloping along in single file.

"Goin' to let fly as they shoot past," said Siggers. "Reg'lar Injun tactics, them. Can't hit us, if we keep low."

"Blowed if they ain't all in their war-paint!" said Hookey Webb, staring.

It was a fact. The Indians, naked to the waist, were wearing head-dresses of feathers, and it was clear enough that they were on the warpath now. They were like the Indians of old—their ancestors—and, although this modern type was not so formidable or so wily, they were sufficiently unpleasant.

It was a question of numbers, too. The Indians had received reinforcements during the day, and there were now several hundred Redskins ready for the attack.

As they went galloping past the cave mouth, they let fly with their arrows, or with their rifles. It was impossible to take any accurate aim, and most of the missiles struck harmlessly against the rocks. Not an arrow or a bullet actually came into the cave entrance.

The Apaches came back in the same way, yelling defiance as they galloped past the cave mouth at top speed.

"Jest gittin' themselves prop'ly worked up for the night's fun," said Siggers, nodding. "Same old game! I've seen it afore, pardners. They're savages, right enough—now."

Handforth came edging forward.

"Can't we do something, sir?" he asked.

"Yes, Handforth—you can get back towards the rear of the cave," replied Lee sharply.

"Oh, I say, what rot, sir!" protested Handforth. "We want to do our share of the scrapping. It's rotten, being kept back like this!"

"It's a pity you couldn't go on sleeping, young 'un," growled Lee. "I was afraid that you boys would want to be too active when you awoke."

"But aren't we going to do something, sir?" urged Handforth. "I mean, it's no good sticking here in this cave. Why can't we think of some wheeze to diddle these Indians?"

"That's easier said than done, sonny," remarked Siggers. "Thar's no way out o' this ravine, 'ceptin' at the end, an' I'm figgerin' thar's two or three hundred Injuns gathered thar. If we try to go

that way, we'll be wiped out in less'n five minutes."

"And if we show ourselves in this cave entrance, we shall be potted," put in Dorrie. "It's no good, Handy—we're in a nasty fix, and we've got to face it. Perhaps we shall be able to do something after darkness has fallen."

The schoolboys, of course, were eager enough to try their hand at something. They had had an excellent sleep, and they were feeling refreshed. Everybody had been allowed a drink of water, and there had been a certain amount of food distributed, too. But the supplies were meagre, and it was necessary to be very careful.

Lee had wanted the girls to have a bigger share of food and water than any of the others, but the girls refused. Everybody was more or less thirsty, but, so far, there had been no actual hardship. However, they all instinctively knew that the position would become grim and ugly if another day dawned without any real change in the situation.

Siggers had confidentially told Nelson Lee that the Indians were probably biding their time. It was their object to starve their enemies into submission—into surrender. Once the water supply gave out, the situation would become appalling. Even now it was sufficiently serious.

During the day, Nelson Lee had turned over a hundred ideas in his active mind, but not one of them seemed feasible. He had wondered if it would be possible to scale the cliffs—to escape from the ravine by that method. A careful examination of the rock sides had shown Lee that no such plan could be put into execution.

There was the main camp, of course, but this was situated quite a number of miles away, on the edge of the desert. There were some mechanics left there in charge of the motor tractors and the tents and the camp in general, but these men knew nothing of the predicament that the rest of the party was in. They would assume, no doubt, that the boys and girls had joined up with Lee, and that everything was going along smoothly. So there was no possibility of any help coming from the main camp.

And it was equally impossible to get word to the main camp.

The problem had to be faced. Somehow or other, Lee and his companions had to defeat the Indians without any help from an outside source.

"THIS is a fine game!" grumbled Handforth, as he joined Nipper and Tommy Watson and Travers and a few other juniors at the end of the cave. "Mr. Lee won't let us do anything, and we've just got to wait!"

"It's pretty rotten," said Nipper, nodding. "Think of the girls, too. They're having a bad time of it. We're besieged, and it's no good trying to think anything else."

"In fact, dear old fellows, we're in a pretty frightful sort of 'mess,'" said Travers. "I don't want to be pessimistic, but I'm hanged if I can see any way out. What can we do during the night? These Redskins will probably get up an attack, and we shall be kept busy until the morning. And by this time to-morrow evening we shall be dying of thirst. Hunger doesn't matter much—we can carry on for two or three days without grub—but without water we shall be madmen after forty-eight hours."

"It's no good talking like that, Travers," said Nipper gruffly. "We know the water's short, but it doesn't make it any better to remind us of it. Besides, all sorts of things might happen between now and to-morrow morning."

"Something's happened already," drawled Travers. "Perhaps I'm wrong, but I've got an idea that there's a tunnel just behind me, leading right into the cliff."

"A tunnel!" went up a chorus from the other boys.

"Something of that sort," nodded Travers. "I didn't say anything about it before because I might be wrong. But if any of you fellows are keen on exploring——"

"Are you trying to be funny, Travers?" asked Nipper, moving nearer. "Mr. Lee had a look round these caves, and he told us that there's no possible exit. There's not a crevice or a crack anywhere."

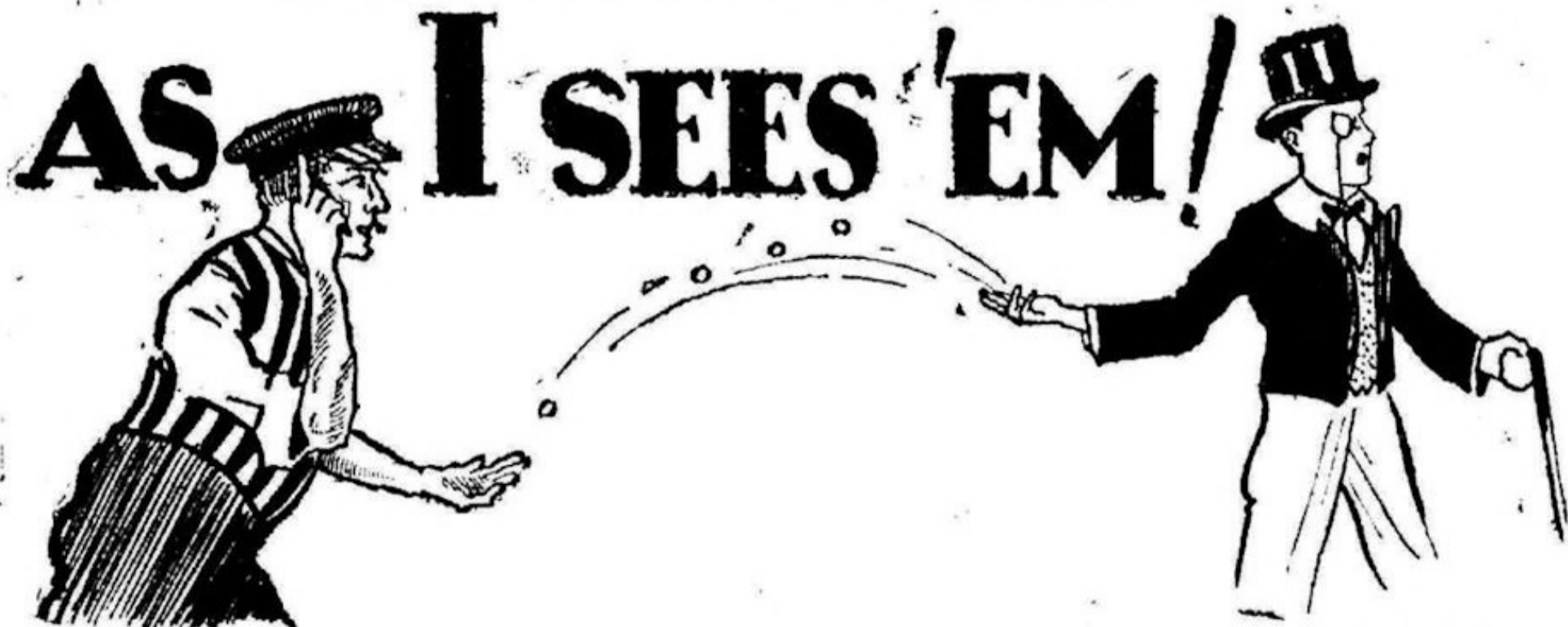
"That's what I thought, until I felt something loose when I leaned back against a rock," said Travers coolly. "It may interest you to know that I can feel a draught when I put my hand against a little opening here!"

CHAPTER 4.

Travers' Discovery!

"BY George! He's right, you chaps!" panted Handforth, a moment later. "There is a draught here! And this rock seems to be loose——"

(Continued on page 14.)



ST. FRANK'S, like every other big school—like every school, I expects—has its good and its bad 'uns. It's only natural like. As I often says to myself, I says this 'ere 'ud be a funny old world if there was no black sheep, as they calls these bad lads.

But I can say this about St. Frank's. On the whole they're as nice a lot of young gentlemen as you could ever wish to meet. I'll admit some of 'em lead me a fine dance at times—especially those there cheeky little rascals led by young Willy Handforth of the Third Form—but providing they doesn't get up to too much mischief I don't mind. I was young myself once, I says to myself, and kids will be kids. Good luck to 'em, I says!

What I does object to, however, is when they made personal remarks about my legs. Now I ask you, I can't help being bow-legged, can I? Many's the time I've chased the little rascals round the Triangle with a broom, but I'm wise to their game now.

In the Remove Form there's a whole heap of real nice young gentlemen. Nipper, Reggie Pitt and Handforth major are what I consider to be splendid types of British boyhood. That there Glenthorne fellow is a nice chap, too—only he's asleep half the time.

When he is awake, however, he's jolly generous with his money. Still, I've been told as 'ow he's got bags of it, so he can afford to keep on saying, "Here you are, Cuttle, take this!" Yes, I thinks a lot of Master Glenthorne—only I'd like him to keep awake more often!

I can't quite make up my mind about Master Travers. A likeable fellow he is—but many's the time I've seen him having a smoke on a quiet, and that's what I can't stand for. Smoke when you're older, I says, but not when you're young. This 'ere Master Travers is also, always causing me no end of trouble with that there dratted moty-

JOSH CUTTLE

is the school porter at St. Frank's, and as such has had excellent opportunities of judging the characters of the schoolboys. In this entertaining article he gives you a few of his impressions.

bike of his. Now if there's one thing I detests it's moty-bikes. Death-traps I calls 'em. And when you get somebody riding one of these 'ere things straight at you, and doing circles round you, and snatching your hat off as he dashes past, and generally putting the wind up you—well, I

asks you! Still, I've got to admit that Master Travers is generous with his tips, and so I'll say no more.

TALKING about tips—ah, how it makes my hands go all of a-tingle!—the fellow for these 'ere when he first came to St. Frank's was Master Singleton. His Honour—that's how I should speak of him, for he's one of these 'ere Honourables or something—flung money about like water, as the saying is, and I reaped a fair harvest, I can tell you. Nowadays he's not quite so lavish—"Hard lines, Josh!" says I.

The boy I dislike most in the Remove is Master Claude Gore-Pearce. Of all the snobs I've ever had the bad luck to meet he's the snobbiest of them all. No, I've no use for him—nor for his two precious pals, Gulliver and Bell, nor for those other young rascals in the Fourth Form, Merrell and Marriott. They're all of the same kidney, as the saying goes. I'd duck 'em all in that there fountain if I 'ad me own way.

A chap who I have the greatest admiration for is Edgar Fenton. He's the skipper bloke of St. Frank's, as you very well knows. A fine fellow this. I'd do anything for him.

And then there's that lanky bloke—that Fifth-Former named William Napoleon Browne. My, he could talk the hind leg off a donkey! And he always calls me "Brother Josh" for some unknown reason. I'm not his blinking brother at all!

Taking the masters, I likes Nelson Lee and Dr. Nicholls best. On the other hand, I'd do to that there nasty Mr. Pycraft the same as I'd do to Gore-Pearce and the others—chuck him in the fountain!

AT GRIPS WITH THE REDMEN!

(Continued from page 12.)

"Not so loud, dear old fellow," murmured Travers. "No need to let the girls know—or Mr. Lee, or Dorrie, either. We don't want to raise their hopes unnecessarily. This crevice may be too small for any of us to squeeze through. Let's be certain of it before we let on!"

Three or four slim figures approached from the dimness of the inner cave.

"You can't keep us out of it like that, you chaps," said Irene. "What's that you were saying about a crevice? Oh, if there's any way of escape——"

"My only hat! I didn't know you girls were listening!" said Handforth blankly.

"We weren't listening; but you speak so loudly, Ted, that we can't help hearing you," explained Doris. "Weren't you saying that there's a tunnel, or something?"

"I can't believe it," said Nipper. "We've been all over the caves, and they're all shallow. Still, we'd better make certain. Let's have a look at this place, Travers."

"With pleasure," said Travers, moving aside.

It was difficult to see anything at the back of the cave. A certain amount of daylight came in, but it was very subdued. Out in the front, Nelson Lee and the other men were on the alert—watchful—their weapons ready. They were taking no notice of what the boys and girls were doing at the rear. They were only too glad, in fact, that the young people were quiet for a moment.

"By Jove!" said Nipper breathlessly, after a brief examination. "You're right, Travers! There's a draught here, sure enough—and this big piece of rock seems to be a bit loose!"

"Let's all pull at it!" suggested Ena Handforth eagerly. "Come on, Ted!"

"You leave this to us, sis," said Handforth, frowning. "You girls had better keep aside. There might be some danger——"

"We're not afraid of danger," put in Irene.

"I'm not saying you are," replied Handforth. "But we don't want you to get injured, or anything. Supposing this chunk of rock falls over? I say, be sports, you know. Please leave it to us!"

It was no time for argument. The girls held back, and Nipper and Handforth and Travers, and one or two others, commenced pulling at the rock.

At first sight, it seemed that this rock wall was no different from any of the others. But Travers, having felt that draught, had had reason to make a closer examination, and he had found that a large slab of the rock was slightly movable.

Now, as the boys exerted their strength, they felt it moving perceptibly. They tugged and they pulled and they pushed and they heaved. And suddenly, without warning, two or three hundredweight of the stuff gave way. It did not actually collapse, but it swung aside, almost as though it were on a pivot.

"My only sainted aunt!" breathed Handforth tensely.

A yawning cavity was revealed—a black gap, extending back into the cliff.

"Easy, Handy," muttered Nipper. "Don't go climbing through there yet. We want to make certain that it's safe. By Jove! I'll bet that this is a relic of the old cliff-dwellers."

"You mean that this rock was fixed like that by human agency?" asked Irene.

"I believe so," said Nipper. "It couldn't be natural. It swung back too smoothly for that. I daresay it has been untouched for hundreds of years. At one time, perhaps, there were cliff-dwellers in this very cave. And if this really is a kind of back door, then it stands to reason that it must lead somewhere."

"Good gad!" said Archie. "I mean, escape, what?"

"Perhaps, Archie," said Nipper. "Before we tell Mr. Lee or any of the others, however, it's best to make sure. Who's got some matches?"

"I have!"

"Here's some, too!"

"I've got some candles!" said Handforth triumphantly. "When I started out from the main camp, I packed my outfit properly. I brought water and grub and ropes and candles and all sorts of things. I wanted to be on the safe side—ready for emergencies."

"Good man!" said Nipper heartily. "Give us one of those candles, Handy! You're a magician!"

"As the candles are mine, I'm going to do the exploring," said Handforth coolly.

They all wanted to go, but Nipper pointed out that it would be far more sensible if the majority of them remained behind. He and Handforth would venture into this black space, and they would light their candle after they were in. If they discovered something important, they would send word back, and then Nelson Lee could be told.

"Go ahead, then," said Reggie Pitt. "But don't be long! We'll watch here, in the entrance, and if you get into any sort of trouble, yell out. We'll hear you."

As it happened, however, there was a check at the very outset. Nipper was the first to squeeze through, and he found himself in a low, narrow tunnel. And it was fortunate that he struck a light when he did, for only a couple of yards further on the floor of the tunnel vanished. There was nothing but a gaping hole—a black, yawning abyss. Even when Nipper held his light out over this gap, he could see nothing. The bottom was invisible.

"My hat!" he breathed. "It's a good thing you didn't go first, Handy! You'd have fallen right down into this pit!"

"Rot!" said Handforth, who was just behind. "I'm not so reckless as all that, you chump! Do you mean to say that we can't go on? Can't you jump across?"

"Impossible!" said Nipper, holding his light out. "The tunnel doesn't go on—there's only this chasm."

"How deep is it?"

"Goodness knows!" said Nipper. "I can't see any bottom—and I can't hear anything, either. Hold still and listen—I'm going to throw a piece of rock down."

"Good wheeze!" said Handforth.

They waited tensely. Nipper threw a piece of loose stone into the black abyss, and, after an appreciable spell, there came the sound of a sharp impact.

"Must be sixty or seventy feet deep," said Nipper in a low voice.

"My only sainted aunt!"

"There's something solid down there, anyhow," went on Nipper. "Didn't you hear the rock strike? Pity we can't see down; but nothing short of a searchlight would be any good. And we can't climb down, because the sides are as smooth as glass—"

"How about going down on a rope?"

"That's not a bad idea," said Nipper. "Is there a rope handy? Some of you chaps can lower me—"

"Rot! I'll climb down!" said Handforth.

They crawled back, and they soon found that a rope was available. It was one that Handforth himself had brought; and, naturally, he wanted to be the fellow to do the exploring.

But, after a hurried council of war, it was decided that Nipper should be the investigator. So the rope was tied round his waist, and he crawled forward into the narrow opening again.

Most of the juniors had noticed that the air was filled with the pungent odour of burning wood, but they had paid no heed, even though this odour was becoming stronger and stronger.

Nipper took the candle and the matches with him, and he was lowered into the depths of that mysterious abyss. When he felt solid rock at his feet, he judged that he had been

lowered not less than fifty feet, and perhaps sixty. The air seemed pure, and he could distinctly feel a slight current.

"All right, down there?" came a hail from above, echoing strangely and eerily.

"Yes; I'm going to light the candle," replied Nipper. "I'm standing on something solid, and now I've got to see if I can make any more progress. I'll soon let you know."

He struck a match, lit the candle, and held the light above his head. He half expected to find himself at the bottom of a shallow pit, without any opening leading from it. Instead, he saw that there was a narrow, uneven opening just in front of him—big enough for him to squeeze through if he crouched low. Those at the top waited tensely.

"Well?" came Handforth's impatient voice.

"There seems to be a kind of tunnel," called Nipper. "How much rope have you got up there?"

"There's a good bit to spare," came Reggie Pitt's voice. "Thirty or forty feet of it. What are you going to do?"

"I'm going into this tunnel," replied Nipper, looking upwards. "Keep a tight hold of the end of that rope, because, if you drop it, I shall be in a fine mess. But let me have as much of it as possible."

"Go ahead!" said Reggie.

Up above, at the edge of the chasm, the watchers saw the light vanish. There was a flickering glow for a moment or two, and then complete darkness, although they could hear the echoing sounds of Nipper's foot-falls in the rock tunnel. The whole effect was rather uncanny.

"Hope he doesn't get himself into trouble down there," muttered Handforth, looking



worried. "You ought to have let me go, you asses! Phool! What's all this rotten smoke?"

"I don't know," said Church. "The cave seems to be full of it. We're all half-choked."

It was an anxious time, waiting for Nipper to give a signal, but it came at last. The light reappeared, and there was a tug on the rope.

"Better haul me up, you chaps," came Nipper's voice.

"Isn't it any good?" asked Pitt. "Can't you get anywhere?"

"I don't know—yet," replied Nipper. "There seems to be a tunnel leading right through the rocks. I went as far as the rope would allow me, and the tunnel goes straight on. There's a draught of air through it, so it must lead out somewhere."

"But what's the good of coming up?" asked Handforth. "Why don't you untie that rope and leave it dangling? Then go on and explore. But you'd better let me do it," he added, as an afterthought. "We'll haul you up, and then I'll go down."

Nipper was soon hauled up. Then he was dragged back into the cave, and he found himself surrounded by the schoolboys and schoolgirls.

"Do you think it's any good?" asked Irene eagerly. "I mean, is there a way through? Shall we be able to escape?"

"Steady," said Nipper. "It's impossible for me to form any opinion, really. As far as I went, the tunnel's quite all right—dry and safe. But how do we know how far it goes? It leads straight downwards, getting deeper and deeper into the earth. Before we do anything else, I think we'd better tell the gov'nor."

"Yes, and he'll probably forbid us to do any more exploring," said Handforth tartly. "You know what Mr. Lee is! We mustn't be exposed to any danger! We mustn't take any risks! We're so precious that if we hurt our little hands we shall——"

"Cheese it, Handy," said Nipper. "The gov'nor isn't as unreasonable as all that. Great Scott! What's all this smoke? What's happened up here?"

"Goodness knows," said Pitt. "We've been so busy with you that we haven't had time to make any inquiries. This smoke's been getting thicker and thicker all the time—and now it's nearly choking us!"

THEY did not realise that Nelson Lee and Lord Dorrimore were both filled with acute alarm at that moment.

The two men were crouching near the front of the cave, with their handkerchiefs to their noses and mouths; and old Dicky Siggers and Hookey Webb were also there. They were breathing with difficulty, and their eyes were smarting to such an extent that they could hardly see one another.

"Reckon it's gittin' worse, pardners," mumbled Siggers. "Wind's against us, for one thing. Blowin' the smoke right inter the cave. Mebbe it won't be so bad when thar's a blaze."

"It might be worse," said Lee grimly. "These Apaches are cunning! They'll either smoke us out, or burn us out! I don't suppose they particularly care which—as long as they annihilate us."

"It looks bad, gents," panted Hookey Webb. "This is on'y the beginnin', too. No tellin' wot these swabs'll get up to next."

"This is enough to be going on with," said Lord Dorrimore thickly.

The trouble had started nearly half an hour earlier. With the coming of darkness, the Indians had crept up in great numbers along the wall of the ravine, and each man had brought a big armful of brushwood and twigs and grass. This cave-mouth was ten or twelve feet above the floor of the ravine, and so the Indians had been able to creep up in comparative safety.

Even if the defenders had attempted to ward off this attack, they would not have met with much success. In the first place, it would have been risky to show themselves boldly over the rock ledge; and, in the second place, they did not quite care for the idea of shooting at the Redskins. It was a totally different thing when the Indians came charging down, shooting and letting fly with their arrows.

But now, abruptly, the situation had become acute.

Those great heaps of brushwood and grass had been set alight. All along the cliff face fires were smouldering, and vast clouds of smoke were rolling up into the cave entrance.

The objective of the move was obvious. The Indians, realising that there would be a lot of bloodshed if they maintained their former tactics, had decided to smoke their victims out—to force them to surrender.

And they looked like succeeding, too!

CHAPTER 5.

Into the Unknown!

THERE was a double peril here.

The smoke was bad enough—so bad, indeed, that Nelson Lee's head was already dizzy. The choking smoke fumes were beginning to affect him—and to affect the others in just the same way.

This danger was great enough; but what when the fires burst into fierce flame? The heat from those fires would come searing into the cave, the heat would become so intolerable that the occupants would have the choice of surrendering to the inflamed Redskins, or dying slowly.

"Trouble is, we can't do nothin' to stop 'em," grunted Siggers. "Reg'lar old game o' theirs, this—smokin' out their victims. Looks like we're done for, pardners."

"Wau! Would it not have been better, N'Kose, if we had faced these dogs in open battle?" asked Umlosi discontentedly. "Is it thus that we must die? Are we to be smoked out like insects from an unwanted nest? Are we to perish of suffocation whilst our weapons lie idle?"

"Well, old friend, it looks very much like it at the moment," said Lord Dorrimore, removing his protective handkerchief for a moment. "It's hard cheese on you. But how could we foresee this devilish dodge? Gad! We can't stand this much longer!"

"How about the boys an' gals?" asked Siggers, glancing round. "Guess they're gittin' a good bit o' this smoke, too, ain't they?"



Slowly Nipper was lowered into the depths of the mysterious abyss until at last he reached the bottom. Then, holding the candle above his head, he saw that he was in a narrow underground cave; and in front of him was a narrow uneven opening which led to—where?

"We're all getting it," replied Lee. "The cave is completely choked—every inch of it."

He was in an agony of anguish. What should he do? By tacit consent, he was the leader of this party, and it was for him to give the decision.

Should he signal to the Indians that he and his companions would surrender—or should the Indians be defied?

There seemed little choice either way. If they fell into the hands of the Indians, the result would be too awful to contemplate. If they stubbornly remained in this cave they would succumb, one after the other. They were in a trap—a trap that was appalling in its hopelessness!

EVEN as Nelson Lee was attempting to come to some decision, the flames broke through. From below came the crackling and roaring of the fires, the sound growing louder and louder. And now, suddenly, a lurid glare came into being. It increased rapidly, and flames came licking over the lip of the cave. A fearful blast of heat came surging into the cave, causing the men to stagger back, guarding their faces with their upraised arms.

"This," said Lord Dorrimore, "has definitely done it!"

"I'm afraid you're right, old man," panted Lee. "Within fifteen minutes this cave will be as hot as an oven. This is the end."

"'Tis a death of indignity and degradation," rumbled Umlosi. "Wau! Let us not submit, Umtagati! Let us rather leap down and give battle to these hounds!"

A tug came at Nelson Lee's sleeve, and he half turned.

"Nipper!" he muttered.

"What's happening, gov'nor?" asked Nipper breathlessly.

"I'm afraid, young 'un, that we're done," replied Lee hoarsely. "The Indians have brought piles of brushwood and grass up, and they have made bonfires all along the face of the cliff. The smoke was bad enough, but now that the fires are burning up the heat will do its work only too quickly—and only too thoroughly! There's no chance for us now!"

"Isn't it possible for us to fight them, sir?" asked Nipper.

"We can fight, but we shall all go under," replied Lee. "Such a result is absolutely inevitable. There are hundreds of these infernal savages in the ravine, and they are

waiting for us to emerge. Once we do so, they will spring on us in their hordes, and we shall not stand an earthly chance of surviving."

There came the sounds of choking and gasping from the rear of the cave. The other boys and the schoolgirls were feeling the effects of the tremendous heat—which was charged with acrid, choking fumes. The wind was carrying the flames over the lip of the cave, and into its interior.

"It's durned queer," Siggers was saying. "Like as if thar was a draught clean through, drawin' in the flames. Can't figger it out, nohow."

"There is a draught!" exclaimed Nipper eagerly. "That's why we're getting so much smoke—and so many fumes. Guv'nor, if we act quickly, there's a chance that we might hoodwink the Indians, after all!"

"My boy, what are you saying?" asked Lee, in agony.

"There's a way of escape—at the back of the cave, sir!"

"By the Lord Harry!" ejaculated Dorrie. "Am I mad, or is he?"

Nelson Lee seized Nipper by the shoulder.

"What do you mean, young 'un?" he asked steadily. "You know perfectly well that there is no exit from this cave—except the one that we now see before us."

"Travers found it, sir," said Nipper. "It's at the back, here—a great chunk of the rock moved aside, and we found a shaft descending into the cliff. There's a tunnel at the bottom—"

"You can call me a coyote if I didn't figger on somethin' like that!" ejaculated old Siggers. "So that's how thar comes to be a draught! Gosh! We'd best move quickly, pardners—an' make it snappy, too!"

"Let me see!" ejaculated Lee tensely.

A moment later his whole manner changed. He became alert and active. He took command of the situation in a second. Just when everything had seemed lost, there was this loophole!

Like pistol shots Lee's orders rang out. He gave instructions that Dorrie was to get down the shaft first. Once there, Dorrie was to wait—and the girls were to be lowered one by one, and Dorrie was to lead the way with the candle, the girls following him. Then the boys would go.

"What about you, guv'nor?" asked Nipper anxiously.

"I shall remain until the last," replied Lee. "We men can stand this inferno better than you youngsters. We can't have any arguments—we mustn't have any delay."

IT was a desperate chance, and there was always the possibility that the party would find itself trapped farther down in the bowels of the earth.

But there was nothing else to be done. There was this shaft and the tunnel waiting for them, and they had to take the risk. The Indians evidently knew nothing of that tunnel, and they would assume that the

refugees had succumbed, one by one. They would give the flames a certain amount of time, and then, perhaps, they would let the fires die down and climb into the cave.

But by that time, if all went well, the last of the fugitives would be clear away.

The girls proved themselves to be brave and active. They would not hear of adopting the method that Nelson Lee had suggested. They were not going to be lowered down, one after the other. The rope was fixed securely to the rocks at the top of the shaft, and then the girls quickly descended, hand over hand. One or two of them blistered their palms in this process, but they did not grumble. Indeed, it is doubtful if they knew of these minor injuries.

It was a merciful thing that they lost no time. The boys, of course, shinned down like young monkeys, and the fact that there was the possibility of escape gave them added strength. By the time the last of them went down, they were nearly suffocated. The fumes in the cave were terrible.

Far below, Lord Dorrimore was doing his part. He hated the idea of going first like this—knowing, as he did, that the biggest danger was up in that cave. But it was necessary that somebody should be in charge of the girls, and Dorrie had not dreamed of questioning Lee's instructions.

He led the way along the narrow, twisting tunnel. It went steeply downwards—so steeply, indeed, that it was difficult to gain an adequate foothold at times.

Behind Dorrie came Irene and Winnie and Doris and the other girls. Then the St. Frank's juniors—all pressing onwards, excited, breathless, and filled with hope and uncertainty.

Dorrie had no time to think of what might be happening to Nelson Lee and the other men. It was necessary for him to give all his attention to this present task. For the going was bad. There were pitfalls everywhere. At times he was compelled to halt and call out a warning.

By now he was rapidly recovering from the effects of those fumes. The air down here was cool and quite pure. There was a decided current coming from somewhere. There was no smoke—no reminder of that inferno in the cave.

And then, suddenly, the tunnel opened out. It became wider, higher, and it continued widening until it was revealed as a great natural cavern, with limestone sides and roof. Lord Dorrimore came to a halt, his figure just visible in the glow from his flickering candle. All around, on every side, there was the thick pitchy blackness of the cavern.

"Well, we've got somewhere, girls," said his lordship. "Thank goodness there's a bit more space! We can spread out here."

"Isn't it wonderful?" asked Marjorie, looking round and trying to pierce the darkness. "I thought that tunnel was going on for ever—and I thought it was descending

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right into the centre of the earth! But where are we? And what shall we do now?"

"Better wait until Mr. Lee shows up. I think," said Dorrie. "Let's be all together before we carry on. There's room for us here—and we can wait in comfort."

"I do hope that Mr. Lee gets through safely!" said Irene fervently.

"Where are we now?" came Handforth's voice, from somewhere in the rear. "Let go my arm, Church, you fathead! Keep your hands off me, Mac, blow you!"

Handforth came blundering forward with a number of other St. Frank's fellows. As the boys came tumbling out of the narrow tunnel, they spread out in this cavern, filled with wonder and awe. They were overwhelmingly relieved, too, to find that the tunnel did lead somewhere. They had been momentarily fearing that the tunnel would end without warning. They had all felt so cramped while they had been compelled to proceed in single file.

"By George! This cavern stretches out for a tremendous way," said Handforth,

blundering forward. "Who's got a light? Why don't you come on, Dorrie? It's as black as ink out here!"

"We're going to wait until Mr. Lee comes, Ted," said Irene.

"But why?" asked Handforth. "Why not carry on and find out where this cavern leads to? Mr. Lee's bound to be here within a minute or two."

"In that case, we might as well stop," said Nipper. "My hat! What a mercy to breathe some cool air! Those fumes were beginning to choke us!"

"Another ten minutes of them, my lad, and we should have been done for!" said Dorrie.

"Why aren't the other men here?" said Reggie Pitt anxiously. "Where's Mr. Lee? And what about old Siggers and Hookey and Umlosi? They ought to have followed us——"

"They'll be coming," said Dorrie steadily. "No need to get the wind up yet. Give them time."

"I say!" came a hail from Handforth, who was some little distance ahead. "There's

a rummy sound here—and it seems to be getting hotter, too. I believe there's some steam——"

"Come back, you fathead!" came Church's voice. "Wait until you get a proper light——"

"I can take care of myself," interrupted Handforth. "There's nothing to be afraid of. But it's so confoundedly dark that I can't see—— Whoa! What the—— Hi! I'm slipping——"

"Grab him!" yelled Mac.

There came the sounds of scrambling and scuffling and heavy breathing. Lord Dorri-more ran forward with the candle, and some of the boys and girls pressed after him.

They found Handforth sprawling on the rocky floor, with Church and McClure clinging to him. And there, just in front, was a black expanse of water. A damp heat was rising from it, and, as the light of Dorrie's candle fell upon the surface, he could see that it was bubbling!

"Ye gods!" ejaculated his lordship. "I'm hanged if this water isn't boiling!"

CHAPTER 6.

Getting Exciting!

"STEADY, pard—steady!" said Dicky Siggers, in a hoarse whisper.

"I'm all right," muttered Hookey Webb. "I ain't dead yet, matey! Takes more'n this to kill a tough old bloke like me! But I ain't sayin' that roastin' alive appeals to me much. Lummy! Now I know wot the Sunday joint feels like when it's shoved in the old gas-oven!"

"You men all right?" came Nelson Lee's voice.

"We ain't exac'ly all right, mister, but we're still alive," said Siggers. "You'd best come with us. The boys have all gone down."

They were at the back of the cave, and Nelson Lee was the last to pass through that narrow crevice, with Umlosi just ahead of him. Dicky Siggers and Hookey Webb were at the brink of the chasm, and Hookey was on the point of lowering himself. All these men were reeling with dizziness. They were finding it difficult to breathe.

Even as Nelson Lee was in the act of passing through the crevice, he beheld a number of demoniac forms scrambling over the lip of the cave. They were Indians, half naked, and they did not seem to care about the heat.

Outside, in the ravine, the fires were blazing less furiously, but they were still formidable. The Indians, no doubt, had improvised a sort of ladder arrangement which bridged the fires. Now they were climbing up like monkeys, and charging into the cave!

They thought, no doubt, that the white people here half dead, and they had now come to finish them off. Instead, they caught sight of Nelson Lee as he squeezed his way through that narrow opening at the back of the cave.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Lee's automatic spoke sharply and quickly. Several screams pierced the air, and some of the Indians fell. The rest came charging madly forward, uttering blood-curdling shouts.

"It's a pity!" said Lee grimly. "I did not want the Redskins to see which way we had gone. I did not want them to know how we had escaped from the cave. We were just a moment too late!"

Crash!

He managed to get that mass of rock back into its original position. Dicky Siggers and Umlosi helped him, and it was Umlosi's strength, perhaps, which did most of the work. Anyhow, the rocks were thrust back, and it might take the Indians a considerable time to discover the secret.

"'Tis not as I would like, Umtagati," growled Umlosi. "Wau! Not once have I been able to use my spear! Was I not hoping to give battle to these curs?"

"Perhaps you'll get another chance, Umlosi," said Nelson Lee. "For the moment we must be content that we have escaped the fate that the Indians planned for us. Heaven only knows what lies in wait for us at the bottom of this abyss! Let us hope that the young people are still safe."

"Thou art right, my master," said Umlosi. "There is N'Kose, too. It is well that we should join him."

Lee would have felt more comfortable if he could have jammed that mass of rock in some way, but a quick examination showed him that such a thing would not be easy. And, anyhow, the Indians might not get through.

Even if they did, they would not prove dangerous. For what could they do in such a confined space as this? They could only attack in single file, and the white men could deal with them with comparative ease.

So, on the whole, the position was vastly improved.

Hookey Webb went down the rope first, to be followed by Siggers and Umlosi. The Kutana chieftain wanted Nelson Lee to go next, but Lee would not hear of it. He insisted upon being the very last.

"Since it is thy wish, Umtagati, it is not for me to question thy will," rumbled the giant black. "But do thou come with all speed."

They went down the tunnel in single file. Before venturing upon this part of the journey, Nelson Lee had secured the rope. He had left it hitched in such a way for his own descent that he could quickly release it after getting to the bottom. That rope might be needed later, and, in any case, it would be folly to leave it there for the Indians, in case they got past the rock barrier.

"Looks like them others have got clear away somewhere," said Hookey, as he stumbled on. "No sign of 'em down 'ere, anyhow. Who would have thought that this tunnel went right down into the cliff like this?"

THE ST. FRANK'S QUESTIONNAIRE!

Here are twelve testers for you, chums—questions which refer to St. Frank's and its members. Give them the "once-over," jot down the answers to those which you know, and then compare them with the correct list which will be given, together with another set of questions, next week.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1.—What is the name of the river which flows near St. Frank's?</p> <p>2.—Who is the school doctor?</p> <p>3.—Who is William Napoleon Browne's inseparable chum?</p> <p>4.—What is the name of the old house near Bellton which used to be a school?</p> <p>5.—Where is the old ruined mill situated?</p> <p>6.—What is Juicy Lemon's Christian name?</p> <p>7.—What is the colour of Doris Berkeley's eyes?</p> <p>8.—Who is the "cat" of the Moor View School?</p> | <p>9.—Who are the occupants of Study B, in the Ancient House?</p> <p>11.—What is the name of the village iron-monger?</p> <p>12.—Who are the twins of St. Frank's?</p> |
|--|--|

ANSWERS TO LAST WEEK'S QUESTIONS

1. *Sir John Brent, Bart.* 2. *Josh Cuttle has bow-legs.* 3. *This study is not occupied.* 4. *Professor Sylvester Tucker.* 5. *Joseph.* 6. *Mrs. Poulter.* 7. *Arthur Morrow.* 8. *Two—Edith and Ena.* 9. *Dora Manners.* 10. *Tubbs.* 11. *Lionel Corcoran.* 12. *Cuthbert Chambers.*

"It don't surprise me none," said Siggers. "All along the Chichon Mesa thar's tunnels an' caves like this—most of 'em relics of the old cliff dwellin's, I guess. You ain't seen nothin' yet, pardners. I could show you cliff dwellin's that would make your hair stand on end. Like catacombs, burrowin' inter the cliffs fer miles. Yep, an' skeletons, too—an' long shelves wi' rows of skulls on 'em. All sorts o' queer sights I could show you."

"We've seen quite enough to satisfy us for the moment, Siggers," said Nelson Lee dryly. "Let us be thankful that we have escaped from the Indians, if only temporarily. If we can get out of this ravine——"

"Lights ahead!" sang out Hookey Webb, his voice trembling with excitement.

A MINUTE later they joined the main party in that strange subterranean cavern. There were shouts of satisfaction and many cracked cheers.

"It's the guv'nor!" yelled Nipper. "Oh, good egg! They've all got down safely!"

"Hurrah!"

"We're all together now. We're all safe."

"Thank goodness!"

"What about the Indians, sir?"

"Unfortunately, some of them got into the cave just before we left," said Lee. "They know how we escaped, and that means, perhaps, that they will get that rock door open and follow us. We must lose no time in pressing on——"

"Sorry, old man, but it can't be done," said Lord Dorrimore.

"You mean that there is no exit from this place?" asked Lee sharply.

"None that we can find, anyhow," said his lordship. "And there's something else, too. We called a halt here, on purpose to wait for you, but we didn't realise that we had only just halted in the nick of time.

Do you know that there's a boiling stream just over there, in the darkness?"

"You don't surprise me," said Siggers, nodding. "All this region is more or less volcanic, an' I've seen boilin' streams before now. Most of 'em underground, too. Whar's this one, anyway?"

Dorrie pointed.

"Handforth nearly fell into it," he explained. "In fact, if it hadn't been for Church and McClure, he'd probably have been dead by now."

"Oh, I say, sir!" protested Handforth.

"We haven't been able to examine it thoroughly, but it seems to me that there's no way across," said Dorrie. "It's not exactly a stream, but a lake. A sort of overflow, or something. The water extends right across the cavern, and it's so broad that we couldn't hope to jump it."

"Let me see," said Nelson Lee.

Two or three candles were alight, and Nelson Lee and the other men walked to the edge of the boiling pool, where they held their candles aloft.

They could dimly see the other side of the water, and Lee's eyes gleamed. The cavern narrowed towards that end, but it seemed to Lee that there was a continuation of the tunnel beyond.

"You say this water is boiling?" he asked, staring down at the black, steaming pool.

"Yes."

"Do you mean literally boiling, Dorrie?"

"Well, we saw bubbles coming up," said his lordship. "I didn't actually plunge my hand into it to test it. Man alive! Look at the steam! Look at those bubbles, too! Can't you see them?"

"Mebbe it's only air comin' through the water," suggested Siggers. "I've seen it before now. I don't reckon this water is actually b'ilin', but I guess it's too hot



With the rope fixed securely to the rocky roof it became an easy matter to cross the pool of boiling water. One swing and over came Irene Manners, to be deftly caught by Nelson Lee. Then followed the rest of the party, one by one.

fer comfort. It'd sure take the skin off your back."

He went on his knees, bent down, and dipped the tip of one of his fingers in the water.

"Darnation!" he ejaculated. "If this water ain't b'ilin', I'm a chunk o' cactus!"

"It's fully fifteen feet across," said Nelson Lee thoughtfully. "We can't leap it, and yet we must do something. Are you sure there's no way round, Dorrie?"

"None whatever," said Lord Dorrimore. "We've examined it thoroughly, Lee. We can't bridge it, either. We haven't any materials."

"Yet we must get across," pointed out Lee. "Those Indians might discover the secret of that rock at any moment, and then they'll follow us."

"We can hold that tunnel easily, though," said Siggers.

"That's not the point," replied Lee. "We don't want to fight the Indians in a confined space like this. It will be much better if we can get out into the open."

"Sure thing, mister. But how're we goin' to git thar?" demanded the Arizona man. "We can't jump, an' we can't build a bridge. I'm figgerin' that we're in another mess."

"Not yet," said Lee grimly. "Hold your candle high above your head, Dorrie. You others do the same! There might be a chance——"

He broke off, catching his breath in sharply. The roof of the cavern was high here. It arched above grimly, jagged and uneven. The rocks could just faintly be seen in the candlelight. And there, below, was that pool of black, boiling water.

It was not actually black, of course; it only appeared to be so. Nipper and Travers and some of the others—including the girls—had already scooped out some of the water, or they had soaked their handkerchiefs in it. After it had cooled they had found that it was sweet and fresh and quite drinkable. Many of them had thus been enabled to get relief from their parching thirsts.

It was a tip which the others followed, and now, as Nelson Lee studied the problem, practically everybody was securing a drink. Even that hot water was glorious to partake of. Ice-cold water would have been better, but in such circumstances as these nobody thought of grumbling. Water was water, anyhow.

"Yes," said Lee suddenly. "I think it can be done."

"You mean—that we can get across, sir?" asked Nipper tensely.

"Yes," replied Lee, "and the sooner we can commence the operations, the better."

CHAPTER 7.

Out of the Frying Pan——

"WHAT'S the idea, pard?" asked Dicky Siggers curiously.

Nelson Lee pointed.

"Fortunately, the roof of this cavern is not smooth," he said. "See! There are plenty of jagged projections. The rock is uneven and rough. I think we ought to be able to loop the rope round one of those projections."

"Gosh! I got you!" said Siggers. "It's sure a dandy scheme, mister! Swing across, eh?"



With the rope fixed securely to the rocky roof it became an easy matter for Irene Manners, to be deftly caught by Nelson Lee.

"It's the only possible way," nodded Nelson Lee.

It was a perfectly simple scheme, and only feasible because of the jagged nature of the cavern roof. If there had been no projections, it would have been impossible to secure the rope.

BUT as it was, Nelson Lee, after one or two throws, succeeded in looping the end of the rope tightly round one of the protruding rocks. He pulled it

fight, and made certain that it was hooked safely.

But even now there would be an enormous risk for the first one who went across. Perhaps the rope would slip—perhaps the rock would break. And if either of these things happened the unfortunate man would be plunged into that boiling water, to die an appalling death.

Yet this chance had to be taken by somebody.



is the pool of boiling water. One swing and
ved the rest of the party, one by one.

"Waal, let's go!" said Siggers carelessly. "I reckon I'll be the first over, pardners."

"No; I'll go first," said Lee.

"Thou art surely mad, Umtagati," said Umlosi, with scorn. "What has become of they wits, O my master? Surely I am the one to go first? For am I not heavier than all the others—and thus, if this rope holds me, is it not certain that it will hold the rest?"

"A sound argument, Umlosi, but this is my idea, and I'm going to take the chance,"

replied Lee quietly. "But you needn't think that I shall do anything rash. I've no desire to be boiled alive."

He pulled on the rope, and Dorrie helped him, too. It withstood the strain well, and there was no sign of the rock snapping; or of the rope slipping off. Lee had pulled the knot tight, and it was gripping securely.

Lee suddenly leapt back, swung himself up, gripped the rope, and then went soaring out over the black, steaming water.

"Oh!" went up a general shout.

But it was all over in a second. Lee reached the other side, dropped, and they heard the sound of his shoes slithering on the rock. He recovered his balance, and stood there, holding the rope.

"All right!" he said coolly. "Dorrie, send the girls over first. Here's the rope—take care that you secure it, or it might dangle right over the centre of the stream, out of reach."

He gave the rope a heave, and it came across, to be seized by Dorrie and several of the boys.

"There's a tunnel here," went on Lee, after he had relighted his candle. "It's pretty wide, too—and there is a distinct current of air coming through it. Perhaps we shall have some luck, after all. Hurry up, over there!"

IT was, of course, an easy matter for the entire party to bridge that deadly stream. One swing, and Irene Manners was over, to be deftly caught by Lee. Then came Doris Berkeley and Marjorie Temple and the other girls. After that, the boys.

It was all done methodically, swiftly, and in businesslike way. Long before the last man came over the rope had proved its worth. Not once had it given any sign of slipping or breaking.

Dorrie himself was the last one over. But, just before he came, he stood quite still, as though listening, and he was staring back into that narrow tunnel beyond the cavern.

"What is it, Dorrie?" asked Lee, from the other side.

"My imagination, perhaps, but I'll swear I heard some sounds a minute ago," replied Lord Dorrimore. "I'm wondering if those infernal Indians have followed us."

"You'd better come across, anyhow."

"I'm coming," said Dorrie. "I don't want to give the Redskins a chance of— Good glory! I was right! Here they are! I can see lights now—flaming torches! They're coming after us!"

"Oh, my hat!"

"And we thought that we'd dished them, too!"

"Great Scott!"

Lord Dorrimore swung across the stream, and he was immediately caught by Lee.

"Quick!" ejaculated Lee. "The rope! We can't leave it there—for the Indians to use!"

"But how can we get it down?" asked Dorrie.

"This way!" replied Nelson Lee. "Hookey—Siggers! Umlosi! All pull on this—and use all your strength."

They understood. Grasping the rope securely, they gave a tremendous tug in unison. There came a great "twang," followed by the abrupt snapping of the rope. It parted, fortunately, near the roof, so very little of it was wasted.

The tunnel on this side was big. It was wide and high, and this meant much greater speed for the fugitives.

Not that it was possible to rush headlong into that tunnel. Those who led the way carried candles, and they examined the ground before they ventured upon it. At any moment there might be another chasm in the floor, ready to receive any unwary mortal who neglected to take precautions.

There was no doubt about the advent of the Indians. They were coming in great numbers, running along the narrow tunnel, carrying big flaring torches. Perhaps they saw the last members of the party vanishing into the opposite tunnel, and they came running on into the cavern, uttering wild yells. They ran blindly, madly, for they were worked up into a tremendous pitch of excitement and fury.

It was evident that they knew nothing of the boiling stream in that cavern. For the foremost Indians, running on, had no time to check themselves. They must have believed that the cavern was entirely covered by the rock floor.

"Great glory!" ejaculated Dorrie, aghast.

He had turned his head just as he was about to enter the tunnel, and he had seen the catastrophe. Eight or nine of the Indians, rushing forward to the attack, had plunged headlong into that boiling pool!

There arose a hideous outcry. Agonised screams, a tremendous plunging of water, and cries of deadly anguish. Then, for a brief spell, silence—this silence to be superseded by a greater outcry than ever.

"Poor devils!" muttered Dorrie, with a shiver. "I didn't want them to meet a fate like that! Yet we couldn't warn them."

He halted, fascinated by the horror of that scene. It was like some terrible nightmare.

The cavern was lurid with the torches of the Indians. And there, in the flickering light, the painted figures of the Redskins could be dimly seen. The shadows leapt to the roof, casting grotesque shapes on the rock. The boiling water was disturbed and angry, and now great masses of steam were rising. The unfortunate Indians who had plunged in were still. Mercifully, they had died quickly.

As for the others, they stared fascinatedly—brought to a full realisation of the truth with a sudden, abrupt shock. Indeed, they were terrified. With one accord, they now turned on their heels and fled.

"**W**E'RE getting somewhere, anyhow," said Handforth eagerly.

"Yes, rather!"

"I'll bet we come out in the open—probably in another ravine," said Handforth. "By George! We'll diddle those rotten Indians yet! Once we get out into the open, we needn't be afraid of 'em. They won't be so keen on attacking us on the open ground. It was different in that ravine—"

"We're not out of the wood yet, Handy," said Nipper.

They were pressing on, side by side, and just in front of them the girls were hurrying. Nelson Lee was in advance, with Dicky Siggers. The light from their candles was feeble, but it sufficed. Ordinarily, Nelson Lee carried a powerful electric torch—and, for that matter, so did Nipper. On this trip, however, they had never dreamed that they would have any uses for electric torches. They had travelled light, wearing nothing but shorts and open-necked shirts. They did not wish to be bothered with any apparently unnecessary articles.

"The air's getting cooler!" called Dorrie. "I can feel it on my face! I believe we're getting near to the exit!"

"Hurrah!"

"Oh, let's hurry!"

"How glorious it will be to see the stars again—to be out under the open sky!"

They were all talking excitedly; they were all worked up to a great pitch. And then, just when they were hoping for the best, Nelson Lee made the grim discovery.

He found himself at the end of the tunnel, and, almost without realising it, he went plunging out into the open air. But in the same instant he checked and fell back. His heart had given a little jump, and now it was beating more rapidly than usual.

"Back! Back!" he exclaimed huskily. "Good heavens! What an extraordinary thing!"

"What is it, gov'nor?" panted Nipper, pushing forward.

"Keep back, Nipper!" urged Lee. "And see that the other boys and girls keep back, too! Don't you understand? We're still in that accursed ravine!"

"My only sainted aunt!" muttered Nipper
(Continued at foot of opposite page.)

The POPULAR
Every Tuesday 2d



Handforth undertakes to answer, in his own unique fashion, any question "N.L." readers care to submit to him. But, although of a certainty the results will be amusing and entertaining, the Editor takes no responsibility for their veracity.

Write to Handforth, c/o the NELSON LEE LIBRARY, to-day.

DOUGLAS GORDON (Newport, Isle of Wight).—You're the first person who's ever started their letter with "Dear Ossey." I wondered who you meant at first. I can't say I care for that abbreviation of my second name. Makes me think I'm an ostrich. Hope you have a good holiday at Bognor, although I've heard that it always rains in Wales. (Don't take any notice of Handy, Douglas. He's got Bognor mixed up with Bangor.—Ed.)

"INQUISITIVE" (Leigh-on-Sea), asks me a very perplexing question. He—at least, I take it he's a he and not a she, but if he isn't a he and he's a she, she's only got herself to thank for not telling me she's a she—wants to know if my fists are ever sore. Why should they be sore, you chump?

ERNEST HOLMAN (Leyton).—Oh, here you are again, eh? Just as cheeky and as silly as ever, too. I showed your fatheaded menu suggestions to Fatty Little, and he was quite bucked. He admitted he didn't think even he could get through ten plates of egg and bacon for breakfast, two roasted bullocks for dinner, 600 jam-tarts, 400 doughnuts, 400 meringues, 200 cream-buns for tea, but he's quite willing to do his best—providing you supply all the said grub at your own expense. That just serves you right, Ernest, for daring to make such a disgraceful and gluttonous suggestion. Your other suggestions on dress were not appreciated by Archie Glenthorpe. He looked at them with a kind of glassy stare, shuddered, and then collapsed.

F. U. N. KNEE (London) wants to know where flies go in the winter-time. I've never followed one, old man, so I can't tell you definitely. Here's a suggestion you might

like to try out, however. Catch a fly just before winter starts, then tie a note to one of its legs giving your name and address and asking the finder to let you know where he discovered the fly. How's that for a brainy suggestion?

W. MARCHANT (Stevenage).—I'm surprised at your not knowing that Captain Cook discovered America, my lad. Any boy who doesn't know this elementary information is a prize duffer.

THOMAS PEGG (Winnipeg).—Some of you readers are extraordinary people. This chap wants me to describe Winnipeg to him—and he lives in Winnipeg himself! What's the game, Thomas? Are you trying to catch me? If you are, then you're unlucky. What I don't know about Winnipeg would fill a postage stamp. It consists of houses, and shops, and streets, down which run motor-cars and trams. Write and let me know if that description is O.K.—and I bet you my best Sunday topper that I haven't got a single detail wrong.

"PUDSEY" (Leeds).—You asked me to sign your letter "Pudsey" and I'm doing so. You were born there, were you? I bet Pudsey has been regretting it ever since! You're not the first chap to ask if St. Frank's is ever going to visit the moon? Well, why shouldn't they? All we want is a special kind of aeroplane or airship that'll travel through space. Nothing easier. Why, it'll only take me a few ticks to think out a marvellous idea, and then only a few hours to complete my invention. I'll see if I can find time to start on it straight away after I've finished this week's replies.

EDWARD OSWALD.

The tunnel came right out into the ravine, and, amazingly enough, it came out only a short distance away from the original cave! There, in full sight, were the fires, still burning, and the ravine was filled with

Indians, too! What was more to the point, the Indians had seen Lee—or, at least, they had seen the candle just before he had snuffed it out. And now large numbers of the Redskins were racing up, yelling menacingly.

After all this strenuous excitement, the fugitives had fallen out of the frying-pan into the fire! They were almost back at their starting-point, and there was no possible way of escape!

CHAPTER 8.

Between Two Perils!

NELSON LEE was terribly disappointed. He knew, from past experience, that it was the height of folly to "count one's chickens before they were hatched," but on this occasion he had at least hoped that the tunnel would lead out into some gully or canyon well clear of the Indian horde.

So it was a shock to find that it led out into that self-same ravine. Obviously the tunnel merely penetrated into the mountain, circled round, and then doubled back. But it had been difficult, in the tunnel, to keep any sense of direction. Even Nelson Lee had found himself at a loss, and, at a random guess, he had believed that the tunnel would lead out into an adjoining canyon.

He stood there, just near the exit, his brain working rapidly. The Indians were already preparing for an immediate rush. Something would have to be done quickly. But what? The situation was even more desperate than before.

Overhead, above the crags, a flickering

bluish-purple flare showed for a moment, shuddering away into blackness again.

Lee was only half conscious of it, but he knew that there was lightning playing. An electrical storm was brewing—just as though this night was not disturbed enough as it was! He thought he heard the rumbling of thunder, but, with the yelling of the Indians and the crackling of the fires round the other cave, it was difficult to distinguish any particular sounds.

"What are we going to do, guv'nor?" asked Nipper breathlessly.

"We must make a fight for it, Nipper," replied Lee, compressing his lips. "There's no escape for us, at all events. The Indians have worked themselves up into a pitch of fury that is beyond all hope. They have thrown scruples to the winds, and they mean to wipe us out. If they once get to close quarters with us, the end will be swift. They will have no mercy."

"Look out, sir! There's a crowd coming this way!" panted Nipper. "Great Scott! What an ugly mob!"

Lord Dorrimore came pushing forward, with Dicky Siggers. They knew the worst, for bad news travels rapidly, and everybody in the party had heard the startling news.

"Just in time!" snapped Lee. "Down, Dorrie! You, too, Siggers! Are your rifles ready? Good! Let them have a volley!"

Crack! Crack! Crack!



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The rifles spurted fire and lead, and some of the charging Indians fell, screaming and writhing. The rifles spoke again, and more Indians fell. Arrows spattered round the cave entrance.

"What shall we do, sir?" asked Nipper, from the rear.

"You boys had better guard the tunnel at the back!" called Lee, as he prepared to fire again. "You've got rifles, haven't you? Get the girls between us, and see that they are not exposed to any danger!"

"Right, sir!" said Nipper, twirling on his heel.

He rushed back, his ears filled with the noise of the firing and the diabolical yells of the Redskins. It was unnecessary for him to repeat Nelson Lee's orders. The schoolboys and schoolgirls had heard, and they were quickly preparing.

"Why can't we help at the cave entrance?" demanded Handforth. "That's where the fight's going on! There aren't any Indians in the rear. They've been stopped by that boiling river!"

"They may get across it, Handy. Anyhow, we've got to guard this part of the tunnel."

"And we've got to be kept out of danger," said Irene bitterly. "Are we so helpless? Can't we lend a hand somewhere?"

"Guv'nor's orders, Renie," said Nipper. "Some of us may get wounded, and then you girls will come in useful as nurses."

"I hope we remain idle," said Doris fervently.

WITH remarkable speed the besieged party organised itself. All the men took charge of the cave entrance, and so good were their defensive tactics that the Indians, after the first attack, retired beaten. They left several dead and a number of wounded.

"This ain't nothin' to what they'll do soon," said Siggers. "They didn't figger on us comin' out o' this cave, so they wasn't prepared. But now they're on to us, they'll soon get busy."

"Well, we've got a bit of a respite, anyhow," said Dorrie. "By the Lord Harry, we're having some excitement to-night!"

"Yes, matey, an' it looks like finishin' up in a bust o' glory," said Hookey Webb. "I didn't mean you gents to come into any danger like this 'ere. I s'pose you're feelin' that I was a blamed old fool to—"

"Aw, ferget it, Hookey!" broke in Siggers. "We ain't sore. An' we ain't dead yet, neither. Thar's plenty of ammunition left, an' thar's plenty o' spirit in us."

"True words, O man of the desert," said Umlosi. "N'Kose, it is well that I should venture forth with my spear," he added, turning to Dorrie. "For have I not been idle long enough? I, the warrior king of the Kutanas! What manner of fight is this that I should lurk behind and allow my spear to go unstained?"

"The trouble is, Umlosi, you'd have just one glorious bust up and then you'd go

under," said his lordship, shaking his head. "I'm not doubting your courage, old friend, and I know that you'd wipe out about a score of these blighters in next to no time. But you're not a magician, and your life isn't charmed. You're too valuable to be wasted like that."

"Wasted, my father?" asked Umlosi. "Wasted, if I account for a score of these vermin?"

"You're worth more than twenty score of them," replied Dorrie. "I dare say you'll get your chance later on, Umlosi, but for the moment I'd rather you kept here, in cover."

"Thy words, N'Kose, are sufficient," rumbled the giant black. "It is for me to obey."

During the lull, Irene & Co. discovered that there was a large number of broken rocks



just inside the cave. Fragments of limestone, loose and handy. And, without being told, they commenced hauling these to the front of the cave.

"Hallo! What's this?" asked Dorrie. "More ammunition? Afraid it won't be of much use—"

"We thought you could build a kind of barrier," said Winnie. "The Indians might make a rush soon, and—"

"Splendid idea!" put in Nelson Lee. "Yes, by all means. But you had better get some of the boys to bring these rocks —"

"Not likely!" burst out Ena. "Oh, I say, Mr. Lee! Can't we girls do *anything*? It's *too* bad!"

"Go ahead, then!" chuckled Lee. "I wouldn't hurt your feelings for worlds!"

The girls had scored a minor victory, and they worked like Trojans. Afterwards, they hardly remembered how they had carried those enormously heavy chunks of rock to the front of the cave. They struggled and strained, and worked off a tremendous amount of stored-up excitement and energy. It was something for them to do, and they did it valiantly. What was more to the point, this work of theirs unquestionably proved of tremendous value. Without that barricade of rock, Lee or Dorrie or some of the other men might have got killed—or badly wounded, at all events.

For within a few minutes of the barricade's erection a regular bombardment com-

menced. Rifles cracked, and arrows came clattering against the rocks.

Now and again there would be a bluish glare up in the sky, and the intervals between these flashes were becoming shorter. Occasionally, a rumble, deep and menacing, made itself heard above the local din.

"**B**Y George!" said Handforth. "They are coming!"

"Now we're for it, dear old fellows!" said Travers. "Got your rifles ready?"

"Absolutely!" said Archie Glenthorpe, his voice crisp and alert. "What ho! Now for the good old battle! They shall not pass, what? I'm dashed if this doesn't remind me of that chappie Horatius, minding the good old bridge!"

"It's something like it," said Travers coolly. "Indians to the rear of them, Indians to the right of them—I mean, Indians in front of them. Indians, in fact, all over the confounded place!"

There was another rock barricade towards the rear, and many of the St. Frank's fellows were crouching behind this, their rifles ready. Now they could see numbers of the Redskins coming down the wide, lofty tunnel. They were carrying great flares, and they were advancing hurriedly, and with raucous yells.

"Better let them have it!" said Nipper grimly.

Crack, crack, crack!

The juniors hesitated until the very last; their hearts were thumping madly. Then, when they remembered Nelson Lee's orders, they pulled their triggers. Their rifles became alive, and the reports thundered and echoed in the tunnel.

Several of the leading Indians fell, but the rest pressed on.

"Steady!" said Nipper. "Keep cool, you chaps! Let 'em have another volley!"

The rifles cracked again, and more Indians fell. This battle was becoming grim. It seemed impossible that the defenders could last out much longer against such numbers.

The position was, in all truth, desperate. The Indians had evidently found a means of getting across that boiling stream, and now the white party was attacked from the front and from the rear. If there was any crumbling of the defences, the end would be swift. The Indians would break through, and then—

"Oh!" gasped Church, in agony.

He had been about to reload his rifle, and the weapon clattered to the floor. He sagged back, and Handforth, twirling round, uttered a hoarse cry. In the dim, flickering light from the Indians' torches, he saw that Church was slithering down against the wall, an arrow having pierced him.

"Churchy!" panted Handforth.

"I—I'm all right!" muttered Church. "Don't bother about me. Keep the Indians back! Keep them back, you chaps! If

they once get through— The girls— Don't let them get through!"

"Let us have him!" said Irene quickly.

She and some of the other girls were ready; they quickly seized Church, and carried him off into the comparative safety beyond—between the two defence forces. It was dark there, but the girls were ready with bandages—hastily improvised bandages, torn, mostly, from their own frocks.

"Churchy!" muttered Handforth hoarsely. "They've got him! Poor old Churchy has been killed!"

"It may not be as bad as that, Handy," said McClure, with a gulp. "I don't think he's fatally hurt—"

"The devils!" roared Handforth wildly. "Let me get at them! They've got Churchy! By George! Let me get at them!"

With a thunderous roar, he thrust down a part of the barricade, and charged through. Some of the other boys, who were about to fire, paused in consternation. They gazed at Handforth, horrified.

"Come back, Handy!" yelled Nipper. "Oh, you idiot! You'll get killed—"

"It's no good, dear old fellow—you know what he is," said Travers. "For the love of Samson! Look at that!"

They were all looking—fascinated.

Handforth, utterly reckless of the consequences and disdaining any weapons but his fists, was charging into the Indians like a young tornado.

And the Apaches were unprepared for any such move as this. Handforth gave them no chance to let fly any arrows, or discharge any guns. He was amongst them before they could be aware of his intentions.

Crash! Thud! Crash!

"You brutes!" he shouted hotly. "You dirty rotters! Take that!" Crash! "And that!" Crash! "And you have a go at this!" Crash! "I'll show you what we're made of!"

It was a whirlwind attack, and the Indians crumpled up in disorder. Four or five of them had gone down, absolutely knocked out by the force of Handforth's terrific hits. For when Edward Oswald got in a good right-hander, or an accurate left-swing, he did considerable damage.

Certainly, he had the advantage—for he had sprung this attack by surprise. Furthermore, the Indians were in their own way in the confined space of the tunnel. Handforth, on the other hand, was alone, and he could hit out with full effect.

"My only hat!" gurgled Gresham. "They're bunking! The Indians are turning tail!"

"Now's our chance!" said Nipper tensely. "Quick, you chaps! Come on! We've got to drag him back! It's a miracle he's alive even now—but he can't last long if he stays there!"



"Oh!" gasped Church in agony. He had been about to reload his rifle when an arrow whizzed through the air and pierced him. He uttered a hoarse cry and slithered against the wall.

They surged forward. Handforth was seized from the rear, and hauled back beyond the barrier—which was quickly re-made.

"Let me go!" protested Handforth fiercely.

"We don't want you to get killed. Handy!" said Nipper. "You're safe now—because you took the Redskins by surprise. But that's over now—and if you remained there you'd be a certain mark for them."

"They've killed Churchy!" breathed Handforth miserably. "Let me go, you rotters! I've got to smash those beastly Indians—"

"Ted—Ted!"

It was Irene's voice, and it somewhat sobered Edward Oswald. He turned, breathing hard.

"It's all right, Renie!" he muttered. "But when I think of poor old Churchy—"

"He's not badly hurt," said Irene. "That's what I want to tell you—"

"What!" yelled Handforth. "I—I thought—"

"You always jump to conclusions, 'Ted.'" put in Irene. "The arrow only stuck in his arm, and I don't think it's poisoned. We pulled it out, and bound up the wound."

"And I'm going to take my place again." put in Church, pushing forward. "It's only a scratch, you chaps."

"Oh, my only sainted aunt!" gurgled Handforth, as he grabbed hold of Church. "Good man! And—and I was ass enough to think— You silly ass!" he added severely. "What the dickens do you mean by getting in the way like that? Haven't you

any more sense than to get yourself potted?"

"The arrow came between two of the rocks—"

"Rot!" said Handforth. "I'm not potted, am I? Giving me a scare like that, you chump! I've a good mind to give you a punch on the nose!"

"Don't waste your punches on Church. Handy," said Nipper. "By Jove! You punched some of those Indians pretty effectively! They're still knocked out!"

Handforth felt rather shaky. It was like him, of course, to "slang" Church on the spot; but, actually, he was so overwhelmed with relief that the reaction made him just a little groggy.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

The sharp reports of the rifles brought him back to his old form, and a glance told him that the defenders were hard at it again—both in front and at the rear. The Indians were pressing more grimly than ever!

CHAPTER 9.

The Unexpected!

BOOM-OOM-OOM!

Following an extra vivid flash of lightning, the thunder rolled out with tremendous force, echoing and re-echoing down the ravine.

"Fits in nicely, doesn't it?" asked Lord Dorrimore. "A few claps of thunder is just the right kind of accompaniment to this beano."

Nelson Lee did not reply; he was on the alert, watching the movements of the Indians in the ravine. There was a brief lull in the attack, and the Redskins had retired. They were finding that it was impossible to rush these defences; the firing of the white men was too accurate, too deadly. Already the Apaches had lost a considerable number of warriors.

But the die was cast more certainly than ever now. In no circumstances could these white men be allowed to go free. Not a single member of this party must escape—to take this tale of battle to the big cities, where it could be sent on to the United States authorities.

The Apaches were astute enough to know that there would be a tremendous sensation if this story ever reached official ears. And the only way to prevent this was to wipe out the defenders altogether.

"Looks like they're plannin' somethin' fresh," remarked Dicky Siggers. "Some cunnin' dodge, I guess. I'll allow they're not too keen on close fightin'."

"What do you think they're up to?" asked Dorrie.

"Mebbe they're goin' to start some more o' them fires," replied Siggers. "They'd have done it sooner if they hadn't bin so darned excited."

"How's everything at the back?" asked Lee.

"All safe, sir!" came Willy Handforth's cheery voice. "One or two chaps a bit winged, but nothing to write home to mother about. We're keeping our end up, sir."

"Splendid!" said Lee. "Good lads! Keep it up!"

"Rather, sir!" said Willy, from the darkness. "Our bunch of Indians have got a bit tired of it, and they're giving us a rest. How's everything out there?"

"Quiet for the time being, but there's something pretty big coming, I imagine," replied Lee. "But don't bother about us; you look after your own end."

Boom-oom!

"It's a wonder these cusses ain't scared o' the lightnin'," said Hookey Webb. "Reg'lar firework display, ain't it?"

"They're too busy to take notice o' thunder an' lighnin', I figger," said Siggers. "Damnation! Here they come! Looks like the end, pardners!"

IT was an organised affair.

Suddenly, without warning, a large number of Indians came sweeping down the ravine, and each man carried a huge bundle of brushwood. This, in a way, served as a kind of guard. The whole thing was swift and dramatic. In a tremendous rush, the Indians dumped the brushwood down in front of the cave, choking the entrance completely within a couple of seconds.

Then, right on their heels, came a second force of Apaches, carrying great flaring torches. These latter were flung into the

brushwood—thrust into it, thrown on the top of it—and the whole thing was over before the defenders could make any attempt to clear the entrance.

"That was quick work," said Dorrie, with a whistle.

"If they'd done it before, they might have saved some of their dirty hides," remarked Siggers. "Waal, thar's nothin' to it now, misters. We're for it!"

Boom! Crack! Boom!

The thunder rolled out so alarmingly that the whole cave seemed to shake. At the same moment a lurid glare appeared in the midst of that smother of brushwood which

COMING NEXT WEEK!



choked the front of the cave. The torches were doing their work, and the brushwood was catching well alight.

"Quick!" said Lee fiercely. "Our only chance is to thrust this stuff aside before it gets a full hold!"

"Can't be done, pard," said Siggers. "Them Injuns is waitin' an' watchin'. Soon as we start that game they'll let fly an' drop the lot of us."

"Well, that's better than being burned alive," said Dorrie. "Let's try it, anyway."

They commenced pushing at the choking mass, but it was apparent almost from the first that it was a hopeless task. That brushwood had been brought up by scores of Indians, and the cave entrance was not only choked with it, but there was a barrier of the stuff extending many yards out into the

ravine, and most of it was now roaring up in fierce flame.

To break through was impossible. Indeed, the heat was already tremendous, and the white men were compelled to back away. They could only stare aghast, horrified by the swiftness, the suddenness, of this new peril.

There was something infernal in the whole situation. The roaring of the flames was mingled with the deadly crackling of the burning brushwood. Through it all the white party could hear the triumphant yelling of the Apaches; there came, too, the deep, rumbling peals of thunder.

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“Good heavens!” muttered Nelson Lee. “What is to be done now?”

It was impossible to remain anywhere near the entrance. The men were obliged to back farther away. The heat was becoming intolerable.

“Well, we can retreat into the tunnel,” said Dorrie, speaking as calmly as ever. “Of course, the Indians may object, but we shall have to make them see reason.”

“But what will be the good?” asked Lee. “The fires will be raging at the other cave, too. Before long there will be no current of air coming through. There will be nothing but deadly, choking fumes. We're caught, Dorrie—hopelessly caught!”

“Like rabbits in a warren,” nodded Lord Dorrimore. “Infernally bad, of course, but we did put up a good fight, didn't we?”

A sudden shout came from the inner barricade, where the boys were still on the alert.

“Look out!” came Handforth's voice. “What the dickens—Great Scott! What's happened? I'm choking!”

“Dust!” gurgled Fullwood. “Oh, my hat! Those Indians must have done something—”

Lee came up, and he found the air filled with choking dust. Up the tunnel everything was inky black. The only light in the cave now came from the entrance, where the flickering, lurid glare of the raging fire was increasing.

“Don't know what happened, sir, but suddenly there was a great rush of wind,” explained Nipper. “Then the dust came. The Indians seemed to have gone—”

“It's easy enough to understand what they have done,” said Lee, setting his teeth. “They've destroyed the tunnel.”

“What!”

“Either with some kind of explosive, or else they have loosened the rocks at a weak spot,” said Lee. “That rush of wind and dust can only mean one thing—a collapse of the tunnel, and the complete blocking of it. The cunning demons! They've made sure that we shan't escape this way, and they've made equally sure that we shan't escape the other!”

The matter was soon proved beyond all shadow of doubt. Lee went plunging forward into the tunnel, and he soon encountered a great mass of loose rocks. The tunnel had been completely blocked up. Escape was impossible!

There was something horrible in this new situation. To remain here was unthinkable, and yet the alternative was worse. For to escape the victims would be compelled to rush through that white-hot barrier of fire. They could never get through! They could never hope to get out!

Everybody realised the frightful nature of the situation, and Nelson Lee was struck by the fact that all the boys and girls remained calm. There was no panic; there was no terror.

“This is the end, Dorrie,” muttered Lee hoarsely. “Mercifully we cannot last long! The heat is intolerable already. Another four or five minutes—”

“Listen!” gasped Nipper. “What's that hissing noise, sir? Great Scott! The place is full of steam now!”

“Steam?” repeated Dorrie. “Ye gods! The boy's right. What on earth—”

“You kin call me a rattlesnake if the sky ain't come to our rescue!” roared Dicky Siggers suddenly. “Gosh all Arizony! The storm's bust, pardners!”

“The storm—steam!” said Lee, with a gulp. “You mean, Siggers, that—”

“I'm figgerin' that thar's a whole heap o' rain out thar in the ravine,” said the desert man. “Gosh! I know what these storms kin be like, too, on the edge o' the Mesa! Say, listen! Can't you hear the hiss-in'? When it rains out here, it rains! I

reckon them fires won't last more'n another minute at the most."

If they had only been able to see outside, they would have realised more eloquently than ever that Dicky Siggers had told the actual truth.

The thunderstorm had been brewing for some time, and now, dramatically, it broke. It wasn't merely a downpour of rain, but a cloudburst. Thousands of tons of water came crashing down, converting the floor of the ravine into a madly flowing stream within a couple of minutes. The Indians were plunging about, seeking safety. The fires were blotted out.

And then, in the middle of it all, came another tremendous booming crash—more like an explosion than ever. It shook the ravine, and it was followed by a dull, menacing sound of rushing, cascading water.

With devastating unexpectedness, a rolling, surging fury of foaming water came crashing down the ravine. Thousands of tons of it—the foam brown and ugly, the crest choked with fallen trees and uprooted bushes. The flood came rolling down with the force of a tidal wave, sweeping everything before it!

CHAPTER 10.

Another Surprise!

THE Indians were taken completely un-awares.

The flood, overtaking them, caught them in its grip. They were lifted on that foaming crest, and, screaming and shrieking, they were swept onwards, out of the ravine and into the main canyon.

Not an Apache was left. One and all, they were carried on the flood, and many, no doubt, were drowned.

Meanwhile, in the cave there had been much excitement.

The main body of water, rushing straight down the ravine, had not penetrated this cave. But it was only natural that a certain amount of the flood should surge in. Like a tidal wave it had arrived, swirling into the cave, foaming, hissing and roaring.

In a moment, the men and schoolboys and schoolgirls found themselves nearly swept off their feet. The water came dashing round like the waves of an angry sea. It rose to their knees, it almost lifted them from their feet, and soon they were plunging round, floundering and gasping.

But after the menace of that deadly fire, this flood seemed trivial. Just for a moment Lee feared that the flood would completely choke the cave, drowning them all, but this was only a momentary impression. The flood waters did not rise higher than four feet, and then they just as quickly subsided, the murky waters swirling out of the cave and joining the remnants of the main flow.

"Waal, I guess that was pretty quick work," remarked Siggers.

"What do you think happened?" asked Lord Dorrimore.

"Cloudburst," said the desert man. "But I figger it was somethin' else, too. Can't rightly understand. Seems as if a mighty chunk o' water was loosened from one o' the gorges, up above. Mebbe the mount'in gave way, an' let it loose."

"We're saved, at all events," said Nelson Lee fervently. "Scarcely five minutes have elapsed—and yet, in that brief space of time, the fires have been put out and the ravine has been cleared of the enemy. The danger is completely over."

"Don't—don't you think that the Indians will come back, sir?" asked Handforth.

"They can't come back—they've all been swept away," replied Lee.

"Hurrah!"

"And now that the storm has stopped I think we'd better get out of here into the ravine," went on Nelson Lee. "Come along."

The order was obeyed with alacrity. Out they went into the ravine, under the moon. After the blackness of the cave, the outside air seemed brilliantly clear. They could see one another distinctly—and they could see the havoc that had been wrought in that once picturesque spot. Gone were the bushes and the trees, gone were the flowers. In the centre of the ravine there was a roaring stream, and the sides were smothered with mud. Tree trunks were lying grotesquely in various places, and there was an air of desolation and destruction about the whole picture.

As the men and boys and girls came out, Nelson Lee took stock of them. He found, to his relief, that none was missing. The entire party emerged, some of them slightly wounded, but, on the whole, they had escaped rather wonderfully.

Some of the boys and girls were laughing. They felt that they had to do something to relieve their pent-up feelings. And, really there was something for them to laugh about. Never was there a more disreputable-looking crowd.

Many of the fellows were so torn and tattered that they looked like scarecrows. The girls were hardly any better. Some of their frocks were half ripped away. Sleeves were missing, skirts were rent, and, normally, the girls would have been horrified at these disasters. But now nothing seemed to matter. Soaked with muddy water as they were, bedraggled and quite unpresentable before the male gaze, they could only laugh.

"It's over!" Irene was saying. "And we're still all alive! Oh, I can't quite believe it!"

"That thunderstorm was the luckiest thing imaginable," said Harry Gresham.

"I don't call it luck," said Nipper. "The whole thing was Providential."

AS though there had not been sufficient surprises on this eventful night, another one came soon afterwards.

Nelson Lee was trying to sort things out a bit. He was wondering if it would be possible to get some fires going, so that they could all dry themselves. The problem was to find anything burnable amidst all this wetness.

Two figures appeared unexpectedly—abruptly.

At first it was thought that they were the figures of Indians. They were high above, on one of the crags overlooking the ravine. They could be seen in the moonlight.

"Better give 'em a taste o' lead," suggested Siggers, as he looked up. "Better scare 'em off, anyway. Darned if I kin understand—"

"Let me urge you, brothers, not to dispatch any lead in this direction," came a well-known voice. "What kind of gratitude is this, after we have—"

"Browne!" went up a general yell.

"William Napoleon, of that ilk," agreed one of the figures calmly. "Kindly reassure me, brothers and sisters, that all is well. Brother Horace and myself are anxious to know if there have been any casualties—"

"No, Browne—we're all safe!" called Nelson Lee. "But how, in the name of all that's marvellous, did you get here? And what have you been doing?"

"Without exaggeration, Brother Lee, I think I can safely say that we have saved the situation," replied Browne. "You may have chanced to observe a slight flood just recently? If so, behold the author of it. It was I who released the foaming waters!

BROWNE and Stevens, of the Fifth, were with the others ten minutes later, after they had managed to climb down the rocky side of the ravine.

The Fifth Form skipper and his bosom friend were surrounded by a shouting crowd, and Browne was evidently very well pleased with himself. He was as cool as usual, and it was some little time before he could make himself heard.

"It is quite simple," he explained. "Brother Horace and myself, suspecting that all was not well, left the main camp. In case of emergencies, we brought various articles with us—rifles, ammunition, and even a certain amount of high explosive."

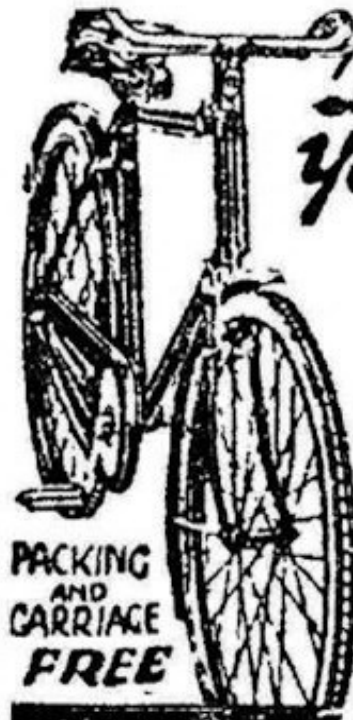
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Things Heard and Seen by EDWY SEARLES BROOKS

I HEARD some of the St. Frank's juniors discussing talking films the other day. Buster Boots, of the Fourth, was very caustic. He declared that the talkies are rotten and hopeless, and worse than torture. According to his remarks, he had always enjoyed going to the silent pictures, but now that the talkies have come, he'll give the cinemas a miss. I thought it just as well to inquire into the matter, and the astonishing thing is this. When I asked Boots how many talkies he had seen, he had to confess that he'd never seen one at all! Well, that's just the way of things. I wonder why people condemn on mere hearsay! You can be pretty well always certain that hearsay is anything but the truth.

* * *

IT'S just the same with my yarns. Here's Jean Davies, of Walton, Liverpool, telling me that she gets ragged about reading the Old Paper—especially by people who have never read a copy for themselves. Just like Buster Boots and the talkies. I generally make a principle of keeping my opinion to myself until I'm justified in giving it. In fact, I don't believe in forming one at all until I've got something concrete upon which to form it. How nice it would be if people who condemn the Old Paper unread would change their tactics, be just, and give the St. Frank's stories at least one chance.

* * *

BOOTS, at all events, has promised me that he'll go to the talkies before condemning them again. I hear they're going to feature these films at the Bannington Palladium pretty soon. As some of the older readers no doubt know, the Palladium is a very up-to-date picture-house, and it is owned by Solomon Levi's father. When I went into the West House the other day, I found the place littered with leaflets about the talkies. I traced them to

Study O, which is shared by Solomon Levi and Dick Goodwin. Solomon Levi had been busy with his fellow Removites, boosting up his father's business.

* * *

RALPH CLARRY, of Toronto, tells me that he is seriously thinking of becoming an author. It needs serious thinking, too. It isn't a career upon which you can lightly embark. You can't learn how to write stories. There are plenty of people who get the most wonderful ideas, and yet they can't string a dozen words together in the right way. And sometimes people who can write can't get any plots. To be really successful, you've got to have the knack of both—coupled with a good imagination.

* * *

IHAPPENED to see Rex Palmer in Bannington a week or two ago, and I took the opportunity of asking him about his sister, Phyllis. I was really reminded to do so because of a letter I had had from Horace Pryke, of Walderslade. Rex Palmer is one of the seniors at Bannington Grammar School. He's in the Fifth Form, and quite a big man in his way. Not that I am really interested in him normally. I was really thinking about his sister. As a good many readers may remember, Phyllis joined the Moor View School a good many months ago—at just about the time when poor old Chambers, of the Fifth, was sent down into the Third for a brief spell. I have never had any proper occasion to mention Phyllis Palmer again—mainly because her father, in India, became so seriously ill that she had to go out with her mother. Rex tells me that his respected pater is now practically recovered. Phyllis hasn't been back long, and as the summer holidays were just about to start when I saw him, she won't rejoin the Moor View School until the new term. It wouldn't surprise me in the least to find her very popular with Travers.

as he has several times casually and carelessly asked me if I knew when she was coming back.

* * *

OUR photograph this week is of George E. Low, of Holloway. As he hasn't given me permission to publish his full address, there's not much danger of Irene or Winnie or any other of the Moor View girls taking a fancy to his handsome dial and writing to him.

* * *

I DON'T know how it is, but a good many readers seem to have gained the impression that the Moor View School is only a tiny sort of place, with just a few pupils. Perhaps they have jumped to this conclusion because I have never really had cause to mention more than a dozen, say, of the girls. It mustn't be overlooked that I am mainly dealing with the St. Frank's boys, and so all my references to the Moor View girls are naturally confined to those girls who are, in some way, associated with the boys. Irene & Co.'s little group of friends are most frequently featured because of this. But the Moor View School is really quite a big place. A few weeks ago Miss Bond expressly asked me to go round, and I was greatly impressed by the extent of the school. I can't say, exactly, how many pupils there are, but Irene & Co. form a very small proportion of the whole total. It is one of the most up-to-date girls' schools in the South of England, and a worthy neighbour for St. Frank's.

* * *

THERE'S some talk of building a huge motion-picture studio just outside Bellton, and I am rather worried about it. Of course, the St. Frank's fellows will welcome it with open arms. But other people, myself included, are dubious. I was having a chat with the vicar the other day—the Rev. Ethelbert Goodchild—and he was positively alarmed. He wanted me to make representations to the Council, and when I protested that I had absolutely no *locus standi* in the matter, he scoffed, and said that I was so closely bound up in the district, owing to my chronicles of St. Frank's, that I should certainly be a better spokesman than anyone else. I succeeded in calming him down, assuring him that the whole venture might come to nothing. If this motion-picture project takes place, Bellton might easily become a sort of second Elstree. The old world beauty of the village will be wiped out almost within a round of the clock; great studios will appear, garages will spring up, new shops will arise, roads will be widened, and Bellton will soon

become a thriving, bustling town instead of a peaceful, sleepy Sussex village. I hope this disaster does not overtake the little place. Fortunately, the school is empty just now, all the fellows being away on their holidays. So these rumours haven't reached their ears. I sincerely hope that the project will have fallen through by the time the new term begins.

* * *

HERE'S a reader, of Stourbridge—he gives me his real name but signs himself "Doubtful"—who expresses doubts as to the genuineness of the old "Between Ourselves," now superseded by this "Gossip"—which is exactly the same thing in a new form. He says: "It doesn't seem to me that an author of boys' tales—I am 26—would take the trouble to get in touch with his readers." As a good few thousands of readers know, this accusation is quite unjustified. Perhaps this Stourbridge reader will find another pen-name for himself

when he writes to me next. I hope it will be "Convinced," or something like that. Meanwhile, I am wondering how many other readers have exactly these same doubts in their minds. Why is it that so many people regard this quite honest chat of mine as a sheer spoof? Many readers wait years before writing to me to satisfy themselves. If they are doubtful, why don't they drop me a line at once, instead of allowing these doubts to take root and grow? Even if they don't get any mention in these columns, they are absolutely

OUR READERS' PORTRAIT GALLERY



George E. Low

certain of a personal reply from me, and an autographed photo, too, if they include a snapshot of themselves. And if there's any spoof about this, I'll eat my own typewriter. I am very pleased to note that our doubtful Stourbridge friend has been a reader of the Old Paper since No. 1.

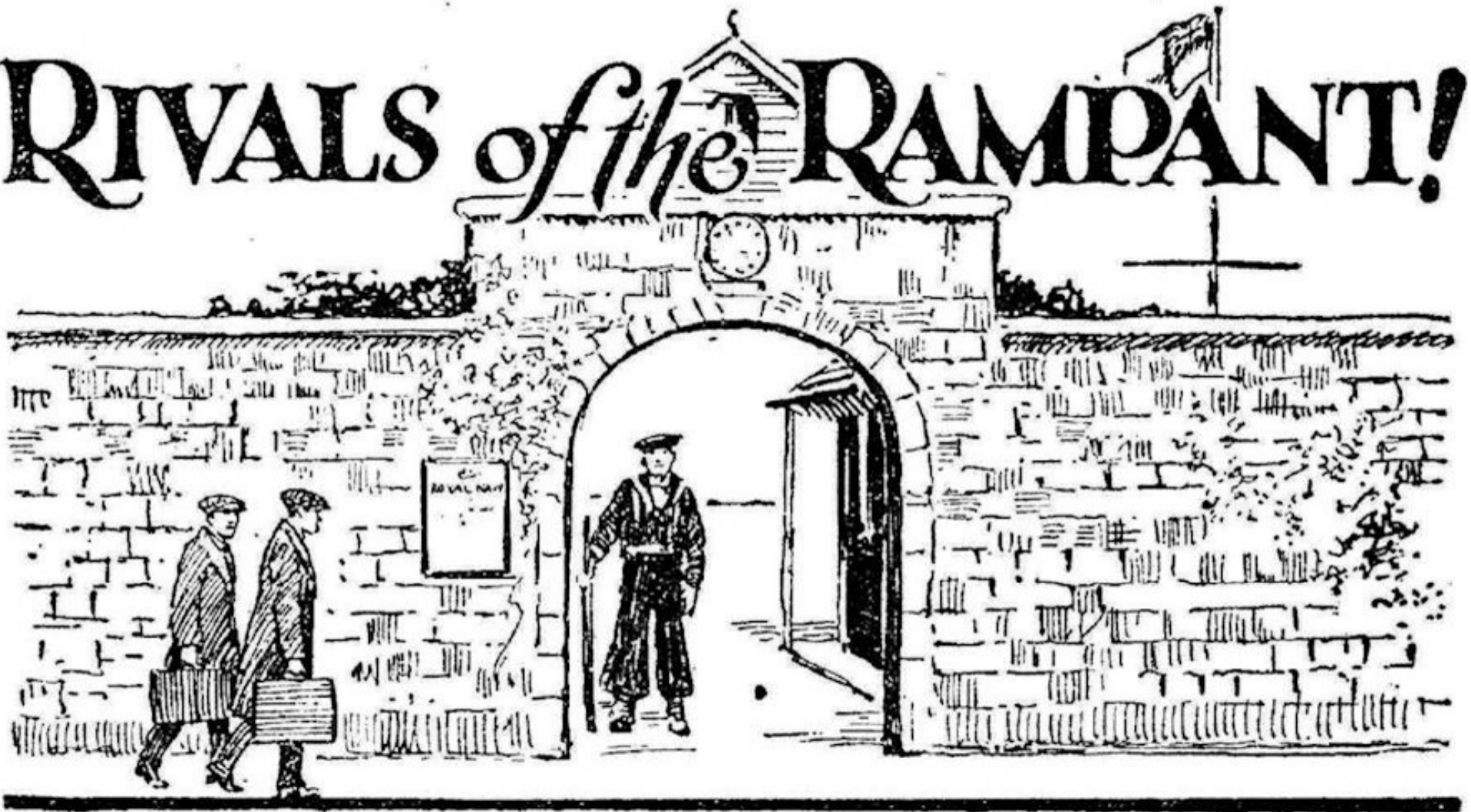
* * *

THAT last paragraph reminds me that we're running short of good photographs for reproduction in these pages. Of course, I've still got plenty of readers' photos in my albums, but lots of them are unsuitable, and lots of others are of readers who haven't given me their permission to publish their pictures. I'd like a lot more, from both sexes—and here's a chance for doubtful readers to find out whether I'm a fraud or not. If snapshots are sent—and now that the summer is drawing to an end, there ought to be a regular multitude of snapshots in hand—I'd like them to be clear-cut ones, with the features well defined. But, of course, studio portraits are even better—not that I want any readers to go to the expense of having special photographs taken.

EDWY SEARLES BROOKS.

The Concluding Chapters of our Thrilling Serial of Naval Adventure!

RIVALS of the RAMPANT!



By STANTON HOPE

Out to Sea!

JACK swarmed up the rope again, and Ginger pushed himself off from the rudder, and, reaching up, caught the end of the swinging line as the stern of the trawler dipped, and drew himself, dripping, from the sea.

Very cautiously, Jack peered over the taffrail, but no one was aft, and he helped his chum on board.

Like two spectres from the sea, they slopped their way forward for a few yards.

Lew Bonner had gone with Captain Michel to the bridge, and the trawler hands were either stowing the heavy wooden chute or were at their anchor stations.

Jack noticed a rope reeved over cleats, and, glancing over the side, saw a skiff with a pair of oars. At the same moment he heard the muffled note of the engine-room telegraph bell, and heard the voice of Captain Michel.

"Au revoir, Bonner, mon ami! I will see you once more on ze next visit to your hospitable shores!"

"Quick, Ginger!" whispered Jack. "Get into the lee of that caboose."

In another few seconds his uncle would be coming for that skiff, and on the impulse Jack unreeved the painter and dropped it into the water as the trawler began to go slow ahead. Then he slithered across the yard or two of deck and joined his pal in the lee of the deck structure.

Aboard the smugglers' ship! Jack and Ginger of the Rampant are out to prevent the smugglers from escaping—but they find it's easier said than done!

Hardly was he there than Lew Bonner came to enter the boat, and at the sight of it drifting away astern, he emitted an angry snarl and hurried forward again.

What he said to the trawler skipper, Jack and Ginger could not quite make out; but a few moments afterwards they heard Michel himself violently abusing in French some luckless member of the crew for not having tied up the skiff properly.

"Come on, now's our chance, raggie!" breathed Jack. "That looks like an iron wedge or spike lying on the deck there."

They slithered across to the port side, and Jack took up the implement with which he hoped he might temporarily disable the trawler and so give P.-o. Teak and the coastguards a chance to capture her.

The engines had been going slow ahead, and again there came the muffled clangour of the telegraph bell, followed by a tuneful hum in crescendo that denoted a higher speed. The *Dominique* was fast steaming out to sea!

The Battle of the Bridge!

TWO things the boys became aware of as they crept towards what they believed to be the engine-room hatch. They glimpsed figures forward, and noted that the dripping anchor had been laid on deck and that the chain was fitted with a patent shackle so that it could have been instantly let go in case of emergency. That is to say, the trawler could simply have lost her anchor and a length of chain, and got under way without loss of time if the necessity arose.

Secondly, they judged that the engines were of much higher power than those usually installed in a fishing vessel of this type—engines that would give the *Dominique* a fine turn of speed to outrace any ordinary small craft of His Majesty's Coastguard.

With Jack ahead, the two boys stealthily reached the engine-room entrance, and, at that precise moment, a burly figure in greasy blue overalls came up an iron ladder inside.

"*Ma foi!*"

At the startled exclamation of the engine-room hand, Jack dropped back against Ginger, and, tripping over his chum's foot, he went hurtling headlong on the deck while the heavy iron spike clattered out of his hand into the scuppers!

In another moment all was confusion

aboard. Voices roared exclamations in French, and a couple of tough trawler-men in rubber sea-boots came charging from for'ard.

"Into 'the ditch'!" gulped Jack.

He himself leaped up and dashed for the short bridge ladder. He had not been able to do the job he had intended, but he thought of another way whereby he might delay the trawler sufficiently to enable the coastguards to come up with her.

Little Ginger started for the side to follow Jack's advice to hurl himself into the sea, but, seeing his pal did not intend joining him in the water, he raced after him towards the bridge.

The appearance of Jack in soaking wet trousers and vest completely flabbergasted the trawler skipper. His hand went out for a belaying-pin, which he kept handy near the compass, but before his hand could reach it, Jack launched himself full at him and got him a terrific clout on the jaw.

"*Cochon!*" roared the skipper, forgetful of the need for silence. "For zat I keel you!"

This time he got the belaying-pin and lurched forward to crash it down upon Jack's head. The boy escaped injury by dropping almost flat to the deck, and Michel, by his own impetus, stumbled over his body and went crashing down to the deck below, sweeping Ginger off the ladder in his descent.

The little Cockney landed on his feet like a cat, but he found himself in between two excited and infuriated Frenchmen; Michel himself remained stunned where he had fallen.

For'ard of a small chart-room was a Frenchman at the trawler's wheel. The

HOW THE STORY STARTED:

JACK GILBERT, a cheery youngster of some fifteen years, has just joined *H.M.S. Rampant*, a naval training school at Porthaven. His only living relative is his scoundrelly uncle,

LEW BONNER, and the less he sees of him the better Jack will be pleased. The boy joins the Navy along with

CLEM SMITH, or *Busky*, as he becomes known at the *Rampant*. Smith is of the bullying type, and is very jealous of Jack's friendship with his—*Busky's*—uncle,

BARNY MORLAND, who has just died. It was Barny who got the two boys to join the Navy, and in his will he stipulates that a sum of £2,000 is to go to the boy who acquits himself best in the Service. Both settle down at the *Rampant*, and Jack makes a friend of

GINGER JONES. One evening Jack and Ginger are walking to Porthaven, along the coast, when they come to a particularly bleak spot, where once stood the village of *Paggleshale*, but which is now in ruins, having been "swallowed up" by the encroaching sea. They see many mysterious things happening here, and decide that they must have discovered a smugglers' lair. A few days later they again visit the place to do a bit of investigating. Jack is horrified to find that one of the smugglers is his rascally uncle, *Lew Bonner*. In spite of this, Jack informs the coastguards of his discovery. At first they doubt his story, but when they see a vessel lying at anchor just off the shore they change their minds. They go off to get a launch, while Jack and Ginger swim out to the mysterious craft. They overhear conversation to the effect that the boat will sail within a few minutes, whereat Jack suggests climbing on board in order to try and disable the engines. His chum pluckily agrees. "*Lead on, Horatio!*" he says.

(Now read on.)

necessity of keeping the vessel on her course had prevented him from going to the assistance of his skipper, but he yelled in French for someone to come up to the bridge as Jack stepped towards him.

The Dominique was swinging round at speed for the open sea. The orders of the helmsman had been to pick-up Bonner's drifting skiff, but the advent of the young English bluejackets made him keen to clear off from this dangerous coast.

For a second or so Jack paused to look ahead, and thought he detected a small craft without lights on the dark, heaving waters.

"Ahoy! Launch ahoy!"

He was about to bawl the name of P.O. Teak when there was a dull *poof*, the darkness was stabbed by flame, and a bullet smacked against the side of the compass and ricocheted, ripping splinters out of the bridge rail. Coming up the bridge ladder, and armed with an automatic pistol fitted with a silencer, was his uncle, Lew Bonner!

"So it's you, you spyin' young swab!" exploded the crook.

Twice more in swift succession the automatic spat flame and lead into the night, and at the second shot Jack, who had hurled himself aside, clutched his left arm and drew a sharp breath between his teeth.

And then little Ginger Jones, who had eluded the French deck-hands, took a flying leap up the bridge ladder, caught Lew Bonner by the ankles, and dragged him sharply back. The crook uttered a hoarse cry, the automatic dropped from his hand, and his fingers frantically clawed the unresisting air. One of the smugglers' crew leaped aside in the nick of time to avoid him as he crashed full length on his back close beside the unconscious Michel!

Up on the bridge, Jack felt the fingers of his right hand grow warm and wet, and knew he had been wounded; at first, indeed, it felt as though a hammer had hit him in the left arm, but almost immediately afterwards the limb became numb, and remained so for some seconds.

During this respite, and before a sharp, throbbing pain assailed him, he reached down for the belaying-pin which Michel had dropped on hurtling from the bridge.

By a powerful wrench, the helmsman had ripped a spoke from the wheel, and, with an exclamation of savage abuse, he flung it as Jack advanced. The hardwood spoke-handle zoomed past the blue-

jacket's ear—and then the boy lurched forward and slammed the fellow with all his force.

Down went the helmsman like a pitted ox, and Jack, his left arm hanging limply, dragged over the wheel-spokes with his right hand.

The sweat rolled from his forehead in cold beads, and in a dazed sort of way, he felt the trawler coming round.

Now her head was pointing towards the shore! He felt fainter, and it was sheer agony for him to keep the ship heading in. In a confused babel he heard a rumpus going on aboard, and thought he detected Ginger's shrill voice.

A powerful light flashed up near to hand on the port bow. It was a launch racing toward the Dominique—and in it was Petty Officer Teak and a crew of armed coastguards! Then—

Thump!

The trawler quivered from stem to stern, and Jack's body drove against the wheel with such force that he felt as though he had been slammed in the stomach by a professional pug. He was dimly aware for a moment or so longer of white sea-spume lashing the ship, a confusion of voices and a succession of grinding jars as the trawler's hull bit hard into the sand. And then his legs became limp under him, his hand relaxed on the hardwood wheel, and he felt himself slipping into a void of impenetrable darkness!

The Lone Witness!

"**D**O you feel better now, sonny?" Jack opened his eyes to find himself in bed, looking into the face of an elderly stranger. He tried to move, but found that his left arm was restrained as though enclosed in a box.

"Keep quiet," said the kindly voice which had addressed him. "You're in hospital in Porthaven, and you've got to take your time to let that bone of your left arm set. It was rather badly knocked about."

Events flooded back into Jack's mind. So he was in hospital, and this kindly man was one of the doctors! A screen was around the bed, but presently a neatly-dressed nurse removed it, and Jack saw that he was in a pleasant ward with some other patients.

The doctor left him and he slept a while, and it was not until the following day that he was allowed to receive visitors.

Young Ginger Jones was the first, and, bubbling with excitement, he told Jack of what had occurred after the *Dominique* had been grounded.

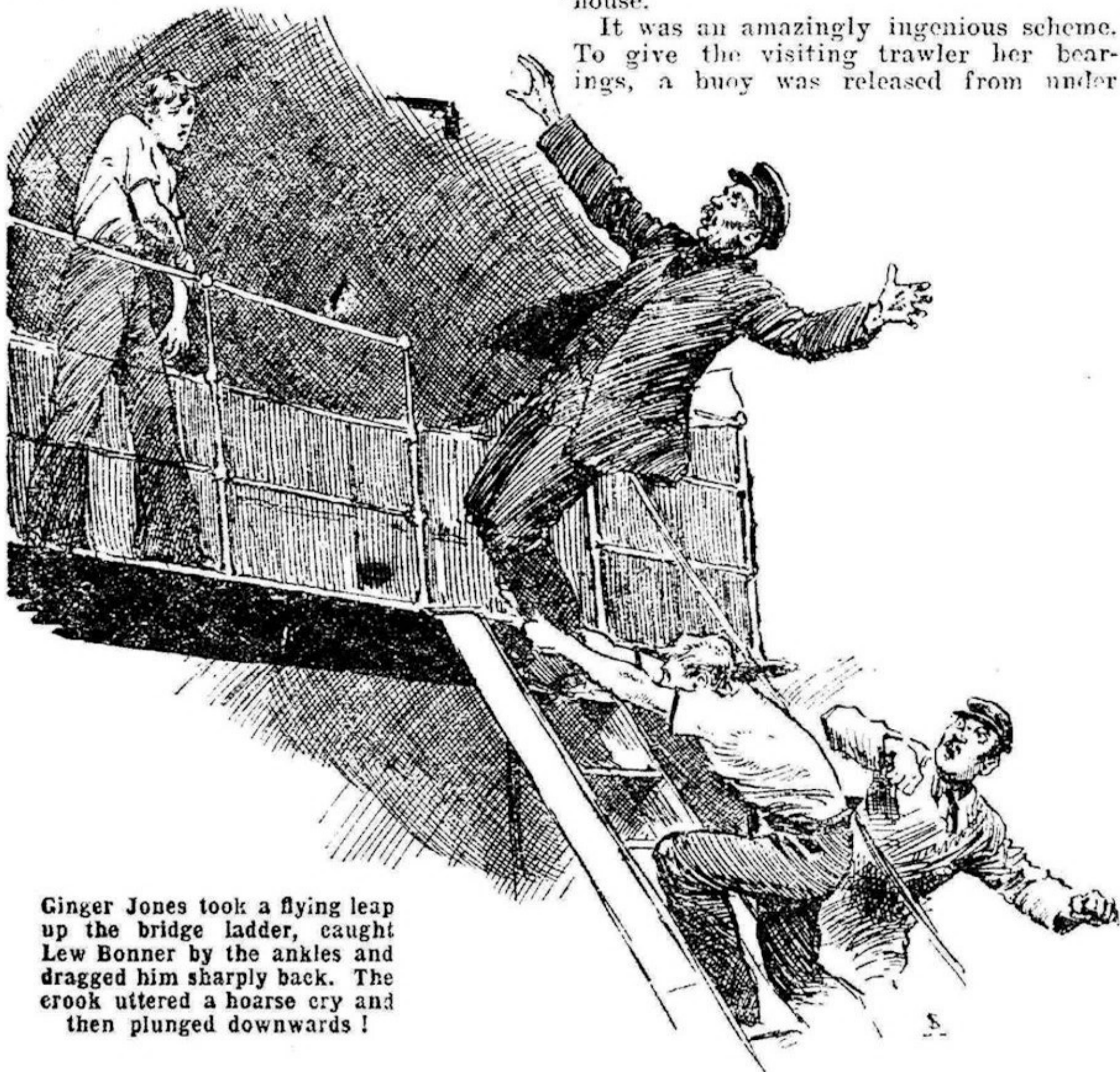
"Teak and the giddy coastguards simply swarmed aboard, old son," grinned Ginger, "and bagged your rotten uncle, Lew Bonner, Skipper Michel, and the whole gang. They were smugglers all right, and they'd sunk a fine cargo o' contraband under the sea."

"But Gavin—and the other chap?" inquired Jack.

It appeared from what Ginger had said that there was a secret tunnel leading from a cellar under old Paggleshale to a remarkable building under the sea.

This building originally had been a part of the village itself, but it had been built up from within with heavy stone set by a special cement on which the sea-water had no effect. By a patent compartment fitted with a port that could be made water-tight, Jem Gavin's gang could take weighted crates and bales covered in waterproof material into this house.

It was an amazingly ingenious scheme. To give the visiting trawler her bearings, a buoy was released from under



Ginger Jones took a flying leap up the bridge ladder, caught Lew Bonner by the ankles and dragged him sharply back. The crook uttered a hoarse cry and then plunged downwards!

"I told the coastguards what you overheard Bonner say," Ginger explained, "and later some of the chaps went ashore and waited near the groyne. Suddenly some sand dropped in, and Gavin and the other chap, Joe Sparling, came out—having found they couldn't get out by the usual exit, I s'pose. Imagine their chivvies, chum, when they walked into the arms of the fellows waiting for 'em!"

the water and hauled down again after the ship had come to an anchorage. A diver named Gaskell was in league with the crooks, and shifted the stuff sunk on to the sea-bed into the under-water house when necessary. It was this man whom Jack must have seen during his search for Ginger's locket.

Both Bonner and Michel had been badly hurt, and at present were in an

infirmary awaiting transfer to cells.

Then Jack asked the question which had been gnawing at his heart all the time the excitable Ginger had been spinning the yarn.

"And my uncle," muttered Jack, "has he 'squealed'?"

"Not to my knowledge," Ginger said; "but don't you worry, raggie—you've proved yourself as big a giddy hero as ever that Busky Smith who beached the ferry."

A slow smile spread over Jack's face.

"Thanks, Ginger," he grinned, "'cause I s'pose you mean that for a compliment."

And then other visitors were announced—a whole bunch of them. To the embarrassment of both Jack and Ginger, Admiral Sir John Britton himself came through the ward in his lavish blue and gold, accompanied by Captain Hedworth Orr, commanding officer of the Rampant. To rear of them came Petty Officer Teak and Busky Smith.

A doctor and two nurses advanced to Jack's bed ahead of the naval procession, and the boy began to feel like the goat at some sacrificial ceremony.

"This is the boy, sir," said the smiling doctor, addressing Admiral Britton.

The admiral rested a hand on Jack's right arm, and the smile on his clean-cut, bronzed face dispelled all the lad's embarrassment.

"I remember seeing you before, Boy Gilbert," remarked the great man, "and I'm anxious to hear from your own lips how you and this chum of yours brought about the capture of as formidable a gang of smugglers as have operated on the English coast for half a century."

He ushered forward Captain Orr and Petty Officer Teak, who greeted Jack warmly.

"I—I hear, sir," stammered Jack, "that they've caught Lew Bonner—my uncle."

"That is so, my boy. You never got on well with him, I believe?"

Jack gritted his teeth and took the plunge. He would have preferred not so much of an audience, but in the agony of his soul about what his uncle might have said without Ginger knowing, he determined to make a clean breast of everything himself, if necessary.

"My uncle's not had any use for me for some time, sir," he said, the fingers of his undamaged hand nervously picking at the bedclothes at his side. "He's a beastly crook, and there was a time when he wanted to make me into one. Has—has he said anything?"

The admiral nodded.

"He has made a statement to the police, Gilbert," he said, "and a copy of it was sent to me for my perusal. Your uncle stated that before joining up you were in a reformatory school. Was that so?"

Jack swallowed.

"Yes, sir. I said nothing about it; I was dead keen to join the Navy, and I knew if I told 'em I'd been there, they wouldn't have had me."

His eyes looked up into those of the admiral.

"You'll let me stop, sir?" he pleaded.

"You won't have me turned out?"

Busky Smith leaned forward slightly, his face expectant. If only Jack Gilbert were kicked out of the Service, it would be plain sailing for him to earn his uncle's £2,000 legacy!

The admiral's next words shattered his hopes.

"We can't afford to let a boy like you leave the Navy, Gilbert," said the admiral quietly.

Jack's face lighted with a radiant smile, and, encouraged by the admiral, he told in a few modest words of the incidents which had led up to Ginger and himself setting out with Petty Officer Teak and the coastguards on that eventful night.

"And in the end," the admiral remarked, "you took over the wheel of the trawler and put her aground on a sand-bank?"

"Aye, sir," said Jack.

All laughed, except Busky Smith, whose face bore the stamp of envy and hatred.

None noticed at first that a somewhat elderly man, a convalescent patient at the hospital, who was passing on his way through the ward, had paused near the bed. All were startled, however, when the man thrust himself between Captain Orr and Petty Officer Teak and advanced direct to Jack.

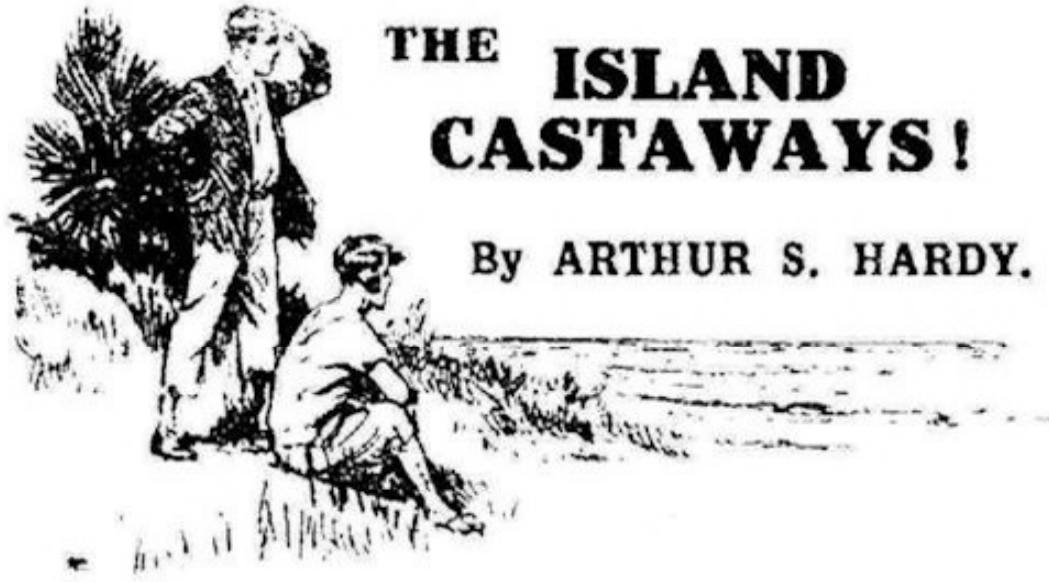
"So this is the lad!" he exclaimed. "Put the French smuggler on a sand-bank, did he! It seems to me, gentlemen, he makes a habit of that sort of thing!"

The admiral and captain looked at the man with sharp resentment at his butting in, and the doctor moved forward to take him by the arm. Jack shifted more upright in bed, his jaw sagging; and Busky stood with eyes staring in horrified dismay out of a dead-white face. The convalescent patient who had intruded was none other than the skipper of the ferry which had been rammed by the Felsgap!

"All right—all right, doctor," the man said; "just half a moment! Shake, my boy! I've had a rotten time with my head, but I'm better now, and when I got

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out of hospital I intended looking you up to thank you personally for what you did, though I hear you got the life-saving medal for it. A born seaman you are to have put that old ferry-boat of mine aground!"

Surprise became sheer bewilderment in the naval officers standing by.

"There seems to be some mistake," the admiral said, when the doctor explained who the man was. "This is not the lad who beached the ferry; it was this other youngster, Boy Clement Smith."

The ferry skipper looked at Busky—glared from his dead-white face down to that medal that hung upon the young traitor's chest.

"By hokey, I remember you, too!" he exploded. "This lad was aboard with us and squirming like a worm with funk at the foot of the bridge ladder."

And then Busky broke down. Between his sobs he confessed all—how the passengers aboard the ferry-boat had mistaken him for the fellow who had put the old packet aground, and how he had kept to the rôle of hero when he had found Jack unwilling to be lauded for the exploit.

A few minutes later Busky was escorted back to the Rampant by the outraged Petty Officer Teak, who took more than one opportunity en route to apply a thick Service boot to his sternsbeets.

When the admiral and the others withdrew, the delighted Ginger remained.

"Pink me, they'll turf Smith clean out of the Navy for this," he whooped, "and in a few days, old son, you'll be shipping a medal on your own giddy chest!"

In both of which prophecies he was entirely correct.

On the day after the showing up of Busky Smith, Arnold Greaves, of Greaves and Greaves, solicitors, hurried over from Sandcliff, where he was staying.

"I've been on the telephone to my partner in town, my boy," he announced to Jack, who was busy with a plate of roast chicken. "As Clement Smith has been compelled to leave the Rampant for good—and rather suddenly—there seems no need to wait until the end of your training for the legacy. We feel that we are meeting the wishes of our late client, Barny Morland, by the conveyance to you now of a cheque for two thousand pounds with which you may start a bank account."

THE END.

(That's the end of this fine serial, chums. Good old Jack has triumphed in spite of everything! And now don't forget that a grand new adventure serial entitled "The Island Castaways!" is starting next week. Don't miss the long, exciting opening instalment.)

HOW TO JOIN THE LEAGUE

ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE APPLICATION FORM No. 110.

SECTION A	READER'S APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP. I desire to become enrolled as a Member of THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE, and to qualify for all such benefits and privileges as are offered to Members of the League. I hereby declare that I have introduced "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY" and THE ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE to one new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. Will you, therefore, kindly forward me Certificate of Enrolment with the Membership Number assigned to me, and Membership Badge.
SECTION B	MEMBER'S APPLICATION FOR MEDAL AWARDS. I, Member No..... (give Membership No.), hereby declare that I have introduced one more new reader, whose signature to certify this appears on second form attached hereto. This makes me (state number of introductions up to date) introductions to my credit.
SECTION C	NEW READER'S DECLARATION. I hereby declare that I have been introduced by (give name of introducer) to this issue of "THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY."
(FULL NAME).....	
(ADDRESS).....	
.....	

INSTRUCTIONS.

INSTRUCTIONS.—Reader Applying for Membership. Cut out TWO complete Application Forms from Two copies of this week's issue of THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY. On one of the forms leave in Section A, crossing out Sections B and C. Then write clearly your full name and address at bottom of form. The second form is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A and B, and writes his name and address at bottom of form. Both forms are then pinned together, and sent to the Chief Officer, The St. Frank's League, c/o THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY, 5, Carmelite Street, London, E.C.4.

Member Applying for Bronze Medal: It will be necessary for you to obtain six new readers for this award. For each new reader TWO complete forms, bearing the same number, are needed. On one of the forms fill in Section B, crossing out Sections A and C, and write your name and address at bottom of form. The other form is for your new reader, who fills in Section C, crosses out Sections A and B, and writes his

name and address at the bottom of the form. Now pin both forms together and send them to the Chief Officer, as above. One new reader will then be registered against your name, and when six new readers have been registered, you will be sent the St. Frank's League bronze medal. There is nothing to prevent you from sending in forms for two or more new readers at once, providing that each pair of forms bears the same date and number.

Bronze medallists wishing to qualify for the silver medals can apply in the same way as for the bronze medal, filling in Section B. Every introduction they make will be credited to them, so that when they have secured the requisite number of readers they can exchange their bronze medal for a silver one.

These Application Forms can be posted for *id.*, providing the envelope is not sealed and no letter is enclosed.

A FEW OF THE ADVANTAGES OF JOINING THE LEAGUE.

You can write to fellow members living at home or in the most distant outposts of the Empire.

You are offered free advice on choosing a trade or calling, and on emigration to the colonies and dependencies.

If you want to form a sports or social club, you can do so amongst local members of the League.

You are offered free hints on holidays, whether walking, biking, or camping.

You can qualify for the various awards by promoting the growth of the League.

If you want help or information on any subject, you will find the Chief Officer ever ready to assist you.

NOTICE.

The St. Frank's League has now attained such proportions that we are compelled to discontinue the offer of gold medals in connection therewith. The silver and bronze medals will still be available, however, as heretofore, to those who qualify for them in accordance with the rules.

The ST. FRANK'S LEAGUE CORNER!



*The Chief Officer Chats
with his Chums.*

*Here's his address if you want to
write to him: The Chief Officer, The
Nelson Lee Library, Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.*

A Complaint!

HAVE you read this week's prize-winning letter, chums? If you haven't I should like you to do so. For this letter was chosen with a special object in view.

The writer makes a complaint against certain readers of the Old Paper. As it happens, I have received other letters from disgruntled readers on the same subject, so it is obvious that the matter calls for a discussion here.

The complaint is that readers have had notices inserted in the "Correspondents Wanted" column to the effect that they wish to correspond with fellow-Nelson Leetes, and then do not answer the letters they receive in reply to their request.

If such is the case, then undoubtedly those who asked for correspondents in the first place are in the wrong; they are acting in a discourteous manner. Yet on the other hand they may be deserving of sympathy!

Let me hasten to explain my somewhat paradoxical words.

The St. Frank's League is a big organisation; the "Correspondents Wanted" column is an extremely popular feature. Therefore it is not unlikely that a reader who asks for

correspondents will receive as many as twenty or even more answers. And answering twenty or more letters is not exactly a job to be recommended, and, still more important, the cost of postage for same is going to be in the region of half-a-crown. To many readers, indeed—especially those still attending school—such a thing is quite out of the question.

So those of you who have been complaining receive my sympathy. At the same time I'm sure you will see eye to eye with my remarks in the last paragraph.

In conclusion, I want to say this. Wherever possible, I hope readers WILL reply to all letters they receive in connection with any notice inserted by them in the Old Paper.

Concerning Dogs!

"DOGGY," of Chesterfield, has just become the owner of a dog. He wants to teach his pet some tricks. To do this my Northern

chum will require plenty of patience—and a kind nature. It's no good getting wild with the dog because it will not do your bidding at first. And then, when it does succeed in doing the trick, give him an extra friendly pat on the head and present him with a nice tit-bit as a reward.

THE CHIEF OFFICER.

THIS WEEK'S WINNING LETTER

DEAR CHIEF OFFICER,

Many thanks for the S.F.L. badge which I received on Saturday.

You will no doubt be interested to know that through the N.L.L. I have got nearly twenty penchums; some in Australia, New Zealand, U.S.A., India, and last but not least, England. When my next notice appears I hope to increase my correspondents to about forty.

And now I have a complaint to make—against some of your readers. They have a notice put in the Correspondents Wanted column asking other readers to write to them, and then, when you do write, they take no notice whatever. I do not think this is at all fair of them.

It's owing to this treatment that I am asking you to put another notice in the Old Paper for me. I want readers to write to me first. Of course, you can rely on me to reply to all-letters.

Yours sincerely,

*(Signed) ALFRED TAYLOR (S.F.L. Number 7844)
(For this interesting letter Alfred Taylor, of Leeds,
has been awarded a useful penknife.)*

All members of the St. Frank's League are invited to send to the Chief Officer letters of interest concerning the League. The most interesting will be published week by week, and the senders will receive pocket wallets or penknives. If you don't belong to the League, join immediately by filling in the form which appears on the opposite page.

CORRESPONDENTS WANTED

Wilfred Wardle, 44, King Street, Maidenhead, Berks. offers N.L.L. old series, Nos. 235, 302, 303, 416, 419; new series, Nos. 69, 75, 82, 131.

Wilfred Kirkbride, 42, Orme Street, Beswick, Manchester, wants correspondents in Australia; interested in chemistry and school stories.

William Wade, Whish Street, Windsor, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, wants stamp collecting correspondents anywhere, excepting England and Australia.

Henry Cathcart, 288, Baltic Street, Bridgeton, Glasgow, offers N.L.L. Nos. 68-154, new series.

Clifford Monks, 20, Lily Lane, Moston, Manchester, offers N.L.L. No. 1 to the current number.

John Murphy, 335, Northampton Buildings, Clerkenwell, London, E.C.1, wants copies of the N.L.L., containing the "Walter Church" series and the "Fresh Air Fiends" series.

Wallace L. Lawler, 11, Pheasant Street, Lowesmoor, Worcester, wants to hear from readers in his district.

R. Ringrose, 31, Victoria Road, Driffield, East Yorkshire, wants N.L.L. new series. Will exchange stamps.

Ronald W. Tomalin, High Street, Long Buckby, Nr. Rugby, wants correspondents interested in football and cricket.

Leslie Raybould, 174, Crankhall Lane, West Bromwich, Staffs., wants correspondents in Rhodesia.

D. Grogan, 38, Dresden Road, Highgate, London, N. 19, wants to hear from readers interested in model steam engines.

James L. Craig, 360, Hoc Street, Walthamstow, London, E.17, wants correspondents, especially those overseas.

Arthur Martin, 8, Adderbury Crescent, Adderbury Road, Beverley Road, Hull, wants correspondents.

W. Blake, 96, Lake Road, Portsmouth, wants correspondents in Ireland.

J. Doody, 61, Argyle Street, Neebels, Birmingham, wants correspondents in the British Empire.

W. Rowe, Sweetman Street, off Hale Street, Red Hill, Brisbane, Australia, wants correspondents in England.

A. V. Austen, 38, Park Avenue, Palmer's Green, London, N.13, wants correspondents interested in back numbers.

A. J. Argoon, Jervis Street, Burwood, Victoria, Australia, has N.L.L., old series, for sale.

AT GRIPS WITH THE REDMEN!

(Continued from page 33.)

"High explosive!" said Nelson Lee. "But where did you get it from?"

"You apparently forget, Brother Lee, that a quantity of high explosive was brought for blasting purposes," replied Browne calmly. "Our judgment was sound, for it was not long before we discovered that the Indians were on the war-path. But we did not make the mistake of showing ourselves at once. We bided our time."

"You were wise," said Nelson Lee. "You were much more useful in the background."

"Unquestionably," said Browne. "We watched the progress from the high peaks, and we came to the conclusion that the battle in this ravine was hot, not to say desperate. Yet we could not help to any appreciable extent. Valiant as Brother Horace and myself are, you must remember that there were only two of us. So we sought some stratagem, some subterfuge. And it was while we were engaged upon this task that the thunderstorm broke."

"Of course, sir, we didn't know exactly what a tight corner you were in," put in Stevens. "We got into some sort of shelter when all that rain came, and then Browne noticed that a tremendous amount of water had formed a basin, up above the ravine. It was like a miniature lake."

"A charge of high explosive, and the miniature lake was released," said Browne. "You see? It was this water, which came cascading down, and which swept the Indians away."

They went into further details—not that the schoolboys or schoolgirls wanted to hear any more. The bare facts were enough for them. William Napoleon Browne, by an astute move, had provided that great rush of water. Providential as the storm had been, it was undoubtedly due to Browne's brilliant idea that the Indians had been so thoroughly overwhelmed.

And now the situation was eased. The party was freed from the Redskins, and the hunt for old Hookey Webb's gold could proceed.

Yet, if the party had only known it, their perils and excitements were by no means over!

THE END.

(Look out for another exciting yarn in this fine series next week, chums. It's entitled: "The Schoolboy Goldseekers!" and every chapter is packed with thrills!)