

"RIVALS OF ST. FRANK'S!" Splendid Long School
Story Inside.

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**JAPING
THE MODERNS!**

New Series No. 7.

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RIVALS of St. FRANK'S!

The Ancient House has hitherto been a "back number" at St. Frank's, but no one gets a bigger shock when they do get going than the rival Modern House. Soccer skill is matched with Soccer skill—jape countered by jape—and in the end it's the Moderns that "get left"! This tip-top tale is the best yet.

CHAPTER I.

The Fester Challenge!

DICK BENNETT—that is, I, Nipper—snorted. I don't usually snort, but I did so on this occasion. I had good reason to. I was squatting in the easy-chair in Study C, in the Ancient House at St. Frank's, and I had been thinking deeply.

My two study chums, Tommy Watson and Sir Lancelot Montgomery Tregellis-West, were seated at the table, busy with their

prep. I ought to have been doing mine, as a matter of fact, but I was thinking instead.

It was evening, and the cheery fire blazed in the grate. Outside, everything was black, and a blustery wind moaned round the angles of the great Public school.

I snorted again and rose to my feet. Then I brought my fist down upon the table with a bang. I had to relieve my feelings somehow.

"It's rotten!" I declared. "That's what it is, you chaps. I'm not saying that Christine is intentionally nasty, but he's an ass. The difficulty's got to be overcome one

—Of This Long Complete School Story Of St. Frank's!



Related by
Nipper and set
down for pub-
lication by
Edwy Searles
Brooks.

way or another, and I'm going to put my foot down!"

Sir Montie looked up from his work.

"Dear boy, you're interruptin'," he complained mildly. "And you jerked the table frightfully just now. I'm not altogether sure that Mr. Crowell will like these ink-blots all over my exercise-book—"

"That's all right, Montie," I said. "Accidents will happen. Shove your prep aside for a minute, my son. I'm going to talk."

"Rate! Wait until we've done," said Tommy Watson shortly.

"Can't—it's too important."

"We wouldn't dream of hinderin' you, dear Benny," drawled Trogolis-West, with a sigh. "What's the trouble? Didn't you mention

Christine? An' when you put your foot down you'll be careful, won't you?"

I grinned.

"The fact is, I want to jaw about football,"

I explained.

"My dear chap, leave it until later on," said Watson, dipping his pen in the ink. "Football isn't important—"

"That's just where you're mistaken, my buck," I interrupted grimly. "Football is important—jolly important. You don't seem to realize the position. Who's the skipper of the St. Frank's Junior Eleven? Bob Christine! And Christine insists on making up his team of Monks only. It's absolutely offside!"

Tommy Watson rodded.

"That's right enough," he agreed. "I don't see why the Ancient House should be left out in the cold. Christine seems to think that we're just as slack as we used to be over on this side. But if the College House isn't careful, it'll find itself left behind. The Fossils mean business!"

"That's my argument exactly," I said pompously. "I'm not going to boast, but I am going to state a few facts. Before I came to St. Frank's, Fullwood & Co. had this House in the hollow of their hands—I mean the juniors, of course. Well, cricket and footer and all sports were simply allowed to go to pot. You know as well as I do that there's been a big alteration."

"It was your doin', dear fellow," said Sir Montie, looking at me through his pince-nez benevolently. "You're the leader of the juniors on this side. Before you came we were frightfully stale. Nuthin' doin' at all. Fact is, we didn't have enough energy. Dear boy, you were like a live wire—you simply made everybody jump in a most shockin' way!"

I grinned again.

"Live wires usually do give you a shock," I replied. "But we were talking about the football. Since the season started I've been working like the very dickens. The Ancient House Eleven is jolly strong—as strong as Christine's lot, I believe. But will he admit it?"

"Is that a riddle, old man?" asked Sir Montie languidly.

"No, it isn't," I said. "You know the answer just as well as I do. Christine simply ignores us. He calmly says that the St. Frank's Junior Eleven has always been made up of College House chaps, and there's no need for an alteration. He actually tries to make out that we haven't got any players in this House who can hold a candle to the Monks. That's sheer rot!"

"Oh, absolute piffle!" agreed Tommy. "You're a ripping forward, Benny, and so is Montie. I'm not so dusty at half, and old Handford is one of the finest goalies that ever stood between a pair of posts. He's an ass, really, but he can play footer all right."

"And Christine won't admit any of us into the Junior Eleven," I said indignantly. "It's not to be stood! Christine's a good chap, but he's pigheaded. He doesn't realise the full worth of my men. Well, he's got to! I'd be quite satisfied if we had five chaps in the Junior Eleven—to play in all big matches."

"I dare say you would," grinned Sir Montie. "But I'm afraid Christine won't be at home when you call. But you're right, dear boy—you are, really. Why shouldn't the St. Frank's Second Eleven be made up equally from both Houses? Begad, it's only right!"

"I'm a bit proud of my work," I went on warmly. "That's not boasting—it's just what I feel. I've been slogging away during every spare minute, and the chaps have backed me up in a ripping manner. Well, all that work's not going to be for nothing. I'm

going to have the Ancient House represented in all the big matches. I don't see why we should be spectators."

"You're right on the mark every time, old boy," said Tregellis-West, leaning back in his chair. "But may I ask a simple question?"

"A dozen if you like."

"One's enough, Benny. How are you going to make Christine change all this?" said Sir Montie mildly. "He's junior skipper, and his word goes. If he says he won't have us, he won't. Arguin' is just a waste of breath."

"Not if you agree in the right way," I replied. "Christine doesn't understand the position—and I'm going to make him. In fact, I'm going straight over to the College House now to put it to Christine plainly. See?"

"We shall get chucked out on our necks!" remarked Watson dubiously.

"We'll risk that."

"Just as you like, Bennett, old fellow," murmured Sir Montie. "It's a fearful bore bein' chucked out on our necks, but I'm willin' to go to the slaughter! I'll be a martyr, begad! Anythin' to please you?"

"—Well, let's finish our prep first—" began Tommy.

"Blow the prep!" I interrupted crisply.

"Let's get along!"

To stop all further argument, I opened the door and switched off the electric lights. Tommy and Montie followed me out—the latter with a resigned sigh. We strode along the passage to the lobby, and found it deserted. But just as we were going out Mr. Alvington came in and smiled at us as he passed.

We were great friends, of course. For "old Alvy" was really Nelson Lee, my esteemed gov'nor. We weren't detective and assistant during our sojourn at St. Frank's to escape the unwelcome attentions of the Fu Chang Tong—we were master and pupil. The only person in the whole school who knew the truth was Dr. Stafford, the Head.

At the present moment I wasn't concerned with the gov'nor, or with anybody else. Footer was to the fore, and I was keen on it. I'd always revelled in the great game; but, of course, I'd got pretty slack at it. Just lately, however, I'd been slogging at practice for all I was worth. All my old form returned—in fact, I believe I was better than I'd ever been.

As Tommy and Sir Montie and I crossed the dark Triangle, I wondered how Christine would take my proposition. He would probably refuse to listen to me. But I meant to peg away until I got some sort of satisfaction. To tell the truth, I'd never fairly tackled him. My eleven had only just polished up their form to the high mark I required. And now I was ready for business.

We marched straight into the College House, and went along to Study Q—where Bob Christine and Roddy Yorke and Charlie Talmadge resided. They were three decent fellows—the leaders of the Monks, in fact.

But Study Q was dark and empty, and I closed the door again.

"Common-room," I observed shortly. "This way, my sons."

We proceeded to the Common-room, and found that apartment pretty well crowded with Removites. There was a general look round as we strode in.

"Hallo—Fossils!" called Talmadge. "No admittance!"

"Rats!" I said cheerfully. "I've come here to talk business with Christine."

"With me?" asked Bob Christine, a sunny-faced junior. "Can't be bothered now, Bennett. I'm just starting a game of chess—"

"Blow the chess!" I interrupted. "I want to come to a proper understanding about the footer."

"My dear old scout, there's a proper understanding already," said Christine calmly. "We all understand that there aren't any Fossils worth putting into the Junior Eleven—not even as reserves. Good-night!"

"Shut the door after you!" said Yorke casually.

I grinned. "Now look here, we didn't come here to make any unreasonable requests, or anything, of that sort."

"I said, 'We came because we want to put things straight. St. Frank's is a school with two Houses of equal size. It's only right that both Houses should be represented in the junior footer team. Isn't the First Eleven composed of seniors of both Houses?'"

"What are you getting at, anyhow?" asked Christine curiously.

"Patience, dear fellow, patience!" murmured Sir Montie. "Benny will explain it all in good time, you know. He's a fellow with sound ideas, but he will do things in his own way. There's no stoppin' him. I've tried it, an' it's no good. Perhaps you won't agree to what he wants. But you will in the end, begad! When Benny's fairly on the warpath he's a whirlwind—he is, really!"

"That's more than you are, West, anyhow!" grinned Talmadge. "I wish to goodness you asses would clear off. We don't want to hear anything about your silly footer. I dare say the Third Form will give you a match—"

"That's just it!" I cut in. "You think we're only fit to play a fag's Form, don't you? That's just where you are off the track. The Ancient House Remove Eleven is as good as your lot—perhaps better!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You think that's funny, don't you?" I went on grimly. "Well, I'm not going to beat about the bush; I'm just going to tell you what we want. I'm skipper of the Remove on the other side, and it's up to me to put things in order. On Saturday afternoon St. Frank's Juniors are playing Bannington Grammar School, aren't they?"

"So I've heard," grinned Christine.

"It may be a rumour, of course—"

"Well, I reckon that the team we send against Bannington ought to be picked out of the fellows of both Houses," I went on, warming to my work. "That's only fair. And I suggest that in the Bannington match—in all big matches, in fact—there ought to be at least five Fossils in the team."

"Ha, ha, ha!" The Monks simply yelled.

"Only five?" asked Talmadge sarcastically. "Why not say twenty, and done with it!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You can cackle all you jolly well like!" I roared. "I've only got five men—not including myself—who are just as good as any of you fellows here. I'm not asking a favour, mind you—I'm just sticking up for the rights of the Ancient House. I want five men in the junior school team. Every player ought to be picked on his merits."

"My dear kid, that's my system always," said Bob Christine genially. "I bar favouritism. Every man in the Junior Eleven has got to be a first-class player—and your chaps aren't up to our form."

"Have you seen us at practice?" I asked warmly.

"I've seen you amusing yourselves," replied Christine. "Never taken any particular notice, of course. Whoever takes any notice of the Ancient House? It's painful, but it's a fact—the College House is the only place at St. Frank's where there's any merit."

"Begad! What modesty!" drawled Sir Montie. "Do you know, Benny boy, I had an idea that we should cause general amuse-



Edward Oswald Handforth, the big-hearted, big-listed, loud-voiced leader of Study D. Think he's a born leader—but a born duffer would be nearer the mark! Nevertheless, Handy's good points outweigh his headstrong ways.

ment. Don't you think we'd better beat a retreat before the slaughter begins—"

"Rats! We didn't come here to kick up a fuss, Montie," I interrupted. "But, before I go, I want to have a straight answer. I want to know whether the Ancient House is going to be given a chance or not—especially in the Bannington match."

"Not!" yelled a dozen voices in unison.

"Chuck the cheeky cads out!"

"Hold on!" said Christine, grinning. "Bennett's had his say, now I'll have mine. When the Fossils prove that they can play football decently, I might offer them a House match—just for the sake of appearances, you know. As for making any alterations to the team for Saturday, that's out of the question. But I'll tell you what," added the junior skipper, with a chuckle. "I'll make you a challenge, Bennett."

"Fire ahead," I said grimly.

"To-morrow's Wednesday," said Christine. "I was going to keep my men at practice during the afternoon, but if you like I'll play your Eleven. It'll be a bit of fun, anyhow. And if you win the match—well, you can have the Bannington fixture as a present."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You mean that if we beat you to-morrow afternoon, you'll stand out altogether?" I asked quickly.

"Exactly! You can take your team over to the Grammar School," grinned Christine. "We'll come along and look on!"

"I accept that challenge," I said promptly.

"You see!" yelled Oldfield. "Do you think you'll stand a chance?"

"Quite a good one," I replied calmly.

"You'll be whacked hands down!" yelled Talmadge. "Christine, my son, you must be potty! We can't play these fatheaded Fossils—we shall be the laughing stock of the whole school!"

"We shan't!" chuckled Christine. "They will!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

I beamed delightedly.

"I couldn't ask for anything better," I said, making for the door. "That's fixed, Christine. My Eleven plays yours to-morrow—and if we win we go over to Bannington on Saturday!"

"That's it," grinned Christine. "You stand about one chance in a million, but, if you're satisfied, I am. And, in any case, it'll be a bit of practice for us. I like to be obliging, you know."

Sir Montie and Tommy and I passed out, and as soon as we got into the gloomy Triangle I took a deep breath.

"Ripping!" I exclaimed. "It's just what I wanted!"

"We can't possibly whack 'em!" said Tommy doubtfully.

"Can't we? We'll jolly well try!" I declared grimly. "Just think what it means, my bonny boy! If we can only pull off that match, we go to Bannington on Saturday—not five of us, but the whole lot! By Jingo, it's ripping!"

CHAPTER 2.

The House Match.

I MADE no attempt to conceal my intense satisfaction.

To tell the truth, I had been very surprised at Christine's challenge. I had never dreamed that he would make such an offer. Of course, he had no idea of the form which the Fossils had assumed. And, although the odds were really against us, I had a distinct hope that we should pull off the match.

Christine's Eleven was hot stuff, and the Monks, as a whole body, were tremendously amused. They expected to win by about ten goals to nil. But I was optimistic enough to hope that the Fossils could, at least, finish up with a draw. I resolved to ask Christine what would happen in that event.

Tommy and Sir Montie wanted to go back to Study C to finish their prep. But I wouldn't hear of it, I carried them off to the Common-room, and found the bulk of the fellows there.

"News, dear fellows," said Sir Montie languidly. "Benny's been goin' it again. Before long the Ancient House will come into its own."

"That's about true," I remarked. "The fact is, you chaps, Christine has challenged my Eleven to play the St. Frank's Junior Team to-morrow afternoon. I've accepted, of course."

"What?"

"A House match!"

"My only hat!"

There hadn't been a Junior House match at St. Frank's for years, and the Removites were simply staggered. But their surprise changed to excitement and amusement when they learned that Christine's challenge had been of a humorous character.

"But that doesn't make any difference," I declared. "It's just the chance we wanted. If we only set our backs to it, we'll surprise the whole school. It's up to us—and we mustn't fail."

"Silly rot!" sneered Ralph Leslie Fullwood, gazing round haughtily through his monocle. "You'll get it in the neck—and serve you right! Do you think your team can stand up against Christine's? With Bennett as a skipper and Handforth as goalkeeper, and a lot of muffs to make up the rest of the team, you'll be licked to the wide!"

"I don't suppose you'll care if we are," I said curly. "A fat lot you care about your House, Fullwood. It's owing to your miserable slackness, when you were leader, that the Ancient House Remove got into such a mucky state!"

The great Fullwood scowled.

"Go and eat coke!" he exclaimed sullenly.

My remark had gone home, and Fullwood didn't exactly know what to say. He lounged over to the corner of the Common-room with his nose in the air, and stood chatting with his precious pals. The knuts of St. Frank's were by no means so powerful

as they had been at one time; they no longer boosed the show.

"I don't suppose we'll win," said Handforth, of Study D. "Of course, so far as I am concerned, the match is safe enough. But I'm thinking of the forwards. It's no good me protecting the goal if I'm not supported, is it? I'm not sure that I oughtn't to be skipper—"

"I am!" I interjected. "I'm quite sure, Handy, old man. You're a good custodian, but you're not a bit of use in the field. You stick to your job, and play the game of your life to-morrow. For every ball you let through the posts, we'll bump you!"

Edward Oswald Handforth sniffed.

"My goal's safe enough," he declared. "If it only rested with me, the game is a foregone conclusion!"

Handforth was a good goalkeeper, as I have remarked, but he had the peculiar fault of imagining that he was the only decent player in the team. But that was Handforth's character all over. He wasn't exactly conceded—he fully believed that he was the only chap in the Remove who was capable of being an efficient leader. As a matter of fact, a fag in the second could have led better than Handforth.

Nobody really took the match seriously—except the members of my Eleven. They, of course, knew that their chance had come, and they meant to take advantage of it. When I suggested that we should all get up early the following morning and do an hour's practice before breakfast, there wasn't a single objector. Every man in the team was as keen as mustard to be at the top of his form. We'd worked hard for this match—and we didn't mean to make it a farce.

The news spread, of course, but everybody seemed to take it humorously. The Ancient House had been the home of slackers for so long that nobody quite believed that a passable team had been mustered up. Our continual practice had passed almost unnoticed by the majority of the fellows; they hadn't thought that we were worth noticing.

Well, the next morning the whole team turned out eagerly, and when the rest of the fellows came down to breakfast, I had been keeping my men on the go for over an hour. And I was keenly satisfied with the result. I was just a bit weak in the half-back line, but my forwards were all good. I was playing centre, and I had plenty of confidence in my own ability.

I am afraid I was not very attentive in the class-room that morning. But, as I was practically the top boy of the whole Remove, Mr. Crowell didn't particularly mind a little inattention on my part.

For weeks I had been fuming over the one-sidedness of all the junior matches. There had been three big fixtures so far, and in each of them the Ancient House had been left in the cold. I meant to go to superhuman lengths to bring about a change.

After dinner I had my men on Little Side almost before they could swallow the last mouthful. And when Christine & Co.

arrived, I was feeling highly optimistic. The fellows had entered into the spirit of the thing, and meant to move heaven and earth to pull off a victory. It wasn't such a herculean task as the rest of the school believed, for we ourselves—the team—fully understood our own capabilities. Everybody else wasn't quite "wise" to our form, as Justin B. Farman put it.

The Ancient House Eleven was made up as follows: Hansforth; Hubbard, Church; Armstrong, McClure, Tommy Watson; Trevelick-West, Owen major, myself, Griffith, and Justin B. Farman.

Christine's men—the St. Frank's Junior Eleven proper—were extremely strong. They were composed of: Billy Nation; Turner, Page; Freeman, Steele, Roddy Yorke; Oldfield, Talmadge, Christine, Clapson, and Harron. Christine was playing all his best men, and that made me just a little dubious as to the result.

I had been hoping that he would give one or two of his reserves a chance, but he apparently meant to make mincemeat of us, as a lesson not to be cheeky. The more goals he could score against us, the greater would be our humiliation.

"It's going to be a tough fight!" I declared to the fellows, as we were about to leave the pavilion. "There's one thing I want to warn you against. Don't assume that we're whacked before the game starts. We're not whacked. The odds are heavy, but if we all pull together we'll surprise the natives. Don't forget that we're out to win."

We took the field cheerfully, and with plenty of confidence. This match had aroused general interest, and the ropes were crowded. Fullwood & Co. were there in force—ready to jeer when the ball went into our net. Fullwood, I believe, had a few bets on the match, and he thought that he was on a cert.

In the event of a draw—Christine had grinned when I suggested it to him—it was arranged that five of my men should go to Basington on Saturday. So, even if we couldn't win, we stood a chance of gaining my real object.

Bryant, of the Fifth, had consented to referee the match, and he stalked on to the field and blew his whistle sharply. The teams lined up, and Christine and I tossed. He won—which meant that we should have the wind with us during the second half.

Christine had evidently given his men instructions to score a goal within the first minute—just to set the crowd laughing. Consequently, the Monks followed up the kick-off with a rush.

To everybody's surprise, this rush was stopped almost at once. The Fossils worked together with clockwork-like precision. This, in itself, was a revelation to the spectators. They had expected us to be nothing better than a ragged, straggly mob.

But they soon found out their mistake. The Monks' rush was stopped, and Owen major and I got off in fine style. We attempted to get through the Monks' defence.

but we found it was a difficult task. Our attack was stopped, and the game swayed into midfield.

Here, for some time, it remained, neither side getting a decent chance. But the play was good all round. It had been believed that the game would be fought in our half of the field practically all the time. But both the teams were well matched. The fact that the Monks hadn't scored straight away caused general surprise.

And then I saw a chance.

Farman, at outside-right, neatly trapped the ball from Clagson, and streaked up the field like lightning. The whole forward line moved with him in unison, and there was a buzz of excitement from the ropes. Farman slipped through the opposing halves, and then Turner bore down on him. The ock meant business, and I could see our advantage slipping away.

But the American junior passed in the nick of time. He sent the ball neatly on to Griffith's foot. Steele charged at Griffith desperately, but the forward dodged cleverly, sending the ball to me at the same second.

I didn't hesitate. I sent the ball in with all my strength, risking everything on one kick. It was just a slim chance. The leather flashed from my foot, and shot straight for the goal. Naton, between the posts, flung himself sideways.

But his outstretched fingers missed the ball by inches, and it shot into the net.

"Goal!"

"Great Scott! Goal!"

There was a gasping roar from the ropes, and I caught a vision of scores of caps soaring skywards. The Ancient House fellows simply went off their heads with excitement for the moment. Their Eleven had scored during the first five minutes, and this match was being played for the especial purpose of taking us down a peg!

"Goal!"

The shout rang out continuously for over a minute. Fullwood & Co. were silent, and so were the College House chaps. They gazed at one another in alarm and consternation. They couldn't quite believe the evidence of their own eyes.

And then Sir Montie and Tommy and three or four other Removites rushed upon me and nearly wrung my arm off.

"Amazing, dear fellow!" gasped Tregollis-West. "First blood to us, begad! Benny, boy, you're a marvel!"

"It was a fluke!" declared Talmadge gruffly.

The Monks were very sore, but Christine grinned cheerfully.

"You won't catch us capping like that again!" he exclaimed. "I'll tell you one thing, though; I'd formed a wrong idea of your team, Bennett. My hat, you're hot stuff, and no mistake! We shall have all our work cut out to pull the game out of the fire!"

This early success had filled every Fossil with wild enthusiasm, and when the game restarted my men played with terrific zeal.

But the Monks played with terrific zeal, too. They didn't give us any other chance of attacking. We were compelled to be on the defensive the whole time. On three occasions within ten minutes the opposing forwards got through. But Hubbard and Church were first-class backs, and they worked like Trojans.

If ever there had been a test match this was one. The brand-new Ancient House Eleven was being put through its "baptism of fire," so to speak. It was proving its mettle.

Only once did the backs stop the Monks' rushes. On the other two occasions, Handforth, in goal, was compelled to act alone. He was all hands and feet, and he kept the ball out of the net with amazing skill.

Again and again the Monks tried to score, and we were pressed severely. But then, after a corner kick, there was a fierce attack in front of the Ancient House citadel. Handforth desperately fisted out the ball as Christine sent it in. But Harron's head got in the way, and it went back with a thud. The leather struck the goal-post, rebounded, and fell right against Talmadge's foot.

Bang!

Talmadge slammed the ball in instantly, and another yell went up.

"Goal!"

The Monks had equalised—but only after a period of grueling hard work. It was nearly half-time, and when the whistle blew, every player was in need of a rest.

The score was 1-1, and Bob Christine & Co. had confidently boasted that half-time would see them about five goals up.

The Monks were beginning to look very serious. And when the second half started, Bob Christine's team lined up with grim faces.

My own team had the advantage of the wind now, and if we could only bring off one more goal, and keep the ball out of our own net, we should win.

It sounded easy—but it wasn't.

The Monks were desperate, and they attacked fiercely and determinedly. Once it looked as though they were going to score, but Church just managed to clear the ball into midfield. And then Sir Montie's chance came.

He trapped the ball, and dribbled it away down the field swiftly. The Monks were after him in a pack, but Sir Montie was as swift as a deer when he liked, in spite of his affected languor.

The opposing backs flung themselves in, and he lost the ball. It shot away, and Freeman kicked in an attempt to clear. But Farman headed the ball and drove it back. Just for a moment there was a wild scramble. And out of it all rushed Sir Montie, with the leather again at his feet.

He had scarcely a second to deal with it. The halves were upon him, but a clear goal lay in front of him—with Naton dancing about between the posts with arms outstretched.

Sir Montie kicked, and the ball shot forward like lightning. Nation made a frantic leap upwards and sideways. His fingers scraped the ball as it sped in, but he was a fraction of a second too late.

"Hoorah! Goal! Hoorah!"

"Bravo, West!"

"Well kicked! Oh, well kicked!"

"Goal!"

Everybody simply went mad—the Monks with chagrin, and the Fossils with joy. Bob Christine was almost pale with alarm, and he was tremendously subdued. This match was proving to him that the Ancient House

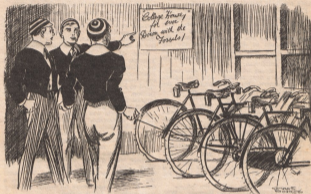
CHAPTER 3.

Victory!

SATURDAY morning dawned fine and clear.

There was general satisfaction when the weather conditions were observed. The Bannington match promised to be the most interesting of the season, and it would have considerably dampened our spirits if the weather had been bad.

As it was, the majority of the Fossils were simply bubbling with delight and eagerness.



I stepped into the bicycle shed and saw a notice fixed to the wall, which read: "College House for ever! Down with the Fossils!" Then I looked at the bicycles—and gasped. Five or six had flat tyres, and from each tyre protruded dozens of pins! "This isn't a jape," I said angrily. "It's a caddish outrage!"

Eleven was equal to the recognised junior team. I suppose, really, it was a personal triumph for me.

There were only ten minutes more to run, and during that time we centred all our efforts upon defence. At all costs the ball had to be kept out of the net. We weren't after any more goals! We only wanted to prevent our opponents scoring.

The Monks tried desperately to equalise, but their efforts were useless.

And the whistle blew at last, leaving both teams thoroughly exhausted after one of the hardest matches ever played upon the St. Frank's junior field. But what did we care? The game was over!

And while consternation reigned supreme in the Monks' camp, the wildest enthusiasm filled the heart of every decent Fossil. My team had won—and we were to play Bannington Grammar School on the Saturday!

Since Wednesday afternoon the whole Junior School had been in a state of tumult.

The College House fellows came in for a tremendous amount of chipping—and they had nothing to say. After all their boasts as to what they were going to do, they could do nothing but hide their diminished heads. For them the fateful match turned out to be a fiasco.

Bob Christine's challenge, issued in a fit of sarcasm, had resulted in sheer disaster—for the Monks. Instead of teaching me a lesson, they had simply given me one of the most important fixtures of the whole term.

Some of the fellows demanded that the conditions should be ignored; but Bob Christine was a chap of his word. He had said that I should take my own men to play the match, and he made no attempt to back out.

But it was a bitter pill for him to swallow, and he did so with as good a grace as

possible. He had the consolation of knowing, however, that the Fossils would keep their end up for St. Frank's as well as the School Eleven could have done. And that was comforting.

On the Wednesday evening Christine had written to the Grammar School skipper, explaining that a new St. Frank's Eleven would go over to Bannington, and added that he would explain later on.

For Christine meant to accompany my Eleven to Bannington. A whole crowd of fellows had the same intentions. The distance was only just over four miles, and so every available bicycle was got ready.

Fullwood & Co. hadn't much to say. The knuts, generally, didn't take any interest in football—except in the matter of bets. But Fullwood himself hated me, and any success of mine was gall and wormwood to him. He had attempted to drag my name into the dust on more than one occasion, but had failed. Just now, however, he affected to be studiously indifferent.

Morning lessons were a bore to everybody, but they were over at last. And just before dinner, Morrow, the head prefect of the Ancient House, sent word out to me that I was being called up on the telephone.

I went into the House with a puzzled frown on my brow. I couldn't imagine who could want me on the 'phone. But I soon found out. The instrument was installed in the prefects' Common-room—it was an extension 'phone—and I found Morrow and two or three other prefects there when I entered.

"There's somebody wants you, Bennett," said Morrow, jerking his head towards the instrument. "While you're about it, you'd better tell your friend that it's not usual for juniors to be rung up."

I grinned, and went over to the 'phone.

"Hallo!" I called. "I'm Bennett. Who wants me?"

"Oh, that's Bennett, is it?" came the reply. "Just a word with you, old man. I'm Gray, of Bannington Grammar School. You were going to bring a team over here this afternoon, weren't you?"

"Yes," I replied calmly. "I am going to bring it!"

"I'm sorry, but it can't be did!" called Gray. "The fixture is off."

"How's that?" I asked.

"Well, several of our chaps are down with influenza, and the Head's barred all matches for to-day," replied the Bannington skipper. "We're in quarantine, so to speak. It's simply rotten, of course, an' I'm frightfully sorry. I dare say we'll be able to fix up another date later on."

"Let's hope so," I replied. "Good-bye!"

I hung up the receiver and turned away. I had received the news quite calmly, and proceeded to tell the fellows of what had taken place over the wires. Everyone was simply thunderstruck—except Fullwood & Co. For some reason or other they cackled hugely, and were highly amused.

"This means that the match is off altogether!" exclaimed Handforth warmly.

"I call it rot! Who the dickens cares for influenza? It strikes me, Bennett, that Bannington's called off for some reason. That was only a rotten excuse!"

Merrell and Noye—two of the knuts—were standing near, and they grinned broadly.

"Spoilt your little game, what?" chuckled Noye.

"Perhaps," I replied sweetly—"and perhaps not!"

Immediately after that I got all my men together and quietly told them to get ready to start exactly as though nothing had happened. In fact, I told them to get ready a little before the originally arranged time.

During dinner there was considerable talk, which the masters couldn't subdue, for all the juniors were keenly disappointed. Only the monks, on the other side, felt relieved. And their relief was mixed with the regret that one of the best fixtures had been wiped off.

Most of the Removites were in the Triangle after dinner—as I knew they would be. Everybody was ready for setting off to Bannington; bikes had been got ready, and the fellows who didn't possess bikes had decided to run over by the afternoon train from Bellon. The match had excited general interest among the juniors.

And now it was off!

The Triangle was simply crowded with indignant Removites. I had simply repeated the words which had been given to me over the telephone. But they were quite enough. Gray, the Bannington skipper, had said that St. Frank's match was cancelled. And "that's all there was to it," as Farman put it.

There were groups all over the Triangle when Tommy and Sir Montie and I left Study C and went into the lobby. We found the rest of the Eleven there, talking in a clump. Their bags were all ready, but they were looking a bit mystified.

"Look here, Bennett, what's the idea of this?" asked Handforth grimly. "Didn't Gray ring you up and say that the match was postponed? What's the good of us getting all prepared like this? A fat lot of good it'll be—"

"Cheer up!" I interrupted lightly. "The fixture's all right."

"What?"

Handforth and Hubbard and Church simply yelled at me; but I only grinned and passed outside. The team followed, and upon the steps we found the noble knuts, chatting in a group, and indulging in frequent chuckles.

I went straight up to Fullwood and smiled at him.

"It was a bit too thin, old scout," I said sweetly.

Ralph Leslie Fullwood glared at me.

"What are you gettin' at, you cad!" he demanded.

"You're a smart chap, Fullwood. I leave it to your mighty brain," I said. "But telephones don't disguise a fellow's voice when you're only speaking across a short extension line—say, for example, from the College House to the Ancient House!"

Fullwood started.

"What—what—"

"Besides," I went on, "when you've played a mean trick of that sort, it isn't exactly advisable to cackle like a Cheshire cat—it gives the game away, you know. That's just a tip."

"I don't know what you're babbling about!" blustered Fullwood.

"Oh, yes, you do!" I smiled pleasantly. "And so do your precious pals. Quite a nice little plot, eh? Tried to muck up the match—out of sheer spite! It was you who rang me up, Fullwood, not the Grammar School skipper. I recognised your dulcet tones in a jiffy. Pity, wasn't it?"

Fullwood was red in the face, and the other knuts looked very sick. Of course, I had been aware of the game from the very start. But I hadn't exposed it until now because Fullwood was a tricky young brawler. He would have tried some other dodge, perhaps—and that would have meant unnecessary trouble, and possibly delay.

"You're dotty, you—you rotter!" roared Fullwood. "I haven't used the telephone for days—"

"That's a lie, anyhow!" put in Charlie Talmadge, of the College House. "You were in the prefects' Common room, over on my side, only an hour ago—"

"You—the awful scoundrel!" gasped Handforth, rolling up his sleeves and glaring at Fullwood. "Tried to muck up the match, did you? Our match! My only hat! There's going to be bloodshed in half a second!"

I pushed Handforth back, and grinned. "No time for pig slaughtering now, Handy, old son," I said cheerfully. "If you feel like punching Fullwood's nose, leave it until this evening. It'll be something to look forward to—especially for Fullwood!"

Ralph Leslie sneered.

"You can't prove it was me—" he began.

"I don't want to," I interrupted curtly. "But I know it, all the same—and you don't look like an injured innocent, Fullwood. The fellows will know what to believe all right. You'd better think of some other wheeze!"

I walked away with Sir Montie and Tommy.

"Dear fellow, you're surprisin'," murmured the schoolboy baronet. "You are, really! You do these things so calmly, y'know. Bogus! Fullwood's face was worth quids, dear man—I wouldn't have missed it for worlds! It's awfully refreshin' to see the cod taken down a few pegs!"

Of course, the news spread like wild-fire, and the fellows were mightily indignant. The knuts, with Fullwood at their head, decided—quite suddenly—that the immediate vicinity of the Triangle was somewhat unhealthy. They melted away, and the Removites didn't trouble to find them.

All the fellows grinned with delight—all the Fossils, at least. But the Monks were rather glad, I believe. Although it was galling that the Ancient House Eleven

should play the match, Bob Christine & Co. were anxious to be onlookers.

I'd never met the Grammar School fellows, but I was given to understand that they were a very decent crowd. The Junior Eleven was known to be hot stuff—in their own words, they were "mustard." But Christine confidently asserted that St. Frank's could lick them hollow—provided, of course, that the Monks were playing. I assured Christine that the result was even more certain under the present conditions. In reply to this remark I only received a snort.

Bannington was looking quite sunny as we passed through on our jiggers; and the Grammar School proved to be an imposing establishment. But it was modern compared to St. Frank's, and not half so good really.

Arthur Gray and his men were on Little Side waiting for us. A senior match was just beginning on the First Eleven ground, but we weren't interested in it. Gray was the Fourth-Form skipper, and quite a decent chap.

"A new team, eh?" he inquired genially, after we were introduced. "Well, if you're as good as the old one, you'll give us a good game. I'm rather sorry you're not playing, Christine."

"Not so sorry as I am!" said Bob ruefully.

He briefly explained the circumstances, and Gray grinned hugely. I believe he thought that the change was very much for the better—from his point of view. But as soon as the match started he knew different.

My team was in fine fettle. Our first success had put great heart into us, and every fellow was simply bubbling with enthusiasm, and with the desire to attain new honours.

The Eleven played together superbly, and Handforth did wonders in goal. Farman and Trogell-West were particularly good in the forward line, and before the game had been going ten minutes we scored first blood.

Christine & Co. cheered as loudly as anybody, and Farman, who had taken the goal, asserted that "we had made a plump dandy start, anyway!"

But the Grammarians were good footballers, and the game was first class. Before half-time the home team had equalised, and just as the whistle blew they scored again.

So when the second half started we were one down—that meant that we had to get another goal to equalise and two to win. As a matter of fact, the Saints equalised within the first minute. I kicked the goal myself, seizing upon an unexpected chance almost as soon as the ball had been kicked off.

The teams were well matched, but I think we were just a little more scientific in our method of play; and the Grammarians were certainly weak in their half-back line.

Having equalised, we maintained the offensive. The game was played, for the most part, in the enemy's territory. And Owen major headed the ball into the net beautifully when everybody least expected it. Soon

after that Farman scored again, and the game was as good as over.

We were two up now, and the Grammarians made frantic efforts to lessen their defeat. The last five minutes were rather hot, and I must admit that the Bannington fellows had a bit of bad luck. For, just as the whistle blew, Gray sent in a ripping shot. But it entered the net too late, and so the goal didn't count. It was really hard lines.

"Four—two!" exclaimed Bob Christine joyfully, as he wrung my hand. "Top-hole, Bennett! By Jove! You've kept our end up fine!"

"What about the Ancient House?" I grinned. "Do we get a show in all big matches in future?"

Bob Christine nodded emphatically.

"You bet!" he exclaimed. "Fact is, Bennett, I've been a bit of an ass."

"Glad you admit it—"

"I'm only too willing to admit it," he interrupted frankly. "If there's one thing I detest, it's being unfair. And, in future, the St. Frank's Junior Eleven will always be made up equally of Monks and Fossils. By jingo, with your best men, and mine, we'll be practically invincible!"

I was tremendously pleased—and so was every other member of the Ancient House team. We had fought for our rights—and we had got them.

CHAPTER 4.

The Blue Book.

THE Grammarians took their defeat in quite a nice spirit, but assured us that when they paid a return visit to St. Frank's, they would do their best to whack us on our own ground. We were quite agreeable that they should—do their best.

"It's a piece of fearful cheek, really, those mouldy old Fossils having so much nerve," remarked Charlie Talmadge, as we prepared to set off home. "I suppose the asses will be kidding themselves that they are as good as the Monks!"

"My dear chap, it's not kid—it's a fact!" I said stantly. "To tell the truth, the College House will be left miles behind before so very long. The Fossils are going to forge ahead in everything!"

"Why, you—you ass—"

"No squabbles now!" grinned Christine. "But I'll tell you one thing; the old rivalry between the two Houses at St. Frank's looks like being revived. That'll mean House rows; friendly ones, of course. And you'd better look out for squalls, Bennett. We're jolly pleased that you whacked the Grammar School, but the Fossils will be bound to crow no end. In that case it will be my duty to point out—forcibly—that the College House still rules the roost. This is just a hint—see?"

"Dear boy, who couldn't see!" drawled Sir Montie. "But squalls are queer things, you know. They're so frightfully changeable, begad! The squalls might turn round in the wrong direction—what?"

This little exchange of views made me really cheerful. Already I had crossed that keen sense of rivalry which had once characterized the juniors of both Houses at St. Frank's—but had been long since dead. St. Frank's would be altogether more healthy if that friendly rivalry was renewed in earnest.

Handforth simply couldn't be suppressed. The worthy inhabitants of Bannington, I verily believe, had an idea that Handforth was making public announcements of some kind. At all events, he rode a little in advance, and his fog-born voice awoke the echoes. It was a kind of song of triumph. The mighty Edward Oswald seemed to have a fixed idea that if it hadn't been for him the match would have been lost. But as nobody else had this idea, there was no harm in allowing Handforth to stick to his little delusion. In any case, argument was useless. Arguing with Handforth was like asking a mule to be reasonable.

And just as we were in the middle of the old High Street, Handforth's sweet voice was interrupted. As nobody had been listening to him, this didn't matter much. A loud report sounded, followed by ominous wobbles of Edward Oswald's front wheel. In short, his tyre had sprung a leak, as Tommy Watson put it. At all events, repairs were necessary, and so repairs were done. They were accomplished on the spot, several fellows electing to lend a hand.

A good few juniors went on ahead, but the eleven stuck together. And so we were compelled to wait until Handforth's tyre was capable of holding wind again. Sir Montie and Tommy and I strolled off down the High Street with the intention of purchasing some liquid refreshment. There was no reason why we shouldn't improve the shining hour.

"Hold on!" said Tommy, coming to a halt. "I want to pop in here for a tick. Old Spragg might have a copy of that book I was talking to you about yesterday."

I didn't remember what book it was, but we halted. "Old Spragg" was the name of an ancient gentleman who presided over a grabby little bookshop set in a back-water of the High Street. Outside the shop stood a long bench, with a miscellaneous assortment of musty volumes on view.

These books were in separate piles, with different prices marked on each pile. Sir Montie and I stood looking at the old volumes idly while Tommy was within the shop. They seemed a pretty dilapidated lot, in any case.

One book, however, attracted my attention, and I picked it up with a slight amount of interest. It had been wedged in between four or five others on the sixpenny pile. It was bound in a blue kind of leather, and was

decidedly ancient by the look of it. The title was nearly worn off, but the book was in a pretty good condition considering that it had been published in the year 1793.

"Crimes of Fifty Years Ago"—that sounds interesting," I remarked. "Those crimes must have been committed somewhere about 1748. Is it worth a tanner, Montie?"

"My dear boy, don't ask me!" said Montie. "Personally, I wouldn't handle such a beastly-looking book. The cover's nearly off, an' I'm quite sure it's full of those horrid little insects—"

"Rats!" I interrupted. "I suppose you mean bookworms? There's generally a selection in most old books, but they don't hurt you, Montie. I'm going to sport sixpence on this, anyhow!"

I don't suppose he understood my interest in the volume—I'm sure he didn't. As a matter of fact, I thought that "Crimes of Fifty Years Ago" might interest the gov'nor. It's often possible to pick up an old book at a second-hand shop for a few pence which is really worth pounds.

I took the blue-covered volume inside, paid my sixpence, and found that Tommy was ready to depart. We marched out together, Tommy remarking that it wasn't his business if I liked to throw good sixpences away.

Just in the doorway we almost ran into a well-dressed man who was entering. I could see his eyes fixed upon the book in my hand, and his expression suddenly became very intense for some reason or other.

As I passed he grabbed my arm and jerked me round.

"Tell me, boy, what is that book?" he asked abruptly.

I didn't like the man's curt, authoritative tone, and I jerked my arm free from his grip.

"I don't mind telling you," I replied. "But there's such a thing as politeness, sir. This book is called 'Crimes of Fifty Years Ago'—"

"Ah! Give it to me!" the man exclaimed eagerly, thrusting out his hand, and grabbing for the volume. But I jerked it back, my temper rising slightly.

"Excuse me," I said quietly. "I've just bought this book—I've paid the enormous sum of sixpence for it. It's mine, and I haven't the slightest intension of giving it to you. If you'll please let me pass—"

The stranger's eyes gleamed. "You young fool!" he snapped. "Give me that book—do you hear me? It's mine—mine! I—!" He paused abruptly, and laughed. "But I am going to work the wrong way. You have bought the book, you say? For sixpence? I will give you a shilling for it, young man!"

"Thanks," I said curtly. "I'll keep the book."

And I pushed past him, Tommy and Sir Montie were just on the pavement, grinning. But before I could take a couple of strides the stranger seized my arm again. He spun me round fiercely.

"You young jackanapes!" he snarled angrily. "I want that book—"

"Well, you won't get it now, however much you want it!" I broke in, with equal heat. "If you had asked me politely I might have re-sold it. I don't want it."

But I'm not going to be called a fool and a jackanapes—"

"Tush!" he snapped. "You shall have two shillings, boy!"

"Begad!" murmured Sir Montie. "Sell it, Benny boy. It's a rippin' deal, y'know. I don't believe in profiteerin', really, but—"

"That's all right, Montie," I interrupted. "I'm not going to sell."

"You are going to sell!" declared the man with glittering eyes. "I came to this shop for the especial purpose of purchasing this book—and I am not going away without it! Do you understand? I am not going away without it!"

I smiled. "That's funny," I said calmly. "I've got an idea that you are going away without it—because I'm going to take it myself. I wouldn't sell it for any price after the way you've behaved. Don't you think we'd better finish this little argument?"

Perhaps my tone cooled him down. At all events, he changed his tactics almost at



Ralph Leslie Fallwood, the supercilious leader of the knuts' brigade at St. Frank's. He's a "gay dog," and plays the "giddy goat"—in short, a "bad egg"!

once, and smiled. But his eyes still shone with excitement and anger. I couldn't understand why—and I didn't particularly want to understand.

"I have insulted you, my boy," he said quietly. "Forgive me. That book is of no value to you—you have admitted as much. But it is priceless to me. It—it was the property of an—an old friend of mine, and I want it as a keepsake. I will give you five shillings for it. There—how is that? Five shillings. Your profit will be considerable."

"I don't want to make any profit," I said impatiently. "I'm not going to sell the book, thanks!"

Again I pushed past him. I was fed up with the silly argument, and several small urethans were standing round, keenly interested in the proceedings. The stranger's yarn about wanting the book as a keepsake was all bunkum, of course.

He did not attempt to detain me again—he realized that there would have been trouble if he'd attempted any violence. But he glared after me, and uttered a harsh exclamation of fury.

"I will give you ten shillings!" he shouted desperately.

I didn't take any notice, but walked away with Sir Montie and Tommy. Old Spragg, I knew, had come out of his shop. He was probably thinking that he had allowed a valuable book to go for a mere song. But the volume was mine—I'd said the marked price for it—and I meant to stick to it.

"Yes aah!" said Tommy Watson warmly. "What's the matter?"

"The matter!" he echoed. "Why, you—you chump, you've chucked nine and sixpence away! That chap was willing to give you half a quid for that mouldy old book! And you refused it! My only Aunt Jane!"

I laughed and glanced back. Old Spragg was having a heated argument with the infuriated stranger.

"My dear chap," I said, "if that fellow was willing to give me ten bob for the book, it proves that the book's worth more. Don't you see? Why should he offer me such a price? Because he knows it's valuable, probably. Anyhow, I'm going to take it to old Alvy when we get to the school. He'll know. And, in any case, I'm not hard up for half a quid. The book's mine."

"Let him have his own way, Tommy boy," said Sir Montie. "Benny's a good fellow, but he's obstinate. Rightfully obstinate. When we get to St. Frank's he'll bore us to tears with that beastly old book. But we mustn't grumble—life is full of worries."

We found that Handforth's tyre was repaired, and the journey to St. Frank's was continued. And when we arrived at the school we were greeted enthusiastically. The news of our victory had reached St. Frank's well ahead of us, and the Ancient House fellows were simply bubbling with joy.

I invited the whole team to tea in Study C, and several other fellows managed to be present too. Teddy Long, of course, was to the fore—although he had been sneering for days at the absurdity of allowing the Ancient House Eleven to go over to Bannington. Long was the sneak of the Remove, but whenever there was a feed on he managed to squeeze in somehow or other.

Just before tea was over Tommy Watson mentioned the blue-covered book, and there was a little discussion concerning it. One of the guests suggested that the book was, perhaps, the last of an ancient edition, and worth a lot from a collector's point of view. Anyhow, I decided to speak to the gov'nor about it.

So, after tea, I took it along to the House-master's study. Mr. Alvington, of course, was really none other than Nelson Lee, the famous crime investigator. But, as I'd often told him, if the detective business ever failed, he'd do fine as a schoolmaster.

He looked up with a smile as I entered his study.

"Can you spare a minute, sir?" I asked, closing the door.

"Two, if you like, my boy," replied Lee cheerfully.

"That's generous of you, gov'nor," I grinned. "Lemme see, I haven't had a private word with you since yesterday morning, have I?"

"I don't think you have, Nipper," smiled Nelson Lee, laying down his pen. "But I wasn't aware that such a word as 'lemme' existed in the English language. Our stay at St. Frank's seems to be having a detrimental effect upon your vocabulary, Nipper."

I grinned.

"Chuck it, gov'nor!" I replied. "I want you to have a squint at this book. I bought it at Bannington this afternoon—for sixpence."

"Oh, yes. I was going to congratulate you upon your visit to Bannington, young 'un," said Lee. "I'm very glad to hear that the Ancient House team has won such honours under your leadership. You're doing well, my boy. But what's this?"

He picked up the disreputable-looking volume, and examined it, the cover nearly falling off as he did so. He dipped into several different portions of the book and then looked up.

"It may prove to be interesting, Nipper," he remarked, "but I don't think you have made a very useful purchase."

"I'm not thinking of reading it, sir," I grinned. "The fact is, I had an idea you might like to look at it. Do you think I've swindled the bookseller by getting it for so small a sum?"

The gov'nor chuckled.

"You gave sixpence for it, eh?" he replied. "I am inclined to believe that the bookseller has swindled you, Nipper. This dilapidated volume would be rather dear at threepence."

"Well, that's queer," I said. "Some man offered me ten bob for it."

And I told the gov'nor of the affair outside old Spragg's in Bannington. He listened carefully, examined the book again, and then passed it back to me.

"I can't quite understand it," he said. "This man offered you ten shillings? I should say he was a crank of some kind, with more money than he knew what to do with. At all events, the book is worthless."

I left Nelson Lee's study after another minute or two, and there was a general grin among the fellows when they learned that the blue volume wasn't actually worth what I had given for it. Everybody reckoned that I had been an ass not to accept the ten shillings which the stranger had offered me.

But the Removists didn't know the real value of that musty old book—and, for that matter, neither did I!

CHAPTER 5.

Mysterious!

AFTER prep in Study C, Sir Montie and Tommy and I went down to the Common-room. At least, my two chums went; I followed after about ten minutes. For I completed a little task I had been engaged upon.

It was nothing much—but it was to mean a lot later on. While looking at the old book I managed to drop it, and the cover came right off. As it happened, I had an old dictionary without a cover at all. And as the blue cover fitted the dictionary exactly, I thought it rather a good idea to use this cover for a good purpose.

So I fished out some glue, and proceeded to stick things together. After about ten minutes the blue cover of "Crimes of Fifty Years Ago" adorned the dictionary. As it was for my own use, it didn't matter a scrap—and I hate books without covers.

I felt that my sixpence hadn't been wasted after all, and I shoved the dictionary on the shelf with a feeling of satisfaction—stowing the aged volume beneath a pile of old magazines, out of sight.

Then I went down to the Common-room.

I found that apartment simply crowded, and everybody was talking at once. And they certainly had something to talk about that was worth while. The Ancient House victory had stirred the whole school, and seniors and juniors alike were discussing it. The Fifth and Sixth, naturally, regarded all junior affairs from a somewhat lofty altitude, but the Ancient House seniors were undoubtedly pleased.

Fullwood and Co. said nothing. They preferred the Ancient House in its old slack state, and my success as leader of the Fossils was a direct blow at Fullwood. While he had been leader the Remove had gone to

pot; and it was galling for him to stand by while I repaired the damage. His power was broken for good and all. At the same time, he and the knuts still clung together.

In the dormitory that night there was a considerable amount of talk, and everybody was late in going to sleep. As a natural consequence, most of the juniors felt a bit seedy in the morning. But the knowledge that we had won the Bannington match, and thus proved our eligibility for the St. Frank's Junior Eleven, was a great source of satisfaction.

After breakfast Sir Montie and Tommy and I strolled about in the Triangle. As you'll probably guess, we were deeply engaged in "footer" jaw. As a matter of fact, I was engaged in the difficult proposition of choosing five or six fellows who were most suitable for the school team. There was certain to be a small amount of jealousy, and I wished to avoid as much of it as possible.

About this time I noticed the plump figure of Teddy Long on the other side of the Triangle. Under ordinary circumstances I took no notice whatever of the fat little bouncer. But his tactics at the present moment were a bit interesting.

My chums and I were near the gates, and Teddy Long had dodged out of the Ancient House doorway with the apparent intention of scudding out into the road—for he came straight towards us.

But then he abruptly stopped, looked at us rather uncertainly for the moment, and then edged over towards the chestnuts and elms which grew on the other side of the fountain. It was quite clear that he wished to avoid us.

"Now, what's up with that young rotter?" I asked curiously. "He's up to some mischief. I'll bet! Did you notice the way he dodged?"

"Leave him alone, dear fellow," said Sir Montie languidly. "Long is rather an expert at dodgin'—"

"Yes, but he looks guilty, somehow," I said keenly. "I believe he's been up to some game connected with us. Otherwise, why should he wish to avoid us? I'm going to collar him, anyhow."

I walked over towards the elms, where the squat Removite was seeking to obtain cover. The very fact that he wished to hide from us looked suspicious. And when he broke into a run at the first sign of approach, I was positively convinced that there was something in the wind.

I pelted after him, and he gave a little squeak. His fat legs moved like clockwork as he vainly attempted to reach the gates before me. It was an easy matter to cut him off, and I grabbed his shoulder, and spun him round.

"You—you rotter!" gasped Teddy Long. "I—I'm not going out—"

"Not just yet, anyhow," I said grimly. "What's the game, you young fashad? Why are you looking so guilty? Up to something a bit more sneaky than usual?"

"I—I—I—"

"Begad, that's not English!" said Sir Montie, who had leisurely strolled up. "Use lucid language, Long, dear boy."

"I—I haven't done anything!" panted Teddy indignantly. "I didn't go into your rotten study— I—mean—"

"Oh, so you've been in Study C, have you?" I said grimly. "Out with it, you little idiot. What's the game?"

"It's like your check, keeping me here!" roared Long. "Lemme go, you cad! I've got an important appointment with—with—I mean, I've got to meet somebody down the lane— Leave my waistcoat alone, West, you beast!"

"Dear fellow, you're gettin' too fat," drawled Sir Montie. "Isn't there somethin' bulgin' here? Begad, it's not superfluous tissue, is it?"

Teddy Long wriggled wildly.

"You—you rotters— Yow!"

Sir Montie, quite calmly, had ripped open the fat Remove's waistcoat while I held him. Something fell to the ground with a thud, and I glanced down. I saw a faded, blue-covered book—and I uttered an exclamation.

"That old volume!" I ejaculated, in surprise.

I picked it up. The book was the dictionary—in its new cover. Why on earth had Long been concealing such an article under his waistcoat? I looked at the young bouncer angrily.

"What's the idea of this?" I demanded.

"I—I— That rotten book isn't worth anything!" gasped Teddy. "I—I was only going to read it, Bennett!"

"You saw! Do you think I believe that rot?" I said sharply. "Now, then—out with it! And if you don't tell the truth, I'll take your head and shove it in the fountain pool!"

Long shuddered—he loathed water.

"Oh, don't be an ass, Bennett!" he panted. "It—it was this way, you know. I—I went for a stroll ju-just before brekker, and I—I met a man out in the lane. It's the truth— honest injun!"

"Your injun's generally a fearful liar, Teddy boy," murmured Trellis-West.

"I did meet a man!" roared Long. "A ripping chap, too. He—he gave me half a crown, and— and promised me another seven and six— I—I mean—"

"That is to say," I interrupted grimly, "this stranger offered you half a quid to pinch this blue-covered volume?"

"Not—not pinch it!" stammered Teddy. "Besides, it's only a rotten old thing—you said so yourself! The man asked me if I knew anything about an old blue-covered book which one of the fellows had bought at

Bannington. I—I knew you'd got it, Bennett, and I told the chap so."

"Well?" I asked, rather surprised.

"He said that if I fetched it for him he'd—he'd give me half a quid!" said Teddy defiantly. "Of course, I—I was only going to give you a surprise, Bennett. I—I thought you'd be pleased, you know. As soon as I'd got the money, I should have handed it over to you—"

"Well, I'll give you the benefit of the doubt," I said. "But you're a young rascal, anyhow. Where is this man you speak about?"

"Just down the lane, at the first bend," said Teddy Long. "I—I say, don't you think I'd better take him the book—"

"I think you'd better clear off!" I interrupted curtly. "And consider yourself lucky that you haven't been bumped. Cut, you young bouncer!"

The sneak of the Remove scuttled off—and made straight for the tuckshop. He still had the half-crown, and he evidently meant to get rid of it before it could be taken from him by force. I'd forgotten it for the moment.

"What the dickens was the young ass talking about?" asked Tommy Watson wonderingly. "Do you think that chap has come to St. Frank's for the book?"

"There's no question about it," I replied. "It's queer. Why on earth is he making such efforts to get hold of that ragged old volume? I'm afraid he would have got a bit of a shock if Teddy had taken him this." I added with a grin. "There's nothing but the cover here—but Long didn't know that."

"What's to be done, dear boy?" asked Sir Montie, adjusting his pince-nez. "Time's getting on, you know—"

"I vote we run down the lane," I interrupted. "We'll interview this merchant, and point out that he'll get himself into trouble if he incites fellows to take other people's property."

As Sir Montie had said we had not much time to spare, and so we hurried as we strode down the lane. But when we got to the corner there was not a soul in sight—although I fancied I saw a movement among the trees of Bellton Wood.

"Bunked!" I said, nodding my head. "I half expected it. The fellow must have slipped into the wood as soon as he saw the three of us coming down instead of Long. He guessed that trouble was brewing. Well, it's no good waiting here."

We walked back briskly, and were just in time to scrape into the Remove Form-room before Mr. Crowell—the Remove-master—appeared on the scene.

But what could be the meaning of the incident?

Why had the stranger adopted such a device in order to get hold of that musty old record of forgotten crimes?

The affair was queer—but it was to be even more mysterious before long.

CHAPTER 6.

Japed!

I IMMEDIATELY after dinner I went along to Study C and raked out the coverless old book. I hadn't examined it properly so far, and I thought it would be worth while to do so. It certainly wasn't as worthless as it seemed—or the genial stranger would never have gone to such trouble to possess himself of it.

I went through it almost page by page, with Sir Montie and Tommy looking over

"The—the awful rotters!" bawled a powerful voice, which couldn't possibly be mistaken.

"Bugad! You do shock a fellow, Handforth!" protested Tregettis-West. "Dear boy, what's the matter? You're lookin' frightfully excited, and your tie's all crooked. It's bad form to go about with a crooked tie—"

"Blow my tie!" roared Handforth. "You're captain of the Fossils, Bennett—or supposed to be. It's my job, really, but there's too much fat-headed jealousy in this



As I looked down shyly from the window of the dormitory, I got a shock. I saw a figure stop by a window of the Common-room. "A burglar!" I muttered. Next moment the man had pushed the window open and was climbing in!

my shoulder. But we couldn't find anything that gave us any enlightenment—except, perhaps, an assortment of figures which were scribbled on the fly-leaf at the back. The whole page was covered with hastily-pencilled figures.

"Well, these aren't worth ten bob, are they?" I asked. "They're only a jumble, anyhow. Look's like a kid's exercise, more than anything else. By Jupiter! I don't suppose it's a cipher, is it?"

"What, one of those queer things which mean something else?" asked Montie, rather vaguely. "Don't ask me to help you with it, dear fellow. I loathe figures; in fact, I loathe anything which means brain exercise. That's the worst of havin' such a little brain, you know; I've got to use it sparingly."

"A cipher?" I said thoughtfully. "Now, let me see—"

The study door opened with a crash.

House for fair play to be thought of. Christine & Co. have been playing a rotten trick!"

I and my chums had been poring over my strange purchase for nearly half-an-hour, and evidently something startling had occurred during that time. Handforth, at least, was very excited—and when Handforth was in that state he awakes the echoes.

"What's the matter, Handy?" I asked calmly.

"Come and look for yourself," bawled Edward Oswald furiously. "It's up to you to put your foot down, Bennett. House rivalry's all very well, but there is such a thing as a limit. And those caddish Monks have overstepped the mark the first go off!"

Handforth stamped out of the study again, and we followed him—more out of curiosity than anything else. I certainly believed that he had got hold of the wrong end of the

sick. Bob Christine wasn't the fellow to do anything caddish.

In the lobby we found several other fellows talking heatedly, and with black brows. And Handforth led the way straight over to the bicycle shed. There were five or six Fossils crowding round the doorway—Church and McClure and Farman, and Owen major, and one or two others.

"What's all the giddy fuss about?" I asked curiously.

"No more fuss than is warranted, anyhow!" said Owen major warmly. "Just have a look in here, Bennett. I reckon it's a bit too thick!"

I stepped into the bicycle shed with Tommy and Montie close behind me. And the first thing we saw was a piece of old cardboard fixed to the wall, facing the door. Upon it were the words: "College House for ever! Down with the Fossils!"

The writing was hurried, but it looked like Bob Christine's.

"Well, I can't see anything much in that —" I began.

"Look at all those tyres!" roared Handforth into my ear.

I looked, and then my expression changed. For five or six bicycles were seriously put out of action. In short, all the tyres were flat, and from each protruded the heads of dozens of large pins. The tyres, in fact, had been deliberately punctured in innumerable places, the pins being stuck right in.

"Bogad! What a horridly mean trick!" murmured Montie, in a shocked voice. "Old scouts, this is a bit too steep—it is, really!"

"Steep!" I echoed angrily. "This isn't a jape—it's a rottenly caddish outrage. I didn't think Bob Christine could be such a bounder. But he'll have to answer for it, I can tell you!"

"I saw a crowd of Monks over by the College House, cackling like old hens, five minutes ago," said Owen major hotly. "There's no doubt about it, Bennett—Christine has opened the rivalry by doing this piece of caddishness."

"It smacks more of Fullwood than Christine," I said. "It would be just like Fullwood, too, to stick that card up. I shouldn't be surprised if the knuts did this, expecting us to believe the worst of the College House fellows. Fullwood enjoys causing trouble."

"Rats!" said Handforth. "That's Christine's handwriting all right—"

"Why the dickens can't you juniors keep quiet!" exclaimed a sharp voice. "Clear away, you young sweeps!"

I recognised the voice of Starke—Walter Starke of the Sixth. He was an Ancient House prefect, and a pretty considerable bully as well. He and his inseparable pal, Kenmore, were just about a pair. The Ancient House was rather unlucky in the matter of prefects. Morrow and Canny major were all right, but Starke and Kenmore were fellows of Fullwood's type. I strongly suspected that

Fullwood & Co. sometimes played banker in Starke's study.

"What's the matter here?" demanded Starke impatiently. "Fetch out my bike, Watson, and don't stand there gaping. Fetch Kenmore's, too."

Tommy Watson grinned. "Your bike's crooked, Starke," he said, with real satisfaction. "At least, I think your jigger's among the victims. If you've got time to repair about a dozen punctures—"

"What do you mean, you young idiot?" snapped Starke.

He soon found out what Tommy meant, for a moment later he spotted the pins sticking out of the tyres of his own machine. I think most of the juniors really enjoyed the situation for a moment. It was rather rich to know that Starke was one of the sufferers.

"Who did this?" roared the prefect furiously.

"Better find out, hadn't you?" I asked. "We don't know ourselves—"

"That's a whopper!" interrupted Teddy Long, from the background. "You know jolly well that cad Christine did it—"

"Christine, eh?" rapped out Starke. "This is a bit too much of a good thing, Kenmore. Those rascals in the College House want licking. If Christine's responsible for this, I'll take him before his Housemaster. Mr. Stockdale will deal with him pretty severely."

Starke and Kenmore marched off across the Triangle. If Starke's bike hadn't been touched he would probably have grinned; but the fact that his own property was damaged brought forth all his bullying propensities. He hadn't the slightest right to touch the Monks, for he had no authority in the College House. But he could make a severe report to the Monks' Housemaster.

As it happened, Christine & Co. were lounging on the steps of their House, chatting amiably. They looked quite innocent, although I saw a grin barking about Yorke's mouth. But Christine and Talmadge and Oldfield were as serious as judges.

"Look here, Christine," I said, getting my wood in first. "I believe some cads have been playing a double trick—a trick on us and a trick on you. Five or six bicycles have been punctured—"

Bob Christine nodded. "That's right," he said—"the tyres are as flat as pancakes, aren't they? Just a little joke, you know, I told you to look out for squalls, Bennett."

I simply glared.

"You admit it, then?" I exclaimed. "I'm sorry, Christine, tremendously sorry. I didn't think you could be such a beastly cad—"

"Nothing caddish in what I did," said Christine amiably.

"I'm going to march you off to your Housemaster, you young blackguard!" rapped out Starke. "I heard you confess! I suppose you punctured the tyres on my bicycle deliberately!"

"Oh, my hat! Did we treat your jigger the same way?" yelled Talmadge. "I say, that's rich!"

"You'll think it's rich when you get a licking!" snapped Starke angrily. "I'm going to report this to Mr. Stockdale—"

"Hold on," grinned Christine. "Don't make any report yet, Starke, old son. You're not one of our prefects, and you're not anxious to make an ass of yourself, I suppose? If you like, we'll go across and mend your tyres for you."

"You'd better be quick about it, then," put in Kenmore. "We might overlook it if you do the job properly. But if Starke's tyres are injured you'll have to pay the damage—"

"We'll pay it—if there is any damage," said Christine cheerfully. "A few pins don't amount to much, anyhow. Come on, you chaps. Let's go and get it over. Must satisfy these lurdly prefects, I reckon."

I couldn't quite understand the Remove skipper. He treated the whole thing as a joke. And yet the trick was detestable in every way. He was the last fellow I should have suspected of playing so low down a jape.

All the other Monks were equally as unconcerned. I should have expected this sort of thing from the knuts—but not from fellows I always regarded as decent. But Christine & Co. were highly amused.

As we entered the bicycle shed again the Ancient House Removites were looking very black, and I suspected that the Monks would have been summarily colared if it hadn't been for the prefects' presence.

The Fossils were just ripe for a genuine row—and I felt quite incensed enough to take the lead myself. Starke, I felt positive, meant to make his report to Mr. Stockdale in any case—but he didn't see any reason why his tyres shouldn't be mended beforehand. If he made his report straight away, he would be compelled to mend the punctures himself.

"Now, what's all the fuss?" asked Bob Christine, with a twinkle in his eyes. "Not much harm in a few pins, that I can see. I suppose you want 'em all taken out, Starke? Nothing simpler!"

Christine walked across to the prefect's bicycle, watched by many pairs of eyes. And he calmly plucked one of the pins out, and held it up. It came out with singular ease, and a loud roar of laughter sounded from the other Monks at the door.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ever been diddled?" cackled Talmadge.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Can't make out why you bothered us at all," said Christine blandly. "Did I mention that these pins had been treated before we used them? You said you didn't think I was a cad, Bennett—well, I'm not. But this is jolly funny, and I'm going to laugh."

Christine laughed uproariously, and I simply gasped.

"The tyres aren't punctured at all!" I yelled. "Don't you understand, Starke? These funny asses have been dishing us! They must have let the air out by means of the valves—"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Begad!" said Sir Montie, with a sickly smile. "It's one against us, dear fellows. We were had superbly, Christine's a fearfully deep chap, you know. Just listen to the merriment!"

I couldn't help grinning, although the joke was against the Ancient House. Christine's jape was not at all caddish; on the contrary, it was quite funny—from his point of view.

A brief examination showed that all the pins were merely stumps; they had been clipped off quite near the head. Thus, when they were lightly stuck upon the soft rubber of the tread—without injuring the tyres in the least—they looked exactly as though they had been rammed right in. And the wind had simply been released by means of the valves. Not a single tyre was injured in the slightest degree!

"Well, I'm jiggered!" gasped Handforth blankly.

"Is that a pun, dear fellow?" groaned Montie. "Puns are frightful after this shock! Just as we are talkin' about jiggers you say that you're jiggered! It's too bad of you, Handforth—you shouldn't say these things."

Bob Christine & Co. retired across the Triangle yelling with laughter. Starke and Kenmore stalked off without another word, and the Removites looked at one another sheepishly. I felt just as sickly as the rest. Without a doubt the Monks had brought off a very successful jape.

But just as we were beginning to talk Starke and Kenmore turned back.

"This rot's your doing!" snapped Starke sourly. "You can't make a fool of me without paying for it! Every junior here will take a hundred lines!"

The two prefects went off feeling somewhat more satisfied. But we weren't! We felt like kicking one another!

CHAPTER 7.

A Counter Jape!

SIR MONTIE looked mildly interested. "It sounds all right, Benny boy," he observed, "but can it be done? It's a bit risky, you know—"

"There's risk in everything," I interrupted lightly. "Nothing would be done if we didn't take risks now and again, old son. We've simply got to pay Christine & Co. back for that jape. We can't let the insults go unavenged."

It was evening, and Study C looked very cosy and cheerful with a bright fire flickering in the grate. Prep was over, and Tommy and Montie and I had been plotting a plot.

It was my wheeze, and my chums were just a bit doubtful.

"It's as simple as ABC," I went on. "This length of rope will do the trick nicely. There's no need for you chaps to be in it at all—it's a one-man job. But those cocking Monks will sing small in the morning, I'll bet."

"What about the other fellows?" asked Tommy. "Don't you mean to take them into it?"

"My dear chap, that would take the cream off the joke," I grinned. "Let 'em all be mystified for a time. Then we'll spring the cat out of the bag. By jingo, Christmas and his lot will be the laughing-stock of St. Frank's for days. It's simply a stunning wheeze!"

"You ought to know—you thought of it, dear man," murmured Tregellis-West. "We'll back you up. That's our job—backin' you up. If you're collared, though, it'll be serious. A gain, at least. Perhaps a floggin'—"

"There's nothing like being cheerful," I interrupted, with a chuckle. "Don't you worry your head, Montie—I shan't be collared. Now, where's that rope?"

I picked up a length of stout rope which lay at my feet, and proceeded to make knots at intervals of about two feet. I'd smuggled the rope into the study earlier in the evening—having borrowed it from Warren's toolshed.

Having knotted the rope to my satisfaction, I slipped upstairs with it and concealed it under the mattress of my bed. Then I came down and found that the supper bell was just ringing.

As leader of the Fossils, I felt that it was up to me to play a return jape upon Christine & Co. without delay. The College Hoarse fellows were still laughing hugely over the success of their little joke.

In the dormitory some of the Removers were rather indignant. They declared that I hadn't shown up well as a leader. Nothing had been done to wipe out the stain—and, apparently, I didn't mean to do anything.

I just grinned, and held my tongue. You see, I was "wide," as Farman would have expressed it. The humour of the wheeze I intended perpetrating would be all the richer if the Fossils didn't learn of it till afterwards. I could have explained my plans at once—but that wasn't so good as keeping mum.

So the Removers went to sleep grumbling. Only Tommy and Sir Montie were in the know. And they and I kept awake after all the others had gone right off. At least they had agreed to keep awake. Actually, they didn't.

The old clock had boomed out the quarter to twelve when I quietly sat up in bed. The night was a bit chilly, but quite still. A weak ray of moonlight was penetrating the windows.

"Yes fellows ready?" I whispered.

Deep silence.

I grinned, and tumbled out of bed. I had half-suspected that Fullwood & Co. would be

off on one of their nocturnal expeditions to the White Harp—the disreputable little inn on the borders of Bellton, where the knuts gathered for the purpose of losing money at billiards. But to-night there was nothing doing—and I was glad.

"Rouse up, you lubbers!" I murmured softly.

Both Tommy and Sir Montie slept next to me, and I shook them in turn.

"Begad!" mumbled the schoolboy baronet. "Have I been to sleep, Benny, old fellow? Quite an accident—"

"Yes, I know all about that," I chuckled. "You're a nice sonny, aren't you? Now, then, Tommy, out you get!"

They were both rather reluctant to leave their beds, but they did so when they found that I was determined. Very quietly, we all slipped our clothes on. At least, we merely put on our clothes over our night attire.

"I say, I'd give it up if I were you—" began Tommy.

"If you were me you'd go on with it!" I interrupted. "That's what I'm going to do, anyhow. My dear old son, it's the simplest thing in the world. I shan't be gone more than ten minutes, at the most. And think of the morning!"

My chums chuckled, and we all moved across to the window nearest us. I raised the sash very softly, and then went and fetched the rope from under my mattress. One end of this I tied to the foot of the bedstead which was nearest the window—one occupied by Handforth. The other end of the rope I hung out of the window. As the bed was close against the window, it wouldn't move when my weight rested on the rope. Besides, Tommy and Sir Montie would steady it. And Handforth would have slept through a lot of din.

I stood by the window for a moment.

"All you have to do is to wait here until I come back," I whispered. "You can get into bed again if you like—but be at the window in about ten minutes' time. Savvy? I shall want you to chuck the rope down to me when I whistle. We can't leave it dangling all the time. A hawk-eyed master might spot it."

"Trust us, dear boy," yawned Sir Montie. "We won't desert you."

I slipped a leg over the window-sill, and gradually lowered myself until I was gripping the knotted rope with one hand.

"Hold tight!" I muttered.

I allowed my full weight to rest on the rope, and I felt it give slightly. But Handforth's bed didn't shift an inch; it couldn't, as a matter of fact, for it was wedged against the wall.

Within twenty seconds I was standing on the ground. The Triangle stretched out before me, dark and shadowy. The half-moon had gone indoors, and had closed the door behind it—at least, it was completely obscured by a heavy cloud.

(Continued on page 24.)

Get Together With Your Editor For—



Letters to the Editor
should be addressed
to NELSON LEE LIBRARY, The Fleetway House,
Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

HALLO, CHUMS.—I have some wonderful news for you to start off with this week regarding future St. Frank's stories—a superb series which begins in a fortnight's time! It is a type of series that has always proved immensely popular with readers. It features a rebellion at St. Frank's—and what a rebellion it is! From the very first yarn the whole series is packed with thrilling adventure.

I have read many of these series in my time, but this one is definitely the best "rebellion" series I have ever read, and you will all be of the same opinion by the time it ends. It's the heroes of the Remove, led by Dick Bennett & Co., who start the revolt, but they have every reason for doing so, as you will agree when you read the first yarn.

Chums, don't miss a single story of this coming series—that's my advice to you.

Who likes a word-puzzle? Here's one that a Birmingham reader sent to me, and as I think it is good, I am passing it on to you. These are the clues: The first word means "edge," and, when beheaded, becomes a place of amusement where bumps are frequent unless you are skilled. When beheaded again the word left is a liquid that almost everyone uses. What are the three words? Discover the first one and the others are easy. The solution appears at the end of this chat.

Many readers have taken advantage of my offer, two or three weeks ago, to answer problems on any and every topic. I have replied to a great many by letter, but there are a few that, having more than an ordinary interest, I am answering in this chat.

"C. Y.," of Bristol, is desirous of discovering why the white feather is a sign of cowardice. Curiously enough, this symbol had its origin in an act of bravery and not cowardice. The incident happened many years ago when a tribe of Redskins attacked a lonely settlement in North America. Most of the settlers, learning of the impending attack, had fled to safer parts. But a number of Quakers—a religious sect founded by one George Fox in 1624—decided to face the hostile Redskins boldly. When the Indians arrived, the Quakers, unarmed, met them

and explained that it was against the principles of their religion to fight. The Redskins were duly impressed, no doubt by the bravery shown, and the Quakers were presented with some white feathers. One of these, the Indian chief said, if placed on a horse, would tell the Redskins that the place belonged to a Quaker and would be immune from attack. It is quite easy to understand, therefore, why the white feather has become a token of cowardice, for no doubt, down through the ages, it became a symbol behind which cowards sought safety.

By the way, interrupting my replies for a moment, here is a good joke told to me the other day by our office-boy.

A squad of raw recruits were being put through their paces in musketry drill. The sergeant, a nice polite chap, was finding it necessary to give particular attention to one recruit, who couldn't have hit the target from five yards. But the sergeant was a persevering fellow. "Now," he bellowed hopefully, "see if you can hit the target from twenty yards." The recruit did his best, but he had no idea where the bullet went. "You've got a bull," said the sergeant scornfully—"in a field fifty yards to the right!"

Your friend, "J. D.," of Brighton, was not pulling your leg when he told you that monkeys worked in banks abroad. This is the practice of the banks in Siam, strange as it may seem. The monkeys sit beside the tellers, and their job is to test all coins that are paid in by biting them. The teeth-marks on the coin tell the clerk if the coin is counterfeit or not. Monkeys also have to work for their living in the East Indies, where they are employed to gather coco-nuts.

It is nearly forty-five years ago now, "M. W.," of Derby, that the first car succeeded in passing the mile-a-minute speed. The record was set up by a driver named "Red Devil" Jamaty, who, driving an electrically propelled car in a race, attained the speed of 65.82 miles per hour. To-day ordinary motor-cars in everyday use can beat this speed, while the record of 272 m.p.h., which was set up by Sir Malcolm Campbell at Daytona Beach, Florida, recently, puts it completely in the shade. It is an example of the rapid growth of speed.

I wonder how many of you solved the word-puzzle? Here is the solution: Brink—rink—ink.

Well, cheerio for the present, chums!

"Smilers"

Jokes from readers wanted for this feature. If you know a good rib-tickler send it a.o.s. to "Smilers" Nelson Lee Library 5, Carmelite Street London E.C.4. Splendid pocket-wallets, penknives and grand prizes are awarded for all efforts published.

HARD LINES.

Teacher: "Are you eating, Jones?"
 Jones: "No, sir."
 Teacher: "Take a hundred lines for deceiving me!"

A penknife has been awarded to D. Smith, Kingswood, Hornchurch Road, Romford.

SLOW SOUP

Diner: "Waiter, I have been waiting half an hour for my turtle soup."
 Waiter: "Well, sir, you know how some turtles are!"

A pocket wallet has been awarded to R. Paddock, Newtown Road, Sheffield English, Hunts.

EASY

Artist: "I can alter any face with one stroke."
 Boy: "So can our school teacher!"

A penknife has been awarded to H. Middlecott, Edward Ward, Coventry and W. Hospital, Coventry.

A LITTLE ERROR.

Tramp (with arm in sling): "No'oo, I was not always like this."
 Lady: "No, I was the other arm you had in the sling yesterday!"

A pocket wallet has been awarded to B. Wellings, 5, Melville Road, Edgbaston.

ENOUGH SAID.

Master of House: "You must consider Martin. You say you are going to take a post as an attendant in a lunatic asylum. What do you know about lunatics?"

Footman: "Well, sir I've been here as footman for three years."

A penknife has been awarded to G. Green, 32, Smallbrook Street, Birmingham, 5.

SHAVE

Sergeant: "Did you shave this morning, Jones?"

Recruit: "Yes, sergeant."

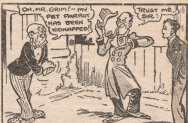
Sergeant: "Well, next time you shave stand a bit closer to your razor."

A pocket wallet has been awarded to J. Collard, 26, Keunpton Road, East Ham, E.5.

The Remarkable Adventure

TRACKETT GR

The Dud Detective



of
M & SPLINTER
 and — His Assistant

"Smilers"

WHAT A SURPRISE.

Gen: "You sold me a sixpenny surprise

packet last week and there was nothing in it."

Hawker: "Wasn't that a surprise?"

A penknife has been awarded to F. Masterson,
 18 Colegrove Road, Peckham, S.E. 15.

IGNORANCE.

Foreman: "Hurry up with that work."

Workman: "Rome wasn't built in a day."

Foreman: "I wasn't foreman on that job."

A pocket wallet has been awarded to R. Berry, 29, Florence Road Cottages, St. Clements, Jersey, C.I.

GENEROUS.

Jew (offering sixpence and penny to son):
 "Vick vill you have, Ikey?"

Son: "I won't be greedy, dad, so I vill take the small vun."

Father: "Ah, vell, as you are unselfish, I vill give you the big vun!"

A penknife has been awarded to G. Croomba,
 67, Val Plaisant, St. Helier, Jersey, C.I.

PAINFUL MEMORIES.

Master: "Trees contribute greatly to the heat of the atmosphere."

Boy: "Yes, sir; the birch has often scammed me up!"

A pocket wallet has been awarded to A. Fount, 5, Elmtree Road, Teddington.

APPROPRIATE.

Diner: "Waiter, this sauce tastes like furniture polish."

Waiter: "Yes, sir; we always serve that kind with cabinet puddings!"

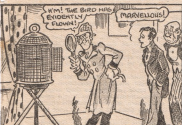
A penknife has been awarded to J. Plosted,
 69, College Road, Harrow Weald.

ON TICK.

Father: "It's only fair to tell you, my boy, that I am pleased with your economy this term. Your requests for money last term were too frequent."

Son: "Yes, father, I thought so, too; so I've had everything on tick this term!"

A pocket wallet has been awarded to R. Meyer, "Narwood," Couper Road, Ruthinmies, Dublin.



RIVALS OF ST. FRANK'S!

(Continued from page 20.)

I wasted no time, but hurried across the open space towards the College House. Only one or two windows were illuminated—those of masters who had been rather late in retiring. As a rule, everybody at St. Frank's was in bed by midnight.

I expect you're wondering what my game was. Well, I simply meant to get up into the Remove dormitory in the College House. The wall beneath that particular window was covered with thick ivy, and I knew that it would be child's play to mount it.

The wall beneath the window of my own dormitory was ivy-covered, too, but the roots were comparatively young, and would not have carried my weight. That's why I had provided the rope. On this side a rope wasn't necessary.

On many occasions I had risked all sorts of dangers while engaged on some piece of detective work with the gov'nor. But the mounting of this ivy couldn't be called risky. For one thing, the roots were thick, and provided a splendid foothold; and, for another thing, I shouldn't have hurt myself much even if I had fallen from the very top.

For the dormitory window was comparatively low, and fellows had dropped from it to the ground on more than one occasion. Still, it wasn't a nice drop, and I didn't mean to test it. I just want to make it clear that I wasn't getting up to any foolhardiness for the sake of a mere jape.

As it turned out, I shinned up the ivy without the least difficulty, and pushed up the lower sash of the window without making a sound. Then I stepped into the dormitory, and stood quite still. Deep, regular breathing, varied by a musical snore now and again, met my ears. Bob Christine & Co. and their faithful followers were sound asleep, as all good little boys should be.

I grinned.

"Now for the collection!" I murmured with a chuckle.

Without making a sound, and with no particular hurry, I went from one end of the dormitory to the other, collecting up all the fellows' clothing. I didn't even leave a pair of socks.

Having taken a full load aboard, so to speak, I gently opened the door and passed out into the corridor. If I was spotted now, I should get into exceedingly hot water. It was a tremendous offense to leave my own House in the middle of the night.

But I wasn't afraid of being spotted.

I crept along the corridor until I came to a narrow door. I opened it and entered stealthily. The room was merely a little box-room, in which was stowed the Removites' trunks, etc. I simply bundled down the clothes in a heap, and then returned to the dormitory for a fresh supply. As I entered I spotted a piece of cardboard, which had been used for the packing of a parcel evidently. This gave me an idea. I picked it up, and, taking out a pencil, I wrote on it

the words, "Ever Been Had?" Then I placed the card on a chair beside Christine's bed, after which I continued with the task of removing the Monks' clothing.

After about five minutes every article of apparel which belonged to Bob Christine & Co. lay in a great pile upon the floor of the box-room. I chuckled as I left the little apartment and locked the door behind me.

The key had been in the lock, but I took it out and tacked it just on top of the door frame, where it could just be reached. Nobody would think of looking for it there.

The jape was now completed—the opening stages of it, at least.

I didn't believe in anything very drastic, but it was highly necessary to show the Monks that they couldn't do as they liked with the Ancient House. And this little wheeze promised to be one of the jokes of the term.

It doesn't sound much, I know—but just consider it. When the Remove turned out in the morning they would naturally look round for their clothing. They couldn't very well go down to breakfast in their night attire.

And they would look round in vain.

Their clobber would be conspicuous by its absence. I could just imagine their astonishment and consternation. They would search for it everywhere, of course, but the chances were that they wouldn't find it for some little time.

Naturally the whole crowd of Removites would be late for breakfast, and when they finally came down there would be general amusement. The whole school would cackle over the joke. And Bob Christine & Co. couldn't very well be punished, for it wasn't likely that they would hide up their own clothes. But the Monks would know whom they had to thank. The notice would tell them that!

The joke would be all the richer because the Ancient House fellows themselves didn't know anything about it. I would let the cat out of the bag afterwards.

Feeling quite satisfied, I tiptoed across to the window and leaned out for a moment. The moon had come out again, and was smiling rather weakly upon the Triangle.

I wasn't quite pleased, for I should be conspicuous as I crossed over to the Ancient House. A glance at the sky, however, told me that if I waited a minute I should be better placed, for a heavy cloud was moving along towards the moon slowly and sedately.

And then I got a bit of a shock.

As I looked down idly, I saw the figure of a man appear just round the angle of the Ancient House; he had apparently come from the direction of the hedge which separated the playing fields from the Triangle.

He crept round cautiously, close to the wall, and halted outside one of the windows of the Remove Common-room. Then, as I watched, he proceeded to force an entry!

Now nobody would do such a thing like that unless he was up to mischief, and I felt my heart beating rapidly.

"Burglars!" I muttered. "At least, one burglar!"

There could be no doubt about the matter. The thing had been so deliberate that there could be no mistake. The man, of course, fondly imagined that the whole school was asleep. It was extremely lucky that I happened to be at the dormitory window at that moment.

But why on earth should the burglar break into the Common-room? There was nothing of value in that apartment—or in any portion of the school section of the House. The private portion of the Ancient House was quite cut off from the rest of the building at night—cut off by a fire-proof door.

As I was wondering what to do, the man pushed the window open and disappeared within.

I determined to investigate without delay.

CHAPTER 8.

The Mystery Intruder.

NELSON LEE was the man to look into this affair, I decided; and I scrambled down the ivy as quickly as possible—and perhaps with a certain amount of recklessness. At least, I slipped the last six feet, and fell with a thud.

But a fall like that doesn't do any harm, and I was soon scudding across the Triangle. The moon had obligingly snuffed out, and I felt safer. I found the rope dangling down all ready for me. Sir Montie and Tommy must have been on the look-out.

The guv'nor has often told me that I can climb like a monkey, and I certainly did so on this occasion. I simply shifted up that rope in leaps, and tumbled into the dormitory.

"Begad! Are there demons after you,

dear fellow?" asked Sir Montie in mild astonishment.

"I've done the trick!" I panted. "But there's a burglar just got into the Ancient House—"

"A burglar!" gasped Tommy Watson. "Gammon!"

"You ass, I saw him open the Common-room window!" I replied. "He's in the House now, and, if we're shippy, we'll be able to collar him. Come on—there's not a second to waste!"

"Hadh't we better wake the other chaps—"

"Rather not!" I said. "Do you think we want everybody jawing? The burglar would be warned in no time—and we can capture him easy enough if we go to work in the right way. Thus way!"

I crossed the dormitory, and emerged into the passage, Sir Montie murmuring that I had really gone off my rocker, begad!

But I knew that I had made no mistake; the man who had entered the Ancient House had no right there, and it was up to me to put a spoke in his wheel.

But just as we were passing along the corridor on the way to the staircase, I noticed that a little glimmer of light streamed from beneath the door of Nelson Lee's bed-room. The guv'nor, evidently, hadn't retired, and I made up my mind quickly.

"We'll tell old Alvy!" I muttered. Without waiting for the others to make any remark, I tapped at Nelson Lee's door, and waited. In about five seconds a footstep sounded, and the guv'nor appeared before us. He was over half-dressed, and he uttered a little exclamation as the light from his room streamed upon me.

"Nip—"

The guv'nor passed abruptly as he caught sight of Tommy and Sir Montie.

PEN PALS

R. C. G. Ellis, 52, Brookhill Crescent, Brockley, London, S.E.4, wants pen friends anywhere, particularly in the Johannesburg area. Age 17.

L. Clifford, 274, Camden Road, London, N.W.3, wants an American correspondent keen on the film. Also Canada.

Charles F. Wiley, Stromness, 463, Reddings Lane, Hall Green, Birmingham, wants a correspondent in China; interested in mystery stories; exchange stamps; age 16.

Martin O'Callahan, Lane Street, North Richmond, South Australia, wants correspondents; also to hear from readers who have Old Series N.L.L. and "Monsters" for sale (cheap).

Les Dellow, 75, Villiers Street, Rockdale, N.S.W., Australia, wants to hear from stamp collectors.

Robert Grant, 2, Beach Terrace, Sheerness, Kent, desires correspondents interested in character and life at Greyfriars School.

Hanley Rosendale, 305, Mair Street, Ballarat, Victoria, Australia, wants correspondents interested in Scouting, etc.; ages, 15-17.

J. Goldstein, 27, Broughton Street, Chesham, Manchester, wants a correspondent overseas.

Eric Phillips, 56, Oban Street, Beatrice Road, Leicester, wants correspondents interested in amateur theatricals, especially in the Leicester area.

Miss Irene Randall, the P.O. House, Sandwich, Kent, wants a girl correspondent in Italy; age, 15-17.

Ken Mason, 72, Kenelm Road, Small Heath, Birmingham, wants correspondents overseas; ages, 13-14.

"Well, boys, what do you want?" he asked sharply.

"Awfully sorry to trouble you, sir!" panted. "But I've just spotted a man getting into one of the lower windows. We were just going down to collar him, but I saw a light under your door—"

"You are quite right in coming to me, Bennett," interrupted Nelson Lee briskly. "Is the whole dormitory awake?"

"No, sir—only we three!"

"That's just as well," said the gov'nor. "I won't inquire why you were out of your beds at this hour—and how it is that you happened to see a man entering a lower window. Do you know which window it was?"

"The Common-room, I think, sir," I replied.

"Very well, let me lead the way."

Nelson Lee didn't waste time by asking needless questions. He just strode down the passage with Watson and Tregollie-West and I in the rear. The gov'nor had made a bit of a slip—which wasn't usual for him—by commencing to address me as Nipper. But I don't suppose my chums noticed it.

When we got to the top of the staircase, we came to a halt and listened. But everything was silent down below. So we noiselessly descended, and turned out of the lobby towards the Common-room, which was situated at the foot of five or six shallow stairs.

Faint beams of moonlight entered the windows, and we could just see dimly. But as we were about to descend the steps, I clutched at the gov'nor's arm.

"Up the passage—look!" I hissed. From where we stood it was possible to see up the Remove Study passage, which led out of the lobby. And, for a moment, we all saw a dim shadow pass in front of one of the side windows.

"Beard!" murmured Sir Montie. "Benny was right!"

The gov'nor didn't wait for any further evidence, but ran swiftly down the passage. At that very second, however, the marauder became alarmed, and dashed off without any further attempt at concealment. He rushed right into the end study, which was usually occupied by Lincon and Young, and slammed the door. We heard the key turn in the lock, and then the study window was shoved up noisily.

"Let's get through one of the other studies!" I gasped.

But Nelson Lee was already putting this plan into execution. He dashed into the next study, and had the window open in a moment. And we all three saw a figure pelting across the Triangle at full speed. Even as we watched he plunged through the hedge into the playing fields.

"After him!" panted Tommy excitedly.

"No, my boy, we'd better not pursue the chase," put in "Mr. Alvington" quietly. "The man secured a good start, and by this time he is on the edge of the wood. We should merely waste our energy. Our feet,

moreover, are not shod in a suitable fashion for cross-country running!"

We were all in slippers, of course, and I realised that the gov'nor's decision was a wise one. It would be hopeless to continue the pursuit.

"Well, it's quiet, sir," I remarked. "What the dickens was the fellow doing in this quarter? I believe he came out of Study C—anyhow, the door was open as we passed. We don't keep diamonds and banknotes in our study—do we, you chaps?"

"A fever now and again, dear boy—but nothing more," drawled Sir Montie.

"We will go to your study, boys," said the gov'nor.

As we emerged into the passage we listened for a moment. But the whole school was quiet, and it was evident there had been no alarm. The little episode had not awakened anybody else.

It was rather galling to know that the marauder had slipped off, but it had been unavoidable.

In Study C Nelson Lee switched the light on as we entered.

The first glance showed nothing out of the usual; but when I looked over at the bookcase I started. Nearly all the books were shifted about, and there was a blank space between two of them.

"That blue-covered volume!" I gasped amazedly.

"My only topper!" exclaimed Tommy. "Do you mean to say that the chap broke into the school just to pinch that rotten old book?"

"It looks like it," I replied, striding across the study. "The book's not here, anyway—Great Scott! It's the dictionary that's gone—not that old record of crimes at all! The chap's made a bloomer."

"Will you kindly explain what you mean, Bennett?" asked the gov'nor calmly.

Just for a moment I collected my thoughts. I had been intending to tell Nelson Lee of those pencilled figures on the fly-leaf, but I hadn't had a chance. I should do so now, of course.

The burglar had fallen into the same error as Teddy Long. Seeing the blue cover, with the title still faintly visible, the pilferer had naturally assumed that the book was the one he was after. But he had only got the shell, so to speak. If he had had more time, he would probably have discovered his mistake.

I told Nelson Lee that this was the third attempt to gain possession of the old volume, and Lee was rather impressed—especially when he heard of the figures upon the fly-leaf.

"I meant to puzzle over them myself, sir," I ended up. "But I didn't find time. I dare say those figures have some significance."

"It seems the most plausible explanation, at all events," replied the gov'nor. "You say that the unknown man has merely taken the cover, and not the book itself?"

"That's right, sir—here's the book."



Suddenly something hit me on the side of the head with stunning force. I saw Nelson Lee twist round on four rough-looking men who had rushed up, and one direct blow from his fist crashed on a ruffian's jaw. Next moment we were fighting hammer and tongs!

And I unearthed the coverless volume from beneath the pile of magazines which had obscured it. Nelson Lee turned to the back of it, and studied the figures for some few moments. Then he tucked the book under his arm.

"Come along to my study, boys," he said. "We will look into this."

"All of us, sir?" asked Tommy in surprise. Lee smiled.

"Well, it is rather a concession on my part," he said, "but you may as well come. Another half-hour won't make much difference, now that you are out of your beds. The other occupants of the House are undisturbed."

Both Tommy and Sir Montie were pleasantly surprised. But I knew why the gov'nor had given us permission to go with him to his study. He wanted me to be there—and I couldn't be there without the others.

We closed all the windows, and then went along to the Housemaster's study. A weak fire was still glowing in the grate—for the hour was only just after midnight, after all. Quite early for the gov'nor and I!

Nelson Lee threw on a few pieces of coal, and the fire blazed cheerfully. Then he lit a cigarette, and dropped into his chair before the desk.

"Squat down, boys," he said, in the free-and-easy manner which had endeared him to all the decent fellows in the Ancient House. "Don't feel uncomfortable—although you do look somewhat untidy."

Sir Montie blushed.

"It's shockin', sir!" he murmured. "Do you think I could go an' dress properly—"

"I don't, West," said Lee. "You are quite presentable—and I shan't look at you too carefully. Now, let's examine these figures."

"Do you think they are important, sir?" I asked.

"I don't know what I think—yet," replied the gov'nor. "It is obvious, however, that the stranger hasn't been making these frantic efforts for the sake of the old volume itself. He has some other motive—and the figures suggest a cipher."

"That's what I thought," I said eagerly. I stood just against Nelson Lee's chair, looking over his shoulder. Tregellis-West and Watson sat down near by. They couldn't quite get over their surprise. They had expected to be sent hustling back to the dormitory—and they were here, in Mr. Alvington's study, taking things easy!

After about two minutes the gov'nor nodded.

"Yes, the thing is absurdly simple," he said. "These figures are the key to a message which is probably contained in the pages of the book itself. We shall see. Have I your permission to tear this fly-leaf out, Bennett?"

I grinned. "Tear the giddy book to pieces if you like, sir," I replied cheerfully.

"That is not necessary, Bennett," said Lee, carefully detaching the sheet with the

figures upon it. "Now, we shall see, within a minute, if these figures are valuable. I have an idea that they are."

"I am terrifically interested, dear fellow—I—I mean, sir!" gasped Sir Montie.

I looked at the roughly pencilled figures curiously. They were all sprayy, but this is how they were placed:

8	—	25	—	47		
17	—	6				
25	—	14	—	87	—	156
80	—	2				
181	—	205	—	234		
234	—	5	—	15		
345	—	79	—	125	—	217

"If I have judged correctly," remarked Nelson Lee, "the first figures in the line—for example, the '8' at the top—stands for the number of the page. The other figures are words. Thus, '25' means the twenty-fifth word down the page, and so on. Just turn to page eight, Bennett."

I did so, and then counted down until I came to the twenty-fifth word.

"Arch," I read out.

"H'm! That doesn't sound very promising," smiled Lee. "However, we cannot judge yet. Now find the forty-seventh word, my boy."

"Stow," I said, after counting.

The governor frowned slightly.

"'Arch—stow,'" he repeated. "Are you sure you counted correctly, Bennett?"

"Quite sure, sir."

"Very well. Turn to page seventeen and tell me what the sixth word is," said Lee. "I'm half afraid we're on the wrong track, but we must persist."

The sixth word on the seventeenth page proved to be "fact."

"That makes it 'Arch—stow—fact?'" I remarked with a grin. "There's no rhyme or reason in that, is there, sir? I think we'd better try something else, don't you? This is just a waste of time—"

"Patience, Bennett—patience!" interrupted Lee mildly. "I'm not at all sure that we're on the wrong track. Turn to page twenty-three; there are three words on that particular page."

It was some little time before I could count down, for the last of the three words was near the bottom. And the message now ran: "Arch stow face north twenty yards," and I was flushed with excitement. Tommy and Montie were also as keen as mustard.

"You were right, sir," I exclaimed eagerly. "There's sense in it now, although I can't fully understand it. Shall I go on?"

"By all means—by all means!" After about five minutes' counting, the message was complete, and this is how it ran in its deciphered form:

"Arch stow face north twenty yards ahead five-and-half further left ditch dig."

"THE COMING OF 'KANGAROO'"



When Harry Noble arrives at St. Jim's from Australia he gives the fellows a bit of a surprise—as you can see in our cover picture reproduced here in miniature! But this is only one of the shocks the St. Jim's fellows get, for Harry Noble is a unique and surprising fellow! Don't miss this ripping yarn of Martin Clifford's in which he introduces a new boy to St. Jim's. Get your copy now!

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Nelson Lee stroked his chin with satisfaction.

"Excellent, Bennett—excellent!" he exclaimed. "We now understand why our unknown horse-breaker was so anxious to obtain this volume. The message reads like some directions concerning a hidden treasure!"

"Begad!" murmured Sir Montie. "It's beyond me—I can't make any sense of it!"

"Well, I judge that the intended meaning is this: The reader is to proceed to the arch over the Stone and face north," explained Nelson Lee. "He will then measure twenty yards straight ahead, and turn abruptly to the left, when he will measure a further five and a half yards. There, presumably, a ditch is to be found. After that there is nothing to do but dig."

"Well, I'm piggered!" I exclaimed admiringly.

The gov'nor had elucidated the cipher in the correct way—there was no doubt about that. But what was buried in the ditch?

I put the question to Nelson Lee, and he shook his head.

"Really, Bennett, you mustn't expect me to tell you that," he smiled. "But I am certainly determined to have a look into the matter. You had better get off to bed now, and we will investigate in the morning."

"Not now!" asked Tommy blankly.

"Certainly not, Watson. We need daylight, and it will be necessary to take certain tools," replied Lee, rising to his feet. "Now, off to bed with you. I will give you an early call, and we will set off on the expedition before breakfast."

And so it was arranged.

CHAPTER 9.

Hidden Lest!

NELSON LEE kept his promise, and called me and my chums long before the rising bell was due to clang out.

We dressed ourselves quickly, and then went downstairs. Nelson Lee was waiting for us with spades and forks.

"You've been quick, boys," he smiled, by way of greeting. "I fetched you out early because the walk is rather a long one. However, we have two clear hours before breakfast."

We set off briskly, and took the footpath across the meadows to the Bannington road. Just before crossing the stile I fancied I saw the bushes move near the wood. I looked hard, but there was no sign of any human form.

Well, the arch was reached after a sharp walk of about twenty minutes. We could have gone on bicycles, of course, but we shouldn't have saved much time, and the digging implements would have been cumbersome.

The arch spanned the river, and allowed the road to run over it. It was a very quiet spot, and at that early hour there was no sign of any traffic.

We got our compass bearings, and then descended to the marshy ground just below the arch, on the bank of the stream. The gov'nor produced a measure, and we carefully ruled off twenty yards due north. Then we carried out the other directions—and found ourselves right in the bed of a shallow ditch.

"We seem to have come to the right spot, at all events," remarked Nelson Lee. "It is fortunate that the ditch is dry, or we should have met with a big set-back here. Now, boys, put your backs into it."

We all set to work with a will—except Lee. He stood by, watching us. And, after about five minutes' brisk work, my fork struck something, which yielded reluctantly. We redoubled our efforts.

"There's something!" I panted, after a bit. "By Jupiter! It's a leather trunk by the look of it—just about in the last stages of decay—"

"Let me see, boys," said the gov'nor, bending over the hole we had made.

And then, all in a second, the earthquake happened.

At least, that's what it felt like for a second. Without the slightest warning, something hit me on the side of the head, and I just saw Nelson Lee twist round. After that things were rather confused.

But I know that the man who had questioned me at Bannington was lashing out with both his fists, and there were three rough-looking men with him—gipsies, by all appearance. One of them was armed with a stout cudgel, but he didn't keep it long. One direct blow from the gov'nor's fist crashed on the fellow's jaw.

Next moment we were fighting hammer and tongs.

Sir Montie and Tommy and I were greatly outmatched, of course, and we had been taken at a disadvantage. But the brutes had expected us to knuckle under at the first blow. When they found that we were ready to fight them, they did not seem so enthusiastic.

I really believe that the tussle would have ended badly but for one fact. Nelson Lee took on the man we already knew—the man who had broken into the school—and he dealt with him severely.

After one or two light blows, the gov'nor delivered a clean knock-out, and the man crashed over on to his back and lay still. Without the slightest pause, Lee turned, and got home a lovely punch on another ruffian's nose.

That did it.

With their leader knocked out of time, all the stuffing seemed to be knocked out of them also. The three gipsies simply turned on their heels, and fled. They had been paid to attack us, I guessed, and they didn't see the fun of continuing the fight after their employer had been hauled out.

At all events, they streaked off, and vanished.

"Upon my soul!" panted Nelson Lee,

rubbing his knuckles. "I didn't expect an interruption of this kind, my boys. Are you hurt at all?"

"Just a few knocks, sir—nothing much," I gasped.

Tommy had a black eye, but he was rather proud of it, and didn't grumble in the least. Sir Montie's casualties merely amounted to a bruised nose and a swollen ear. And, before we could have any further conversation, the knocked-out man sat up dazedly.

"I don't know who you are, but I should advise you to remain quiet," said Nelson Lee sternly. "It is my intention to keep you here until the police are informed, and you will then be charged with deliberate assault and burglary."

"I only took that blamed dictionary!" whined the man.

"You admit, then, that you broke into the school?" asked Lee sharply.

"I don't see that it's any good denying it!" growled the fellow sullenly. "It's hard lines, sir—rosten hard lines. I've done nothing to be sent to prison for, anyway."

"You had better make your statement to the police—"

"My name's Ginter, sir," interrupted the man. "Give me a chance, anyhow! I'll tell you the whole truth—honour bright I will!"

"Hoping that I shall let you off!" said Lee grimly.

"I leave that to you, sir," muttered Ginter. "But I'm done—I'm clean done. And I know when I'm beaten."

And after that the man told his story.

It was a rather interesting yarn.

Ginter, it appeared, had served time for burglary; he was, in fact, known as "Gentleman Ginter" to the police, and had quite a choice record.

He told us that he had only come out of prison a month before, and was now on ticket-of-leave. Three months previous to his release a convict had died in the prison infirmary—a man named Deane, who had been sentenced to ten years' penal servitude for burglary with violence. He only served five years of his stretch when he died.

He was in for the theft of the famous Massington gold plate. I was rather surprised to hear that, for I'd often heard our old friend, Detective-Inspector Morley, refer to that particular case. Sir James Massington, who lived just beyond Bannington, had suffered the loss of his priceless gold ornaments and plate.

The stuff had been stolen by Deane, but had never been recovered. Deane had been interrupted just after he had cracked the crib, and had violently assaulted an under-footman, smashing the poor chap's skull severely.

Well, Deane had been put on trial, but had refused to reveal the hiding-place of the gold. He had, therefore, received ten years. He and Ginter had been great friends in the prison—as far as it is possible for men to be friends in a prison.

And just before Deane died he made a request that Ginter should be allowed to come

to him. Ginter was only serving three years, and his time had nearly expired. With his last few breaths, Deane had whispered to his fellow convict a few words which meant a tremendous lot.

In short, he told Ginter that if he would go to Bannington he would find a book called "Crimes of Fifty Years Ago" in his uncle's house. He would then learn the whereabouts of the missing gold.

Ginter had gone to Bannington as soon after his release as possible, but had found that Deane's uncle had sold a lot of old books to Spragg only a month before for a mere trifle.

Well, Ginter at once hurried to the book-shop, and, by a curious stroke of chance, he arrived just in time to see me going off with the very volume he wanted! Which explained his desperate attempts to get hold of it—a fortune was at stake!

But the fellow was a rascal, and he was handed over to the police. He had been intent upon securing stolen property—and that was enough to earn him imprisonment. His attack upon us, and the burglary of the school were further examples of his guilt. We found out afterwards that a caravan of shady gipsies had been encamping on the edge of Bannington Moor, near Belton Wood. Ginter must have seen us leave the school with spades and forks—and had guessed things. In sheer desperation he had tried to defeat us.

Of course, other facts came out. Deane, after stealing the Massington gold, had fled, with the pursuers hot on his track. He realised that capture was certain, and had hidden the gold close to the Stowe arch.

Deane had been cunning; he had taken the exact measurements, and had placed them down immediately upon arrival at his uncle's house in Bannington. But he had recorded the whereabouts of the gold so cryptically that no one could ever discover it. He was on bad terms with his uncle, and did not mean the latter to get the gold.

I don't know how the case went against Ginter, but I fancy he received another term of imprisonment. Sir James Massington, of course, was overwhelmed with delight to recover his famous treasures.

A short time afterwards Sir Montie and Tommy and I were each presented with a gold watch—by way of recognition for our part in the affair. Nelson Lee had discreetly remained in the background, for he did not wish to figure in the papers—even as Mr. Alvington.

The little jape with regard to Bob Christie & Co.'s clothing was a huge success. All St. Frank's laughed over it, and it was acknowledged that the Fossils had scored over their rivals of St. Frank's.

THE END.

(Sensational — dramatic — thrilling! "Under Arrest!"—a magnificent yarn of St. Frank's, featuring a Sixth-Former who is arrested for murder, is a story you must not on any account miss reading. Order your "Nelson Lee" now.)

Here's *THE Wild West Yarn Of The Week!* It's *One Long Thrill!*

The RUSTLERS of HIDDEN CANYON!



Not Welcome!

"GEE! That looks better!" Buck Malone, the boxing ex-puncher, gave a grunt of satisfaction as he glimpsed the neat, well-kept ranch-house nestling down in the valley.

Bandy, the boxing bear, also grunted with satisfaction, or so it seemed. Possibly Bandy imagined that ranch-house meant rest and food for him—both of which he wanted badly.

Billy Baxter, the third member of the weary, dusty trio, also grunted, though with little satisfaction.

Buck and Billy had lost their jobs when the circus ran by Joe Sandley had gone

broke. Sandley had given Bandy to them, and the trio had started on a tour of the cow-towns, giving boxing exhibitions to earn a living.

"It looks good, Buck," Billy admitted. "But what we want is a town where we can give a show and earn money for grub and a night's doss, old scout. We aren't beggars—"

"Shucks, you gold-darned Britisher!" snorted Buck. "Ain't that that bunkhouse full o' punchers what'll go durned crazy to see a dandy show like we'uns give? Hoggans—nix! We're shove goin' to earn our supper and bed, pard, at that bunkhouse!"

"I reckon you ain't!" Billy and Buck swung round at sound of

By Stanley Austin

Buck & Co., the boxing pals of the prairie, thrive on thrills and handing out K.O.'s! They take on all-comers—including a gang of hard-bitten rustlers!

the sudden, rasping voice. From behind a nearby boulder of rock, scarcely a couple of yards away, a horse had moved. Riding it was a massive, raw-boned man with a pronounced cast in one eye and a straggling, untidy red beard. Hard, hostile eyes glinted at them from under a wide-brimmed stetson and over a menacing Colt.

"I reckon you ain't, hombre!" repeated the foreman. "I reckon you're burnin' the trail ponce, also you're aimin' to earn a cupper o' lead and a durned six-foot excavation for a bed. Git, you durned hoboes!"

"Waal, of this ain't a real hospitable welcome," said Buck, without moving a hair. "Proper neighbourly, ain't you, boss?"

"I'm tellin' you to quit!" rapped the man menacingly.

"And I'm tellin' you as we ain't hoboes," said Buck mildly. "You may heard tell of us—the Battling Bees, we uns are. We're roomin' th' trails givin' boxin' shows in exchange for grub, shelter or dollars, and we was aimin' to giv' a show at that bunkhouse yonder."

"Waal, you ain't! Tain't healthy for strangers in this hyer section! Git!"

"You the boss of that ranch, p'raps?" inquired Buck.

"I'm Jack Walters, foreman, and I'm tellin' you to quit!" snarled the man.

"Aw, us! quit, feller," drawled Buck Malone coolly. "Argufym' with a six-gun ain't healthy. But I would shore like to say as yore manners ain't no better than yore looks, hombre!"

It was not a wise speech in the circumstances. But cool as he was, Buck was angry at the man's churlish, savage greeting. Billy almost expected to hear the gun roar, but he scarcely expected what did happen.

Bitter, angry blood flushed the foreman's face. He quickly holstered his gun and dropped from his horse.

"I guess I ain't wastin' lead on you!" he roared. "Boxin' puncher, are you? Shucks! I'm goin' to eat you, you shrimp of a slab-sided hobo! You aims to talk to me like that—"

He was a huge, bull-like giant of a man. He rushed at the smiling Buck, and his massive fist shot out. But it was Billy Baxter who met the rush. Billy had expected it, and he thought Buck was unprepared. He jumped forward like a panther, and swung under the foreman's guard. Then, with the swiftness of a snake striking, his left arm snapped up. His fist connected with the jetting, red-whiskered jaw, all the driving force of powerful back and shoulder muscles behind it.

The punch would have dropped any ordinary man. The burly bully just rocked back on his heels, and then, recovering himself with a gasping snarl, he turned upon Billy.

"Stand out, you bonehead Britisher!" yelled Buck bestially. "Leave this to me, you— Waal, carry me home to die!"

Buck ended in deep disgust as he saw that it was too late for him to take the bullying

foreman on. Billy Baxter had already got the big bully's measure. Billy, dressed in stout clothes, and with an innocent-looking face under his battered straw hat, looked a tenderfoot; but his looks were deceptive. He was like whiptoad and steel, and, when roused, he was a tiger and a hurricane rolled into one.

Buck grinned as his pal's iron-hard fists battered the ugly features of the ranch foreman. Big as the man was, and strong as he was, the active, well-trained young boxer had him tied up into knots. He whirled about the ravine, astounded foreman, punching and hooking with evident enjoyment.

"You always was selfish, pard!" groaned Buck. "Can't you even leave a bit for this hombre to punch? Aw, yos— Gosh! That was a sockolager, Billy!"

It was a right hook, and a beauty! It caught Walters just as that inhospitable individual was rocking on his heels again, and it dropped him like a pole-axed ox.

He crashed down, and it seemed to rid him of any economical qualms as regards wasting lead! Without rising, his hand flew to his gun; but just then came the clump-clump of hoofs.

Walters had his weapon out, and was just lifting it savagely when a soft, musical voice rang out:

"No, Jack Walters—none of that! Stop!"

"Jumping snakes!" gasped Buck Malone. It was a girl, scarcely as old as Billy. She rode a horse as if born to the saddle, and, silhouetted against the blood-red sunset, she looked a picture of grace as she pulled up on the rim of rock above them. She wore a dark-grey riding outfit, and one slender hand rested on a small gun-holster.

The Battling Bees blinked at her. In that lawless country the girl was an unusual sight. She eyed them, at first, suspiciously and coldly, and then, as she met Billy's steady blue eyes, she smiled.

"Stop!" she repeated in a clear, authoritative voice. "Put your ironmongery back, Walters! What does this mean?"

The foreman gritted his teeth, but he obeyed and holstered his gun. Then he stood up, swaying a little, his dark eyes glinting venomously at the pals.

"You've no cause to chip in on this, miss," he hissed. "I was jest orderin' these hoboes off'n. With this hyer rustling goin' on, we wants no strangers nosin' round the ranch."

"Quite right," nodded the girl, and her keen eyes ran over the pals. They rested curiously and with some amusement on Bundy, who was sitting patiently on his haunches close by. "Who are you?"

Buck and Billy explained between them.

"How strange," she answered, with a merry laugh. "And so this is a tame boxing bear! Well," she added, with a cold glance at Walters, "the bunkhouse boys will enjoy such an entertainment, I'm quite sure. But you all look tired and hungry, and first you must have supper. Mister Walters, will you tell the ranch cook to give these strangers—"

and the bear—supper, and arrange for them to sleep somewhere!"

"But, miss, they're hoboes, and with them rustlers about—" began Walters, his voice trembling with rage.

"Nonsense!" chipped in the girl slyly. "Nobody shall ever say we turn weary travellers away on the Bar H. They're not spiss—they look honest enough to me, and I wish some of our own men looked as honest," she added grimly, as she turned to the staring pair. "You mustn't mind our foreman—he's distrustful of strangers, and he's a right to be after the happenings in this valley lately. Dad's just the same—"

"Then you, Miss—" began Buck, raising his wide-brimmed hat.

"I'm Mary Dalton, daughter of the owner of Bar H. Walters, please see that my orders are carried out."

Buck and Billy barely had time to mumble out their thanks when the girl gave them a pleasant smile, wheeled her horse and galloped away towards the ranch in the valley.

The Battling Bees stared after her gratefully. It was already close on sunset, and the nearest cow-town was thirty miles away. And they had been tramping the dusty, rocky trail for hours without rest and without food, hoping to strike a ranch or settlement where they could earn food and rest. They were thankful enough to take advantage of the girl's kindness.

But they were forgetting Walters.

The moment the girl had vanished from sight he whipped out his Colt again, his face savage with rage.

"Now, you 'uns," he gritted, covering the startled pair, "I gives you one minute to hit the goldarned trail, you pesky coyotes! Git!"

"Here, hold on," said Billy warmly. "You heard what that girl said—she said we could—"

"What she said ain't interestin' me none," hissed Jack Walters. "Think I'm takin' orders from her, you doggoned hoboes! I guess I'm shore boning for a chance to plug you! Light out, darn you! Jest one chance, and I'm pumpin' lead into you, darn you!"

They stared at the ugly, passion-filled face, and both Buck and Billy knew better than to disobey. That the man, furious and vengeful for his licking, would be glad of a chance to shoot them, they knew full well. The owner's daughter had ridden away, evidently expecting her orders to be obeyed as a matter of course. But they knew the foreman had no intention of obeying them—far from it. The man looked a killer, and it was foolish to take a chance.

Buck's hand hovered for a brief second over his own gun, but the eager glint in Walters' eyes caused Buck to drop all idea of objecting.

"Aw, put your gun back, hombre," drawled Buck. "We're shore not honin' after yore big-hearted hospitality, you ugly-faced, squint-eyed, red-whiskered coyote! I guess we'll hit the—"

Bang!

The gun exploded almost in Buck's face, scorching his eyebrows, the bullet whipping the steaton from his curly hair. Billy started forward, his eyes blazing with rage, believing for the moment that the foreman had shot to kill; but Buck, cool as ever, grabbed his arm and held him.

"Now, quit chewing the rag and git!" roared Walters. "Next time I pulls to hit! And remember in future—this ain't a healthy country for strangers. Hit the blamed horizon or I'll start in an' fan you!"

After that even Buck didn't stay to argue further. He grinned feebly at his partner, and then he went over to Bandy and grasped the chain and began to lead him away. Jack Walters watched them go, his eyes glittering with the rage that consumed him. But he did not "fan" them—possibly he feared that farther shooting might bring the girl or her father on the scene. The two pals, carrying their packs and leading Bandy, slowly went down the farther slope and vanished from the foreman's burning eyes as they were swallowed up in the jungle of high mesquite and catalaw.

The Hidden Canyon!

"W AAL, of this ain't the durned elephant's eyelash!" growled Buck Malone. "Say, pard, we was fools to let that coyote of a foreman frighten us off'n that ranch. We ought to hev' chanced his blamed gun and accepted that young lady's kind invitation!"

"We shundering well ought!" agreed Billy Baxter emphatically.

Both the pals now wished they had not allowed the ballying foreman of the Bar H to run them off the ranch.

The sun had set like a ball of filmy copper over the distant mountain peaks, and the short twilight was rapidly giving place to darkness. The air was still unpleasantly humid and stagnant, and there was a hint of thunder in the air.

It was two hours since they had turned their backs on the Bar H, and long ago they had regretted turning away. Yet common sense told them that they had chosen the wiser course—if Jack Walters had not shot them he would have taken an early opportunity of getting his revenge before the night was out, they well knew. Yet they could not help grumbling at the decision they had taken. They were hungry, and a night in the open, with a thunder-storm threatening, was not an inviting prospect. For two hours they had tramped wearily on, hunting for shelter, but so far they had found none. The country was rough, mostly jungle of cactus, mesquite and catalaw, and overrun with rabbits, lizards and worse—the deadly rattler.

"But we've got to camp somewhere," went on Billy, trying to speak cheerfully. "And I'm about whacked, and old Bandy's more than whacked. What about stopping here, old pal?"

"Nope! We'll reach that thar hill in ten minutes," said Buck, nodding ahead. "Mebbe find a cave o' sorts there w'll shelter Bandy, ef not us'uns."

Billy nodded, and they pressed on wearily, scanning the hillside hopefully as they advanced in the dusk. But it was Bandy who found the cave—or it appeared to be a cave. He grunted suddenly, dragged his chain free and ambled over to a big black patch in the cliff-side that seemed merely a mass of brambles.

Investigation proved that behind this was a yawning gap, wide and high.

"Jest what we want—a cave!" said Buck with satisfaction. "Good old Bandy! I guess I'll jest scoot round in case thar's rattlers or— Holy smoke! What's this?"

The ex-puncher whistled—and Billy did likewise as the discovery was made that the entrance was not a cave, but a tunnel. And the tunnel opened out into a wide, grass-grown canyon.

Nor was that all. In the canyon countless dim forms were milling about. A hundred yards inside was a roughly-built cabin, with smoke rising straight up from a stone chimney. Near the cabin was a large corral in which more dim forms moved.

"Hosses!" breathed Buck Malone, as he and Billy, from behind a boulder, looked down on the scene. "By the great horned toad, them's hosses! Pard, I reckon this ain't a healthy spot for honest young gents like us'uns. A darned hidden canyon and—hosses. Gee!"

"Yes, but what—"

"We gutter light out, pard—less we want a rope necktie or a supper of lead!" snapped Buck, grabbing up his pack and Bandy's chain. "Burn the trail agen— pronto!"

Bandy didn't like going, but they urged him out into the open again. Billy did not argue or question. Though no tenderfoot, he always left such matters to Buck, who, as an ex-puncher, had had more experience of the West than had he. They scurried out of the tunnel and made tracks along a sandy-bottomed arroyo. After five minutes' walking Bandy suddenly stood and refused to go farther. But just then Billy sighted a shallow cave in the hillside, and Bandy allowed himself to be led into this.

It was not big enough for them all to shelter in, but Buck and Billy had no intention of staying yet. They fastened Bandy's chain to a jutting rock, and left him there.

"Safe thar as anywhere, pard," drawled Buck, his eyes gleaming. "Now us'uns will slip back and take a better look at that dandy canyon. C'mon!"

They hurried back, excited and curious to discover the meaning of the strange scene in the hidden canyon—though Buck had more than a suspicion of the truth.

"Mebbe them coyuses is at thar summer camp, and mebbe they ain't," said Buck, as they hurried along. "An' after what that girl said, I shore reckon we got—"

He broke off. Clearly to the ears of the Battling Bees came the unmistakable clapping of hoofs. Through the gathering darkness, riding carefully through the bush, came several horsemen.

The pals were scarcely half a dozen yards from the tunnel now, and instantly they checked and dropped behind a huge boulder. Two minutes later the horsemen came riding in silence over the shale.

A rough-looking bunch they were, seen in the fading light. Suddenly Buck gripped his companion's arm in a grip like a vice.

"That leadin' hombre," he breathed.

"Take a look, pard!"

"P'hes!" Billy Baxter whistled softly.

"Walters!"

"Yeah! I never thought thar could be another hombre so darned ugly," murmured Buck, with a grin. "But thar's one or two c'n beat him in that bunch. Billy I reckon we've stumbled on summat interestin'—we shore hev'. Hark!"

A deep, familiar voice reached them.

"Get in, boys! I reckon Black should be hyer by this. Nope, by thunder! This sounds like him."

Again came the sound of hoofs. Jack Walters' men had filed in through the tunnel, leading their horses, but the foreman himself waited until the three approaching horsemen came up. They dismounted with a jingle of spur-chains and a muttered, gruff greeting.

"Howdy, pardners!"

"Howdy, Black!"

The nearest of the three horsemen turned, and Buck and Billy glimpsed his face in the dusk—an unmistakable face—a face they knew only too well. It was Black Carter, their old enemy; the rustler, road-agent and general bandit, who had trailed Gomez, the Mexican animal trader from Joe Sandley's circus, Gomez, in his turn, had trailed the Battling Bees in an attempt to get hold of Bandy, the bear, for some unknown reason.

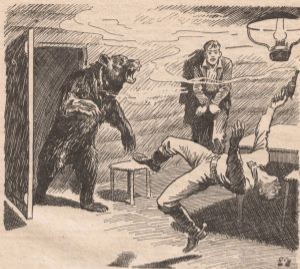
"Black Carter!" whispered Buck. "That darned cuss agen! An' us'd hoped we'd finished with that hombre!"

The pals remained still as mice, scarcely daring to breathe. They knew that if Black Carter discovered them their lives were not worth a cent. For days they had seen nothing of their Mexican enemy or of Black Carter, and they had hoped to have shaken them off for good. But here was Carter—and obviously in league with Walters, foreman of the Bat II.

"So Walters is in cahoots with that rogue, that poison snake!" breathed Buck. "Holy smoke, pard, we've lit on summat, I reckon! But Black's got his darned finger in every bit o' roguery as goes on in these parts far as I've heard tell. So—"

He broke off, his eyes glinting. Black Carter followed Walters through the tunnel, and silence reigned. Buck turned to Billy.

"I don't like battin' in on another hombre's affairs, Billy," he murmured, "but I reckon this hyer's a case for the Battlin' Bees



Bandy gave a savage snarl of fury, and before the rustler could fire again, his massive paw swept out. It was a terrible blow, and it sent the man head-over-heels across the shanty. He crashed against the wall and slid in a heap to the floor and lay still.

to take up—just to pass the time away of you like! That girl was kind to us, pard, and I reckon we're goin' to thank her right and suitable. You stay hyer and look after that bear. I'm gon' to rustle one of them cayuses, and burn th' wind to the Bar H."

"You mean it, Buck?"

"Yeah, I shore do! You get back to Bandy, pard! You'll find it a bit lonesome and slow, but I reckon things'll be gettin' warm round hyer soon."

With that Buck left Billy and approached the tunnel cautiously.

Billy remained where he was. He would liked to have followed his pal, but he had great faith in the ex-puncher's keen brain and good sense. Buck was not away long. There was a dull, soft clump of hoofs, and through the dim tunnel came Buck, leading a big, dark bay gelding. He stopped by Billy with a soft chuckle.

"Easy as pie," he grunted. "Not a blamed guy guardin' the horses, and they was tethered only a yard from the tunnel. Most o' the bunch hev' gone down to the canyon,

and I reckon that's whar they hang out. Now, pard, you gutter hang on with Bandy, while I burn th' wind. Hit the trail back to the cave, Billy; I'm off. So long!"

He vaulted into the saddle and rode away in the dusk. For a time he rode at a walk, ears and eyes alert for sound or sight of an enemy. But he met not a soul, and once away from the rough ground and out on the grasslands, he let his horse out and fairly "burned the wind." Buck had not spent years on the ranges for nothing, and not once was he at a loss for direction. Through the dark, hot night he galloped hard, and eventually the lights of the Bar H gleamed in the valley below, and he drew in his steaming, foam-covered horse a little.

Soon he was near to the bunkhouse, from which came a hum of voices and loud laughter, but he made straight for the house. And on the veranda—to his relief—he glimpsed a slim form seated.

With a musical jingle of spurs and bridle, Buck leaped from his horse and tethered it to the rail. The girl—he could see it was

Miss Dalton, even in the deep gloom—stood up and called.

"Who—who is that?"

"It's one of them boxing guys you met up with three hours ago, miss," said Buck earnestly. "Buck Malone's my name. C'm I see your dad, Miss Dalton—on mighty important business!"

"Certainly you can. But why did you not come as I asked you?" demanded the girl, recognising him. "Come inside."

The door was wide, revealing a lighted interior. The girl eyed him curiously, and then led him through into a little office-like room beyond. Here, seated at a desk, was a grizzled man of fifty, with a lined, harness-looking face. The moment he sighted Buck behind the girl he leaped up, and his hand flew to a gun at his belt.

"It's all right, dad," said the girl hurriedly. "You can trust this man, I think."

"What's he want? We're trusting no strangers hereabouts!"

"Only a pow-vow with you, boss," said Buck, grinning despite himself. "I hear there's bin a powerful deal o' rustlin' goin' on in these parts, Mister Dalton."

The ranch-owner glanced sharply at the ex-punisher. His suspicion seemed to vanish as he met Buck's frank gaze.

"I reckon thar hev' puncher," he snapped. "A powerful sight too much! Scarcely a rancher in the valley as ain't bin nearly cleaned outter horses! Most of us nearly broke! You come for a job? Ef you hev', then forget it, lad! No jobs—"

"I guess I ain't honing for a job, Mister Dalton," said Buck coolly. "I jest moseged here to tell you what to find a powerful heap of cayuses. Mebbe you could recognise some of 'em."

"What do you mean?"

Buck told him what he meant, crisply and quietly. As he proceeded the rancher's eyes blazed with excitement.

"Gee, this is fine, lad!" he snapped. "A hidden canyon—and a bunch of horses! I never dreamed—nobody dreamed, though we lived our lives in this section! And who were the men—did you know any of them, puncher?"

"Yeah!" said Buck calmly. "One guy was Walters, yore foreman!"

"What!" yelled the owner, while Miss Dalton jumped. "My foreman!"

"Yeah! And another was that darned rattlesnake, Black Carter, boss!"

The rancher's face set hard.

"We knew that hog Black Carter was in it—the coyote's in every bit of thier's round this country," he said thickly. "And—waal, stranger, I'm not so surprised as I might've bin about Walters! I've suspected him of being in cahoots with the rustlers, though I never could spot anything wrong. Say, puncher"—he paused, thinking—"you've done me and others a good turn to-night, lad. Would you care to do us another?"

"Yeah! Any amount! Sure thing, boss!"

"Then ride over to Barela with this note."

He scribbled on a sheet torn from a notebook and placed it in an envelope.

"Take that to the sheriff at Barela! I'll send round the ranches and get a bunch of good men together. "You c'm' back with the sheriff and his posse. Sooner we strike the better!"

And so it was settled. Five minutes later Buck Malone, armed and determined, was riding fast for Barela for help, while Rancher Dalton got busy in his own way.

Rounding Up the Rustlers!

"GOSH, this is getting on my nerves!" Thus Billy Baxter, crouching down behind a bunch of mesquite, his eyes fixed upon the dark mouth of the tunnel.

He was finding it slow—and Billy didn't like things slow. When he found them slow, he usually began to find a way of quickening them up.

He did so now. Buck had warned him to lie low, knowing that a false move would mean death, sudden and sure. But Billy was finding it increasingly hard to remain out of the fun. And at last, nothing having happened during his vigil, Billy made a move.

Creeping to the mouth of the tunnel, he entered it, cautiously and slowly. Buck had told him that no look-out was kept, and he found none now as he peered down into the dim canyon. A dim, hazy moon shone on dark, moving forms of horses, but they were some distance away now. A faint light showed from the window of the shack—it seemed to beckon to the curious watcher.

Billy didn't quite understand what it all meant, and he was very curious to find out.

He watched for a full ten minutes, and then, tiring of this, he moved quietly down into the canyon and then on towards the shack. Reaching it, he crawled softly to the lighted window.

From within came the murmur of gruff, husky voices. From somewhere along the grass-grown canyon, in the distance, came sounds of voices and a musical instrument. Evidently the rustlers—if rustlers they were—were making merry, possibly in an unseen bankhouse up the canyon.

Billy waited, listening for another minute, and then he ventured a glance through into the lighted cabin.

Only three men were there—Black Carter, Walters, and a third man, a small, wiry puncher whom the others addressed as Pete. They were playing cards and smoking, and the table was littered with cards, matches, chips and dirty dishes and glasses. Suddenly, even as he looked, Walters flung down his cards and rose with a yawn.

"Time to be gettin' along, pard," he drawled. "The old man will hev' gone to bed long ago, I reckon."

"Shore us'll be able to git in all right, Jack?" asked Black Carter.

"Shore thing, Black," the treacherous foreman grinned, "I've seen to th' winder."

"An' th' safe? You got the combination fixed in your cabeza?"

"I reckon I ain't watched through the old man's window night after night for nix, Black," drawled Walters. "An' the dollars are thar—twenty thousand greenbacks, them bein' another mortgage as th' old man's raised on the ranch off'n that storey over in Pine City. The old bird's nigh broke, an' had to raise the wind to pay us hands," he added, with a chuckle. "Waal, let's get off."

The men rose, knocking out pipes, adjusting belts and obviously making ready to ride. And Billy Baxter, his face set hard, didn't need to guess where they were bound for. Not satisfied with robbing old man Dalton, not satisfied with bringing him to the verge of ruin, the villainous Carter and the treacherous, disloyal Walters intended to break into the ranch safe that very night—to steal the mortgage money which, doubtless enough, would mean utter and total ruin for Mr. Dalton.

Billy's sunburnt face registered angry indignation as he turned away. His eyes were gleaming with determination. Somehow he had to do something, and his thoughts were on the problem when he heard a slight sound behind him. Next instant, even as he turned his head, he glimpsed an evil face, an up-raised arm, and then something hit his head with stunning force, and for the moment he lost consciousness.

He had overlooked the fact that his head and shoulders were silhouetted against the lighted window to anyone coming down into the canyon.

When he recovered from the blow he found himself on the floor of the cabin, with Black Carter and Walters glaring down at him, their faces red with rage and amazement. They had obviously recognised him at once.

"Seed him only this afternoon—ordered the young whelp off'n the ranch with a gun, Black, but I reckon I wasn't wise, as he's an old friend o' yours. Good for you, Tarrant! I got a hunch his pard an't far away," went on Walters. "You'd better get the boys out and search right pronto. We'uns has to be hittin' it now. Ropo this guy up, and tell the boys!"

Though disturbed by the discovery of Billy, the rascals were far too eager to tackle the Bar II safe to bother their heads about anything else just then. They tramped outside, leaving Tarrant alone with Billy.

Tarrant seemed in no hurry. He leisurely roped Billy's hands together, and then he took food and drink from a cupboard. Evidently the man had been out on the trail and was hungry.

He ate and drank wolfishly, and it was just as he was finishing his meal that the strange thing happened.

From outside the door came a queer grunting, followed by a thumping and scraping against the door. Tarrant leaped from his chair and dragged out his Colt.

"What the heck's that?"

Billy knew what it was only too well. He recognised that disconsolate grunting. It was Bandy, the boxing bear—Bandy, who had broken loose, and had either smelted Billy out, or was hunting round for food! Billy felt a sudden agony of fear, knowing that the rustler would shoot the tame bear on sight.

There was a lumbering crash on the door. With his Colt ready and amazement in his face, Tarrant stepped quickly to the door. As he did so, the door crashed back almost in Tarrant's face. Framed in the doorway was the lumbering, huge form of Bandy, the tame grizzly.

Tarrant gave one yell of startled terror, and then his gun spat fire.

His aim was wild, and luckily the bullet missed. But the scorching blast of powder was enough for Bandy, who had tasted lead before and didn't like it. He gave a savage snarl, and before Tarrant could fire again his massive paw swept out.

It was a terrible blow, and it sent the rustler head over heels across the shanty. The luckless man crashed against the wall, slid in a heap to the floor, and lay still.

"Phew! Good for you, Bandy, old pard!" snapped Billy.

Bandy granted his satisfaction on recognising Billy. Then he ambled to the table and devoured half a loaf in a mouthful. Billy grinned, sighted an open clasp-knife on the table, and set to work with frantic speed.

Luckily his hands were tied before him, and once he got a grip on the knife the rest was easy. The strands soon parted, and, taking charge of the rustler's gun, Billy somehow urged the protesting Bandy outside and got him clear of the cabin.

Tarrant's horse stood outside, but the first thing was to put Bandy in a safe place, and he led the grunting bear up to the tunnel.

As Billy's head emerged at the other end, rough hands gripped him, and then a cold rim of steel was pressed against his forehead. A hard voice hissed in his ear:

"Let out one yap, hombre, an' it'll be you last!"

In the dim light Billy glimpsed a mass of horses. Surrounding him were hard-biten faces, and yet they were honest, homely faces. He had just glimpsed a star on the breast of the man who gripped him when another voice spoke—a welcome voice:

"Waal, carry me home to die! Ef it ain't that boneheaded pard o' mine! Billy, you looked jink—"

"Oh, it's you, Buck!" said Billy, panting in relief. "Listen! Is there anyone at the ranch—in Mr. Dalton's?"

"I reckon Boss Dalton's out on the trail after—"

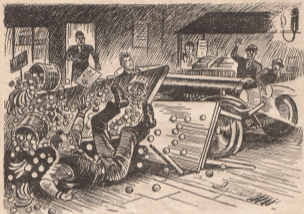
"Then we've got to race there, Buck!" hissed Billy frantically. "Miss Dalton may be alone there, and Black Carter and Walters have gone there to raid the ranch safe—quick! They'll—"

(Continued on page 44.)

There Are Dramatic Developments In These Chapters Of—

OPEN THROTTLE!

By DAVID GOODWIN



Sad News!

BUD started hastily for the stairs. "Ush!" said Mrs. Guffey, "Don't you go up now, Bud. She's sloopin'." Dr. Bolt said she wasn't to be disturbed on no account till she woke up.

"What's the matter with her, Mrs. Guffey?"

"I dunno," sniffed the old lady. "Some long name the doctor gives it. But its name ain't so long as Dr. Bolt's fare when he told me. I never seen him look so serious about anything. I says to him: 'How long will she be before she's over it, doctor?'"

"He looked at me vey queer, and didn't answer for a bit; then he says: 'Not very long, Mrs. Guffey.' I

couldn't make out what the doctor was driving at."

Mrs. Guffey dried her eyes again.

"I noticed she wasn't well for three weeks past, though quite cheerful, for she's a rare plucked 'un; but it wasn't till last Tuesday

that I came in and found her in a faint on the floor, and I put her to bed and called old Bolt in. I'm looking after her all I can. I didn't know where you was, Bud, till your letter came this mornin' with the money, and a good lad you was to send it. She'll be able to have anything she wants now."

A voice was heard calling, rather faintly, from the upper room.

"There! She's a waked up," said Mrs. Guffey.

THE OPENING CHAPTERS

Bud Kelly, a clever young motor mechanic, gets a job as chauffeur-valet to Cyril Babbitt, a youthful millionaire. He has a suspicion that Heston Finch and Barney Finch, Babbitt's uncle and cousin respectively, and Joe Cleugh, a rascally chauffeur, are in league "to get rid" of Cyril.

Cleugh is arrested for putting into effect a scheme to end Cyril's life—a scheme which miscarries, Bud having a miraculous escape. Later, Bud gets fed-up with Babbitt's erratic treatment of him, and after a heated scene, he clears out and goes to his mother, who, he discovers, is very ill.

(Now read on.)

Bud waited no longer, but hastened upstairs. He opened the door of the bedroom gently. Mrs. Kelly lay on the little iron bedstead, her hair grey against the white pillow, her gentle, old face very quiet and composed.

"Mother!"

"Bud!" she whispered, her eyes lighting up joyfully. "Why, Bud dearie, I was just thinkin' of you!"

He was on his knees beside the bed, his arms round her, and she pressed him to her heart.

"I never knew you were ill, dear," he said brokenly.

She smiled at him.

"Ill! Me? I should laugh, me lying here like this! Be up in a couple of days, doin' the housework. I was never one for bed. You was a dear boy to send that money. You didn't ought to have sent it, Bud—not all that! I haven't spent but little of it. It's fine, your having such a good job. Has your gentleman given you the day off?"

Bud's heart smote him. He dared not tell her what had become of the job.

"And you've come all the way from the West End to see me! That's just like you, Bud—"

She broke off suddenly.

"Are you in any pain, mother?" he whispered.

"Oh, no! That is—nothin' much. I'm so glad to see you, Bud. Hold me again. Hold me tight—like that!"

Though she spoke so pluckily, her voice was faint and weak. A few months ago Bud had left her in good health, though she was never very strong. And she was not yet fifty. But now she was suddenly altered. She seemed years older. He looked at the brave, weary eyes, the lined face, and the strange, grey shadow about her mouth. A nameless terror seized Bud. Why hadn't he come before?

There was a tap at the door, and Mrs. Guffey appeared.

"Doctor's here!" she murmured.

Bud rose and went out. On the stairs he met Stanley Bolt, the sixpenny doctor from the surgery in Barro Street. Dr. Bolt, who knew Bud, nodded to him, and passed into the room.

Bud went downstairs. Mrs. Guffey took her leave. She had to go and get supper for her husband, the fish-porter, over the way.

Ten minutes later Dr. Bolt came down again.

"Well, sir," said Bud anxiously, "is she any better? What is it? What is the matter with her?"

Dr. Bolt told him, but Bud did not understand, any more than Mrs. Guffey had done.

Dr. Bolt might as well have talked Greek. What Bud wanted to know was whether his mother was in any danger. The doctor laid a hand on his shoulder.

"We are doing our utmost for her. But we doctors have to give bad news sometimes, Bud. You will want all your courage. My boy, I'm afraid you are going to lose her!"

Bud was white as ashes. The room seemed to swim round him.

Dr. Bolt turned away to the window and stared out of it, and shook his head.

"No. There isn't a doctor in London who could save her. I'm wrong," he added, half under his breath. "There's one. There's just one who might have."

"Who is it?" exclaimed Bud.

"Sir Ralph Collins of Harley Street. The cleverest doctor and surgeon in England. He has just discovered a new treatment for these cases. He has cured several that were despaired of. It's quite new, and he's the only man who can do it safely."

"Why, then," said Bud, "we'll have him. There's six pounds in the house to pay him."

Dr. Bolt smiled sadly.

"Sir Ralph Collins' fee is a hundred guineas," he said.

"A hundred guineas!" gasped Bud.

"Yes; and he's very busy even now. Everybody is after him. He has a ward in his hospital for these cases, and pays for it himself. But I know that it's chock-full now; and, besides, it's too late to move your mother. Twice two hundred guineas couldn't bring him down here. We might as well cry for the moon. We—we must do the best we can ourselves."

There was a rap at the door, and it was pushed open. Somebody stuck his head into the room.

"Hallo!" said a voice. "I say, Bud!"

Bud did not hear. He was on his way up to his mother's room.

Dr. Bolt stared in surprise at the intruder. He saw a dish-dressed-looking young man in evening-dress.

"Who on earth are you?" he asked.

"This is Kelly's place, isn't it?" exclaimed the intruder. "I say, call young Kelly down. I want him! I'm Babbit!"

Dr. Bolt's first impression was that the stranger was not sober. But he saw that this was a mistake; the fellow was quite sober. He was bareheaded, and his hair was wet, and his shirt-front wet and crumpled. He was pale and excited, too, but he had all his senses.

"You had better leave Kelly alone," said Dr. Bolt grimly. "His mother is dying."

"What?" gasped Cyril. "What do you mean?"

"What I say," answered the doctor sternly.

Full Speed Ahead.

CYRIL BABBIT turned paler still. "How awful!" he said, under his breath. "Can't anything be done for her? Tell me about it!"

Dr. Bolt, softening a little, did tell him about it, for Cyril's distress moved him.

Bud, hearing voices, came back and looked into the parlour. He halted, perfectly thunderstruck, at the sight of Cyril Babbit.

"Mr. Babbit!" he exclaimed.

"My goodness!" gasped Babbit, hanging on to Dr. Bolt's coat lapel. "Say it again! What did you say the blighter's address was?"

"Seymour House, Harley Street, West," replied Dr. Bolt, rather bewildered. "But why—"

"Clear the way!" said Babbit, and rushed through the shop into the street.

Dr. Bolt, who had an idea that he was mad, went after him, and Bud, perplexed and distressed, followed as far as the shop door.

Babbit's big car, the touring Bugatti, stood at the kerb with a crowd of awed small boys round it. Babbit was in the driving-seat already. He started up and swung. There was hardly room to swing, but he got round somehow and shot away like a bullet.

"Here! Where yer comin' to?" roared an anxious voice. "Ho!"

Crash! The mudguard of the car hit the trestle of Buster Bill's fruit stall, and sent Buster Bill, the cattermonger, flying on to the pavement with an avalanche of fruit falling all round him. The air was thick with flying oranges and apples.

The whole street was in a pandemonium. Enraged voices broke out.

"Stop that car! Stop it!"

But Babbit did not even look back. He increased speed. Somebody hurled a cauliflower at him, but the car buzzed away down Cooper Street and disappeared. Buster Bill, a huge man with a red scarf and a still redder face, struggled up from the wreck of his stall.

"I got his number!" said Buster Bill furiously. "and I'll get me flats on him yet!"

Dr. Bolt turned back towards the shop door, more bewildered than ever. He could not understand it.

"Who is this bounding lunatic?" he said angrily. "People like that ought not to be allowed loose. What did he come for?"

Bud neither knew nor cared. He was much too wretched to concern himself about Babbit. He went indoors without a word.

"Poor lad!" said Dr. Bolt to himself sadly, as he walked away.

Just an hour later Bud came down into the little parlour, worn out and haggard. The room was empty and the house was very still. He heard a knock at the shop door, and went and opened it, hoping that Dr. Bolt had come back, as he promised; though there seemed nothing that Dr. Bolt could do.

But it was not Dr. Bolt. Bud opened the door and found himself facing Babbit. With Babbit was a tall, elderly gentleman, looking very tired, with a handbag, a white moustache, and gold-rimmed eye-glasses.

"What's this?" said Bud.

"I am Sir Ralph Collins," replied the old man, removing his silk hat courteously.

Bud staggered back into the shop.

"This young gentleman brought me," said

Sir Ralph, following. "If the patient is ready I will see her at once."

"You won't want me—I'll only be in the way," stammered Babbit, and disappeared. In the doorway he nearly collided with Dr. Bolt, who had just returned. Bolt recognised Sir Ralph, and was even more astounded than Bud.

"This way, sir!" gasped Bud, leading them both through the parlour.

Sir Ralph Collins went up the narrow stairway to Mrs. Kelly's bed-room. Dr. Bolt, the sixpenny surgeon from Barga Street, showed him the way.

Bud dropped into a chair, feeling blind and stupid. He hardly realised what was happening; his heart was beating very fast; he wondered whether he was in dreamland.

He could not have told how long he sat there.

It was nearly three-quarters of an hour later when the two doctors came downstairs again. Bud started to his feet.

Sir Ralph Collins smiled at him.

"My boy," he said kindly, "your mother will live. You need have no fear at all now."

Bud gulped. The room seemed to spin round him.

"Are you sure, sir?"

"Quite sure." Sir Ralph patted him on the shoulder. "Everything has gone well. And she will have a good night, and so more pain. I hope she will be up and as strong as ever in a fortnight."

He turned to Dr. Bolt.

"A close thing, though, doctor," he said under his breath. "We were just in time—just in time."

Bud grabbed at Sir Ralph's hand.

"How am I to thank you, sir?" he gasped, his eyes wet. "I—"

"Oh, that's all right!" smiled Sir Ralph. "Nobody troubles about thanking a doctor. Good-night, my boy! Dr. Bolt, I leave the case confidently in your hands now. But I'll just look in to-morrow. Good-night!"

When Sir Ralph and Dr. Bolt had left the house Bud turned to Babbit, who had returned.

"I say, Mr. Babbit," he stammered brokenly, "how can a fellow ever thank you—"

"Oh, rats!" said Babbit hastily. "For goodness' sake don't! I'm the goat! Hallo! What's the trouble now? Oooosh!"

A huge, red-faced man grabbed Cyril by the collar. It was Buster Bill, the catter. An angry crowd had gathered round the shop door.

"Gatcher!" hissed Bill. "This is the bloke that bust my stall to blazes. Nah, then!"

Buster Bill's Vengeance.

"WHAT'S this about!" exclaimed a policeman, pushing through the crowd. "Here, you're wanted for furious driving, an' refusing to stop when called on!"

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"This ain't no copper's job!" protested the enraged Bill. "What I want is ter wipe the street with 'im!"

The crowd surged round threateningly, but the policeman pulled Cyril away from his captor.

"I'm heesely sorry, old thing!" ejaculated Cyril. "Was in a frightful hurry, don't you know. Wouldn't upset the fruit trade for the world. Don't wonder you're annoyed. Will this square the giddy damage!"

Buster Bill, his eyes goggling, stared at a couple of notes that Cyril had thrust into his hand.

"Twenty quid!" gasped Bill.

An awed silence fell on the crowd. Bill's stall and all its fruit was not worth thirty shillings. Even the policeman was staggered.

"You see, I was going for the doctor," said Cyril apologetically. "Had to put the pace on a bit."

"Do you know what he did?" cried Bud, coming forward. "He saved my mother's life, and if you set about him you can set about me, too. This is my boss, and he brought the swiftest doctor in London down here for two hundred pounds. And she's out of danger."

"Woi!" gasped Bill.

"That's right what I'm telling you. Now then, Buster Bill, got anything to say?"

"By cripes, I have!" yelled Bill.

He made a rush at Cyril, and all the crowd

rushed with him. Cyril thought his last hour had come. But the next moment he was hoisted up on the shoulders of four burly costers, and borne out of the shop and along the streets in triumph, with a cheering company all round him.

The policeman grinned, and put away his notebook, closing one eye.

"That's all right," said he, strolling majestically away. "I got his number. But I wouldn't summon that young feller, not in be made a sergeant. He's the stuff. Old lady better, Kelly, my lad? That's good. Let the boys have their bit of fun."

The policeman disappeared round the corner. Cyril, with his fingers twined in Buster Bill's hair, was swaying about like a boat in a heavy sea as the crowd bore him along and cheered him.

"Don't make such a row!" protested Bud. "You'll wake mother."

The noise died down and the mob became silent. Mrs. Kelly was a notability in Couper Street. They put Cyril on his feet again, and shook hands with him till his fingers were nearly sprained.

"Thanks, old dears!" panted Cyril. "But you've chaired the wrong guy. Ought to be thanking the doctor, not me. I'm only Bithering Babbit."

He escaped into the house with the aid of Bud. They went into the parlour, and for a moment or two stood looking at each other.

Bud did not know what to say. He had not thought much of Rabbit. But now he felt rather like kneeling down and kissing his boots.

"I say, Bud," said Cyril humbly, "I just wanted to beg your pardon, don't you know. Don't often behave like a leaping, bounding cad. It's up to me to apologise."

"You!" said Bud huskily. "Well, look here, sir—"

"Now don't do it!" interrupted Cyril hastily. "You look as if you were going to start thanking me, and I can't stand it. Any fool can drive away and fetch a doctor, and I'm more pleased that your mother's better than if I'd won the Derby. Cut all that out. Shall we shake hands and call it square? Will you do that?"

Bud gripped Cyril's hand.

"Well, then," said Bud. "I've only got to say, sir, as long as I live you've got the call on me—tiggers than give. I'd be shot for you."

"You jolly nearly broke your neck for me this morning, anyhow." Cyril looked at him and grinned faintly. "You still seem a bit astonished. I suppose you wonder how the dickens I got here?"

"Well, I do rather."

"I'll tell you. It's the first time in my life I ever got—well, like I was this evening. When you'd gone I went to sleep. Must have slept about an hour. Then old Binns, the butler, woke me up and gave me a delayed telegram. I took a glance at it. It was about your mother."

Bud remembered the telegram Mrs. Guffey said she had sent.

"It scared me," continued Cyril. "I went and put my head under a tap, and old Binns gave me some awful stuff, smelling of ammonia, that made me feel a lot better, and I took another look at the wire. I asked Binns where you were, and he gave me your address out of his book. Then I just got the car and drove along down here."



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"While I was driving I thought what a cad I'd been, and how rottenly all those chaps in my house had treated you, too. And I remembered how you'd played up trumps for me this morning at Brooklands. I was beastly worried because you'd missed that telegram about your mother, and I thought I was bound to come along and see if there was anything I could do if you weren't here. So I arrived. And the rest you know all about."

"Well, sir," said Bud quietly, "you're a gentleman, that's all there is to say. And I'm sorry I lost my temper this afternoon."

Cyril's eyes twinkled.

"When you have the bottle of stuff through the window? Not at all. Best thing to do with it. Might be as well if all the stuff in London was chucked through windows, I fancy. Make plenty of work for the glaziers, too, I say, Bud, no more of it for me. Absolutely. From to-night I cut it right out."

Bud gave a sigh of relief.

"To tell you the truth, I hate the case of the muck," added Babbitt. "What people see in it I can't think. However, that's finished."

"I fancy, sir, those friends of yours will raise a bit of a riot when I go back," said Bud.

"We'll see about that to-morrow," replied Babbitt. "I'm getting just a bit fed up with them. Hallo! Who's the lady?"

It was a nursing sister whom Dr. Bolt had sent along to nurse Bud's mother through the night; another was coming in the morning to do the day nursing. Babbitt had kindly offered to pay all the expenses. Bud took her upstairs. Mrs. Kelly was sleeping quite peacefully. When Bud came downstairs Cyril had gone. But presently he returned.

"Things will get a move on to-morrow, I fancy," he said. "But I've showed the car in a motor-lorry yard near by, and they'll keep her for me. I don't fancy going back home on my own, somehow. I shall stop down here instead."

"Here!" exclaimed Bud.

"Yes. Very sportin' neighbourhood. I've taken a fancy to it. More fun here than in Eaton Terrace. And I'm too dead-beat to turn out again. I say, Bud," he added diffidently, "think you could give me a shake-down here?"

Bud was amazed. He thought Cyril was pulling his leg.

"In this house? Why, what's the idea, sir?"

"Well," said Cyril, "when I was putting the car away I saw my uncle Hocham and young Barney snooping along the street. I don't know if they're wise to it that I'm down here. Anyway, they didn't see me just then."

Bud wondered whether Babbitt had been dreaming.

"Mr. Finch and Barney in Couper Street!" he exclaimed.

"Yes; I'm pretty sure it was they. And I don't want to meet 'em."

"I thought you were so keen on them this morning, sir?"

"Was I? Well, I'm not half so keen about 'em as I was," replied Cyril quietly. "I feel it would bore me to run into 'em just now. And I'm too tired. I'd like to stay here with you, Bud, unless I shall be in the way?"

"Why, of course, I can put you up, sir, and welcome. Only a mighty poor place, after what you're used to. You can have my bed-room. It's small but snug."

"No fear!" said Cyril. "I'm not going to turn you out. I'll sleep on the couch here, if I may."

"But—"

"Cut it out! I can sleep anywhere. I'm a good sleeper. I could doss on the nail in the door and be happy there."

There was no moving Cyril. He was perfectly obstinate about it. Finally Bud obeyed orders, and went up to his garret bed-room. Cyril stretched himself on the broken sofa in the parlour and slept like the dead. Fincher curled himself up on the mat that lay just inside the shop door.

Bud did not open his eyes till past eight next morning. He put on an overcoat and stole quickly across to his mother's room. The nurse met him and smiled, beckoning him in.

Mrs. Kelly had had a splendid night. She had slept right through it. The grey shadow had vanished from her face, like a breath fades from the surface of a glass. Bud felt as if somebody had left him a fortune when he saw how much brighter her eyes were.

"I'm better already, Bud dear!" she murmured. "I feel I'm goin' to get well!"

"Of course you are, mother," said Bud as he knelt by the bedside. "The doctor chap said you'd be about again soon, and strong as ever."

"He's a wonderfully good doctor, that," mused Mrs. Kelly. "How did he come here, Bud, and who paid him?"

"My boss brought him, mother," said Bud.

"What! Mr. Babbitt? Where is he?"

"Sleeping on the sofa in the parlour," Bud replied.

And he told her how the thing had come about. Also that Babbitt was paying for the nurse.

The water came into Mrs. Kelly's eyes. She could hardly find her voice.

"You've a good quarter, Bud," was all she could say.

"I know I have," said Bud. There was a ring at the bell downstairs. The day nurse had arrived to relieve the night sister. She told Bud what was required, and after dressing himself, he went out, leaving Cyril still asleep on the sofa.

(You'll thoroughly enjoy the adventures of Bud and his boss at a double-race meeting in the next rousing chapters of this popular serial. Don't miss 'em.)

THE RUSTLERS OF HIDDEN CANYON!

(Continued from page 37.)

"Aw, don't get so he-up, Britisher," grinned Buck. "Quirk, nix! Black Carter and Walters runned right into us bombres just now. That was a pretty bit o' shootin', and—waa, ef you'll equist round you'll see friend Walters tied to the bark of that pinto yonder, smorin' like a bad 'un. He won't do no rustlin' any more, be shore won't! An' our old pard Black Carter's huring the trail with a bunch of cowpokes on his tail—though I reckon they won't ever hetch that slippery cuss! Nope! Waa, sheriff, ef you'll follow me through the front door hyer, I guess we'll make a start cleanin' up them rustlers in 'th' canyon. C'm on!"

A red glow, the rasping scrape of a fiddle, and drunken yells and laughter guided the sheriff's posse and the vengeful ranchers to the canyon bunkhouse.

Guns began to roar above shouts of alarm and savage oaths, but the rustlers were taken completely by surprise, and it was soon over

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"Just as I said—that slippery cuss wants some ketchin'," said Buck Malone as the Battling Bees and Bandy, with packs full of grub and with the well-wishes of the rancher and cow-punchers ringing in their ears, started out on the trail again two days later. "But I got a hunch agin as we ain't finished with Black. Waa, I guess that coyote brings us bombres more good luck than we bring him, eh, pard?"

"You've said it!" grinned Billy.

(Another nerve-ringing yarn of Buck & Co. next week, chronicled, "The Ghost Town!" Look out for the further adventures of our boxing pals in the Wild West.)

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