

No. 255—HOW THE STRIKE UNEXPECTEDLY ENDED!

# THE NELSON LEE

LIBRARY.

1 <sup>1-D</sup>/<sub>2</sub>



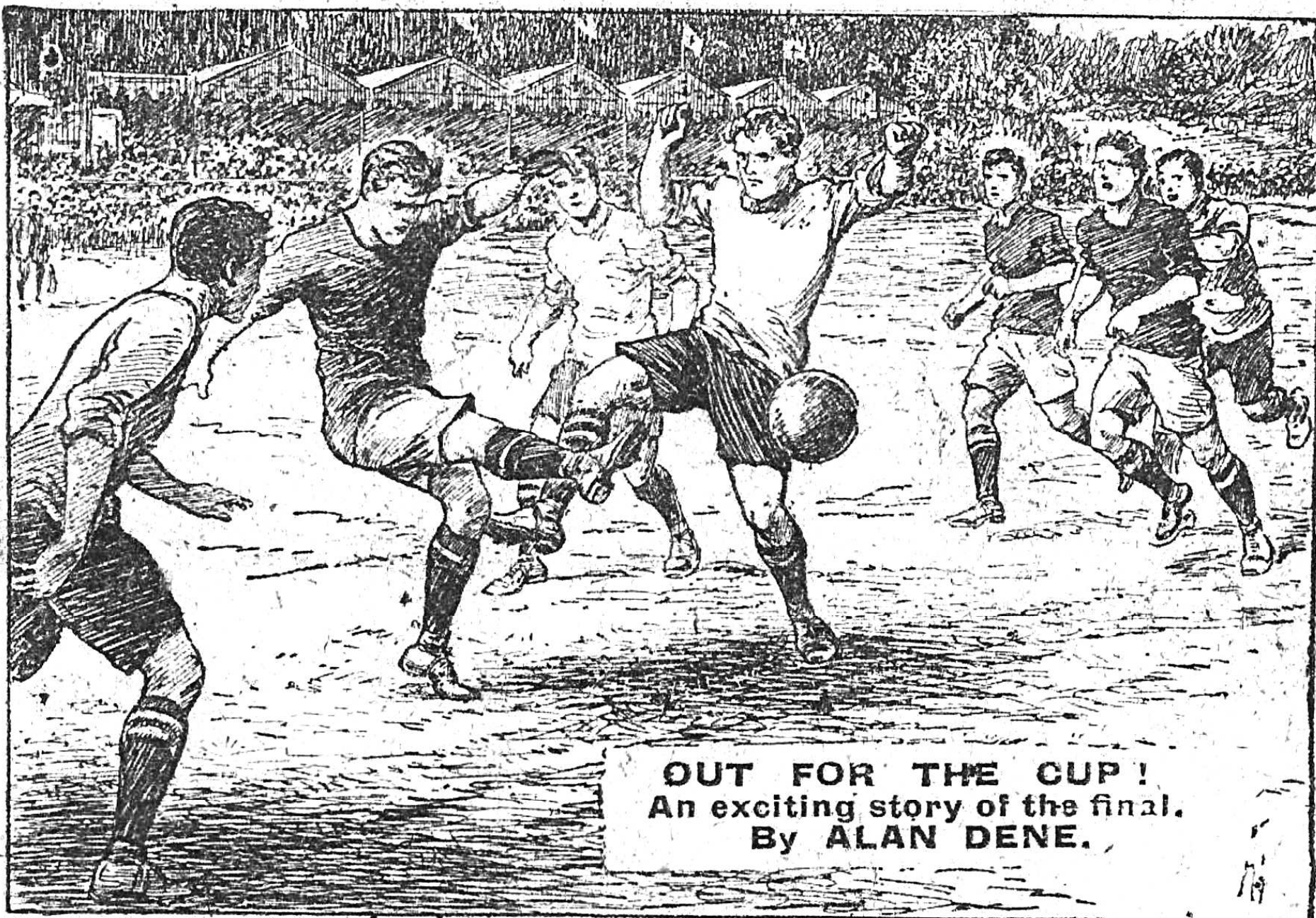
**DIRECT  
ACTION!**

## **THE PRISONER OF THE ISLAND**

A Story of School Life and Detective Adventure at St. Frank's, introducing NELSON LEE and NIPPER and the Boys of St. Frank's. By the Author of "April Fools," "St. Frank's at 'Appy 'Amptstead," "A Shock for St. Frank's," etc.

April 24, 1920.





**OUT FOR THE CUP!**  
An exciting story of the final.  
By ALAN DENE.

Don't miss this story in the SPECIAL CUP-FINAL NUMBER of  
**THE BOYS' REALM.** OUT TO-DAY.  
 PRICE 1½d.

## FURTHER NEW BOOKS

PUBLISHED ON FRIDAY, MAY 7TH.

### DETECTIVE TALES.

#### SEXTON BLAKE LIBRARY

Sexton Blake Figures Prominently  
in all the Following Stories:

##### No. 124.—THE MYSTERY OF THE THOUSAND PEAKS.

A Manchurian Romance, introducing Sexton Blake, Tinker, and the Hon. John Lawless.  
By the author of "The Admiral's Secret," etc.

##### No. 125.—THE CASE OF THE STRANGE WIRELESS MESSAGE.

Telling how a strange call for help came to Sexton Blake. Introducing "Granite" Grant, the Secret-Service Man.

By the author of "The Case of the King's Spy."

##### No. 126.—THE GREAT DIAMOND BLUFF.

A Brilliant Yarn a Masterpiece of Bluff, featuring Sexton Blake, Tinker, and Pedro.  
By the author of "Twice Wronged," etc., etc.

##### No. 127.—THE AFFAIR OF THE ORIENTAL DOCTOR.

An Enthralling Story told in a clever way.  
By the author of the Leon Kestrel Series.

#### BOYS' FRIEND LIBRARY

##### No. 506.—THE SCHOOL OF SPORT.

Magnificent Yarn of Athletics.  
By Capt. Malcolm Arnold.

##### No. 507.—LIMELIGHT LURE.

Splendid Story of Stageland.  
By Henry T. Johnson.

##### No. 508.—ON THE TRAIL OF JUSTICE.

Thrilling Tale of the North-West Frontier.  
By Gordon Wallace.

##### No. 509.—THE SCHOOLBOY CASTAWAYS.

Superb Story of Schoolboy Fun and Adventure.  
By Martin Clifford.

PRICE

**4**

EACH.

**COMPLETE NOVEL IN EACH NUMBER**

ON SALE AT ALL NEWSAGENTS

PRICE

**4**

EACH.





# THE PRISONER OF THE ISLAND.

A Story of School Life and Detective Adventure at St. Frank's, introducing NELSON LEE and NIPPER and the Boys of St. Frank's. By the Author of "April Fools," "St. Frank's at 'Appy 'Ampstead," "A Shock for St. Frank's," etc.

(THE NARRATIVE RELATED THROUGHOUT BY NIPPER.)

## CHAPTER I.

### SOMETHING AFOOT.

"TENPENCE-HA'PENNY!" said Handforth firmly.

"Elevenpence!" declared Church, with an air of finality.

"I ought to know. I bought the things myself——"

"I don't care about that!" snapped Handforth. "I saw the tins in the window myself. They were tenpence-ha'penny, and I think you were an ass not to get some for tea, Walter Church. We had nothing this evening, and I'm feeling hungry already, and it's hours to supper-time."

Church glared.

"You know as well as I do that I'm stony!" he said. "How the dickens could I buy sardines without any tin?"

"Not very well," agreed Handforth.

"Sardines are always in a tin, and you couldn't buy 'em loose——"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared McClure.

"I mean tin—money—cash!" yelled Church.

"If you bellow at me again, my son, I'll punch your ugly nose!" shouted Handforth, in a voice that could be heard all down the Remove passage.

"I say the sardines were tenpence——"

"Oh, my hat! Cut it out, for goodness sake!" said McClure. "I've been trying to finish my prep. for half an hour, and all I can hear is tins of sar-

dines! You might have a bit of consideration, you chaps!"

Handforth rapped the table. He was determined now, and nothing would stop him. The three Remove juniors were sitting in Study D, in the Ancient House at St. Frank's. It was evening, and darkness had already fallen.

"I'm not going to be put off like this," said Handforth. "I've got eyes, and I saw those sardines marked up at tenpence-ha'penny a tin. For two pins I'll go down to the village now—to prove it!"

"Good!" said McClure promptly. "Ripping idea, Handy!"

"Splendid!" agreed Church.

Handforth regarded his chums suspiciously.

"You want to get rid of me, I suppose?" he demanded. "Well, you won't! You'll come with me, my sons! Get your caps, and——"

"But look here," said McClure indignantly, "I've got to do my prep."

"Blow your prep.!"

"Crowell won't say that in the morning!" snapped McClure. "And what about your own prep., Handy? It's all very well to talk about going to the village, but we've got work to do."

"We can finish our work afterwards!"

"It wouldn't matter if the thing was important," went on McClure; "but there's no sense in rushing off to the village to see the price of some beastly



sardines! It's a mad idea—— Yaroooooh! You—you silly ass——"

"A mad idea, is it?" roared Handforth. "Say it again!"

McClure was hardly in a position to say anything at the moment. Handforth had hurled a jacket at him, and he was enveloped in its folds. When he came out into the open again, he gazed at his work-books with horror.

"Look—look what you've done!" he gasped faintly.

"Blotted your silly French, I suppose?" asked Handforth, with serene indifference. "Well, you can do it again——"

"Do it again!" howled McClure. "There's an hour's work there!"

"Well, you shouldn't argue——"

"You rotter!" shouted McClure. "You can go to the village yourself—and good riddance to bad rubbish! Clear out! We don't want you here! We shall get a bit of peace when you're gone!"

It was not often that either of Handforth's chums let fire in that fashion, and Handy was rather taken aback. Church fully expected his leader to slaughter the rash McClure on the spot—Church expected to see gore flowing freely, especially from McClure's nose.

But Handforth was always surprising in his attitude. He very seldom did what a fellow expected him to do.

"I won't waste time by wiping up the floor with you, Arnold McClure," he said witheringly. "I regard your insults with absolute scorn. I wouldn't demean myself by taking any notice of them. It's a bad thing when a fellow's chums insult him to his face. I'm disgusted with you—I'm disappointed in you, McClure. I thought you were made of different stuff."

"Well, look at my French exercise——"

"Blow your French exercise!" roared Handforth. "When I've got more time I'll punch you until you can't see straight. You can't insult me just as you please, I can tell you——"

"But you said you wouldn't take any notice," grinned Church.

"And I don't want any funny remarks from you!" rapped out Handforth.

"Are you coming with me, or not?"

"Well, look here——"

"Are you coming with me, or not?" repeated Handforth dangerously. "I'll give you ten seconds to decide. If you

come, I'll let bygones be bygones; but, if you refuse, I'll kick you out of the study, and roll you along the passage, and hoof you into the Triangle. Which is it to be?"

"Oh, we'll come," said Church wearily.

McClure nodded with equal weariness. They weren't afraid of their leader; they had no fear of being kicked out of the study, or of being rolled down the passage. But Handforth would undoubtedly try to do these things, and, in attempting to do so, there would be a general assortment of black eyes and thick ears and swollen noses. It would save time—and pain—to go at once.

So the chums of Study D sallied out a few minutes afterwards, and hurried across the dark Triangle. It was a calm April evening, and quite mild. The Ancient House and the College House were ablaze with lights, and junior voices sounded from every direction.

Handforth and Co. would just have about enough time to get down to the village and back before locking-up. Nevertheless, they hurried, and there was no further argument. Delays could not be afforded.

Once in the village, Church felt very happy, for it was discovered that the sardines in question were elevenpence a tin—and not tenpence-halfpenny, as Handforth had insisted. Handy glared at the label darkly.

"They've been raised since this morning!" he declared.

"Rats!" said Church. "That label's been there for days!"

"What's the excitement up the road?" asked McClure, staring up the High Street. "There seems to be something doing on the green. There's a crowd of people there, and they're all laughing——"

"I tell you these sardines were tenpence——" began Handforth.

But his chums had wandered off, and they approached the amused crowd of villagers and strikers who stood round a speaker perched on an upturned barrel. Church and McClure were acknowledged warmly by many of the people there, for the majority of them were members of the old St. Frank's staff—the servants who had been dismissed by Sir Roger Stone, the chairman of the Governors.

A new staff was now installed at the school, and the old staff was left to take care of itself. But they remained



in the village, feeling sure that everything would come right before long. The "blacklegs" couldn't last for long, and the school itself would see that justice was done.

That very afternoon a big crowd of people had besieged St. Frank's, demanding that the old servants should be taken back. There was a good deal of indignation in the district.

For it had become common knowledge that, although the strikers were only asking for a fifty per cent. rise in wages all round, the new staff was getting exactly double the old servants' wages—that is, a hundred per cent. rise.

This was scandalous, and the only explanation was that Sir Roger had been unable to procure servants for less—and he had been too dignified to admit that the strikers were right. Since he would not take action himself, he was to be forced. But the country people found him a hard man to deal with.

Somehow it was felt that the strikers had a very strong case, and that they would win if they had a little more patience. From the very start they had been orderly and quiet and well-behaved. There had been no sign of rowdyism, and the badly treated servants received the sympathy of everybody.

Church and McClure gazed at the speaker curiously—and then with grins of recognition.

The figure on the upturned barrel was that of a junior schoolboy—a somewhat remarkable figure, nevertheless. He was like no other junior in the school—he was untidy in his dress, he wore green-tinted glasses, and he held his head on one side as he talked.

"T.T.!" grinned Church. "I've never seen such a chap for spouting! If he was ten years older, he'd be in Parliament!"

"Or leading a society of Bolsheviks!" said McClure. "He seems to be a bit advanced in his views—although I don't believe he knows what he's talking about half the time. He's a harmless specimen!"

"He's a giddy comedian!" chuckled Church.

"Hallo! Who's this?" demanded Handforth, coming up. "I was telling you chaps that—My hat! I'm blessed if Tucker isn't on his hind legs again! He was giving a speech only this afternoon."

"Listen!" grinned Church. "It'll be amusing!"

The juniors listened.

"Yes, comrades and friends, I repeat that the position is one which is almost without parallel in the history of strikes," Timothy Tucker was shouting. "Admitted. You must realise that you are in a position to act. You must realise that you are workers—wage labourers—toilers! You must realise that you have it in your power to strike a deadly blow at this autocrat, Sir Roger Stone—this bloated specimen of the capitalist class! That is so. I address you seriously and solemnly, and my advice is this. Heed my words, and act upon them, for, I assure you, they are words of wisdom!"

"Hear, hear!"

"Go it, Master Tucker!"

"Comrades and fellow-toilers," shouted T.T., "I regret to tell you that a time has come when there is only one course for you to pursue—and that is direct action! It is no longer possible to negotiate; it is no longer possible to gain your ends by arbitration—therefore, direct action is the only way. Direct action! Rise, my comrades! Rise in your righteous wrath, and strike!"

"That's what we have done!"

"We're all strikers!"

"Strike!" roared Tucker, in his shrill voice. "Strike a blow that will sink deep! It is within your power to do so. I must admit that I am deeply impressed by your attentive attitude. Admitted. I am deeply impressed. And I tell you, comrades and workers, that you must act at once, or it will be too late!"

"What have we got to do?"

"Get to the point, Master Tucker!"

The servants were amused, but not seriously attentive. They listened to Tucker because he was comical; they had no intention of carrying out his wild schemes—for they were certain to be wild.

"The point?" shouted the junior. "Exactly, my comrades—exactly! I will now explain my plan. You must march to the school—now! You must march in a body, and you must steel your hearts. This is no time for gentle methods—this is no time for polite words. Grim action is required!"

"There'll be plenty of grim action in a minute," observed Handforth, rolling up his sleeves with ominous calmness.



"You must seize this opportunity," went on T.T., waving his arms. "Perhaps it will never occur again! Do not hesitate—do not falter at the last moment! Your freedom, your liberty depends upon swift, sudden action!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Go it, Master Tucker!"

"It's as good as a pantomime!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The audience certainly didn't take the speaker seriously.

"Dear, dear, dear!" exclaimed T.T., looking round. "This is regrettable—most regrettable. I am shocked. H'm! I must admit that I am shocked. Do you not realise, my friends, that I am speaking on your behalf? Do you not realise that this is a serious—a deadly serious—question? This ribald laughter is unseemly! Exactly. Quite unseemly!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You must listen to me!" shouted Tucker. "I am no advocate of violence—I am no revolutionary hotbed! I regard Bolshevism with horror and disgust. At the same time, I must acknowledge that I am greatly in favour of seeing justice done. I am full of sympathy for the down-trodden masses, and I do not hesitate to advocate drastic action, when such action is absolutely necessary. It is absolutely necessary at this present time."

"Hear, hear!" said Handforth, giving his sleeves a further push.

"Look here, Handy," murmured Church, "don't interfere——"

"Leave it to me," said Handforth grimly.

Tucker looked round at his now attentive audience.

"Comrades, the time has come when you must rise!" he shouted. "The time has come when you must drop——"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"We can't rise and drop at the same time, young 'un!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"When you must drop all thoughts of tenderness," roared T.T. "You must go to the school in a body, and when you arrive you must take matters into your own hands! Direct action! It is the only course. Direct action! It will be our salvation, my friends! Rise in your might, and storm St. Frank's! Attack the blackleg servants, and pitch them out into the road! Compel them to go, and then take their places! Or, to be more

exact, take your own places—for these people are usurpers and invaders! Force is the only argument to apply——"

"It is!" agreed Handforth. "And force is going to be applied now! Come on, you chaps! Grab him—grab the lunatic!"

"Oh, my hat!" gasped McClure.

There was no help for it. He and Church were obliged to follow their leader, and within a couple of seconds the three juniors had burst through the crowd and they were by Tucker's side.

"Dear me!" said T.T. "I beg of you to retire—— Yaroooooh! This—this is most disgraceful—— Ow! Desist, I beg of you—— Whoooooop!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Timothy Tucker was grasped by strong fingers. He was yanked down from the barrel, and bumped on to the grass. Then, flustered and bruised and rather dazed, he was dragged through the grinning crowds.

Handforth was in a grim mood.

"I am shocked!" gasped Tucker. "I am amazed that you should dare to—— Ow!"

"This way, my son!" said Handforth firmly. "We've heard enough of your special brand of Bolshevism! If you think you can incite the strikers to violence, you've made a bloomer!"

"But, my dear sir——"

"We wasn't takin' no notice of 'im, sir!" grinned one of the strikers.

"At the same time, he'll be safer out of the way," replied Handforth. "This way, ass! Now then, you chaps, give him a run!"

"Ha, ha! Rather!" grinned Church.

T.T. hardly knew what was happening. He was rushed across the grass, he was rushed into the road, and he was rushed through the village. His captors did not call a halt until they were breathless themselves. Tucker was well-nigh spent. Running was not one of his strong points—and he had been running under extreme difficulties in this case.

"Oh, dear!" he panted. "This—this is most objectionable of you, Handforth! I—I am surprised at you—quite surprised at you, my dear sir! Do you realise that I had only just commenced my speech? The position is this——"

"Never mind the position," said Handforth grimly. "You've got to come up to the school. We hearu



enough of your tommy-rot, my son! We don't allow wild agitators to spout revolution——"

"But, my dear sir, I was doing nothing of the sort!" declared T.T. mildly. "You are quite mistaken! I was merely urging the strikers to take a firm attitude. Nothing else—nothing else whatever. Admitted, I advised them to use a certain amount of violence—but violence is essential at times."

"It is!" agreed Handforth. "It was essential in your case."

"Nothing of the sort!" declared Tucker. "I have a perfect horror of fighting and the use of force—a perfect horror, my dear sir. I never advocate anything drastic until all other methods have failed. Admitted. Very well. I consider that this strike has lasted long enough, and the only thing is to bring it to an end as quickly as possible. If you will allow me to return——"

"Oh, yes!" grinned Church. "That's very likely!"

"You'll come with us, my peach!" said Handforth firmly. "This way!"

In spite of Timothy Tucker's protests, he was led up the lane towards the school. After a few moments he resigned himself to the inevitable, and was quite cheerful about it. It was one of T.T.'s chief characteristics to adopt the line of least resistance, and he was seldom upset for long.

By the time they reached the school the gates had been locked, and the four juniors were obliged to get in by means of climbing the wall, a method with which they were fully acquainted.

As it happened, Tommy Watson and Tregellis-West and myself were in the Triangle at the time. We had been over to the College House, in order to have a discussion with Christine.

Unfortunately, the discussion developed into an argument, the result being that we were hurled out of the rival camp on our necks. And we were just dusting ourselves down, and setting our collars straight, when we caught sight of Handforth and Co.

"Hallo! Somebody seems to be late," I remarked. "If a prefect happens to spot those asses, they'll be in for trouble."

"We've got quite enough trouble of our own, without troubling about other people's," growled Watson. "I suppose

you know that my tie has completely disappeared? And you're aware of the fact that my left ear is filled with earth?"

"Dear old boy, they are only minor details!" observed Sir Montie sadly. "My own topper is in a frightful condition—it is, really! How on earth we shall ever get through the lighted passages, appals me! I consider that Christine and Co. are a set of ruffians—they have no consideration whatever for a fellow's trousers!"

I grinned.

"Well, we asked for it, so we can't grumble," I said. "I called Christine an ass, and Tommy called Yorke a fat-head. They returned the compliment, and after that the earthquake happened. Never mind! The next time they come over into the Ancient House we'll give them tit for tat!"

"They'll take good care not to come," said Watson, with a sniff.

Handforth and Co. approached.

"Oh, it's you chaps!" was Handforth's greeting. "We've just come up from the village, and we've brought a wild lunatic with us."

"Wild?" I repeated. "I always thought T.T. was tame."

"He used to be," said Handforth. "But we found him on the green, spouting to the strikers, and advising them to burst upon the school like a cyclone, and hurl the new staff out on their necks."

"My dear sir, I was merely suggesting the remedy for the existing conditions," said Tucker, with dignity. "I am astonished that you should pervert the truth——"

"Well, never mind about that," I interrupted. "Take my advice, Tucker, and do nothing. Other measures are being taken to bring about the reinstatement of the old staff. You can take it from me that things are moving, and it won't be so very long before a solution to the problem is found."

Handforth regarded me curiously.

"Have you been up to something?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied. "But I'm not going to tell you anything about it now, Handy. You'll learn all about it in good time. Be a good little boy, and uncle will tell you all about it later on."

We passed over the Triangle to the Ancient House, leaving Handforth



glaring after us, with a glare which was calculated to make us drop in our tracks.

But, somehow, it didn't. We walked on quite serenely.

## CHAPTER II.

### ON THE EVE OF BIG THINGS.

**N**ICODEMUS TROTWOOD put his head into Study C, and looked round.

"Hallo, you chaps!" he remarked agreeably.

Watson and Tregillis-West and I were sitting over by the fireplace, chatting together, and we looked round as we heard the voice of the intruder.

"Hallo!" I replied. "What's your trouble?"

The elder of the Trotwood twins entered the study, and closed the door.

"No trouble," he replied. "I only came in half an hour ago. You know, I went over to Bannington this afternoon, and I met some of the Grammar School chaps. They asked me in to tea, and I had rather a decent time."

"Very interesting," I remarked. "But just at the moment, Trotty, we're full up with something else. I'm sure you don't mind buzzing off——"

"Rats!" said Trotwood. "I want to know what the game is?"

"The game?"

"Exactly."

"If you'll explain——"

"I think it's up to you to do that," said Trotwood. "Fatty Little has been making some veiled remarks, and hinting that there's been some excitement going on this evening—about the strike, I mean. He wouldn't give me any details, and said he was pledged to silence by you. So I've just come along to find out the lie of the land."

I nodded.

"Oh, so that's the game," I said. "Well, as a matter of fact, there is something afoot—or there has been. Little was a fathead not to tell you."

"But he said he was pledged——"

"That only applied to outsiders," I broke in. "You're one of us, Trotty—one of the chaps who can be trusted.

So you don't know anything about the happenings of the evening?"

"Not a thing," said Nicodemus. "I haven't been in long."

"Well, Fatty will tell you——"

"Fatty's buying up the tuck shop," said Trotwood. "He's doing the best he can to get rid of five bob before Mrs. Hake closes. And I'd rather hear the yarn from you, in any case."

"Good enough!" I said. "Squat down, and we'll explain. Sorry we haven't got an extra chair, but, if the coal-scuttle isn't comfortable enough, you can occupy a corner of the table."

Trotwood selected the coal-scuttle.

"Buzz ahead!" he said briskly.

"The fact is, we've been doing something horridly drastic, dear old boy," said Sir Montie. "I'm feelin' nervous about it—I am, really! The more I think about it, the more shockin' it seems. If we don't all get the sack, we shall be lucky."

"As bad as that?"

"No, of course not," I grinned. "You mustn't take any notice of Montie. He's a peaceful old stick, and anything out of the common rather startles him. You know the position, Trotwood, so there's no need to go into that. You know that Sir Roger has refused to have anything to do with the strikers, and that the new servants are getting double the wages of the old."

"Yes; I know all that," said Trotwood. "And we're pretty well helpless in the matter, because if any servant complains of interference, the whole school stands a chance of being gated."

"We've taken steps to bring matters to a head," I explained. "Sir Roger, as you probably know, decided to leave the school this evening."

"I didn't know it," said Trotwood.

"Well, you know it now," I went on. "He probably thought that things were getting too hot, and the best thing he could do was to clear out. That was probably the idea. Well, he went down to the village, in order to catch the last train."

"Oh, I see!"

"But he didn't get to the station," said Watson.

"Something delayed him?"

"Yes—he was captured and imprisoned."

"What!" said Trotwood. "Sir Roger Stone captured!"



"Precisely," I smiled.

"Imprisoned?"

"Locked up as tight as a drum," said Watson.

"But who on earth did it?"

"We did."

"You!" shouted Trotwood, in amazement. "You captured Sir Roger, and locked him up! If you're trying to pull my leg——"

"We wouldn't attempt anything so impossible, my son!" I interrupted. "You asked us to explain, and we're doing it. Sir Roger Stone was waylaid on his way to the station by six mysterious, cloaked figures. He was taken from Bellton Wood, and placed in a secure prison. And Sir Roger Stone is there at the present moment. Nobody will worry about him here, because it is believed that he went away by the last train. He can't communicate with the outside world, so we're as safe as houses."

Trotwood looked at us in a rather startled manner.

"But—but I can't believe it!" he ejaculated. "My dear Nipper, this is altogether extraordinary! You don't seem to realise what a terrible thing you've done! Sir Roger Stone, the chairman of the Governors, captured and imprisoned by members of the Remove!"

"Exactly."

"But—but if the truth comes out, you'll be flogged and sacked, and goodness knows what else!" exclaimed Nicodemus in alarm. "It's not like collaring a senior, or any of the other chaps. Sir Roger! Captured! Great Scott!"

"Bowls you over a bit, eh?" I chuckled. "Well, it bowled the other fellows over when I first mooted the subject. But after I'd explained they were as eager as anybody to enter into the game. It's going to solve the problem, in my opinion."

"But how?" asked Trotwood. "I don't see how?"

"I'll just explain," I went on. "We three here, and Pitt, De Valerie and Singleton dressed ourselves in long black cloaks and cowls. We borrowed the get-up from the dramatic club props, and it was utterly impossible to recognise any of us. We stationed ourselves in the lane, and when Sir Roger came down we simply surrounded him and made him a prisoner. He couldn't recognise any of us."

"But he might have spotted your voices," said Trotwood keenly.

"That's impossible—we didn't speak a word," I explained. "He called us all sorts of things, and threatened all sorts of other things, but he couldn't get a sound out of us—not even a breath. We took him to Willard's Island, and then down into the small cellar of the island building—that place they call Willard's Folly. Sir Roger was left in the cellar, bolted in, and if he gets out of it without assistance he'll be a worker of miracles."

"But what's the idea?" asked Trotwood curiously.

"That ought to be pretty obvious," I said. "The idea, my son, is simplicity itself. After a night alone in that cellar Sir Roger will have cooled down, and when he has a return visit of the six cloaked figures he'll be ready to come to terms. You see, we're going to him in the morning, and we shall put a proposal to him. The price of his liberty will be his signature."

"His which?"

"He'll have to sign a document instructing the Head to dismiss every servant at once, and to reinstate every member of the old staff," I said grimly. "The document will also stipulate that the old staff is to receive the same wages as the new staff—that is to say, a hundred per cent. more than they were originally getting. The strikers only asked for fifty per cent., but, if Sir Roger can give the new crowd double, he can do the same to the old crowd, which has served St. Frank's loyally for years. In my opinion, the obstinate old buffer will be only too willing to sign."

"And supposing he doesn't?"

"In that case, he'll be left in the cellar for a further period," I replied. "In short, he'll be kept a prisoner until he agrees."

"Phew!" whistled Trotwood. "It's a pretty daring scheme. You've got a terrific nerve, Nipper, to take a bold step like that. And there's no guarantee that you won't be sacked when the truth comes out."

I chuckled.

"The truth won't come out," I said. "Sir Roger will never be able to say definitely who the cloaked figures were. He may guess, but he won't be able to be certain. And if, by chance, he does find out, we shall stipulate before releasing



him that nobody will be punished."

Nicodemus nodded slowly.

"It sounds all right," he said rather doubtfully. "But the question is, will it work out all right? Sir Roger will be in a shocking temper to-morrow, after spending all night in a cold, bare cellar."

"Begad! That's rather amusin'," smiled Sir Montie. "Cold—bare! Yes, it is certainly amusin'!"

Trotwood didn't understand.

"You see, we had some consideration," I explained. "Before we put Sir Roger into solitary confinement, we prepared his prison. We put a carpet down, draped the walls, took a camp bedstead into the cellar, rigged up a table and an easy chair, and heated the place with a little oil-stove. There's grub there, and water, and everything he needs. He'll spend quite a comfortable night. And if he isn't in a good mood to-morrow I shall be surprised. All he needs is time to calm down."

"I hope he does calm down, that's all," said Trotwood. "There's such a thing as overdoing it, remember. He might calm down, and then get wild again, through being impatient. If I were you, I'd go to him jolly early in the morning, so as to be on the safe side."

"We shall certainly do that," I replied. "You see, there's nothing like cheek, and when Sir Roger finds that he is absolutely helpless, he'll be only too willing to throw up the sponge. And, what's more, I believe he'll be cheerful afterwards."

"Cheerful?"

"Yes; if I am any judge of character, he'll see the point of the joke, and will see that it was against himself," I explained. "Once he's fairly beaten he won't make a fuss. When we've overcome his obstinacy, he'll be all right—especially when he learns that he's brought some pretty shady characters into the school with the new crowd. It'll open his eyes a bit, I believe."

"Shady characters?" repeated Trotwood. "I haven't seen any shady characters. One or two of the servants are pretty common, I know. I heard two of the gardeners swearing like troopers this morning, and they can drink like fishes, I believe. If that's what you call shady——"

"No; I mean worse than that," I put in. "I mean criminals—people who've got into the school under false pretences, with the fixed idea of getting hold of everything they can, and then doing a scoot with their booty."

"Dash it all, I can't quite believe that!" said Trotwood. "Criminals, eh? I haven't seen any sign——"

"That's because you don't know," I said. "You can take it from me that there's more than one crook in the school—and he'll soon get exposed. However, there's no need for us to discuss that now."

"But I want to know——"

"Then I'm afraid you'll be disappointed," I said. "I can't go into any details, Trotty. I trust you all right, but the least said the better. You'll know all about it to-morrow, for certain."

Trotwood didn't quite like it, but I said no more. I did not explain that there were two men under suspicion—Jelton, the Head's butler, and White, the porter of the College House.

Nelson Lee knew—and I knew—that these two men were professional crooks, and that their positions on the staff at St. Frank's were only a blind. They were simply waiting for their opportunity to present itself.

As a matter of fact, this opportunity had already come.

I was not aware of that at the time, and I was quite full up with my own plans. I had decided that the only possible way of putting an end to an impossible situation was to force Sir Roger's hand. Since he was too obstinate to take action on his own account, he was to be forced into it.

Only a comparatively few members of the Remove knew about the scheme. It would have been too risky to tell all the juniors—for fellows like Fullwood and Co. or Teddy Long would have derived extreme pleasure from informing.

When we went up to the Remove dormitory that night we were feeling quite content. We had an idea that our troubles would soon be over, and that life at St. Frank's would be running along as smoothly as of old.

But, although we were confident, we were quite unaware of the fact that something was destined to occur very shortly which would alter things considerably.



The truth was, we had made our own plans, but had made no provision for the plans of others.

And the result was to be rather interesting.

---

### CHAPTER III.

#### ROGUES IN COUNCIL.

**S**T. FRANK'S was very quiet.

The time was not far off midnight, and all the boys, juniors and seniors, had been in bed for some time.

Outside, the night was still, and quite mild. Clouds obscured the sky somewhat, but this only helped to deepen the gloom. The whole of St. Frank's appeared to be asleep, and everything was peaceful.

But one man, at least, was not in bed. Jelton, Dr. Stafford's new butler, slipped quietly out of the private doorway of the Ancient House and paused for a moment, breathing in the night air. Strictly speaking, Jelton ought to have been asleep by that time—but, if his plans went well, he would get no sleep that night.

"Good!" he murmured softly. "Things couldn't be better."

He moved noiselessly forward, skirting the Ancient House building, and walked across the Triangle to the rear part of the College House. And here, in the deeper gloom beneath a large elderberry, stood a silent figure.

"That you, old man?" whispered the figure.

"Of course it's me," said Jelton. "Who else did you expect it would be, Jim? We couldn't have a finer night for our purpose!"

"I'm not so sure about that," said White. "We could have done with a bit more wind. A wind causes noises, and a fellow needn't be so confoundedly careful."

"There's that, of course," agreed Jelton. "But we can't grumble. Don't forget that we've got to go down to the river afterwards—and it'll be all the better if the water is dead calm."

The two men slipped round the Triangle in complete silence until they reached the ruins of the old monastery.

Here they paused, and picked their way through the masses of ancient masonry until they came to an opening. Through this they passed, into complete darkness, and were soon descending some crumbling stone steps.

They were circular, and led straight down into the solid ground.

As a matter of fact, the pair were going down into the old vault beneath the ruins—a spot well known to the juniors. There was hardly a fellow at St. Frank's who had not explored the vault and the old tunnels at one time or the other.

Visitors to the school were taken down there sometimes. The tunnels extended in various directions, and in one part they joined up with passages and galleries of an old, disused quarry. In fact, very few people knew the real extent of the tunnels and caverns.

A year or two before a large criminal gang had made their headquarters in those old, disused tunnels, and Nelson Lee had spent two or three weeks of intense activity, routing out the gang, and exposing them.

Jelton and White were very small fry, of course, but they were criminals, nevertheless, and as such were not allowed to go free. Nelson Lee was not quite so ignorant of their movements, perhaps, as it would appear.

Reaching the old vault, the two men lit a candle, and a few moments afterwards were puffing away at cigarettes.

"It's safe enough down here," said Jelton. "Nobody ever comes near this place at night. Once we've pulled this job off, Jim, we'll be off back to London and we shall be able to live like lords for many a day."

"That's if we get the loot," said White cautiously.

"There's not much doubt about that," replied Jelton. "I don't think I shall bother about the Head's safe until later on—not for another hour, at least. We don't want to be in too much of a hurry. It's far better to let everybody get to sleep. In the meantime, we can make certain that everything's ready for our get-away."

White nodded.

"It's just as well," he said. "We've planned everything to the last detail, but there's nothing like being sure. The idea of getting away down the river in a motor-boat is the best thing we could



have struck. We can't leave any tracks for the detectives to get hold of, and I shall be clear away before there's any chase."

"Exactly," said Jelton, leaning against the wall. "When we came down here the most we expected to lift was the school plate, and perhaps one or two valuable articles—the whole lot totalling up to about seven hundred quid. But, by the look of it, we shall be bidding St. Frank's good-bye with ten thousand in our pockets."

The other man looked doubtful.

"I can't quite believe that," he said. "For one thing, it's too good to be true—"

"I told you all about it in the evening—"

"I know you did," said White. "And the more I think of it, the more I believe you must have been mistaken."

"Don't be a fool," snapped Jelton. "Do you think I haven't got ears? Man alive, I know when I'm on a real thing. And this is a real thing, Jim—the absolute goods. All you've got to do is to rely on me."

"I shall do that, of course," said Jim. "At the same time, I can't help being a bit doubtful. It doesn't seem quite reasonable that a schoolmaster should keep ten thousand pounds' worth of unset diamonds and rubies in his study safe."

Jelton smiled.

"Of course, it's not reasonable—I agree with that," he said. "But you seem to have forgotten what I've told you. That stuff doesn't belong to the Head. It was placed in his care by a friend, who hasn't got a safe of his own. So he asked Stafford to look after it. That's quite an ordinary thing. I heard the Head and Crowell talking about it, and I didn't miss a single word. The stuff will be gone by to-morrow, so if we don't move to-night, we shall miss the chance altogether. This parcel of sparklers is one of the finest hauls we could make. All the gems are unset, and I know where we can dispose of them without risk for almost their full value. We should be a pair of fools to neglect a chance like this."

White nodded.

"Yes, we must do something," he agreed. "We've never had a really good scoop, Jelton. If we only get away with this little lot, we shall be able

to rest on our oars for months, and take things easy."

"That's exactly my idea," said Jelton. "Everything has happened just right for the coup. Sir Roger went away this evening, and the Head's got a bit of a cold. He's bound to stick tight to his own room, and there's not another soul within hearing distance of the study. The biggest job will be getting the safe open."

"I suppose it's impossible to get hold of a key?"

"Well, it's not impossible, but I don't think we'd better try a dodge like that," said Jelton. "We might run our heads into a noose. There are only two keys. The Head's got one, and old Stone keeps the other. Sir Roger's gone, so we can count him out. And the Head keeps his keys on him. The only thing we can do will be to force the safe—and that ought to be a pretty easy job."

"You've seen the iron cupboard, haven't you?"

"Yes—and that's just about what it is," said the false butler. "It's one of those safes which look very impressive. It's green, with nice brass fittings, and it weighs a tremendous lot. But it's only a common thing, after all, and what I don't know about opening safes isn't worth learning. I'll guarantee I'll have the door open within an hour—and without making a sound, too."

"Good man," said White. "I think it would be a good idea to settle our plans now—and then there won't be any hitch at the last moment. We might have to run for it, and if we both know the programme we can't go wrong."

Jelton tossed his cigarette end away.

"It's a good idea," he agreed. "Well, in case we have to bolt, we'll both make for this vault. Then we'll slip along the tunnel, until we come out on the island. It's a very handy method of getting away."

The two men had explored the place at their leisure, in order to have things all ready for the selected night. They had found that one tunnel branched out from the main passage, and led to a stone stairway which, in turn, led up on to Willard's Island. The end of the tunnel came out in the passage of the cellars under Willard's Folly.

The two crooks had made this discovery quite by accident, and had taken full advantage of it. They had procured



a tiny motorboat, and this was already concealed among the trees at the upper end of the island.

"Once we get into the open," continued Jelton, "all we have to do is to push the boat into the river, start the motor, and away we'll slip. We shall get down to the sea in about an hour, and after that we can do almost as we please. I tell you, luck is absolutely with us, and I don't see how we can go wrong."

"Yes, we certainly struck it good this time," observed White. "Everything's quiet, and I don't see why we shouldn't start on the job at once."

"Better wait a bit," said Jelton. "Many a good scheme has been ruined by being too impatient. We've got the whole night before us, and we might as well wait a bit longer."

"Just as you like," said the other. "Supposing we go along the tunnel, and make sure that everything is clear? We might as well get the boat ready, too, and have the engine all ready for starting up."

The butler nodded.

"That's exactly what I was about to suggest," he said. "It won't take us long to make all preparations, and then we shall feel more satisfied in mind. There's nothing so bad as being unsettled when you're on a job like this. If we have to bolt for it—which is extremely improbable—we shall know the best way."

The light was extinguished, and Jelton produced a small electric torch. Leading the way, he left the vault, and proceeded along a wide, lofty tunnel. It was perfectly dry, and the air was healthy.

After proceeding along this for some distance the men came to a narrow slit of an opening in the rock wall—a slit which appeared to be a mere crevice, but which, upon investigation, proved to be the opening of another tunnel.

But this tunnel was very narrow, very uneven, and the roof was exceedingly low. Swift progress was impossible.

"It's just as well we decided to come along," remarked White. "The more familiar we are with this confounded place, the better. Thank goodness it's not very long. That's one comfort."

They proceeded for some distance, and the tunnel dipped down sharply, growing even more restricted. At the bottom of the little hill the rock walls were

dripping with moisture, and the floor of the tunnel was sodden and muddy. Jelton cursed as some drips of water went down his neck.

"I reckon we're right under the river now," he said. "A pretty fine fix we should be in if this roof buckled up. Rats drowned in a trap wouldn't be in it, Jim! But I expect we're pretty safe."

"Of course we are," said the other. "This tunnel's been here for donkey's years, and it's stood the test of time. I believe there's another tunnel, something after the same style, in another direction. It leads to the smaller island—but that's all flooded, I think."

"We're concerned with this one," said Jelton. "Good! We've got to the end of it by now."

The tunnel rose steeply, and was quite dry underfoot. And, after taking a sharp turn, the two men found themselves in a narrow, stone passage. They were in the cellars of the curious old building of Willard's Island.

It was only necessary to mount the steps, and they would find themselves in the open air, with the motor-boat close at hand.

But before they emerged they made a discovery which amazed them considerably. Passing along the passage, Jelton came to an abrupt halt, and at the same second he switched off his electric torch.

"What's the matter?" asked White, who was close behind.

"Sh-ssh!" hissed Jelton. "Look!"

He stood aside, and White drew level with him. Everything was pitchy darkness after the torch had been extinguished.

But, at the end of the passage, something was visible which caused the two men to stare in absolute amazement. They only saw it after they had been looking for a moment or two—at least, this applied to White.

There, low in the passage, a slip of pale, yellow light was visible!

This was extraordinary.

Who could possibly be occupying one of the old cellars of this disused building? The light was caused by something, at all events, and the two men crept forward, filled with curiosity and slight alarm.

"What the thunder is it?" whispered White.

"There's a light in that little cellar,"



explained Jelton. "That's the slit under the door. But I always thought this place was deserted. It seems to me that we've hit upon the wrong place, Jim. And it's lucky we came along here now. We shall be able to find things out."

"Go easy, man—go easy."

They crept right up to the door, and Jelton ventured to switch his torch on again. Then he breathed with relief, but there was amazement in his tone.

The door was securely bolted, top and bottom!

This meant that the occupant of the cellar—supposing there was one—was a prisoner, and that he could not escape. So there was practically no danger for the two crooks.

They regarded the door curiously.

"What do you make of it?" whispered White.

"I can't make anything of it," replied Jelton. "When we came here the last time this cellar was as bare as an empty cupboard. But there's a light inside now, and I shouldn't be surprised if——"

He paused abruptly, for a cough had made itself heard. Then came the sound of a piece of furniture being moved.

Almost immediately afterwards the sound of someone stamping up and down came to the ears of the listening man.

"What on earth can it mean?" muttered White.

He shifted his position, and, by chance, knocked the electric torch out of Jelton's hand. It fell with a clatter, but, fortunately the filament of the lamp did not break.

"You clumsy fool!" hissed Jelton.

"I couldn't help——"

"Who's that—who's that?" demanded a sharp voice from behind the door. "Answer me at once! Who is it, I say?"

Jelton and White gazed at one another almost dumbly.

Then Jelton spoke, and his voice was expressive of wonder.

"Sir Roger Stone!" ejaculated Jelton amazedly.

"You must be mad!" said White. "It can't be Sir Roger! You don't suppose that he is shut up in this cellar, do you? Why, it's impossible—absolutely impossible. You can tell me what you like——"

"Who is out there?" shouted the voice from within. "I demand to know! Do

not dare to keep silent! You infernal scoundrels! I will have the law on you for committing this outrage!"

Jelton nodded.

"It's him, right enough," he whispered. "But I tell you, White, I'm positively staggered about this. Old Stone locked up in a cellar, down here! Somebody must have been having a game with him, that's pretty clear. A practical joke, perhaps—not that it matters much to us. He can't get out, so we're perfectly safe—especially if we keep quiet, and don't let him know anything!"

"We'd better get away, then," said White. "We don't want to stop here."

They retired some distance down the passage, and listened while Sir Roger continued to shout. But at last he stopped, probably believing that the noise had been caused by a rat, or some other animal.

And everything was silent.

## CHAPTER IV.

### AN UNEXPECTED ADVANTAGE.

JELTON was certainly puzzled.

"This has upset our plans a bit, you know," he whispered. "I don't feel quite so secure with this old buffer here!"

"But he's helpless," said White. "He can't do anything, old man! We can ignore him, and go ahead with our plan just the same. What can he do? He's locked up in that cellar——"

"By thunder!" muttered Jelton abruptly.

"Eh? What's wrong?"

"Nothing—nothing at all," whispered the other. "But I've just thought of something. I've remembered something of tremendous importance. Sir Roger here! Good heavens, Jim, luck has played right into our hands!"

"I don't see how!"

"Don't you? What about the safe key?" asked Jelton keenly.

White stared.

"The—the safe key?" he repeated. "You—you mean——"

"I mean that old Stone has got a key on him," exclaimed Jelton; "that's what I mean, Jim! Think what it



means! All we've got to do is to get that key, and we can get into the Head's study, and open the safe within three minutes!"

"Great guns!"

"It means that we can get the job completely over within half an hour," went on the butler. "Don't you see? There'll be no noise, no risk, no delay! It's absolutely great—great!"

"I hadn't thought of that," said White. "Before any alarm can be raised we shall be well away— Wait a minute, though. What about Sir Roger? You've forgotten one thing, Jelton?"

"Have I?"

"Yes. We shall have to show ourselves to the old chap——"

"Well?"

"We shall have to get that key, and he'll recognise us at once," said White. "He'll know who we are, and what we are after——"

"And supposing he does?" asked Jelton pleasantly. "What difference will it make? He'll be bolted in this cellar—a prisoner—and there's no possibility of his getting free. We needn't trouble ourselves about how he got locked up here—he's a prisoner, and that's enough for us."

"Yes, but——"

"Wait a minute," said Jelton. "We shall show ourselves to Stone freely, without caring a jot! Why should we care? In the morning—or sooner—everybody will know that we've burgled the school, and there'll be a hue and cry. But the school people will know long before Sir Roger can be released—so where does the risk come in? We can go into the cellar now, and laugh at the old fool!"

White took a deep breath.

"So we can," he said. "It's fine, Jelton—absolutely fine!"

The two men knew they had no time to waste, and they did not hesitate. This piece of luck had come their way, and they did not hesitate to take advantage of it. Once in possession of the safe key, their task would be as simple as child's play. All doubt would be gone. The affair would be a "cert."

Jelton walked along the passage, halted before the door of the cellar, and produced a revolver.

"Just as well to be on the safe side," he murmured.

He shot back the upper bolt, and then

bent down and shot back the lower. The heavy stone door swung inwards, and a flood of yellow light came out into the passage—also a wave of warm air.

Sir Roger Stone jumped up from an easy chair, and stared at the two men. He was fully dressed, and looked quite himself.

"Jelton!" he shouted. "Good gracious! This is splendid! I will reward you liberally for this service, my man! How did you know I was here? How did you get on my track? This is splendid—splendid!"

Jelton smiled.

"The fact is, we found you quite by accident, Sir Roger," he said blandly. "We happened to come along here, and heard you calling. Rather a lucky thing, too——"

"Lucky!" echoed the baronet. "Luck is not the word, my man! You have been able to release me from a most intolerable position. I intend to have the law on the scoundrels who placed me in this cellar—if I can manage to find out who they are."

"How did you get here, sir?" asked Jelton, who thought it would be just as well to know the facts before informing Sir Roger of the true position. "How did you find yourself in this fix, Sir Roger?"

"Really, Jelton, I am unable to tell you," said the baronet. "I was on my way to the station this evening, in order to catch the last train, when I was attacked by six cloaked and masked figures. They said absolutely nothing, but brought me to this place, and left me locked up. That is all I know."

"You can't tell the identity of the six men, sir?"

"No, I cannot," said Sir Roger. "I know nothing more than I have told you. I am extremely glad that you two men—members of my new staff—have distinguished yourselves so admirably. I will return to St. Frank's for to-night, and in the morning I will ring up the police——"

"Hold on!" interrupted Jelton calmly. "You're not going back to St. Frank's to-night, Sir Roger."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing much," said Jelton, lighting a cigarette. "Shut that door, White, and put your back up against it. Now, Sir Roger, it gives me great pain



to open your eyes, but we're not quite at an understanding."

Sir Roger regarded the man in astonishment.

"Good gracious! What are you trying to imply, Jelton?" he demanded. "I don't wish to be harsh, after you have assisted me so splendidly, but I will have you understand that I want no impertinence——"

"Really?" interrupted Jelton. "Well, you old fool, you won't get everything your own way. Oh, no! I've got the upper hand now!"

"Great heavens!" gasped Sir Roger faintly. "You—you dare to refer to me as an—an old—— Upon my soul! I am staggered!"

"You'll be staggered more before long!" interrupted Jelton. "We found you here, old chap, and we're going to make use of you. Then you'll be locked up again and left in this place until the morning—or until some kind person takes it into his head to release you. But you'd better realise at once that we haven't come here to pay compliments. Our business is urgent."

"Yes, the best thing we can do is to hurry up about it," put in White gruffly. "What's the good of wasting time over this old buffer? Get the key, Jelton, and we'll clear off! There's no time to chuck about."

Sir Roger gazed at the two men with anger and amazement.

"I—I am shocked!" he exclaimed. "Is it possible that you are daring to insult me to my face? If I hear another word of insolence, Jelton, I will dismiss you without a moment's notice——"

"That's all right," said Jelton. "We shall be gone to-morrow, in any case—and we shall probably take a few things with us as remembrance. We've had about enough of this foolishness, and the sooner we understand one another the better."

"Upon my soul!" ejaculated Sir Roger.

"Get the key, and let's clear," said White, from the door.

"Yes, that's the idea," said Jelton. "Now, Sir Roger, are you willing to oblige us, or shall we apply force? All we want is the key of the safe in the Headmaster's study. I know you've got one, and what you've got to do is to hand it over in my charge."

Sir Roger could hardly believe his ears.

"The—the key of the safe?" he exclaimed huskily. "You—you must be mad! Is—is this a joke——"

"Oh, cut that stuff!" snapped Jelton. "Hand over that key, or I may be compelled to use violence. And you'd better realise at once that White and I didn't come to St. Frank's for the benefit of our health. We came for the benefit of our pockets—and by the time we leave, our pockets will be well filled. Now then—that key! Hand it over at once!"

"You—you infernal scoundrel!" shouted Sir Roger, realising the truth at last. "You—you are nothing more than a pair of common burglars——"

"Exactly!"

"You are a pair of thieves——"

"Same thing!"

"You—you intend to rob the school——"

"Well, of course we do," said Jelton patiently. "Have you only just grasped that fact? We're going to put our hands on to everything that's worth taking. And as you've got the key of the safe on you, we want that, too. It will assist us materially in our search for the loot."

Sir Roger's eyes blazed.

"You—you ruffians!" he shouted. "So that is your game! You have imprisoned me here, for the sole purpose of robbing me—and robbing the school! It was you, and confederates of yours, who seized me in the lane, and brought me to this confounded cellar! I realise the truth now——"

"We didn't touch you," said Jelton. "Somebody else made you a prisoner, and we found you quite by accident——"

"Do not lie to me, sir!" roared Sir Roger. "I am not a fool—even if you take me for one! This is a plot—a plot to rob the school! And I believed that you were honest men!"

"You'd better get that belief out of your head," said Jelton smoothly. "We came to St. Frank's for the sole purpose of planning this coup. And we can't stop here all night, talking to you. Are you going to hand that key over, or shall we knock you down, and take it by force?"

"I have no intention of giving you the key," snapped Sir Roger. "I am absolutely staggered by this occurrence—that you, two trusted servants of the school, should turn upon me in this way——"

"Trusted servants—rubbish!" snapped



Jelton. "If you want those kind of people—servants you can trust—you'd better take back the old staff. They're tame enough, anyway. But you won't find the new crowd quite so honest, I can give you my word!"

"Good gracious!"

"I could give you the names of a good few servants who have been pilfering ever since they arrived," went on Jelton. "As servants, they're a rotten lot, and no decent school would allow them to disgrace its doors. White and I don't profess to be good servants—not at all; but I'll guarantee that you'll remember us for many a long day! Now then, old man, I'm waiting for that key."

Sir Roger's eyes were certainly opened.

"You—you unmitigated rogue!" he exclaimed hoarsely. "You unprincipled scoundrel! If you think that I shall surrender the key, you are mistaken. I am beginning to realise the truth at last. I am beginning to see that it is better to retain a faithful staff than to throw them aside and engage a worthless parcel of thieves and rotters."

"Exactly!" grinned Jelton. "You've got a grain of sense, after all."

Sir Roger nearly choked. He certainly was beginning to see that he had been very foolish. The old St. Frank's staff, although discontented, were, nevertheless, hard-working, trustworthy people. The new servants were really far from satisfactory—the Head himself stated that much—and some of them, it appeared, were nothing more nor less than professional thieves.

And Sir Roger was also beginning to realise that the old staff had been almost justified in going on strike. Their wages, certainly, had been inadequate, and a fifty per cent. increase was only reasonable. Sir Roger's obstinacy was conquered, and he heartily wished that he had seen the affair in its correct perspective a day or two earlier.

"Hurry up with that key!" said Jelton sharply.

"I have no intention of giving you the key!" snapped Sir Roger. "Good heavens! Do you think that I will allow myself to become an accomplice in this villainy? No! I will see you hanged first!"

White swore.

"I've had about enough of this!" he snapped. "Why the thunder can't you

deal with the old fool, Jelton? He's as obstinate as a blamed mule! If he doesn't give that key up within two seconds, I should plug him with that shooter!"

Jelton nodded.

"That is exactly what I intend doing," he said grimly.

He produced his revolver, and Sir Roger gazed at it with horror and amazement—but not with fear. He had not suspected that these two men were such desperate characters.

"Are you mad?" he panted. "Do—you intend to murder me?"

"Not if you give that key up at once."

"But—but——"

"I'll give you ten seconds," said Jelton, levelling the revolver.

He had, of course, no intention of firing. But Sir Roger was not to know this, and, after all, the baronet was only human. He saw no reason why he should risk his life for the sake of a few odd pounds in the Headmaster's safe. Sir Roger apparently knew nothing of the parcel of gems.

"Here—here is the key!" he panted hastily.

He pulled a bunch from his pocket, detached one certain key, and threw it on the floor. Jelton picked it up at once, and smiled.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "I thought you'd be reasonable when it came to a pinch. We will now bid you good-night, Sir Roger. I hope you have pleasant dreams, and do not forget to have a warm spot in your heart for us. I shall remember this interview for many a day—and perhaps you will, too."

Sir Roger tried to speak, but articulation was difficult. He was so furious that he hardly knew what he was doing. And the two intruders left the cellar without another word, securely bolting the door once more.

Sir Roger paced up and down with intense agitation.

"Those men were right—perfectly right!" he muttered fiercely. "They called me an old fool—and I am an old fool! I was a pig-headed dolt, not to take the old staff back. Thank Heaven, it's not too late even now!"

It was one good sign, at all events. Sir Roger's present position brought him to reason; but it seemed that he had come round too late to prevent a serious



burglary. These professional thieves—for they were obviously nothing else—would have everything their own way.

And Sir Roger, imprisoned in that cellar, would be unable to do a thing to get into communication with the outside world. He assumed that Jelton and White had imprisoned him in the first place—and this assumption was, after all, quite a natural one.

And while Sir Roger fumed and fretted in the cellar, the precious pair of crooks hastened away down the tunnel. They were exultant, for they could see that everything was going smoothly, and that they were to have everything their own way. Perhaps they were right—and perhaps they were wrong.

In any case, they were intent upon commencing operations at once.

---

## CHAPTER V.

AFTER MIDNIGHT.

**B**OOM!

The school clock gave one solemn stroke, and I knew by the chimes which had preceded it that the hour was one o'clock.

Strictly speaking, I ought not to have heard the clock striking at all. It was really my place to be fast asleep; but somehow I couldn't get to sleep that night, however much I tried.

I had dozed off once or twice, but not for any big length of time, and when I awoke it was always with the same thought in mind.

I was worrying about Sir Roger Stone. Had we treated him quite fairly? That was the thought which kept me awake. I couldn't help wondering if we had been rather too drastic, and, somehow, this question concerned me a lot.

Sir Roger was the chairman of the Governors, and a big man—in more senses than one. But was it right to treat him as we had treated him?

Certainly, he had every comfort in the cellar, and he would be able to pass quite an easy night. At the same time, I was just a little bit conscience-stricken, and I felt that something ought to be done.

Would it be possible to achieve our object without leaving our prisoner in

the cellar throughout the night? I had a kind of notion that the baronet would be willing to succumb at once, if we approached him. Perhaps he would rather give in than have this affair become public knowledge.

There was another point, too.

It struck me that it might be better—certainly more effective—to approach Sir Roger in the dead of night. With our cloaked figures, and solemn attitude, we could make the baronet fairly quake; and the success of our venture would be more assured. In any case, I decided to awaken my chums, and seek their advice.

So I quietly slipped out of bed, and shook the noble shoulders of Sir Montie Tregellis-West. He grunted, gasped, opened his eyes, blinked, and then half sat up. He stared at me in the gloom of the dormitory.

"Begad! Who—who are you?" he asked sleepily.

"It's me, my son," I replied softly.

"Dear old boy, what's the idea?" asked Montie. "I don't know what the time is, but it ain't light yet—"

"You ass, it's only an hour after midnight!" I said. "I've awakened you because I want your advice—"

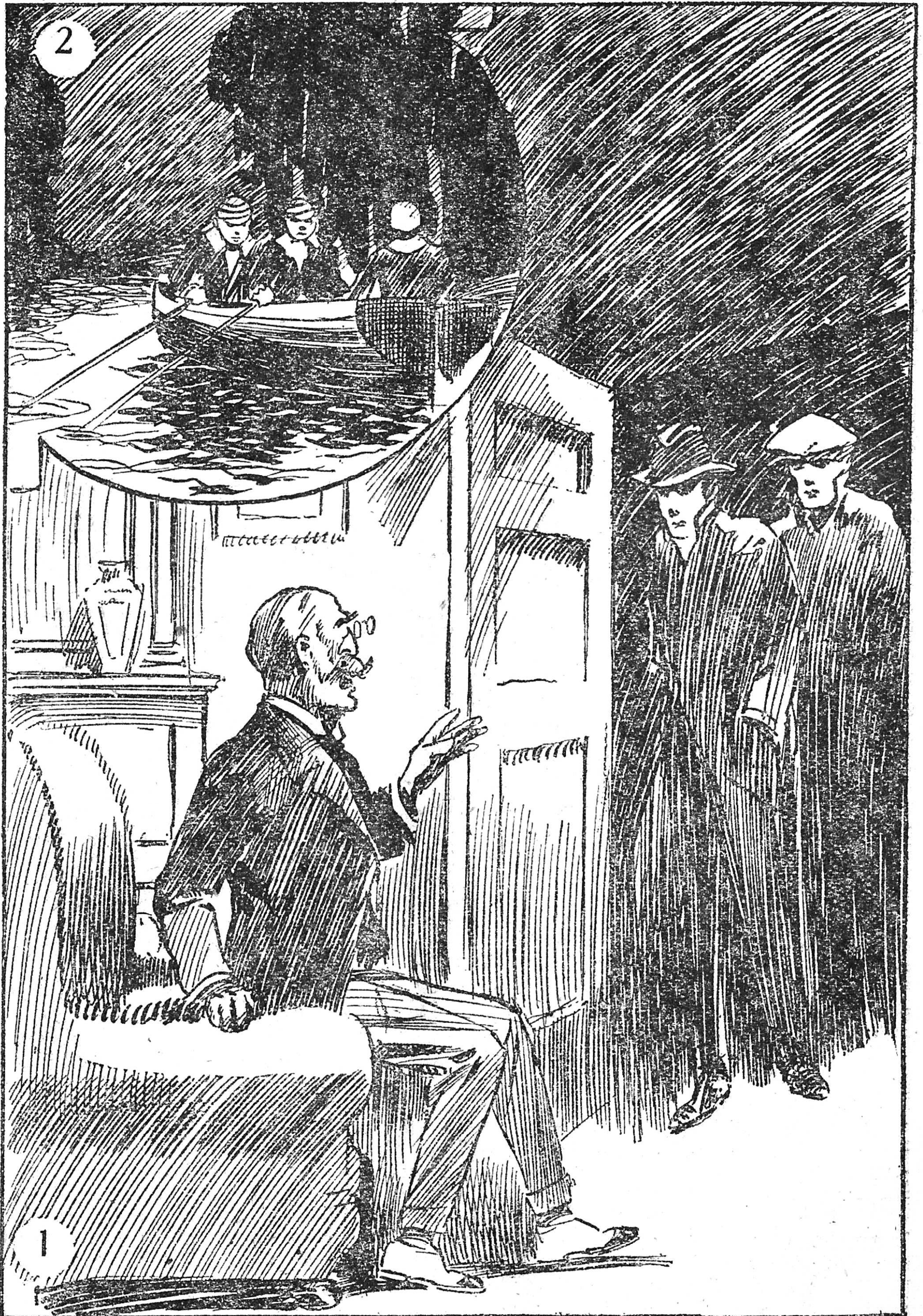
"I'm surprised at you, Nipper—I am, really," said Sir Montie, in reproofing tones. "Wakin' a fellow up for advice at one o'clock in the mornin'! I was dreamin' about cricket, you know. But it was a frightfully interestin' game. We were usin' a football, an' it was simply impossible for the batsman to miss it. And the wickets were as big as goalposts, begad!"

"I don't want to hear about your unearthly nightmares," I said. "The fact is, Montie, you had too much supper—"

"Nothin' of the sort!" declared Montie. "An' I do not suffer from indigestion. This cricket match was just gettin' entertainin', an' I'm frightfully cross with you for wakin' me up. De Valerie was battin', you know, an' every time he sloshed the ball it whizzed into the air, and by the time it came down it was only a golf ball! Then, somehow, it got back into a football before the bowler grabbed hold of it. A most extraordinary dream, Nipper."

"I can quite believe it," I grinned. "Well, we're dealing with realities now, not dreams. I've been thinking about Sir Roger Stone."





1. Sir Roger jumped up from an easy chair as Jelton and White flung open the door.

2. A moment later we were pushing out towards the island.



"Begad! I suppose he's asleep by this time," said Montie. "Surely he wouldn't keep up all night, dear fellow."

"I don't suppose he's got into bed, anyhow," I said. "And, somehow, I don't quite like the idea of leaving him in that cellar all night. He might not be willing to excuse such treatment. And I think it would be a pretty good idea for us to slip some things on and pop along to Willard's Island at once."

"Now, dear old boy—at one o'clock in the mornin'?"

"Yes."

"But I don't see the reason for it."

"Well, we don't want to be too hard on the old chap," I said. "He's been alone a good few hours, and it's quite likely that he'll be agreeable to our terms at once. If so, we'll release him, and let him go back to the school. If he won't agree, then we can leave him until the morning. But I think he'll be far more impressed if we appear before him in the dead of night."

"There's somethin' in that, of course," agreed Sir Montie. "Perhaps you are right, dear fellow—you generally are, anyhow. And I'm perfectly willin' to follow your lead. Anythin' you like, old boy!"

"Good!" I exclaimed. "Get dressed as soon as you like."

He obeyed without question, and I gave my attention to Tommy Watson. He was not quite such a willing follower, and I had a considerable amount of trouble in getting him sufficiently awake to know what was required. But at last I succeeded.

"It's a dotty idea, anyhow," grumbled Watson, as he turned out. "Sir Roger will be fast asleep, and we shall only find him in a terrific temper. The best thing we can do is to stop indoors."

"Rats!" I said. "Don't grumble so much, and come along."

"But I don't agree with it—remember that!" said Watson. "If the whole thing comes to a fizzle, don't blame me!"

I chuckled.

"My dear chap, I shouldn't think of blaming you," I said. "But it won't come to a fizzle. The probability is that we shall meet with success at the first go. Buck up, and get into your things!"

We were soon dressed sufficiently for the journey. It was not necessary to don collars, for we should not let our-

selves be seen. The cloaks and masks would conceal us completely.

Just as the clock was chiming a quarter past one, we slipped out of the Remove dormitory, and made our way downstairs. The school was quiet and still, and everything was black.

We made our exit from the Ancient House by the usual method—that is to say, by the window of Study C. Then we crept round the building until we reached the corner, and then dodged across the Triangle to the playing-fields.

"Good!" I exclaimed. "Nobody spotted us."

"Who was likely to spot us, you ass?" asked Watson. "You don't suppose that all the masters are dodging about between one and two? Why, we could have walked across the Triangle as boldly as anything, if we liked."

"But it's just as well to be cautious," I said. "And remember, not a word when we get into Sir Roger's cellar."

"Begad! But how can we put our terms to him if we don't breathe a word?" asked Sir Montie, with mild astonishment.

"I meant not a word from you chaps," I explained. "I'll do all the talking. I can disguise my voice easily, and Sir Roger will never recognise it. Listen to this! Now, Sir Roger, you must agree to our terms, or take the consequences."

I uttered the last few words in a deep, strange voice.

"Terrific!" grinned Watson. "How on earth you get it amazes me. I couldn't disguise my voice like that."

I grinned, and we proceeded on our way.

We took the towing-path, once we had got to the river, and before long we came to a halt opposite Willard's Island. A boat was just handy, concealed beneath an overhanging willow tree.

We stepped into it, and a moment later were pushing out towards the island. We soon arrived, and very shortly we were standing in the deeper gloom of Willard's Folly, the curious, castle-like building which had been erected on the island. Here, with only a few whispered words, we changed our appearance. It was only necessary to don the long cloaks and hoods, and we were no longer recognisable as juniors of St. Frank's. One precaution we took



was to wear specially prepared shoes with extra high heels, thus giving us additional height.

"Ready?" I whispered, at length.

"Waitin', dear old boy!"

"You ass! You mustn't talk like that——"

"Begad! I'm frightfully sorry!" murmured Sir Montie. "Lead on, comrade. We are ready to follow!"

"That's better," I grinned. "And don't forget—not a word from you chaps."

"Keep your hair on!" muttered Watson. "We're only too willing to let you do the chin-wagging."

I led the way through the open doorway into the stone building. After passing through a bare, cold apartment, we turned down a passage, and then opened a stone door, which admitted us on to a stairway, leading downwards.

I switched on my electric torch now, and we passed down the steps, and found ourselves in the passage-way of the cellars. We knew, of course, which cellar Sir Roger occupied, and we made straight for it.

A gleam of light was showing from beneath the door, and we paused just outside, and stood quite still.

Sir Roger Stone was certainly awake.

"The scoundrels—the unmitigated rogues!" he was muttering, in a voice which fairly shook with anger. "Good gracious, to think of it! And I am bottled up here, unable to lift a finger. The position is appalling!"

I felt somebody nudge me.

"We'd better buzz off," breathed Tommy Watson. "He's in a shocking temper, and he'll never agree."

"Didn't I tell you not to talk, you fathead?" I whispered. "We haven't come down here for nothing, and we're going in. If Sir Roger isn't open to reason now, I shall have no further consideration for him."

I flashed my light upon the bolts, and shot them back noisily. Then I thrust the door open, and we all three marched solemnly into the cellar.

Our prisoner was standing quite close, and he glared at us, with a fierce expression on his face. He had made no attempt to alter his attire, and was dressed just the same as when we had left him, hours earlier.

"Well, Sir Roger," I said, in my deep voice. "I trust you are now in a more reasonable frame of mind. We have

come to you in order to give you a chance——"

"You—you infernal ruffians!" shouted Sir Roger angrily. "How you have the audacity to come back is past my comprehension. You cannot have robbed the school yet, for you have not been away a sufficient length of time. But I can assure you that I will not be intimidated further."

Sir Roger's words puzzled us, for, of course, at that time we knew nothing of the movements of Jelton and White.

"You are mistaken, Sir Roger," I said grimly. "It is not our intention to rob the school——"

"Bah! Do you expect me to believe this nonsense?" shouted Sir Roger. "I know well enough that you are Jelton, in spite of your assumed voice. But why you have come back, clothed in this fashion, is more than I can imagine. If you hope to obtain anything further from me, you will be disappointed. I surrendered the key of the safe, but I will surrender nothing else!"

I regarded the prisoner very curiously.

"You think that I am Jelton?" I asked gruffly.

"I am not a fool!" snapped Sir Roger. "It is obvious that you are Jelton, and I shall see that you are arrested for this outrage in due course. Possibly you have come here to taunt me, to gloat over your success!"

There certainly was something wrong. Sir Montie and Tommy were aware of it, too, for they glanced at me through their eyeholes in a mystified fashion.

Why did Sir Roger mistake me for Jelton? I knew well enough that the Head's butler was a crook—Nelson Lee had informed me of that fact. And, before proceeding with my original purpose, I determined to adopt another course.

"Well?" I said. "Supposing I am Jelton? What of it? You're speaking as though I had been here before."

I noticed that Watson gave Montie a rather startled look. Perhaps it was on account of my altered tone. I was doing my best to imitate Jelton's voice, and it seemed that I was fairly successful with the experiment. Sir Roger himself was equally deceived. He gave a fierce snort.

"I may as well tell you at once that I will have no further conversation with you!" he snapped. "Scarcely more than half an hour ago you came here"



with one of your companions, insulted me, threatened me with a revolver, and forced me to surrender my key of the Headmaster's safe. And now you have the audacity to affect ignorance of the affair. Upon my soul, your nerve is startling!"

"I thought perhaps you might have forgotten," I exclaimed, still talking in Jelton's tone. "As a matter of fact, I'm not quite satisfied with our former chat, and I want to ask you a few questions."

"You may save yourself the trouble!" rapped out Sir Roger. "I will have no dealings with you, you rogue!"

"That's not quite reasonable," I said smoothly. "All you've got to do is to answer me, and——"

"I repeat that I will not answer!" exclaimed Sir Roger angrily. "And to-morrow, let me tell you, when I am freed from this prison, I will see that the police are put on your track. And, what is more, I will clear the school completely of these new servants. They are worthless—they are not to be trusted! The old staff shall be reinstated—every man, every woman, and every boy! They will be reinstated with more than their demands granted!"

"Begad!" murmured Sir Montie involuntarily.

It was certainly a surprise for us. Without the slightest doubt, Sir Roger's mind was changed. He had realised, at last, that the old servants were the most reliable and trustworthy. The new staff had not acquitted itself well.

"I'm glad to hear you say that, Sir Roger!" I exclaimed. "But what's that you were saying about getting the key of the safe? I didn't quite catch on. I haven't got the key of the safe, and I never did have it——"

"How dare you lie to me?" shouted Sir Roger. "And remove that ridiculous dress of yours! You wore it when you first captured me, and now you wear it again, after I know your identity! You must be insane!"

"No; I'm not insane, sir," I said quietly. "The fact is, I've a good mind to tell you the truth. I think it will be the best way out of the difficulty. And if we act now, without any further misunderstanding, there will be a chance to get hold of Jelton."

I was now speaking in my natural voice, and Sir Roger was clearly puzzled.

Watson and Tregellis-West regarded me with astonishment and blank dismay.

"What is this nonsense?" demanded the prisoner. "As I told you before, I do not intend to discuss anything with you— Good heavens! What—what is the meaning of this?"

He uttered the words in absolute amazement, for I had suddenly thrown off my hood and cloak, and stood revealed in my true colours.

Sir Roger looked at me as though I were a ghost, and for a moment or two could say nothing. I turned to my chums.

"You might as well get those things off," I said calmly. "The game's up now, anyhow."

"Oh, my only hat!" muttered Watson.

"I'm afraid we're undone, dear old boy," murmured Sir Montie.

They pulled off their cloaks and hoods, and Sir Roger regarded all three of us with the same expression of blank amazement.

"Good gracious me!" he exclaimed. "This—this is staggering! You are boys—junior boys of St. Frank's! And you have dared to perpetrate this scoundrelly outrage——"

"If you'll just wait a minute or two, Sir Roger, I'll explain everything," I put in. "We've taken a terrific liberty, and I hope you'll forgive us. We had no intention of unmasking, but, by what I can see, the school is being robbed, and the best thing we can do is to be straightforward."

Sir Roger sat down, and mopped his brow.

"Well, go on—explain!" he exclaimed huskily.

"You see, sir, it's this way," I said. "We knew all along that the old staff was deserving of better treatment, and the new servants did not strike us as being ideal employees. There's hardly a decent worker among the lot, and some of them are doubtful characters. Jelton and White, in fact, are professional crooks, and their only reason in coming to St. Frank's was to rob the school. I didn't think they'd get busy so quickly, but it's just as well to have matters brought to a head at once."

Sir Roger glared.

"You are talking in riddles, boy! I do not understand you."

"You'll understand in a minute or two, sir," I replied. "You see, two sets



of events have occurred at once, and they've clashed—causing these complications. But just a little explanation will clear the air. To begin with, you were captured and put in this cellar by us—that is, by the Remove."

"You—you dare to tell me that it was you who committed this outrage?" demanded Sir Roger.

"Yes, sir, but it wasn't meant to be an outrage——"

"Not meant to be an outrage!" stormed Sir Roger. "You—you impudent young rascals! You dare to tell me that it is not an outrage to imprison me—Sir Roger Stone—in a cellar while the school is being robbed——"

"That's just it, sir," I interrupted, "and if you'll allow me to explain fully, you'll understand. It's because the school is being robbed that I have told you the truth. I've laid myself open to punishment—perhaps expulsion—by taking this course, but I feel that it's up to me to lose no time."

"Well, get on with your talk!" growled the baronet.

"We made you a prisoner, sir, because we found that there was no other method of forcing your hand. We've been in favour of the old staff all along, and it seemed to us that the whole business was most unfair. For the old servants to be dismissed, and a new staff brought down at double the wages——"

"Yes, yes, I know all about it," interrupted Sir Roger. "It is unjust—I will grant you that. I appreciate the point now, although I have been somewhat blind to the truth hitherto. Well, well. What else?"

"It makes it a lot easier for us to explain now that you're in a different frame of mind, sir," I said. "Perhaps you won't be quite so hard on us. But I want you to thoroughly understand that we didn't mean any disrespect to you, and that our very last thought was to cause you a moment's discomfort."

"H'm! Isn't it a discomfort to be locked up?"

"Well, sir, it's galling, perhaps, but I don't think there's any actual discomfort in this case," I declared. "We took tremendous pains to make this cellar cosy before we brought you into it. We carted furniture here, and rugs and cushions, and the oil-stove, just to make sure that you'd be comfortable. You see, sir, according to our original plan

you wouldn't have known our identity. I led the whole thing——"

"But we were all in it, begad," put in Montie quickly.

"I can quite believe you, my lad—I can quite believe you!" said Sir Roger grimly. "Well—go on! Get the rest of it out! Time is precious, but before we leave this cellar I want to know the exact truth."

I nodded.

"That's just what you're getting, sir," I said. "We planned everything, and we got hold of you while you were on your way to the station. We brought you here, and it was our original intention to leave you until the morning."

"Oh, indeed!"

"Yes, sir," I replied. And in the morning we meant to come here and offer you your liberty on condition that you dismissed the new staff, and reinstated the old—granting them the same wages as the new servants. Of course, we had no intention of giving ourselves away. We meant to leave you in the dark regarding our identity."

"I dare say I should have been compelled to surrender," said Sir Roger. "For, to be exact, I have been thinking of packing these new people off for a day or two past. But I should like to know why you disclosed yourself to me?"

"Because you mentioned something about Jelton, sir," I replied. "You seemed to imagine that Jelton was responsible for your capture, and by what you said I gathered that Jelton had been up to something shady—that he is even now robbing the school. So I thought that the best thing to do, under the circumstances, was to unmask—so that we can get to the school and give the alarm. That's all, sir: I hope you won't be very annoyed."

Sir Roger glared at me.

"Upon my soul," he exclaimed harshly. "You hope that I won't be annoyed! Good gracious! Boy, do you realise that you have committed an act which can only be punished by public expulsion from St. Frank's? Do you realise that this offence is absolutely unparalleled in the history of the school?"

"Yes, sir, I realise that," I said quietly. "At first you couldn't have expelled anybody, because you wouldn't have known who we were. But as there was a mix up, and there seems to be a danger of the school being burgled, I

thought it better to get at the truth without any delay."

"And what do you expect me to do—overlook this amazing impudence?"

"No, sir, certainly not," I replied. "I don't expect you to overlook it. But I've formed an opinion of you, sir, and I don't think you will be unjust. Now that you realise the truth about the old staff, you will probably realise, at the same time, that there was some justification for our drastic action. And your conscience won't allow you to punish me very severely."

"Good heavens! The astounding impudence of the boy!" exclaimed Sir Roger. "How dare you speak to me in this fashion, sir? How dare you? Egad! I can't help admiring your amazing nerve, though—I must admit it, although I don't want to. I didn't think any junior boy possessed such cool cheek!"

"But I've no intention whatever of being impudent, sir," I said earnestly. "I've just told you the plain truth, and I'm relying on your sense of justice and fair play to punish me as I deserve. If you've been put to any discomfort, sir, I'm very sorry, indeed. But you do agree with me that the old servants are the best, don't you?"

Sir Roger grunted.

"Of course I do, boy—of course I do!" he replied gruffly. "I ought to have agreed with you at first—and I suppose I am an obstinate old dolt not to have swallowed my dignity over a week ago. However, I have learnt a lesson, and I am not ashamed to say so. No, my boys, I am not ashamed in the slightest degree. I intend to reinstate every member of the old staff, and what is more, their new wages will be precisely double the amount of the old."

"Oh, good, sir!"

"That's rippin', sir—it is, really!"

"Yes, rather!"

"I have seen quite sufficient to convince me that I made a mistake," went on the chairman of the Governors. "Jelton and one of the other servants are a pair of professional criminals, and if they have their own way, they will denude the school of every valuable article. There are other servants, too, who are far from satisfactory. I'll clear the whole job-lot out—every man Jack of them. They'll get a month's wages tomorrow, and they'll be packed off."

"That's good, sir," I said. "And the old staff will come back at once?"

"Yes, at once."

"Well, that's something to be pleased about, anyhow," I exclaimed. "Even if I am sacked, I shall feel that I wasn't sacked for nothing."

"H'm! Yes—yes!" said Sir Roger, lighting a cigar. "As it happens, I have no intention of— But one moment. How many boys are concerned in this—this outrageous escapade?"

"We three, sir, and three others."

"Who are the others—and where are they?"

"They're in bed, sir," I replied. "But I'm afraid I can't tell you who they are. It wouldn't be playing the game to get them into trouble—"

"Against your code of honour, eh?" demanded Sir Roger. "I quite understand. Are these boys trustworthy—will they talk?"

"They won't breathe a word, sir," I replied. "The whole thing was kept secret, and only just a few of us know about it. Practically the whole of the school knows nothing. We meant to do this just on our own."

"Then there's no reason why the truth should leak out?"

"It won't leak out, sir," I replied. "We shouldn't have breathed a word, in any case. It wasn't likely that we'd advertise the fact that you had been locked up for a night in the cellar. As I just told you, sir, it was just a little wheeze of our own, and was to be kept absolutely private."

"And I need not fear the story getting abroad?"

"You can feel quite comfortable on that point, sir," I declared.

"H'm! In that case, I may be disposed to keep it private," said Sir Roger, glaring at me. "I have no wish to figure in the newspapers in a ridiculous light, and it is in my own interests to let this matter rest where it is. I dare say I deserve something of the kind, but we will let that pass. It simply means that you will escape punishment, you young rascals."

"You—you mean that you won't do anything to us, sir?" I asked, in surprise.

"No. I intend to do nothing," said Sir Roger. "If I punish you, you will naturally take a keen delight in letting



the whole neighbourhood know the truth —”

“I give you my word of honour, sir, that the truth will not reach the ears of any outsider—whether we’re punished or not,” I put in quickly. “You can rely on us, sir, to keep the thing secret.”

“Thank you, my boy—thank you,” said Sir Roger. “I must acknowledge that your spirit is good. And I am more than ever convinced that the whole fault was mine, and that you only acted in this way in order to make me see the position in its true perspective. I pride myself upon being a just man, and I can now see that I have been most unjust. I will not make matters worse by punishing you when you deserve commendation. We will forget that you took a grave liberty with me—we will put that point aside.

“It is forgotten from this moment. And now we must confine ourselves to the task of putting things to rights. Jelton and his scoundrelly companion must be captured—and after that, the old staff must be brought back. Now that it is all over, I am rather glad that you have behaved in such an outrageous fashion!”

Sir Roger was still speaking gruffly, and he pretended to be very harsh. But he had turned out trumps, after all. He was not afraid to admit his own mistake, and was open-minded enough to see that a heavy punishment would be unjust.

But even I had not suspected that he would overlook the matter altogether. He was certainly a sportsman, and my estimation of his character had been more than correct. The old gentleman had had the wool pulled from his eyes—and, although he didn’t say so much in plain words, he actually approved of our scheme.

For, indirectly, it was to mean the ruining of Jelton’s plan, and he and his precious companion would not find their task quite so easy as they had imagined.

We had wasted quite sufficient time already, and our best course would be to get to the school at the earliest possible moment. Personally, I was not very uneasy, for I knew that Nelson Lee was at St. Frank’s.

That was quite sufficient to set my mind at rest, for I knew the gov’nor would not allow Jelton and the other man to get away from the school with

much. Perhaps we should arrive to find that everything was over.

But the best thing, in any case, was to hasten to the school.

Sir Roger was soon ready, and he intimated that we should lead the way.

“We can either go by the open air, sir, or we can go along an underground tunnel,” I explained. “The entrance is just near here, and it leads out into the old vault under the monastery ruins at St. Frank’s.”

“I think we had better take the open-air route,” said Sir Roger. “I have had quite sufficient of these subterranean places, my boy—quite sufficient.”

I led the way into the cellar passage. Then, abruptly, I came to a standstill, and stared along the stone tunnel.

For, there, just emerging from the secret doorway, were two figures—and they were the figures of Jelton and White.

It seemed that we should have some excitement, after all.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE CAPTURE.

NELSON LEE was rather amused. At least, he appeared to be, judging by the smile which was apparent at the corners of his mouth. The famous schoolmaster detective was quite alone, and he was seated in the Headmaster’s study.

And there was something decidedly curious about his position.

For Nelson Lee was not seated in one of the easy chairs, or, as a matter of fact, in any chair at all. He was cunningly concealed behind the big lounge which adorned one corner of Dr. Stafford’s sanctum.

Nelson Lee’s seat was on the floor, and his position was by no means comfortable. Yet he seemed to be quite content, and he waited patiently, with that smile of amusement on his lips.

Lee, to tell the truth, was watching—and waiting.

It was long after midnight, and the school was intensely quiet. Practically everybody was in bed and asleep, and Nelson Lee could hear no sound as he waited behind the lounge.

Evidently he expected something to happen.

He was certainly not disappointed, for the stillness was suddenly broken by a slight sound at the door. It was only a tiny creak, but in that dead stillness it was magnified into a positive noise.

Nelson Lee became rigid.

The creak was repeated, and this was followed by soft, padding footfalls. Then the door was closed, and the bright light from an electric torch streamed across the study. It went out, and then came on again, and remained steady.

"It's dead easy, old man," murmured Jelton's voice. "Why, the door wasn't even locked, and we can be outside with the loot in less than five minutes. It's the softest game we ever tackled."

"You bet," said another voice. "But we don't want to waste any time in talking. Don't forget that Lee is on the premises, and I don't feel exactly comfortable."

Jelton laughed.

"Lee!" he sneered. "What is he, anyhow? A boomed-up private 'tec, with no more wits than a country policeman! You needn't consider him in the slightest degree. He's in bed, and sleeping like a log. Those sort of people are never on the spot when they are needed."

Nelson Lee's smile broadened. He was picturing to himself the shock which Jelton would receive before many minutes had elapsed. For that scoundrel was to find, before long, that Nelson Lee was not so far distant, after all.

"There's the safe, over by the inner wall," said White. "It's a good thing we haven't got the trouble of forcing the darned thing."

"You're right, there, Jim," said Jelton. "Hold that light!"

White took the torch, and the two men moved across the room to the safe. Their backs were now towards the lounge, and Nelson Lee knew that he was safe in peeping over the top of the heavy piece of furniture.

He saw Jelton and White standing in front of the safe. It was not such a very large one, and the make was not particularly expensive. But it was a good ordinary safe, and should have been burglar-proof.

But when the burglar is in possession of the key, it is a different matter. Nelson Lee was rather astonished to see

Jelton take a small object from his pocket and insert it into the keyhole, and turn.

A series of soft, thudding clicks followed, and Jelton pulled upon the handle of the safe. The door swung open with perfect ease.

"How's that?" chuckled the crook-butler.

"Dead easy!" grinned the other man.

Nelson Lee watched with real astonishment.

"This, at all events, is unexpected," he told himself. "I certainly did not believe that this precious pair had a key in their possession. It really makes little difference, of course, for I should have acted at once, in any case."

Lee had originally planned to surprise the two men before they could damage the safe. But now that they had the door open, he was rather curious to see what they would do. So he waited.

"I dare say the sparklers are hidden in one of these drawers?" whispered Jelton. "Anyhow, it won't take us long to look—and we shall soon lay our fingers on them. They're here, somewhere, Jim."

Lee waited with twinkling eyes. He saw Jelton opening the drawers within the safe; saw him investigating the different compartments. But the man's search was apparently unsuccessful.

"What's the meaning of this?" exclaimed Jelton harshly. "There doesn't seem to be any package here!"

White grunted.

"I thought you'd made some mistake —"

"Oh, shut that growling!" snapped the other. "I distinctly heard the Head talking about the jewels. They must be here—understand? I've got to look through this other compartment yet."

"That is really quite unnecessary, Jelton," said Nelson Lee smoothly. "I can assure you that you will find no sparklers within that safe."

The two men turned round abruptly, with gasps of dismay and fright. There was every reason for their exclamations, for the big spray of electric lights in the centre of the room had suddenly glowed into brilliance, and the whole study was flooded with illumination.

Nelson Lee had fixed up a special switch near him, in order to spring this little surprise. And as the two men turned round they found themselves



facing not only Nelson Lee, but a very serviceable-looking revolver.

Lee calmly stepped across the lounge, and faced the discomfited pair, who were on the other side of the desk.

"Please don't move," said Nelson Lee smoothly. "I can assure you that it will be to your benefit to remain quite still. There is no need to have any trouble, and you had better realise at once that escape is impossible."

Jelton swore furiously.

"We're trapped!" he snarled.

"Precisely!" agreed Nelson Lee.

"You—you fool!" gasped White, panting hard. "I thought there was something fishy about this business from the start! And you were saying that we needn't be afraid of Lee! He's here—he's been here all the time."

Jelton's hand moved furtively towards a heavy paper-weight.

"Yes, we're beaten," he said sullenly. "The best thing we can do is to chuck up the sponge at once, Jim. I know when I'm done, anyhow."

"I fail to see your point," said Nelson Lee. "Can you really be resigned while you are attempting to gain possession of a weapon? Take my advice, Jelton, and keep your hand away from that paper-weight. You wouldn't look at all nice with a finger missing from your right hand—and it would be most awkward, too."

Jelton's hand jerked back abruptly.

"Hang you!" he grated. "You've got eyes everywhere! I expect the whole thing was a trick from the very start."

Nelson Lee nodded.

"Your powers of perception are quite wonderful," he observed. "Yes, my friend, it was a trick—and I am gratified to find that it has worked so well. You will realise, perhaps, that the little conversation you overheard between the Headmaster and Mr. Crowell was really spoken for your especial benefit. I gauged your character quite correctly, it seems. I was quite certain that you would listen outside the door, Jelton, and my object in suggesting the scheme was to force your hand. I wanted you to get on the job to-night, for I was anxious to obtain the necessary evidence. I am obliged to you for supplying it so admirably."

"You—you infernal brute!" shouted Jelton fiercely. "If you hadn't been here, we should have got away with the loot easily——"

"Quite possibly," agreed Nelson Lee. "You would not have been suspected. But I happened to recognise you when you first arrived, and that put me on the alert. It is just as well that you are exposed in your true colours, for we shall get rid of you at once. You will have ample time to ponder over your defeat while you are in the cells. I should advise you to put up your hands."

The two men obeyed. Nelson Lee spoke softly and smoothly, but there was something dangerous in his tone. Moreover, that revolver of his looked rather troublesome. It was better to obey.

"Now," said Lee, "you will do as I order you. On the side table, Jelton, you will find some rope. Take it, and bind your companion's wrists. I may as well tell you that I will not stand on ceremony if you attempt any trickery."

"Oh, keep your hair on!" snapped Jelton. "I know when I'm beaten, you cute beggar! I thought we were safe—and now you come along and ruin everything. I'll get my own back one day!"

Jelton turned, and took a step towards the side table.

The next second his hand shot out, and his fingers grasped a heavy bronze ornament which adorned the Head's desk—a figure, beautifully carved. Jelton swung the object above his head.

"Drop that!" ordered Lee sharply. "If you——"

Whizz!

The bronze ornament shot through the air, straight at Nelson Lee's head. Jelton had acted in desperation—on the spur of the moment—careless of the consequences. And his aim was true.

The heavy figure struck Nelson Lee, and the detective uttered a low cry and sank to the floor.

"Quick!" hissed Jelton fiercely. "Now's our chance! Run!"

"Good heavens!" gasped White.

The pair rushed to the door, and a moment later they were outside, under the night sky. Their mission had failed, but they had gained their liberty. And this, after all, was a consideration.

"Which way?" panted White desperately.

"The tunnel, of course—the tunnel, you fool!" snapped Jelton. "It's the only way. We can get into that boat and escape without any trouble. Curse that brute of a detective for interfering."

"It strikes me that somebody else was

a fool!" exclaimed White fiercely. "You might have known the whole thing was a put-up job——"

"Don't grumble at me!" snarled Jelton.

The two men raced across the Triangle.

And, meanwhile, Nelson Lee picked himself up from the floor of the study. He was not particularly hurt. The bronze figure struck him on the shoulder, causing a nasty bruise, but nothing worse. And Lee was feeling quite comfortable about the escaping pair, for he had made full preparation beforehand.

Nelson Lee knew, for example, that two police officers were stationed just outside the door—that is, just in the Triangle. Jelton and White would be captured as they emerged, for Lee had left nothing to chance.

If he had had himself alone to rely upon, he would have given chase on the instant; but he felt justified in taking things easy. He left the study, passed down the passage to the open door, and went outside.

He was just in time to see two dim figures disappearing into the trees near the monastery ruins.

There was no sign of any police officer. "Confound it!" snapped Lee angrily. "What on earth is the meaning of this——"

He broke off as he saw two other figures running up from the direction of the Head's private garden. They arrived, panting heavily.

"Didn't you see them?" demanded Lee curtly.

The two police officers were taken aback.

"See them, sir?" repeated one—a sergeant. "We heard something, and we came back. But we didn't see anybody."

"What have you been doing?" demanded Lee. "I gave you precise instructions to remain here, just against this door——"

"We thought we heard something over on the other side, sir," explained the sergeant. "And as everything was quiet, we went over——"

"You had no right to leave your posts," exclaimed Lee curtly. "You go after some imaginary object, just in order to satisfy your own curiosity, and allow your men to escape! Come! We must lose no time."

"Which way did they go, sir?" asked the sergeant.

"Over towards the ruins—this way!"

Nelson Lee crossed the Triangle at a quick run, and the two sparkling members of the police force followed him. They were not feeling particularly pleased with themselves; but perhaps it was not too late, even now, to effect a capture.

The escape of the two men was undoubtedly owing to negligence on the part of the police. Having had precise instructions, it was their duty to remain at their posts, and not to wander off merely because they heard slight sounds from the Head's shrubbery. They had taken that little investigation on their own shoulders, at the expense of neglecting their real duty. The result was that Jelton and White had given Nelson Lee the slip.

But Lee knew exactly where they had gone. He was well acquainted with the tunnel, and he was also aware of the fact that the crooks were making for Willard's Island. So no time would be wasted in getting on the trail.

Lee was the first to arrive in the ruins, and he lost no time plunging down the circular stone stairway which led to the vault. His companions blundered after him, and at length they arrived at the bottom.

Nelson Lee by this time was flashing a powerful electric torch.

"Hurry up—hurry up!" he exclaimed briskly. "This way!"

The detective rushed down the tunnel, and the policemen hurried after him. Meanwhile, Jelton and White were quite a considerable distance ahead.

They were, in fact, at the other exit of the tunnel.

"We shall do it all right," panted Jelton. "No doubt about that at all, Jim. Leo was knocked out, and he won't know which way to come even when he recovers. I reckon we can take things pretty easily—but that doesn't mean to say we can afford to waste time."

"We've got nothing for our pains, have we?" snapped White. "If we'd only waited a day or two——"

"Oh, cut out that growl!" snapped Jelton. "How the thunder was I to know that everything would go wrong? We're lucky to escape, and, if we get clear away, we'll avoid schools in future."



"We will!" exclaimed White heartily. "By ginger, we will!"

They emerged from the tunnel into the opening of the cellar passage. Jelton closed the door behind him, and was just about to hurry forward when he paused.

For the moment he had forgotten Sir Roger, imprisoned in the cellar. But now it was impossible to forget Sir Roger any longer.

For, immediately in front of the two men some figures had appeared, and the whole passage was brilliantly lit up. Sir Roger Stone was there—and, needless to say, Tregellis-West, Watson, and myself. As Jelton and White came to a halt, there was a moment of tense silence.

They stood gazing at us, and we stood gazing at them.

I was the first to speak.

"They've either got the loot on them, or they've given up the game," I exclaimed. "Forward, you chaps! Collar the rotters!"

"Begad, rather!"

"Boys—boys!" exclaimed Sir Roger. "You must be careful! These men are desperate, and they will harm you——"

But we didn't take any notice. We dashed forward before Jelton and White could be fully aware of our intentions. And the next second we were at grips. The whole thing was so quickly commenced that we had had no time to consider the odds.

The struggle was fierce while it lasted, and we received many bruises and one or two scratches. Jelton and White were certainly desperate; but they had no weapons on them, and they fought with their bare fists, doing their utmost to force their way past. But the way was barred.

Even Sir Roger attempted to help us. He was lost in the excitement at the moment, and came to the attack with spirit and fire.

Unfortunately, Sir Roger had been holding the electric torch, and it was by the light of this that we had been scrapping. And in his excitement the old fellow used the torch as a club.

It certainly gave Jelton a nasty crack on the head, but the blow did not improve the torch in the slightest degree. The filament of the lamp was smashed, and we were plunged into total darkness.

"Good gracious!" gasped Sir Roger.

"What—what on earth——"

"Now's our chance, Jim!" hissed Jelton. "We can do the trick easy now!"

But it was not so easy, after all. We had obtained a firm grip of the scoundrels, and, although we could not see them, we could feel them. My chief idea was to get them down. There were only three of us against two—three boys against two men—and this was not exactly even odds, particularly when it is remembered that the two men were absolutely desperate.

I rather fancy that we should have been beaten if the scrap had continued for another ten minutes.

Jelton and White would have escaped, without a doubt. But just at that moment assistance came—and it was the most welcome help that we had ever received. The door of the tunnel was pushed open, and the little passage became flooded with light. Then Nelson Lee sailed in.

The two police officers, who were just behind him, had no room to move, and they could only stand there and watch.

But Nelson Lee was more than sufficient to turn the tide. Jelton and White knew that they were beaten, and they threw up the sponge.

Within two minutes they were overpowered and handcuffed.

## CHAPTER VII.

### BACK TO WORK.

SIR ROGER STONE rubbed his hands genially.

"Splendid—splendid!" he exclaimed. "Nothing could have been better. And now, you scoundrels, perhaps you are feeling somewhat chastened in spirit. This will cost you a heavy term of imprisonment."

"We should have been all right if it hadn't been for Lee!" said Jelton sullenly. "He tricked us all along, and we were fools not to see through the game."

Nelson Lee was looking pleased, too.

"I don't understand what you boys are doing here," he said, "neither do I understand Sir Roger's presence. But our men have been captured."

and that is the main thing. Sergeant, you had better take them away at once. They will be charged in the morning. I will attend to all those details personally."

"Yes, sir," said the sergeant. "How shall we get away?"

"You can either go back along the tunnel," I said, "or you can go up on to the island, and take your prisoners over in the boat—you'll find it there. I should think that the boat will be the quickest method."

The police decided to adopt this course, and, after we had seen them off, we retired to the cellar once more.

Nelson Lee looked round the comfortably furnished little apartment with curiosity and wonder. Meanwhile, Tommy Watson was dabbing a blackened eye with a wet handkerchief, Sir Montie was brushing down his trousers, and I rubbed my nose very tenderly. It was much larger than it ought to have been, and it felt as though it filled my face. However, these were only minor details.

"You seem to be puzzled, Mr. Lee," smiled Sir Roger.

"I do not mind confessing that I am troubled," replied Nelson Lee. "There are many points which have quite astonished me. For example, I thought that these boys were in bed and asleep; and I was under the impression that you, Sir Roger, were in London. It was certainly something of a surprise to find you all here. At the same time, I am glad that such was the case, for those precious rascals were prevented from making their escape."

"Thanks to the boys!" said Sir Roger. "I did nothing—nothing whatever—except, perhaps, to make a fool of myself by smashing our only means of illumination. Under the circumstances, I am feeling quite satisfied with the whole position, and I have nothing but praise for these young rascals."

Sir Roger was an astonishing old chap, and we were quite delighted with him. Instead of being furious and harsh, he was the essence of geniality.

"I should like to have the position explained to me," said Nelson Lee, producing his cigar-case, and offering it to Sir Roger. "Now that the excitement is over, we can take things rather easily."

"Ah, yes, I will indulge in a cigar,

Mr. Lee," said Sir Roger. "Thank you—thank you! As for explanations, I think you had better apply to Master Nipper. I can assure you he is quite a wonderful conversationalist."

Lee turned to me.

"Well, Nipper," he said briskly, "fire ahead!"

"Well, it's a bit difficult to explain, sir," I said. "In the first place, we didn't know anything about Jelton and the other fellow. Our scheme was to imprison Sir Roger in this cellar, and we brought him here last night——"

"Dear me!" exclaimed Lee. "Surely you are joking, Nipper?"

"No, sir."

"But you are not seriously telling me that you had the unwarrantable audacity to imprison Sir Roger?"

"It's the truth, Lee; it's the absolute truth," said Sir Roger, with a chuckle. "The whole thing is against myself. I know; but I can assure you the experience has done me good. Egad, I needed a lesson! It's knocked the nonsense out of me, and I don't mind telling you that I bear no malice."

"That's very nice of you, sir," I said.

"Nice, be hanged!" roared Sir Roger, glaring at me. "I was an old idiot not to take action before! I blundered on and brought these new servants into the school, and nearly caused a serious burglary. And I quite overlooked the fact that the old staff is deserving of better treatment. They're good servants—every one of them—and the money they were receiving before they went on strike was positively disgraceful. When they come back in the morning, they will receive double. And, what is more, I'll do my best to make their new pay date back from the beginning of the month."

"That is generous of you, Sir Roger," said Nelson Lee. "This decision on your part pleases me enormously. We shall all welcome the old staff back, the masters as heartily as the boys. But you must not mind me saying that I am very surprised at your change of attitude. You were very emphatic in your denunciation of the strikers——"

"I know I was," interrupted Sir Roger. "I was quite blind to the truth. However, Nipper will continue the explanation."

"There's not much in it, sir," I said.



"We were really a bit desperate, because we thought that the old staff would never be taken on again. So we decided to force Sir Roger's hand. The first idea was to leave him in this cellar until the morning, but we came here less than an hour ago, and heard all about Jelton and White. Sir Roger's a brick, sir; and everything seems to be all serene now."

I went into fuller details, of course, and Nelson Lee listened with amusement and interest. And when I had done he regarded us with pretended severity.

"And am I supposed to be blind to this behaviour?" he asked. "I, your Housemaster, must wink at these colossal misdeeds?"

"Of course, sir," I grinned.

"You deserve to be expelled——"

"Nonsense, my dear sir—nonsense!" exclaimed Sir Roger. "During the first few moments I was of the same opinion, and I was half inclined to report the boys to the Headmaster. But I was wrong. What they did was necessary—for, in dealing with an obstinate man, you must take drastic action. However, we will say nothing more about it. Everything is settled, and I am quite satisfied."

It was clear, in fact, that the events of the night had shown Sir Roger how unjust he had been, and how necessary it was to make amends. He had turned out to be a real sportsman, just as I had anticipated.

And when we went back to bed, half an hour later, we were feeling very satisfied. All the troubles were at an end.

The Remove, of course, knew nothing of these happenings, and when the rising bell rang in the morning the whole school awoke to find that a very startling change had come about. It was so startling that many of the fellows were absolutely amazed.

Handforth happened to look out of the window while he was dressing. And, quite abruptly, he stood stock still, and stared out into the Triangle.

"Great pip!" he ejaculated.

"What's the matter with you, Handy?"

"Well, I'm jiggered!" said Handforth.

Fatty Little walked over to the window. He stared out, gave a gasp,

and then his expression became somewhat blank.

"Great jam rolls!" he exclaimed dazedly.

"They must be mad—off their rockers!" said Pitt, looking out of the window. "There's nothing here. It's a glorious morning. The sun is shining, the birds are singing, and—— Why, what—— Well, I'm hanged!"

"You—you idiots!" roared De Valerie. "Can't you explain——"

"It's Warren!" said Pitt dreamily. "Can it be true, or do my eyes deceive me? Warren, sweeping the Triangle! Warren himself, as large as life, and looking as pleased as Punch! He's working harder than he ever worked before, and I believe he's singing!"

There was a rush for the windows, and I looked out, too. There was no doubt on the subject. Warren, in his customary green apron, was sweeping the Triangle, with the most industrious energy. And just then Tubbs, the Ancient House page-boy, came along jauntily, attired, as usual, in his uniform.

Not only these two, but there were other members of the old staff within sight. Broome, the head gardener, was at work on a flower-bed, and one or two of the stable hands were visible.

"It—it can't be true!" exclaimed Pitt. "Last night the new staff was in possession, and these people were in the village—sacked for good. I'm blessed if I can understand what's happened."

"It's amazing!" said Handforth. "And I mean to find out the truth, too."

He rushed over his dressing, and the other fellows did the same. There was a race that morning that had seldom been witnessed before. Necks were left unwashed, hair was left unbrushed, and neckties were forgotten. All the juniors thought about was getting downstairs at the earliest possible moment.

And I grinned serenely at Tregellis-West and Watson.

"Well, my sons," I said. "Our little scheme did the trick—and we haven't been punished, and Sir Roger has turned out to be a fine old sort, after all. It only shows what cool cheek will do."

"But I don't understand even now," said Watson. "How did the old staff get back——"

"Why, that's easy to understand," I broke in. "Sir Roger must have got busy good and early. I expect he packed all those servants off, giving them a month's wages in lieu of notice, and the old staff was fetched up straight away. They were only too willing to come, of course, and they simply fell into their old duties on their feet. They're all as happy as sandboys, and they'll work better than they ever worked before. It's victory for the strikers—the victory they deserve."

When we got downstairs we found the juniors crowding round any member of the reinstated staff they could get hold of.

Tubbs was the centre of a huge crowd, and if he had answered all the questions which were hurled at him, he would have been busy at the job for hours.

"Really, young gents, I can't say no more!" he was exclaiming, as we came up. "All I knows is that Sir Roger come to the village this morning and saw Broome. And, after a short talk. Broome called all of us together, and said it was all right."

"You've come back for good?" asked Fatty.

"Yes, Master Little," said Tubbs.

"At the same old wages as before?" demanded Tucker. "I am impressed, I must admit, but if you are returning to work with no increase of salary——"

"You needn't worry about that, Master Tucker," said Tubbs. "We're gettin' double the wages we was—just double, and on the top of that we're going to be paid for the time we was on strike."

"Oh, good!"

"And—and do you mean to say that Sir Roger has agreed to this?" asked Handforth blankly.

"It was Sir Roger who come down," said Tubbs. "And he's never been so jolly before. He was jokin' and laughin' all the time. I didn't know as he could be so nice."

"Well, it's a surprise, and no mistake!" said De Valerie. "I knew certain things were happening, but I thought——"

I nudged De Valerie, and managed to get him aside, with the other fellows who had taken part in Sir Roger's capture.

I explained everything to them, and they were able to understand. Further-

more, they gave their promise that the secret would be kept.

Incidentally, only a very few of the fellows ever heard anything about the fate of Jelton and White. It was not general knowledge that the two men had been arrested, and had been taken away by the police.

While we were still talking in the Triangle, Sir Roger himself appeared. He stepped out of the Head's private doorway, and surveyed the sunny Triangle with an appreciative glance. There was a smile on his face, and he was rubbing his hands together.

"There he is!" shouted Handforth.

"Three cheers for Sir Roger Stone!"

"Hip, hip, hurrah!"

"Good old Sir Roger!"

"Hurrah!"

"He's one of the best!"

The cheers were deafening, and Sir Roger was rather startled. At the same time, he looked pleased. Hitherto, he had only heard boos and groans, and it was most gratifying to find himself a popular hero.

He understood now that he had been deserving of groans before. By nature, he was a most generous man. But he was appallingly obstinate, and once he had an idea in his head, it stuck there, and it took superhuman efforts to shift it.

There was general good humour in the school that morning. Everything would now go on smoothly, and it seemed that there would be no more excitement for some little time. The events of the past week or two had been strenuous, but we were all glad to have the old staff back—to see the routine of the school working smoothly and well.

In the Remove Formroom that morning the fellows were inclined to talk more than usual. There was a great deal of whispering, and Mr. Crowell was obliged to pull one or two juniors up sharply. Mr. Crowell himself was showing signs of excitement—he, too, felt unusually animated.

"Let me tell you, boys, that I will have no talking in class," he said severely. "I am aware that there is some little excuse this morning, but there has been enough of it. The first boy who speaks again will receive two hundred lines! Do you understand me? I am in earnest!"

Mr. Crowell glared round the Form-



and the juniors knew that he was in earnest.

Lessons proceeded smoothly for ten or fifteen minutes. Then Mr. Crowell suddenly looked up, and pointed an accusing finger at Handforth. As it happened, Handforth was wrestling with an arithmetical problem at the moment, and he was oblivious of all earthly things. His vision was entirely filled with figures.

"Handforth!" rapped out Mr. Crowell.

"Eh? What's that?" said Handforth, looking up. "Oh, speaking to me, sir?"

"Yes; I was speaking to you, Handforth," said Mr. Crowell. "I warned you that I should punish the next boy who spoke. You will write me two hundred lines."

Handforth looked blank.

"But—but I wasn't speaking, sir," he protested.

"Silence! You had the audacity to answer me," said Mr. Crowell tartly. "Watson, what is the capital of France?"

"Why, Paris, sir," said Watson, in astonishment.

"Take two hundred lines, Watson!" snapped Mr. Crowell.

"Tut—two hundred lines!" gasped Watson. "What for, sir?"

"For speaking?"

"But I only answered your question, sir——"

"Do not bandy words with me, boy!" roared Mr. Crowell. "If you say anything further I will report you to the Headmaster, and you will, in future, clean the boots! Any other boy who displeases me will be placed in the scullery!"

The Remove gazed at Mr. Crowell in astonishment. The excitement of the morning was evidently playing tricks with the Formmaster's wits. His mind was evidently running on servants. But that was no satisfactory explanation of his behaviour. To give Watson two hundred lines for answering a question was rather staggering. Furthermore, the question was one which would not have been put to a fag in the Second Form.

"Get on with your work!" said Mr. Crowell, picking up the inkpot, and rapping his desk with it. "I will have no further delays."

The Remove was rather startled by this time. The ink, naturally, had spurted over the pot all over Mr. Crowell's hands. He wiped it off with his handkerchief, and then proceeded to blow his nose—a most unwise proceeding. For when he removed the handkerchief his face was somewhat inky.

The juniors roared—they couldn't help it.

"Silence!" thundered Mr. Crowell. "For this behaviour, every boy here will write me two lines—and, furthermore, the whole Form will be detained this afternoon for twelve hours!"

This time the Remove gasped. Mr. Crowell sat down, mopped his brow with the duster, and after that he grew calm, and became rational once more. But it was an undoubted fact that he had had a slight lapse from the normal.

And we were to find, before long, that Mr. Crowell was to perform many other curious actions in the near future.

In fact, there was to be quite a lot of trouble!

THE END.

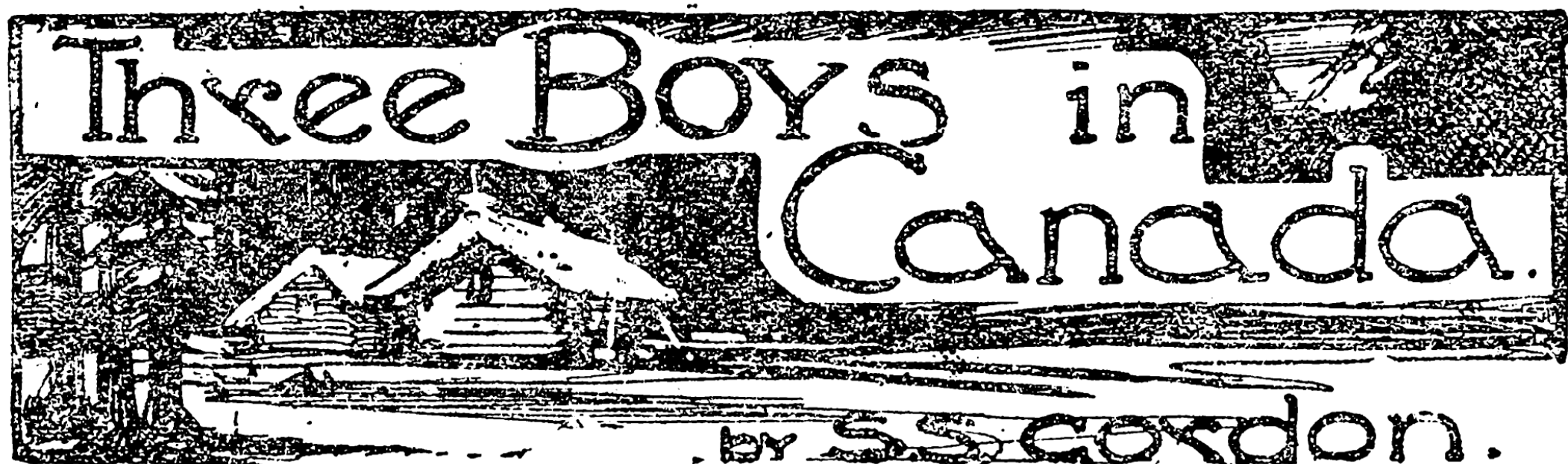
### T O M Y R E A D E R S .

*It was fortunate for the strikers that Nipper's plan succeeded, and that of Jelton and White failed. Otherwise, Sir Roger Stone would not have been convinced of the faux pas he had made, until it would have been too late to restore the old staff, who could not have held out much longer. Once more, however, peace reigned at St. Frank's.*

*Next week, in "The Remove Master's Delusion!", will begin the first story of another splendid series. As a result of over-study, Mr. Crowell's strange behaviour, already alluded to in the above story, became steadily worse, leaving no doubt that he is the victim, temporarily we hope, of non compos mentis, or, in other words, he has become for the time being mentally deranged. In the end, he is obliged to take a holiday, with the result that the Remove are sent a new Form-master, more of whom you will be told next week.*

THE EDITOR.

**YOU CAN BEGIN READING THIS SPLENDID SERIAL TO-DAY!**



***A Tale of Life and Adventure in the North-West.***

**INTRODUCTION.**

JACK ROYCE, returned from Canada, has called to see his brother,

TEDDY ROYCE, a clerk in London. While the brothers are together, they are aroused by a loud summons at the door.

GERALD TELFORD has been set upon by roughs, and seeks assistance of the Royces. The roughs are driven off. Later, Gerald is informed by his guardian, Mr. Cardone, that the money which the lad was to inherit is lost, with the exception of £50. The three lads agree to try their luck in Canada. They set sail for Montreal, and eventually reach Winnipeg. Throughout the journey they are shadowed by a man named Obed Snaith, one of the ruffians who had attacked Gerald in London, and who is believed to be in the pay of Mr. Cardone. While in Winnipeg, the chums rescue a man, nicknamed the Mad Prospector, from ruffians. The man, however, dies of his injuries, but gives the lads a secret chart of a rich gold discovery. The three lads proceed to Medicine Hat, south of Alberta, and after some exciting times at St. Pierre, 150 miles further N.W., they are offered work in connection with the opening up of a new line from Edmonton, N.W. of the Rockies, through the Grand Cougar Pass, and touching Dead Breed Lake, which latter place, being in the vicinity of the Mad Prospector's gold mine, the three young adventurer's were in luck's way.

(Now read on.)

**How the Secret Chart is Stolen.**

HE handed the kit-bag to his brother, who sat up and took it. He untied the cord that fastened up its mouth.

"Who's your friend I heard you making love to?" the elder Royce said, with a grin, as he worked.

"Our beloved cook," said Teddy, still angry over his double downfall. "If he'd got up, I'd have swiped him one, the —"

"Tut, tut!" grinned Jack. "you're getting a very fighty sort of person since you came to Canada, ain't you? It's a rotten bad policy to fall out with the cook, too. Cooks are powerful men in these little communities. You'd better make it up to Connell again some time!"

"Rot!" said Teddy undutifully. "He shouldn't have upset me twice. And I asked him to fight, and he wouldn't."

"Good job for you he didn't, perhaps," laughed Jack, taking out a writing compendium from his bag and opening it.

"That's where you've been keeping the thing?" Gerald asked. "Pretty insecure place, isn't it? That map might be worth a million to us yet, you know."

"Well, then," said Jack, good-naturedly, "if you can't trust me with it, you'd better hang on to it yourself."

"Don't you think we ought each of us to have a copy?" Teddy suggested.

"Why not send it to a newspaper, and have a few million copies of it made, so everybody can see it!" scoffed Jack.

"Still," said Gerald quietly, "if you're not inclined to look on the thing seriously, Teddy and I are, and, you know, you're jolly careless with it. If it gets lost—well, then, where are we? I think, if you don't mind, I will make a rough copy of it, if you'll lend me that pad and pencil."

Jack shrugged his shoulders, and wrapped his blanket about him again, while, with Teddy looking over his shoulder, Gerald, by the light of the fire, made a rough though accurate copy of the Mad Prospector's chart.

(Continued on page iii of cover.)



"That'll do," said Gerald. "I'll make you one, old chap," he added kindly; and quickly made another copy.

Teddy took his, folded it, and placed it in his pocket. Gerald replaced the original copy in the writing compendium, and handed the lot over to Jack Royce, who was dozing now before the cheerful warmth of the campfire.

"All right, put it down near me," Jack grunted.

But Teddy slipped the compendium into the kit-bag again. He did not return the kit-bag to the dump he got it from, but laid it down beside his brother. Then the younger boys rolled themselves again in their blankets, and in a little while they were fast asleep.

By this time Jack was happily snoring away, his face turned skywards.

It was not very much later when Jack was suddenly disturbed in his sleep. He was sure something had struck against his stockinged foot.

He awoke, and raised his head. He saw, between himself and the camp-fire, a dark figure on the ground. He sat up. It surely was a man, and he had an arm outstretched towards Jack's kit-bag.

"I say," Jack began, throwing off his blankets quickly, and attempting to come to his feet.

But before he could reach them, the figure on the ground turned like a snake, and as quickly. His arms got about Jack's knees before the Britisher could stand properly upright.

Jack came to the ground heavily. Before he could utter another sound the figure threw its full weight upon him. A hand was clapped over his mouth.

Jack struggled, but he had been taken at a disadvantage. The man who held him, whoever he was, was plainly a strong, heavy fellow.

It flashed across Jack's startled mind that this perhaps was Snaith, though it was too dark to make out the fellow's features. Nor had Jack time to make anything out; for, as the young Britisher struggled, something was raised in the air, and the same thing came down with a dull, heavy thud on Jack's unprotected head.

Stars danced before the big lad's eyes for a moment, then everything became blank to him. He dropped back in his assailant's grasp limp and lifeless.

Some noise of the struggle must have reached the ears of Teddy Royce in his

dreams. The youngster came awake suddenly, and sat up. He was in time to see a shape on the other side of the fire, with what looked like a kit-bag in his hand. It was a man, with his back turned towards Teddy.

Teddy reached out quickly and touched Gerald on the shoulder. He saw the figure of Jack Royce lying where it had fallen, quite still. It did not occur to the younger Royce that there was anything but restful sleep suggested by his brother's attitude.

"St! Somebody's after Jack's kit-bag!" Teddy whispered into Gerald's ear. "Don't make a noise, but get after him! Don't waken Jack up! Hallo! He's thrown the bag down again!"

Gerald raised himself to one elbow and watched the man who had stretched Jack unconscious to the ground. The fellow seemed to have found what he sought, for his hand went to his side-pocket. Then, stepping right over the form of the elder Royce, he slipped away.

Teddy and Gerald came to their feet at once. Teddy was glowing with excitement. Gerald, more calm, was nevertheless quite appreciative of the situation.

"Some pilfering sneak has been through my brother's kit," said Teddy. "I say, Gerald, are you game for some sport? Don't let on to Jack. He thinks because he's been out here longer than us that he's the whole works. But we'll show him that we can look after ourselves—and him, too, when he's asleep."

Gerald glanced over towards where Jack, lying in a perfectly natural position, was. He nodded.

"And I owe old Jack one or two good turns," he said softly. "I'd like to repay him a bit. If he's been robbed, then we can go and collar the thief and make him hand over what he's stolen."

"Right, then, come on," breathed Teddy, delighted at having an adventure away from the sheltering wing of his big brother.

By this time the unknown thief could faintly be seen in the distance, making over towards where Simpson, the chief surveyor, had his little bivouac shelter pitched.

Quickly the youngsters took up the pursuit of him. They saw their quarry

**(Continued overleaf.)**



pass Simpson's bivouac, and go on towards where the cook-house had been fixed.

"It's—it's that stomach-robbing cook!" grinned Teddy, and worked his arms in eager anticipation. Probably, had he known exactly what the cook was capable of doing, had he known the condition his brother now was in, he would have paused; and yet he probably would not. Teddy was no more overburdened with caution than most adventurous youths of his age.

"Wonder what that was he pinched out of Jack's bag?" Gerald asked slowly.

Teddy looked round at him quickly.

"The rotter was lying awfully close to where we were," he said, "and he

must have heard us talking about the Mad Prospector's gold mine. I thought it funny he should be sleeping so close to us, but never worried about it. But now he's pinched Jack's copy of the map."

"Oh, then, if he has, it's as well we did make our copies," said Gerald with a laugh. "Poor old Jack! He never looked on that chart at all seriously. Well, shall we follow the cook up and see where he puts the chart?"

"Ra—ther!" said Teddy, who had an unbounded faith in that chart. "Even if we have the copies of the thing, we don't want cooks and people like that to know our secret."

(To be continued.)

## WATCH YOURSELF

**GROW** by using the Girvan System. Mr. Briggs reports 5 ins. increase; Driver E.F., 3 ins.; Seaman Mosedale, 3½ ins. No drugs; no appliances. Health and physique improved. Send 3d. stamps for particulars and £100 Guarantee to the Girvan System, Dept. N.M.P., 17, Stroud Green Road, London, N. 4.



## MOUTH ORGANS BEATEN.



All the latest tunes can be played on the Chella-  
phone. The only Pocket instrument on which tunes can be correctly played in any key. "Knocks the German mouth organ into a cocked hat." Post free, 1/6 each (better quality, 2/6), from the maker, R. FIELD (Dept. 15), HALL AVENUE, HUDDERSFIELD.

**CURLY HAIR!**—"My bristles were made curly in a few days," writes R. Welch. "Curlit" curls straightest hair, 1/3, 2/6 (1½d. stamps accepted).—SUMMERS (Dept. A.P.), 31, Upper Russell Street, BRIGHTON.

## CUT THIS OUT.

**The Nelson Lee Library. Pen Coupon. Value 2d**  
Send this coupon with P.O. for only 5/- direct to the Fleet Pen Co., 119, Fleet St., London, E.C. 4. In return you will receive (post free) a splendid British Made 14-ct. Gold Nibbed Fleet Fountain Pen, value 10/6. If you save 12 further coupons, each will count as 2d. off the price; so you may send 13 coupons, and only 3/-. Say whether you want a fine, medium, or broad nib. This great offer is made to introduce the famous Fleet Pen to THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY readers.

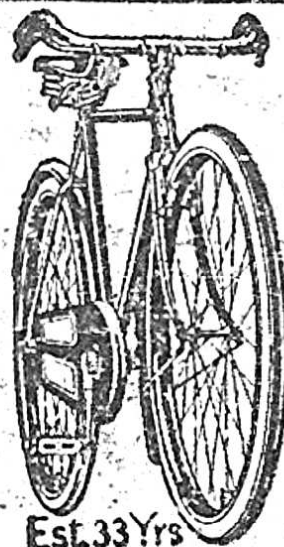
**Special Safety Model, 2/- extra**

Printed and Published every Wednesday by the Proprietors, The Amalgamated Press, Limited. The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4. Subscription Rates: Inland, 11s. per annum, 5s. 6d. for six months. Abroad, 8s. 10d. per annum; 4s. 5d. for six months. Sole Agents for South Africa: The Central News Agency, Limited. Sole Agents for Australia and New Zealand: Messrs. Gordon & Gotch, Limited; and for Canada: The Imperial News Company, Limited.

No. 255.

D

April 24, 1920.



## 15 DAYS' TRIAL

Sent Packed FREE and Carriage PAID. Lowest Cash & Easy Payment Prices. Immediate delivery. Big Bargains in New and Second-hand Cycles. Accessories, etc., at popular Prices. Write for Free List and Special Offer of Sample Cycle. **MEAD CYCLE CO. Inc.** Dept. B 807. BALSALL - HEATH, BIRMINGHAM.

**PHOTO POSTCARDS**, 1/3 doz., 12 by 10 ENLARGEMENTS, 8d. ALSO CHEAP PHOTO MATERIAL. CATALOGUE AND SAMPLES FREE. HACKETTS, July Road, Liverpool.

## INCREASE YOUR HEIGHT

Several Inches without Appliances. **ROSS SYSTEM NEVER FAILS.** Price 7/6 complete. Particulars 1½d. stamp.—P. ROSS, 16, Langdale Road, Scarborough.



## BOYS, BE YOUR OWN PRINTERS



and make extra pocket-money by using The Petit "Plex" Duplicator. Makes pleasing numerous copies of Notepaper Headings, Business Cards, Sports Fixtures, Scoring Cards, Plans, School Publications, Drawings, Maps, Music, Shorthand, Programmes, Notices, etc. in a variety of pretty colours. Send for one TODAY. Price 6/6, complete with all supplies. Foreign orders, 1/6 extra.—**B. PODMORE & Co., Desk N.L. Southport.** And at 67, 69, Chancery Lane, London, W.C. 2.

## Height Increased 5/- Complete Course.

No Appliances. No Drugs. No Dieting. The Melvin Strong System NEVER FAILS. Send stamp for particulars and testimonials.—Melvin Strong, Ltd. (Dept. D), 24, Southwark St., S.E.

