

No. 2 OF THE ST. FRANK'S MAGAZINE INSIDE!

THE NELSON LEE LIBRARY AND ST FRANK'S MAGAZINE 2D

Crash! The limousine struck the gate with a deafening, splintering crash, the mail train thundering down upon it at the same second! Disaster seemed inevitable.



The above sketch depicts one of the thrilling situations in this week's gripping story:—

THE TREASURE OF DON SANTOS!

Featuring NELSON LEE v.
the NIGHT OWL.



Something metallic touched the window pane. Peering forward, Nelson Lee saw the dim form of a hand rising slowly upwards.



Lurking in the vicinity of St. Frank's is the dreaded leader of the Alliance of 13, known as the Night Owl, because of his unblinking, lustreless eyes and his eerie habit of appearing only in the shadow of night to perpetrate

his sinister designs. He has sworn to get even with Nelson Lee, who has salvaged the valuable treasure of Don Santos from the sunken Islington, the ship which was wrecked off Shingle Head, carrying to the bottom the Night Owl's ill-gotten plunder. In the following exciting narrative you will read how the Night Owl schemes to retrieve the treasure by a daring coup that might have been successful against a less wary criminologist than the schoolmaster detective of St. Frank's.

THE EDITOR.

The Narrative Related Throughout by Nipper.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE STILLY NIGHT!

JOHN BUSTERFIELD BOOTS had a dreamy look in his eye.

"Burglars!" he said absently.

"Burglars?" repeated Bob Christine. "Where?"

Buster Boots came to himself, and grinned.

"Don't worry," he said. "They're not coming yet—not in this House, anyhow. They'll raid the Ancient House a bit later on."

Not only Bob Christine, but several other Remove fellows, stared at J. B. B. His words were certainly rather astonishing.

The College House section of the Remove at St. Frank's had just gone to bed, and many of the fellows were already commencing to undress. But John Busterfield Boots was thoughtfully sitting on the bottom rail

of his own bed, running his fingers through his red locks.

"How the dickens do you know that burglars will raid the Ancient House?" demanded Clapson. "Had the tip from the leader of a gang?"

"Exactly!" said Boots calmly.

"What?"

"To-night, at about ten-thirty, a certain portion of the Ancient House is to be held up by masked burglars!" went on Boots. "All the valuables are to be pinched, and——"

"You—you hopeless duffer!" interrupted Bob Christine. "You're dreaming! And if you're not, you ought to be boiled for keeping a thing like this to yourself! The police ought to be warned——"

"Keep your hair on," said Boots. "We're going to be the burglars!"

"Eh?"

"What the dickens——"

"Behold," said Buster, "the leader of the gang!"

He rose majestically, and struck an attitude.

"Poor chap!" said Yorke. "This is what comes of reading too many trashy detective stories! He's got the giddy thing on the brain! I think we'd better send a 'phone call through to the nearest asylum, and tell 'em to rush out the padded van!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't be an ass, Buster—at least, not a bigger one than you can help!" said Percy Bray. "What's all this rot about burglars?"

"No rot at all," replied Boots. "It's going to happen—it's arranged. The crib's going to be cracked at half-past ten. I'm the leader of the gang, and you're my trusty henchmen!"

"Oh, he's dotty all right!" declared Denny.

"Clean off his rocker!" said Crowe.

John Busterfield Boots looked round pityingly.

"Well, honestly, I thought you chaps had more brains!" he said. "But you're as dense as a lot of sheep! I've been giving you all sorts of hints, and you can't see daylight!"

"Hints?" repeated Bob Christine. "What hints?"

"Ye gods and waterlilies!" said Buster. "What hints! But I won't strain your feeble intelligence any longer. The fact is, there's going to be a jape—a first-class rag on the Fossils!"

"Oh, is there?" said Clapson. "Who told you so?"

"I didn't need any telling—I've decided on it!" said Buster Boots, with a touch of his old authoritative air. "I've been thinking this over for a day or two, and I've decided that it's just about time that Nipper and Co. were taken down a peg or two. So we're going to get on the job to-night."

"By burgling the Ancient House?" inquired Denny.

"Exactly."

"That wheeze ought to take first prize anywhere," said Denny. "Of course, it doesn't matter about being chucked in chokey, I suppose? That's just a detail! And the scheme is quite honest, isn't it?"

Buster Boots began to lose his calmness.

"You—you hopeless dummy!" he started. "Didn't I tell you it's going to be a jape? I've got everything prepared—masks, revolvers, clothes, and everything! There'll be six of us in the gang, and we'll hold up the Remove dormitory, and make the chaps hand over their valuables! Then, when we've got all the stuff collected in a heap, we'll reveal ourselves, have a good cackle, and leave the fatheads to sort their property out!"

The Monks looked at Buster Boots with growing respect.

"My hat!" said Talmadge. "It's a pretty good wheeze, you know!"

"Not so bad!" agreed Bob Christine. "As a matter of fact, I was thinking of getting up a jape against the Fossils—but this idea of Buster's is a corker. Absolutely original, too!"

"I never copy other people's ideas," said Buster Boots calmly.

The other fellows allowed him to crow somewhat—for they all realised that this scheme was indeed a good one. They had been slow to grasp the idea, but as soon as it had fully sunk in, they realised its true greatness.

And, as all the Monks were ready to admit, it was high time that the Fossils were japed. There was no particular reason why there should be any rags at all, but House rivalry was getting a little keener of late, and something had to be done to keep it alive.

Moreover, as Boots pointed out, the last big jape had been against the College House. So the Monks really owed the Fossils one. Here was a good opportunity to pay them with plenty of interest.

John Busterfield Boots was now one of the most popular fellows in the College House. Since his reform he had maintained his decent behaviour, and had gained the respect of all his Form fellows. His arrogance had vanished, but he was still full of the same old vim.

"It's a pity you didn't tell us about this wheeze earlier," said Christine. "We might have made a few more preparations—"

"Yes, and you might have made a few incautious remarks, too," said Boots. "Not you personally, Christine—but some of the other fellows. Don't forget that walls have ears—and we can't be too cautious. I said nothing on purpose, because the slightest hint of our game would ruin the whole thing. The Fossils have only got to get a tiny bit suspicious, and they'd never be fooled. And you needn't worry about preparations—they're all made."

"Of course, to do the thing properly, we ought to rehearse," said Percy Bray. "It's a bit difficult to talk like a burglar—"

"It's only necessary for the leader of the gang to speak," said Boots. "All the other chaps have got to remain silent. Too many cooks spoil the broth. I've been practising a lot, and I can do the talk very well, I think."

"What about clothes and masks and—"

"I've already told you that they're prepared."

And to prove his words, Buster went to one of the big dormitory cupboards, unlocked it with a key of his own, and proceeded to bring forth a number of old suits—finally producing some well-made masks, and half a dozen grim-looking revolvers.

"My goodness!" said Yorke. "We can't use those things."

"Why not?"

"They're dangerous—they may go off——"

"That's quite likely," said Buster. "If you have a look at them closely, you'll find that they're water-pistols! They squirt a stream for about six yards! Best I've ever seen—and cheap, too. And they look exactly like the real thing."

The juniors examined the imitation revolvers with huge interest. They were, indeed, specially designed for the purpose of squirting water. And Buster, who had had the whole six sent down from a London store, did a brisk business for a period of five minutes.

He kept one of the "weapons" for himself, and sold the other five—but declined to make any profit on the deal. He could have sold a dozen, with ease.

"There's no need to start experimenting with them now," he said. "I've tested them all, and they're in fine order. The best thing we can do is to pick our gang, and then start rehearsing."

The "gang" consisted of Boots, Percy Bray, Bob Christine, Yorke, Clapson, and Oldfield. These were the six biggest fellows that could be chosen—and they were keen juniors, too.

Long after the others had gone to bed the six rehearsed, under the eagle eye of Buster Boots. Finally, they attired themselves in their burglar outfits, and gave a dress-rehearsal.

And, without a doubt, they looked the parts to the life. In a dimly lit dormitory, with fellows to deal with who had just been awakened, they would easily pass muster.

And Boots practised a deep voice so well that it was difficult to recognise it as his own. And by this time it was well after ten o'clock.

"Time we made a move," said Boots. "We'll do the deed at once."

"Yes, but how shall we get in?"

"There's a little window round at the back," said Buster. "As a general rule, it's kept locked; but I took care to slip the catch just before coming up to bed. We can slip in there without any trouble, and buzz up the back stairs. I tell you, it'll be the jape of the season. After it's all over, we'll cackle at those Fossils until they go green! The whole school will be yelling to-morrow."

And the "gang" departed on their deadly errand.

Like shadows of the night they silently descended the stairs, taking extreme care to avoid the masters' quarters—for it was still on the cards that a master or two would still be up. And it would rather spoil the show if they were spotted prematurely.

However, they succeeded in getting out to the Triangle without any mishaps. It was dark—extremely dark—and decidedly

cold. The December night was setting frosty, and there was a feeling in the light breeze that snow was not far distant. The sky was completely overcast.

Over in the Ancient House only one or two lights still gleamed. These were either from the studies, or bedrooms of the masters, and well away from the Remove dormitory.

The little window that Buster Boots had spoken of was still unlatched—which was really careless of somebody who ought to have seen after it better. However, burglars at St. Frank's were well nigh unheard of—in actual reality. If half the doors had been left wide open nothing would have happened.

One by one the Monks slipped through the window, and found themselves in a rear passage. And from here it was only a short distance to the back staircase—up which they climbed in single file.

And, once in the upper corridor, the Remove dormitory was reached in dead silence, and without a hitch.

Cautiously, John Busterfield Boots opened the door, and entered.

CHAPTER II.

COMEDY—AND DRAMA!



THE Remove slept.

There was no question about this whatever. As Buster

Boots entered the dormitory he was assailed by numerous snores—the majority of them

being unmusical. Loudly above them all, like the roar of a lion amid the bleating of sheep, the special snore of Edward Oswald Handforth arose.

"My hat!" breathed Buster Boots. "It's a wonder they sleep at all!"

With soft footsteps the other members of the gang followed. At last the door was closed, and Yorke stood guarding it, holding his revolver ready. Two other members of the band took up their positions at the windows. The rest placed themselves in such positions that they could cover every fellow in the dormitory with their "weapons."

"Lights!" breathed Boots.

A series of soft clicks sounded, and every member of the gang switched on an electric torch. The effect was mysterious and somewhat startling. All the fellows were clearly visible in bed—and there was sufficient reflected light to reveal the dim forms of the masked band. They looked very genuine as they stood there, holding their water-pistols.

"Hands up!" commanded J. B. B., in a gruff, husky voice.

I sat up in bed at once—for any light sound generally awoke me—and that voice was far from light. McClure sat up, too, and Reggie Pitt and De Valerie showed signs of stirring.

"What the—"

I paused, blinking at the torchlights.

"Hands up, young shaver—an' not a sound!" snarled a voice. "The first kid that yaps will 'ave lead drilled into him!"

"Great Scott!" gasped McClure faintly.

By this time half the Remove was awake, and the other half was becoming aroused. Even Handforth's snore had ceased, and a kind of placid silence reigned.

Handforth turned over in bed, sat up, and gulped.

"Great pip!" he mumbled. "What's—what's happened to the lights? Who's that standing there? What's the game—"

"No talking!" said Boots harshly. "It's a hold-up—sayvy? The first yell for help will be fatal! We've got you all covered, and you'd best not try any tricks! Hands up—you young whelps!"

Handforth took a deep breath.

"Burglars!" he said, as though he had made a remarkable discovery. "I—I say, you chaps, the whole giddy school is in the hands of a gang! Quick! Sound the alarm—dash for the police!"

"Silence!" snapped Boots sharply.

As a matter of fact, he was getting slightly nervous. He had visions of Handforth upsetting the whole applecart. For if any junior did actually shout for help, the gang would have to disappear—and right smartly, too.

"Are you telling me to be quiet?" asked Handforth aggressively.

"I'll stand no lip from you, my lad!" retorted Boots in his gruffest tones. "Put your hands up, or, by thunder, I'll—up, I say! And keep your mouth closed!"

Handforth, dazed, raised his hands up over his head. He had plenty of pluck, but he didn't like the look of that wicked revolver. And it must be acknowledged that J. B. B. acted his part superbly.

"Better take it quietly, you chaps!" I said. "There's a whole gang here—and if they once start shooting, it'll be absolutely ghastly. For goodness sake, don't shout! Do exactly as you're told!"

Boots uttered a growl.

"There's one sensible kid among you, leastways!" he said curtly. "Mike, get busy, an' go through the piles of togs! Grab everything you can. Shove 'em in a heap in the middle of the floor. And if any kid dares to interfere, he'll taste lead!"

The juniors watched, fascinated—horried.

And Mike—in other words, Bob Christine—went quickly from place to place, rifling pockets with astonishing skill. Everything was emptied out—money, pocket-knives, watches, and so forth. And the pile grew bigger and bigger in the centre of the floor.

And then, suddenly, a loud, shattering crash sounded in a corner of the room. It was so unexpected and abrupt that even the burglars were startled. It wasn't half so loud as it seemed—being merely one of

my boots which I had skilfully tossed in the corner during one of Buster's unguarded moments.

"Rescue!" I hissed. "Somebody's coming!"

The gang looked round, startled.

And, in a flash, I was out of bed, and I grappled with Mike. The unfortunate burglar was so surprised that he allowed me to take his weapon without the slightest attempt at flight.

I swung the revolver round, and pointed it at the gang.

"Hands up—all of you!" I hissed. "The tables are turned, you ruffians! Quick, you chaps—collar them."

Eager with excitement, Handforth and a dozen others leapt out of bed, and were upon the dismayed gang before they could make any attempt to flee. Somebody switched the full lights on, and after a short scramble the six burglars were held.

"Rotten!" said Buster disgustedly. "We'd nearly spoofed you, too!"

"Boots!" howled Handforth. "Why, you—you—"

"What do you mean—Boots?" I asked sharply. "These men are burglars—haven't they said so?"

"Oh, draw it mild, Nipper—we give in," said Bob Christine.

"That sort of thing won't do, my man!" I said sternly. "You see, you chaps, they're trying to make out they're College House fellows! They've disguised themselves like Christine and Boots and some of the rest, and they think they can fool us! But we all know they're burglars!"

Christine had pulled his mask off, and was looking indignant.

"It was only a jape, you asses!" he snapped. "It was Buster's idea—"

"And we said it was a good one!" said Clapson bitterly.

"So it was!" snapped Boots. "It nearly succeeded, too!"

But by this time the Fossils had jumped to my scheme, and were looking at the Monks with stern expressions—and without any sign of recognition. Reggie Pitt positively recoiled.

"I've never seen such a villainous looking set before," he said, with horror. "Even without any make-up, they're criminals of the deepest dye. Now, what ought we to do with them?"

"Rope them up, and hand them over to the police!" I said promptly.

"Ha, ha, ha!" cackled Watson. "Ahem! Sorry!"

"This is no laughing matter!" I said severely. "These burglars deliberately raided this dormitory for the purposes of theft. The only thing we can do is to place them under arrest, and hand them over to the authorities! And anything they say will be used as evidence against them."

The Monks were beginning to look very sick.

"Draw it mild, Nipper!" said Buster. "We give you best—"

"Enough!" I interrupted. "This pretence has gone far enough. You cannot fool us that you are Monks. We know you at your true worth. You stand before us, guilty and blackened with crime!"

And the grinning Fossils held on to their prisoners, and proceeded to bind them up. The Monks protested in vain—we wilfully misunderstood all their explanations, and persisted in mistaking them for real burglars. Somehow or other the great jape was not panning out quite so magnificently as Buster and Co. had hoped.

I drew Reggie Pitt aside as the Monks were being attended to.

"I can't help feeling a bit sorry for 'em," I said, with a chuckle. "After all their trouble they get this! But we've got to be stern—we've got to turn this jape absolutely against them."

"Haven't we done that already?" asked Reggie.

"Partly," I agreed. "But if a thing's worth doing at all, it's worth doing well, as some wiseacre once remarked. Now, I suggest we cast Buster and Co. down into the dungeons deep—"

"Down where?" said Pitt, staring.

"In other words, into the College House cellar," I explained. "We'll keep up the fiction that we take 'em for real crooks, and tell 'em that we're going to get the police. Having shut the poor beggars in the cellar, we'll scoot back to bed and return to our interrupted dreams."

Reggie looked doubtful.

"And leave the Monks in the cellar all night?" he said. "H'm! Seems a bit too thick—"

"My dear ass, you appear to be half asleep still," I broke in. "We'll leave the ropes a bit loose on two of the chaps—so that they can work themselves free after about twenty minutes. These fellows need a lesson," I added sternly. "We can't let them off too lightly."

Pitt grinned.

"Good wheeze," he said approvingly. "All right—it's a go."

By this time Boots and his unlucky companions had been securely bound up, and were standing in a line, looking very sheepish. Their great jape against the Ancient House had failed miserably.

"I say, you chaps, chuck it!" said Boots. "We've failed, and we admit. What's the good of keeping up this giddy farce? We give you best—"

"Silence!" I commanded sternly. "Still trying to throw dust into our eyes, eh? You do it very well, my man, but it won't work! This pretence of being College House fellows is ridiculous! We're going to treat you drastically!"

Bob Christine groaned.

"Oh, get it over!" he said resignedly. "We asked for it, any way!"



As Pitt and I grappled with him the mask slipped down. Our prisoner was no Monk, but a real crook!

"Handforth!" I said crisply. "I'll have you in charge of the prisoners."

"Good!" said Handforth. "But what's the wheeze? What have I got to do with the fatheads, anyhow?"

"March them downstairs, out through the side door, and then across the Triangle," I replied. "They won't kick up a row—for their own sakes. Pitt and I will slip down first, and do some scouting, to see if the coast is clear. Take the prisoners straight into the College House cellars—"

"The cellars!" howled Boots, aghast.

"Yes, you burgling crook—the cellars!" I repeated curtly. "And there you will be left—you and your gang!"

"Left to rot in the dungeons!" said Pitt impressively. "This is what comes of trying to crack the crib! You'll be eaten by rats before morning!"

"You will be left down in the cellars," I continued, giving Pitt a severe glance. "The police must be informed, and in due course you will be handed over, and thrust into a cell! Enough! Let the work proceed!"

Reggie Pitt and I left the dormitory, grinning.

It was just as well that we should go first, for it was still on the right side of midnight, and one or two of the masters were rather given to late hours. It would be the height of misfortune if Handforth and their prisoners were stopped by some wide awake master.

But by seeing that the way was clear in advance, there would be no possibility of this unfortunate contretemps.

Reggie and I lost no time in getting downstairs, and a few moments later we emerged

into the open, after unbolting the side door. The cold night wind blew into our faces as we started across the Triangle.

"My hat! It's a bit chilly!" murmured Pitt, with a shiver.

"You didn't expect it to be hot, did you?" I asked. "Don't forget it's the beginning of December, my lad, and—Hullo!"

I broke off, came to a sudden halt, and stared into the gloom.

"A ghost, or something?" asked Pitt blandly.

"A shadow, anyway," I replied tensely. "Look there, just over by the gym. Another of those giddy Monks, I expect.

it tried to escape. And a moment later we were clutching at him.

"I knew it!" I said breathlessly. "Masked and everything!"

But even as I spoke the words I instinctively felt that something was wrong here. The figure was masked, without a doubt—in very much the same manner as Christine and Co. had been masked, but he was bigger.

In fact, I abruptly realised that he was too big to be a junior, and as Pitt and I grappled with him, the mask slipped down. In the gloom, we caught sight of an evil face.

Our prisoner was no Monk; but a real crook!

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We can't allow him to roam about loose. Come on—we'll round the beggar up!"

"Lead on, O chief!" murmured Pitt.

We slipped across the Triangle, and I had momentarily lost sight of the shadowy figure. I was pausing, irresolutely, when I saw a slight movement close to the fountain.

"There he is!" I muttered tensely.

We hurled ourselves forward, and before the fellow could get away, we were upon him. Pitt had cunningly slipped round to the other side of the fountain, and had arrived just in time to cut off the figure as

CHAPTER III.

THE PERUVIAN TREASURE!



DR. MALCOLM STAFFORD looked up, startled.

"But, my dear Mr. Lee, this—this treasure is fabulous!" he exclaimed almost huskily. "These diamonds!

I do not pretend to be an expert, but the veriest novice would recognise these stones as extraordinary specimens. And the emeralds! Upon my soul! I am amazed!"

Nelson Lee smiled.

"I thought you would be astonished, at

any rate, Doctor," he said. "Quite a pretty little collection, eh?"

"A staggering collection, Mr. Lee!"

"I have handled precious stones on many an occasion; but I would not like to compute the value of this treasure," went on Nelson Lee. "Hundreds of thousands, Dr. Stafford—possibly over a million. Some of these emeralds are the most wonderful stones I have ever seen."

"And you say that this astonishing collection belongs to a Spaniard?"

"Yes," replied Lee. "To be exact, to Don Sebastien Santos, of El Camino. According to his very interesting story, this entire collection was brought over from Peru by one of the worthy Don's ancestors. Known as the Treasure of Don Santos, these precious stones have been the pride and glory of my client's Spanish castle. He begged of me to assist him—"

"You have succeeded in the most astounding way, Mr. Lee," said the Head.

They were seated in Dr. Stafford's study, and the hour was rather late. The school, in fact, lay silent and sleeping—at least, so Nelson Lee and the Head assumed. As I have already described, a few fellows, at least, were decidedly wakeful.

"My success in this enterprise was largely a matter of luck," said Nelson Lee, in reply to Dr. Stafford's comment. "If you are interested, doctor, I will give you a few details of the affair."

"I shall be intensely charmed to hear the story," said the Head, who always delighted to listen to the famous detective, when the latter was relating some of his experiences.

Lee lit his pipe, and lay back in the comfortable armchair.

"For a moment we will leave the Don Santos Treasure," he said. "And I will tell you of a certain little incident that occurred on the night of the recent wreck."

"You mean, when that steamer was battered to pieces off Shingle Head?"

"Exactly," replied Lee. "The vessel was the *Islington*, a fairly large cargo boat which had been plying for some years between London and the Portuguese ports. On her last voyage, which proved so disastrous, she had left Lisbon with a general cargo, bound for London. As you already know, she was driven ashore during the gale, and went to pieces on the rocks. Fortunately, the bulk of her crew were saved."

The Head nodded.

"Entirely owing to your wonderful courage, Mr. Lee," he said, admiringly. "Yes, indeed, I do know the story. Who in this district does not? At the risk of your life you swam through the dreadful smother of breakers, and carried a line on to the unhappy vessel—"

"We need not go into all that," interrupted Lee hastily. "My desire is to tell you something that will come as news. The story of the wreck and the rescue of the crew is now an old one. My small part in

the affair has, I am afraid, been greatly over-rated."

"Modesty," smiled the Head, "is a virtue."

"You will remember that the *Islington*—as the ship was named—carried two passengers," continued Lee. "These were reported missing, and are even now believed to be dead."

"Why, do you suspect that they escaped with their lives?"

"I more than suspect—I know," replied the detective grimly. "You are already aware of the fact that I reached the ship's deck with the life-line. Well, whilst seeking shelter from the breaking waves, I happened to meet one of these passengers. At the moment he was remonstrating with an officer, because the latter would not allow him to go below."

"No doubt the officer had a good reason—"

"The very best, for the cabins and corridors below deck were already flooded. But this passenger was in a state of wild excitement, and his desire to reach his cabin was little better than a frenzy. I was astonished, for, I recognised the man as Caleb Droone."

"Droone?" repeated the Head musingly. "I seem to have heard that name before."

"That is not surprising, considering that Caleb Droone has figured in the newspapers on many occasions," said Lee drily. "He is one of the cleverest criminals that Scotland Yard has ever had to deal with. He is known as the Night Owl, and he has gathered a number of expert criminals under his banner, and for a considerable time they have been operating as the Alliance of Thirteen."

Dr. Stafford whistled.

"To be sure!" he said. "Yes, I remember now—although to be quite frank, I take very little interest in the police court reports in my daily newspaper. And it was this man, Droone, whom you saw on the deck of the doomed steamer?"

"Yes," replied Lee. "What was more, Droone, recognised me—and nearly succeeded in sending me to Eternity. He attacked me, and with the assistance of an unlucky wave, he pitched me overboard. As you know, I got ashore in safety, and Droone and his fellow passengers were not heard of again."

The Head looked puzzled.

"The names of the passengers were given in the reports, and I do not remember Droone before being referred to—" he began.

"You will understand, of course, that Droone was using an alias," said Lee. "He escaped, of course; but it suited his purpose better to be assumed dead. For, down in one of the cabins of that sunken steamer, lay this treasure which now stands on the table before us."

"Dear me!" said the Head. "You mean—"

"Droone was the man who burgled El Camino Castle, and made off with such valuable booty," said Lee. "You can

readily understand his anxiety on the stricken ship—knowing the treasure to be below, and finding the way barred. I may tell you at once that Droone lost no time in making active preparations to recover the collection from the sunken ship.”

“But not openly, surely?”

“Oh, no,” replied Lee. “Droone’s activities were entirely secret, and not a soul along the coast knew a word about them. I need not bore you with full details of all the subsequent happenings. But while Droone was active, I was by no means idle.”

“That goes without saying,” smiled Dr. Stafford.

“I had been puzzled regarding the Night Owl’s anxiety to reach that sunken cabin,” proceeded Nelson Lee. “But after Don Santos had visited me, with a tale of his woes, I had no difficulty in putting two and two together. Indeed, the thing was perfectly obvious. The climax came several hours ago—this very evening.”

“I am interested to hear how you obtained the treasure, Mr. Lee.”

The Head listened, entranced, as the detective gave him an account of the night’s adventures—how Lee had dived to the wreck wearing a special apparatus; how Caleb Droone had attempted to murder Lee below water; and how the latter had not only escaped with his life, but with the coveted treasure into the bargain.

Even after leaving the water, Nelson Lee had not been immune from attack. For the Night Owl had sent out his men to waylay the detective on the road back to the school. Even this enterprise had failed and Droone was foiled. Nelson Lee had the stolen collection, and was safe within the walls of St. Frank’s.

“A most remarkable story, sir,” declared the Head, at length. “It is well that I knew nothing of this earlier, or I should have been worrying for your safety.”

Nelson Lee laughed.

“That is why I left you in ignorance of my activities,” he said. “To-morrow, of course, I shall run up to London, and deliver this dangerous prize into the hands of Don Santos.”

“That will be a great relief,” said the Head, with a trace of worry. “For, to tell you the truth, I am by no means easy in mind.”

Nelson Lee read Dr. Stafford’s thoughts.

“You believe that the Alliance men might attempt another attack?” he asked.

“Well, I must acknowledge that the idea came into my head,” said Dr. Stafford. “These wretches know that you are here—and they know that the treasure is here.”

“There is, of course, a possibility——” began Nelson Lee.

“Pardon me for interrupting, Mr. Lee; but I have a suggestion to offer,” put in the Head. “You admit the possibility of these rogues breaking into the school. Don’t you think it would be a wise act on your part

to get out your racing car, and make all speed for London?”

“The plan had occurred to me, of course,” said Lee slowly. “But I deemed it wiser to remain here.”

“But the risk, my dear sir,” protested the Head. “The risk—not only to yourself; but to our boys—to the whole household in general! Isn’t it tempting fate a little too boldly?”

“Of two evils, doctor, I must choose the lesser,” replied Lee. “And after full consideration, I considered that a journey to London in the darkness would be not only rash; but positively perilous.”

“H’m! The position is certainly difficult,” said the Head, frowning.

“Here, in the school, the treasure is quite safe,” continued Lee. “This is a big establishment, Dr. Stafford, and even the Night Owl would pause before making any attempt to break in. And what if, in desperation, he does set his men to attack the school?”

“I tremble to picture the result!”

“Nonsense!” laughed Lee. “There is certainly no need to tremble, doctor. Any such attack must necessarily be furtive and stealthy, for the Alliance of Thirteen would not dare to arouse the whole school. With some hundreds of boys active, there would be utterly no hope of getting away with the treasure. And when it comes to stealth, I fancy I can beat these rascals at their own game. I need hardly tell you that I shall remain wakeful throughout the night, guarding this prize against any chance of marauders.”

The Head looked somewhat relieved.

“Upon the whole, perhaps, your decision is wise,” he commented.

“If, on the other hand, I had elected to make straight for London by car,” continued Lee. “I should most assuredly have played into Caleb Droone’s hands. He has been hoping for some such activity, and has no doubt stationed half his men in ambush. They will keep a fruitless vigil, and a cold one. These fellows welcome the darkness, for it is their ally. In full daylight I shall be able to make the journey to London with far less possibility of attack.”

The Head raised his eyebrows.

“Then you think it likely that they might even attack you in the morning?” he asked.

“I shall be most surprised if I reach London without some little adventure,” replied Lee drily. “But in the full light of day it will take better men than these to outwit me. And now, Dr. Stafford, I think I will go to my own study—since I have kept you up to an unusually late hour already.”

“Not at all,” protested the Head. “I have kept myself up, Mr. Lee—and, indeed, I feel inclined to keep you company for a while. My anxiety is still somewhat acute——”

He broke off abruptly, for Lee was on his feet, having jumped up suddenly. And

now the detective was standing in a tense, listening attitude.

"Good Heavens!" muttered the Head. "You—you heard something?"

"A scuffle, or some such noise!" replied Lee softly. "Wait a moment, doctor. Please do not alarm yourself—and remain here."

Before Dr. Stafford could reply, Nelson Lee slipped to the door, passed out, and ran down the short passage to the outer exit. He pulled back the latch, and a moment later emerged into the Triangle.

It was very gloomy out there, but in spite of this, Lee managed to detect two figures grappling with a third over by the fountain. And a few words came floating across.

"That's it, Reggie—hold him!"

"He's—he's a real crook! My hat! We'd better yell——"

Lee raced across the Triangle, and he arrived in the nick of time. For, as it will be easily guessed, those two figures were Reggie Pitt and myself. And we were having quite an exciting time with the mysterious figure that we had taken to be a disguised Monk.

But at close quarters we had found the fellow to be a wiry, sinewy man—a desperate looking specimen who fought us without scruples. He kicked, scratched, and cursed violently under his breath as Reggie and I tried to bear him to the ground.

There's no doubt at all that we should have lost the rascal if Nelson Lee had not come up at that critical moment. For, strong as we were, we were no match for this desperate criminal.

He had practically broken away, and Pitt was reeling back from the effects of a savage kick, when Nelson Lee rushed up.

"Thank goodness you've come, sir!" I gasped, recognising him at once. "Quick—he's a burglar, or something——"

Nelson Lee wasted no time with questions. He grabbed the man, swung him round with astonishing ease, and with a neat trip he had him sprawling on the ground, flat on his face.

In an instant, Pitt and I were on the fellow, holding him down, and breathing hard. I had already guessed that this man was a member of the Alliance of 13. For I had helped the gov'nor to recover that treasure from the sea bed, and knew all the details concerning the affair. Indeed, Lee had half hinted that he was expecting some activity from Droone's gang.

But in the diversion of Buster and Co.'s jape, I had quite overlooked the Alliance of 13. But now the whole thing came back fresh into my mind.

"That's better!" said Nelson Lee calmly. "If you'll stay just where you are, boys, I'll soon have this gentleman roped up effectively. The police, I am sure, will be glad to renew their acquaintance with him."

"Go easy, mister!" whined the prisoner.

"I was on'y tryin' to find a bit of grub! Blokes like us has a 'ard time of it——"

"Trying to make out that you're a tramp, eh?" I said grimly. "That won't do, my son! Tramps don't creep about wearing masks! That's the idea, sir—a piece of cord round his ankles will keep him fine."

The cord was swiftly tied, and all chance of the fellow putting up a further fight was rendered impossible. Nelson Lee was just attending to the man's hands when there came a sudden cry from the school buildings.

It was a peculiar, gasping shout—and even though it was muffled, I recognised the voice as the Head's. And the sound came from the direction of Dr. Stafford's study.

I have seen Nelson Lee act swiftly on many an occasion—but never so swiftly as he acted now. At the first sound of that cry, he shot round and raced for the door in one burst of speed.

And as he ran, the detective roundly abused himself for leaving the Head alone. But at the time he had never suspected for a moment that Dr. Stafford would be in any peril.

And Lee remembered that treasure of Don Santos—lying openly on the Head's desk!

He dashed into the stone porch, was through the doorway in a flash, and a moment later he arrived in the Headmaster's study—the door of which stood wide open.

Nelson Lee stood there, grim and tense.

For Dr. Malcolm Stafford lay prostrate on the floor, still and silent. And the treasure of Don Santos had vanished!

CHAPTER IV.

THE NIGHT OWL FALLS!



"**M**ARCH!" said Handforth, in a stern voice.

"Look here, you asses——"

"March!" repeated Handforth curtly.

John Busterfield Boots and his disconsolate companions marched. Obviously, it was useless to argue. The Fossils had made their plans, and were not to be swayed.

And Boots and Co., helpless in their bonds, were marched out of the Remove dormitory, and along the corridor towards the rear staircase. Handforth led the way, his intention being to emerge into the open by means of the side door. There was no sense in tempting fate by going through that part of the Ancient House which might contain a prowling master.

"And don't make any noise, either!" said Handforth, with unnecessary emphasis. "The first chap who opens his mouth will be squashed! I don't want any argument, either!"

Considering that nobody was arguing,

and that the whole company was quiet, Handforth's remarks were entirely unnecessary. He, indeed, was the only fellow who was making any noise. But he felt that he had to show his authority in some way. Being leader of the party was just suitable for him.

Fortunately, the side door was reached without any untoward incident. So far the juniors had not been heard—their presence abroad at this hour of the night was not suspected.

Handforth softly drew the bolts, and turned the key. The door swung open, and the whole party emerged into the dimness of the Triangle. And something happened which took the juniors completely by surprise.

As the party stealthily set off towards the College House, a dim figure came shooting round the angle of the building. It was a man, tearing along as though demons were at his heels.

He apparently wore rubber-soled shoes, for he made no sound, and he clutched something under his left arm. The thing happened so swiftly that everybody was unprepared.

The man himself, tearing round the corner, obviously believed the coast to be clear. And he ran full tilt into a crowd of juniors. He collided with them so violently that he not only flung three of them to the ground, but sprawled headlong himself.

"What the dickens——" began Handforth blankly.

He broke off, mainly because the runner, sitting up, gave vent to a string of swear words. This proclaimed him at once to be a stranger—and not too gentlemanly at that.

"He's a burglar!" gasped De Valerie.

"Great Scott!"

"Grab him!"

"Hold him down!"

"By George! He's a blackguard, anyway, roared Handforth.

And, without waiting to ask any questions, Handforth swung round with his famous right in the nick of time. The man had just got to his feet, and was on the point of dashing away—still clutching that object under his arm—which the juniors now recognised as an attache case.

Crash!

Handforth's fist caught the fellow in the neck, and he reeled over, the attache case thudding to the ground, and rolling clear. Little did Handforth and Co. realise how very opportune this meeting was.

For this man, it need not be explained, was the rascal who had attacked Dr. Stafford, and who had decamped with the precious booty. It was sheer ill-luck that had caused him to wend his footsteps round this particular angle of the building—sheer ill-luck for himself.

By the time he picked himself up, the

attache case was in Handforth's grasp. And the man realised the utter futility of attempting to get it back. For here there were a dozen boys, at least.

And half of them were even now advancing to the attack. Two juniors had already grappled with him. The man had to do some quick thinking—and he lost no time. Cursing savagely, he broke free from the clutch of the juniors, and dashed away. It was his only course.

But his feelings were certainly bitter.

For Droone had promised five hundred pounds to the man who secured the Don Santos Treasure, and conveyed it safely into the Night Owl's hands. And this fellow, having succeeded, was nearly mad with chagrin at being foiled by a number of petty schoolboys!

But his liberty was more precious to him than the reward. Once captured, and handed over to the police, there were many outstanding charges against him which he would have to face. And the prospect of penal servitude was not alluring.

He made for freedom.

But even this was not so easy, for the juniors were after him like a pack of hounds on a hot scent. Any hope of regaining the attache case was quite at an end. It was in Handforth's grasp.

And the hero of Study D made no attempt to join in the chase.

He instinctively knew that this little leather case contained something valuable—otherwise the man would never have been so desperate. He had come from the Triangle, and Handforth wanted to find out what had been going on there. Handforth was always inquisitive.

He turned, and sped round the corner, and caught sight of three figures near the fountain. He ran up to them, and found that one figure was that of a man, and he was lying helpless on the ground. The others were Reggie Pitt and myself.

"Oh, here you are!" panted Handforth.

"Yes, we've collared a burglar——" I began.

"Well I'm jiggered! We nearly collared one too!" said Handforth. "But the rotter got away—although I grabbed this attache case!"

I gazed at it sharply.

"The treasure of Don Santos!" I exclaimed.

"The which?" said Handforth bluntly.

"Never mind now—something's happened to the Head, I believe!" I said, in a tense voice. "Stay here with Reggie while I buzz indoors. I'll take that attache case, Handy."

I had it out of his hand before he realised my intent, and dashed off.

"Hi! Come back!" roared Handforth wrathfully. "I'm taking charge of that case—not you! It's likely I'm going to let you take the credit——"

"Don't be an ass—go back to Reggie!" I panted.

But Handforth wouldn't be denied—he

followed me. Not that it mattered much. Pitt would have no difficulty in holding his prisoner—for the latter was now so securely bound that he needed no holding.

I was filled with vague alarm concerning the Headmaster. That cry of his had been very significant. And Handforth's story, although brief, was even more significant.

For it told me, in a flash, that one of Droone's agents had attacked the Head, and had made off with the prize—which Nelson Lee and I had striven so hard to obtain. For I had assisted the gov'nor all along in this case.

I hurried indoors, and when I entered

hold back. We didn't want to interrupt just yet.

"That's better, Doctor," said Nelson Lee gently, as the Head sat down. "No, no! Don't alarm yourself—"

"But the attache case, Mr. Lee—the treasure!" muttered the Head, in a husky voice. "That infernal rogue struck me down! It was all so swift—so abrupt—that I had no opportunity of resisting."

"It was unwise of me to leave you," declared Nelson Lee. "If I had had all my wits about me I should have taken some precaution."

Dr Stafford shook his head.



Nelson Lee stood there, grim and tense, for Dr. Malcolm Stafford lay prostrate on the floor, still and silent. And the treasure of Don Santos had vanished!

the Head's study, I was immensely relieved to find Nelson Lee assisting Dr. Stafford into a chair. The Head, then, was not so badly hurt as I had at first feared.

Lee, indeed, had been quite alarmed upon finding Dr. Stafford prone on the floor. At first the detective had suspected that the attack had been a grievous one.

But a moment's examination told him that the Head was only slightly dazed. With a little assistance he was able to get to his feet, and it was not long before he returned to full consciousness of his position.

And just as Lee was helping the Head into a chair, Handforth and I appeared in the doorway. But we paused. I glanced at Handforth, indicating that he should

"I blame myself entirely," he declared. "Upon my soul! I realise, now, that I was little better than a dolt! This man was masked—he dashed in the doorway, and I stood there, facing him, too surprised to act. I should have cried out at once, of course—but instead I asked the fellow what he wanted."

"And he?"

"Why, the man suddenly caught sight of that attache case on the table, and made a dash for it," replied the Head. "I divined his intention at once, but before I could grasp the case, the wretch hurled himself at me, and delivered a blow which caught me in the chest, and I fear that I fainted. I have an idea I made a slight outcry."

"Yes, it was that which brought me so promptly," replied Lee.

"Alas, too late!" muttered the Head brokenly. "I am ashamed of myself, Mr. Lee—a man of my stamina to succumb so easily! I must be getting even older than I had imagined!"

"I only regret, Dr. Stafford that you should have been subjected to such danger," said Lee. "I must blame myself for the entire series of circumstances. And I am intensely relieved to find that your injury is only slight."

"But those diamonds, Mr. Lee—the emeralds, and the other precious stones?" asked Dr. Stafford. "They are gone! And after all your trouble——"

"If you will permit me, sir, I will leave you," said Nelson Lee. "There may still be hope."

"Lots of it, sir," I put in, feeling that it was about time for me to speak. Lee turned, and glanced at the doorway, where Handforth and I stood.

"Looking for this, sir?" I asked calmly.

"Why, good gracious!" exclaimed the guv'nor. "Is it possible——"

He broke off sharply, crossed to my side in two strides, and took the shabby attache case out of my hand. Quickly springing back the catch, he opened the lid and looked inside.

"Bravo, Nipper!" he said delightedly. "Things are not so bad, after all! See, Dr. Stafford—our friend, Mr. Droone, has not been so successful as we feared. The treasure is here."

"Upon my soul!" ejaculated the Head, still flustered.

"Where do I come in, sir?" demanded Handforth, striding forward with an air of importance. And what's the idea of the 'bravo, Nipper'? He didn't do anything! I got that case from the crook!"

"That's right, sir," I agreed. "But Handy's such an impulsive chap that he didn't give me time to finish. Of course, it was partly accidental, but that doesn't make any difference to the satisfactory result."

Handforth glared.

"Accidental!" he roared. "Why, you silly josses, I deliberately grabbed that case—I scented that it was full of loot! I can always detect swag! I suppose it must be my investigator's instinct!"

"Quite possibly, Handforth—quite possibly," said Nelson Lee drily. "The fact remains, however, that our friends, the enemy, have had their work for nothing. And now I should like to know why it is that you boys are out at this time of the night, fully dressed?"

Handforth looked suddenly alarmed.

"Well, the fact is, we—we—— I mean, Nipper and I—a few others, too, if it comes to that—— You see, we—we just happened——"

Handforth paused, at a loss for words.

"Well?" said Nelson Lee grimly. "I am waiting!"

"I say, guv'nor, go easy!" I protested. "If it hadn't been for us, things might have been pretty bad. Can't you just wink your eye, and pretend that we haven't appeared on the scene? We'll whizz back to bed right off."

"By George! Who said so?" snorted Handforth. "What about these crooks? I'm going off on the trail! I'm going to pick up the scent——"

"I regret, Handforth, that I can permit no such activities on your part," interrupted Nelson Lee. "Under the circumstances, I am willing to let this matter drop—without further questioning. But you must return to your dormitory at once."

Handforth opened his mouth to speak, but I grabbed his arm.

"This way," I said briskly. "Good-night, sir!"

"Good-night, my boys!"

We passed out, and Nelson Lee, glancing at the Head, saw that the latter was smiling.

"I approve of your decision, Mr. Lee," said Dr. Stafford. "It would indeed have been hard on the boys if you had punished them. Some mischievous escapade, I presume—which these junior boys so delight in. Outrageous, of course—but their appearance in the Triangle was undoubtedly opportune."

"Far more than they even realised," agreed Nelson Lee. "But I am concerned regarding your condition, sir——"

"I am better—much better," declared the Head. "It was, after all, a slight blow. I was more startled than hurt. But we must take a care—— Come in!"

The door opened, and I put my head inside again.

"Sorry to interrupt, sir, but what about this fellow we collared in the Triangle?" I asked. "Pitt's still standing guard over him, you know. And the man's getting troublesome."

"Dear me! A prisoner?" asked the Head, starting.

"Yes—I will attend to him at once," said Nelson Lee. "Nipper, you had better remain here until I return."

The guv'nor gave me a significant look, and I understood perfectly. I was to guard that attache-case, in the event of any other attack—which, although possible, was most unlikely.

Nelson Lee went off, but returned sooner than I had anticipated. He explained that he had locked the prisoner away, placed Phipps on guard—Phipps having been aroused from slumber for this duty—and had phoned to the police.

"Finished with me now, sir?" I asked hopefully.

"Yes, Nipper."

"You don't think there's any chance of further trouble, sir?" I inquired. "I'd like

to lend a hand, you know. Just say the word, sir—"

"I appreciate your offer, Nipper, but I think your time will be far better spent in bed," put in Lee gently. "There will, I fancy, be no further activity to-night. The enemy has failed, and he would hardly be unwise enough to tempt Providence again."

So I had to go off to bed—although I felt convinced that the gov'nor's words had been mainly spoken for Dr. Stafford's peace of mind. Nelson Lee actually suspected that Caleb Droone was no means beaten.

I returned to the Remove dormitory rather thoughtful. Buster Boots & Co., of course, had been released from their bonds, and the programme for their discomfiture had been abandoned.

When I arrived in the dormitory I found Handforth talking swiftly and bitterly.

"A nice thing!" he exclaimed, in a sour voice. "A nice thing, I must say! I recover the giddy spoils, and all the thanks I get is to be sent to bed! Who said there was any gratitude in this world?"

"What's the grievance, old man?" I asked, with a chuckle.

"Fathead!" snorted Handforth. "Don't ask silly questions! Here's a real detective case—the whole giddy school is surrounded with crooks—and I'm not allowed to do any investigating!"

"We must all have our portion of sadness in this life, old son," I said. "This is some of yours. But why grumble? Didn't you recover the precious attache-case?"

"Well, of course, I came out pretty strong there!" admitted Handforth. "The crook fairly hurled himself at me—a fierce, savage attack! My mind worked like lightning—"

"I thought I noticed some flashes across the Triangle," remarked Pitt.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You—you funny idiot!" sneered Handforth, deadly calm. "But, of course, I don't expect any credit from you rotters! There was I, grappling with this crook, and like a flash of light it came through my mind that the attache-case must contain something valuable, so, instead of going for the man, I grabbed the case."

"Because that was easier?" asked Tommy Watson.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"No!" hooted Handforth. "I did it because my detective instinct told me that it was of more importance to get the swag than the man."

"Bravo!" said Pitt, clapping his hands. "What about the second verse?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"The truth is, Handy met with a big piece of luck," said Church incautiously. "I was there, and I can tell you exactly what happened. We were taking Boots & Co. across the Triangle, when the crook whizzed round the corner like a Marathon runner. He

and as he got up, Handforth lammed into him with one of his rights! My hat! The rotter went over like a ninepin, and he dropped the attache-case. Handy picked it up, and there you are. The crook scooted."

Handforth turned upon Church fiercely.

"You traitor!" he hissed. "You know as well as I do that all the credit belongs to me! Take that!"

Biff!

Church took it—a fearful swipe in the chest, which sent him reeling. But Church, feeling that the blow was utterly unjustified, turned red with wrath. Besides, half the chaps were looking on, and Church felt that it was just about time to retaliate. He recovered himself, and dashed forward.

Crash!

Church's fist caught Handforth on the chin, and Handforth nearly turned a complete somersault. He finally sat up, gave a sickly look round, and his eyes were rather bleary.

"Who—who did that?" he asked dreamily.

"I did!" snorted Church. "And for two pins I'll do it again! I'm about fed up with your sudden swipes!"

"Hear, hear!" said McClure, with delighted approval.

"That's the way!" said Pitt judicially. "Down with bullying! Why not do the job thoroughly, and black both his eyes? Go it, my sons! Let him taste his own medicine for once!"

Handforth slowly rose to his feet, rubbing his chin. He fixed a glare upon Church that almost made that junior quiver. But Church braced himself together, and suddenly drew himself up. He returned the glare with interest.

"Go on—hit me!" he said defiantly. "If you do, I'll smash you to bits!"

Handforth nearly choked.

"You—you'll smash me?" he asked amazedly.

"Yes, I will!" roared Church, gaining confidence.

"Yes, by Jove, and I'll help him!" said McClure, squaring up.

"Blood is about to be spilt," said Pitt solemnly. "Any pails handy? Better find a few mops, too—there'll be a heap of remains to wipe up before long! It seems that Handforth is about to make a swift and inglorious exit!"

"We're fed up with your bullying!" exclaimed Church hotly.

"My—my bullying?" gasped Handforth. "Why, you fathead, I'm dead against bullying! If I ever catch a chap at that game, I biff him! I regard a bully as a horrible cad!"

"You seem to have got a rotten opinion of yourself!" sneered Church.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"I say, you chaps, chuck it——" I began.

"Not likely!" snapped McClure. "I'm supporting Church. For weeks we've put

up with Handy's stray biffs, and now we make a stand!"

"Two against one!" said Handforth sourly.

"No—we'll take you one at a time," retorted Church. "Unless you apologise, we'll fight you."

"Apologise!" said Handforth, in a weak voice.

"It's a rotten habit of yours to lash out without warning!" said Church indignantly. "Like sheep we've stood it for weeks—but the time has come when we'll stand it no longer!"

"It wouldn't matter if you gave us a chance to get ready!" put in McClure.

"We'd know what was coming, then."

Handforth took a deep breath.

"By George!" he said thickly.

He stared at his chums half dazedly. As a general rule, they were his slaves—they consented to every little whim of his with scarcely a murmur. Church and McClure were not cowards—they took many blows from Handforth because they knew that at heart he was one of the very best. And it saved a lot of trouble to curb the desire for retaliation.

But once in a while they broke out, and Handforth was brought to a full realisation of his sins.

"By George!" he repeated. "So—so you defy me?"

"Yes!"

"Well, perhaps I was a bit hasty," said Edward Oswald, with surprising meekness. "Goodness knows, I don't want to fight you! I don't want to see you chaps in the sanatorium for a week!"

"You'd be the one to go into the sanny!" snapped McClure.

"Or the cemetery!" put in Pitt.

"So you think you could whack me, eh?" snorted Handforth. "Oh, what's the good of this rot? When I'm wrong I'll admit I'm wrong. I'm not one of those obstinate asses who always think they're in the right! I'll be a bit more careful about biffing you fellows in future! Let's shake hands and finish with it!"

He held out his fist, and Church and McClure grabbed it readily. The other juniors looked on, grinning. They didn't quite realise the courage and decency of Handforth's action.

For it costs something to admit one's self in the wrong. Handforth was never slow to acknowledge his faults, once they were pointed out to him clearly.

Church and McClure were wise—they

dropped the subject completely, without the slightest sign of crowing.

And, at length, the Remove dormitory settled itself down to sleep. Not that the events of this exciting night were over yet!

CHAPTER V.

LIKE THIEVES IN THE NIGHT!



CLICK!

Softly, Nelson Lee turned the key in the lock of his study door. Then, in complete darkness, he walked over to the window, and raised the blind. This made no perceptible difference to the gloom of the room, for the night was black. But after a while Nelson Lee could see the outline of the window.

He sat himself in an easy chair. And he was in such a position that he could watch the window in comfort, while lounging back among the cushions. There was no reason why he should not keep his vigil in ease.

The detective had no fear of dozing off. When he made up his mind to keep awake, sleep was out of the question. All Lee's faculties were on the stretch; he was keen, eager and ready for anything that might transpire.

For he felt sure that Caleb Droone would not allow the night to pass without making another attempt to regain that treasure that had already caused him such worry and anxiety.

And Nelson Lee was waiting—prepared.

The Head, after being reassured by the detective, had gone off to bed. But there would be no rest for Lee on this fateful night.

His eyes had grown accustomed to the gloom; he could now see the outline of the window with surprising distinctness; he could even make out the dim shape of the chestnuts in the Triangle.

He had no actual hope of capturing the Night Owl himself, but he thought it possible that he would nab another of Droone's men. And Lee was concerned, too, about the safety of the Don Santos collection.

Once it was handed over in safety to the Spaniard, Lee's responsibility would be over, and his case would be complete. But until the treasure was actually delivered, Lee would need all his vigilance.

He could well understand Caleb Droone's state of mind.

This man had secured the prize—the most valuable a burglar had "lifted" within a decade—with infinite pains. The Night Owl had done his work patiently and thoroughly, and he had brought the spoils to England, to be disposed of through channels which the ordinary individual knows nothing about.

It had been bad enough when the Islington had sunk to the bottom of the sea off Shingle Head; but even this disaster had

not daunted the master crook. With his deliberate coolness he had set to work to recover the prize from the ocean bed.

And then, just as Droone had made all preparations, Nelson Lee had stepped in and carried off the treasure from beneath the Night Owl's nose! Small wonder that the man was grim and relentless!

Moreover, Droone new well enough that to-night would probably be the only opportunity for him to act. On the morrow Nelson Lee would hasten to London, and Don Sebastien Santos would take good care that the treasure was placed beyond the reach of the Alliance of Thirteen.

The minutes sped by, and still Nelson Lee remained in that chair, as silent and as patient as a mummy.

Midnight had chimed out long since, and the time was now getting on for one o'clock. St. Frank's lay silent and asleep. The juniors had all settled down by this time, and the whole school slumbered.

At last one o'clock boomed out solemnly from the old clock tower.

And with the dying away of the throbbing strokes, there came a faint sound from just outside the window of Nelson Lee's study. Nine men out of ten would not have heard it. But Lee made no mistake.

His nerves on the stretch, he caught that tiny sound at once. Instantly he sat slightly forward, tense and expectant.

He waited.

Minutes dragged by, and the silence became oppressive. Even the wind seemed to have died down. A pall of utter stillness hung over the school. There seemed to be an air of impending disaster in the atmosphere itself.

And then, sounding like a pistol-shot in that uncanny quietness, came a click as something metallic touched the window pane. Actually, it was only a slight tap.

Nelson Lee, peering forward, saw the dim form of a man rising slowly upwards. The man pressed his face against the glass, and endeavoured to look into the room.

Apparently he was satisfied that the blind was up and the room empty. He proceeded to manipulate a jemmy, or some such tool, in the vicinity of the catch. It was this tool, evidently, that had accidentally touched the glass as the man placed his hand on the sill.

Nelson Lee did not move a muscle.

He just sat there and watched. He saw the would-be intruder patiently working at the catch. The fellow was an expert, for within two minutes, without making any perceptible sound, his job was done.

The man slowly and cautiously raised the sash.

Lee had guessed that if Droone attempted any entry at all, he would attempt it here. And Lee had guessed right. Perhaps Droone knew that there was a safe in the detective's study—and this safe was the most likely place to find the loot.

For a space of thirty seconds the man stood stock still—listening. And Nelson Lee, sitting there, scarcely breathed. The intruder was satisfied that all was quiet, and he proceeded to climb in.

As he did so, Lee noiselessly arose, and backed away across the room until he was exactly opposite the window. His hand was within reach of the electric-light switch.

But he did not press it down yet.

He still waited, knowing that he had command of the situation. From a hip pocket he drew a small revolver, and silently released the safety catch. He was icily cool, and enjoying the situation immensely. It pleased him to know that his calculations had been correct.

The dim outline against the window made no attempt to move into the room. The man turred, and half leaned out over the sill.

"All clear, Jack," he whispered. "Get a hustle on."

Another form appeared, and also entered.

"What's the good?" he asked, in a growling voice. "It's all very well for the Chief to try this dodge, but we're wasting our time."

"May be—but it's got to be done."

"Lee's not the kind of man to take any chances—especially after that other affair," went on the second intruder. "Does the Chief expect us to find the stuff lying about loose?"

"Oh, shut your face!" snapped the other. "You get on my nerves!"

They turned towards the centre of the room, and as they were in the act of moving cautiously forward, Nelson Lee pressed down the electric light switch.

Click!

The study became flooded with brilliant, dazzling light. Lee was prepared for it, and although the brilliance was blinding for a moment—after the long spell of darkness—he had command of the situation.

"My gosh!" gasped one of the men huskily.

"Hands up, gentlemen—and let me warn you at once that any outcry will be disastrous," said Nelson Lee, in a smooth voice. "Come! I need a little more speed!"

The men—quite smartly dressed fellows—stared at Nelson Lee as though dazed. But they soon recovered their startled wits. And as they stared at Lee the consternation in their eyes turned to sullen anger.

"Thought you'd give us a surprise, eh, Mr. Lee?" snapped one of them.

"I not only thought so—but I rather fancy the surprise was most complete," replied Lee. "I am still waiting—Up, you hound! By Heaven! If you don't obey—"

Both the men shot their hands above their heads. One of them had attempted to slide his fingers towards a hip-pocket. But Nelson

Lee's curt voice, full of grimness, caused the man to abandon this project.

Nelson Lee regarded them calmly.

"You will now back towards the wall on your left hand side," he ordered. "I shall further require you to handcuff yourselves—"

Whizz!

Without the slightest warning, something shot in through the open window from the outer darkness. It caught Nelson Lee between the eyes, and he staggered back with a cry of agony.

"The Chief!" muttered one of the men.

He sprang forward, grappled with Lee, and wrenched the revolver away. At the same moment the second man pushed out his foot and Nelson Lee fell sprawling. His assailants were upon him in a moment, holding him down.

As for the detective himself, he scarcely put up a fight. The agony in his eyes was well-nigh unbearable. And he was blinded—totally blinded—but whether this was temporary or permanent he had no means of knowing.

And he bitterly accused himself of being a fool.

He had realised the possibility of a third man lurking out in the darkness of the Triangle, but he had been prepared for this. Ready as he was for any emergency, however, he had not reckoned upon the trick that had been played. He knew he was safe from any revolver bullet—for the crooks would not dare to fire, for fear of causing an alarm.

With intense relief, he felt the pain subsiding, and already his sight was showing signs of return.

He knew what had happened, although he had seen nothing.

The man outside had flung a small paper pellet—probably from some kind of blow-pipe arrangement, thereby obtaining accurate aim. And the pellet was filled with chemical powder.

This powder, bursting over his face, had entered his eyes. The burning sensation was terrible—indeed, during the first second, Nelson Lee had had the ghastly suspicion that vitriol had been employed.

Through the window came a third figure—this time a man of commanding presence. He was tall, with slightly bent shoulders, and his nose projected from his face not unlike a beak. And the man's eyes were flat—big, strange eyes, with unblinking lids.

In short, Caleb Droone, the Night Owl, himself.

"Good!" he said softly, and in a voice that had utterly no inflexion. "My aim was even better than I had supposed. I regret, Mr. Nelson Lee, that I should have been compelled to resort to such measures, but I am not in a position to take any chances."

"We've got him, Chief," said one of the men. "He's down and out."

"So I observe," said the Night Owl calmly.

Nelson Lee was dragged to his feet and placed in a chair. By this time he had been tied up with thin but strong cord. And a scarf had been bound round his mouth, so that he could make no outcry; but Droone removed this.

Caleb Droone allowed his face to break into a fleeting smile as he noted the detective's red and watering eyes. Lee was just getting his sight back, although the pain was still acute.

"You need have no fear of your eyes, Mr. Lee," said the Night Owl. "The chemical is quite harmless—the action is swift, but temporary. Within an hour your sight will be normal, and to-morrow only a slight swelling will remain to remind you of your present agony."

"You are clever, Mr. Droone," said Nelson Lee evenly. "I must confess that you took me off my guard."

The pair were speaking to one another in calm, level tones—and even with formal politeness. But it was just a pose. Caleb Droone had every reason to hate his enemy, for ever since that shipwreck, Lee had been a thorn in his side. But the criminal gave no sign of the animosity which burned within him.

"We all make mistakes at times," he said smoothly. "And this blunder of yours, Lee, is likely to prove very costly. However, if you are reasonable, I may be inclined to deal lightly with you."

Nelson Lee made no reply to this remark. He knew well enough Droone's object was to regain possession of the Don Santos Collection. Once that valuable prize was in his hands, he would probably deal with his victim drastically. Indeed, Lee knew that murder was in this man's heart.

He had refrained from extreme measures now because the treasure was yet to be found, and, further, murder might be a grave mistake—for such a crime would necessarily bring down the best brains of Scotland Yard. And Caleb Droone in no way desired such publicity.

He went closer to Nelson Lee, and bent lower.

"Where is the Don Santos Collection?" he asked.

"Really, Droone, you surprise me!" replied Nelson Lee mockingly. "A man of your genius—a man of your skill—to come to me with such questions! Surely you are clever enough to find the collection without questioning me?"

"It will not aid you in any way to indulge in these pleasantries," said the Night Owl, his voice becoming harsh. "I ungagged you, Lee, so that you should speak. Remember, at the first outcry the end will be swift!"

"I am under no misapprehension," said Lee.

"Let me again request you to disclose —"

Caleb Droone broke off, for at that moment he had caught sight of the warped, battered attache case—his own property. For an instant his eyes lost their flat expression, and glittered.

The attache case was lying just on the top of Nelson Lee's desk. Apparently, the detective had been so certain that he commanded the situation, that he had refrained from putting the prize within the safe.

The Night Owl stepped across to the desk, grasped the attache case, and opened it. He drew his breath in sharply between his teeth.

The attache case was empty.

CHAPTER VI. CALEB DROONE'S DECISION!



NELSON LEE smiled amusedly.

"Come, come, Droone!" he said.

"Surely you must credit me with just a little common sense. My carelessness would have been criminal if I had left the treasure so easy to your nimble hand."

Caleb Droone turned upon the bound detective.

"We have had enough of this foolery!" he said grimly. "Where is the stuff? Answer me at once, or——"

He paused significantly.

"Or what?" smiled Lee.

"Your exit from this world will be swift and sudden!" snarled the Night Owl.

"Repetition is always tiresome," said Nelson Lee, with perfect composure. "Your threats are amusing, Droone. I am not a village policeman, whom you can frighten into a panic."

Caleb Droone bowed.

"The rebuke was necessary," he exclaimed. "I beg your pardon, Mr. Lee. At the same time, it is as well that you should realise your position."

"I do—quite clearly," said Nelson Lee. "And I realise that the advantages of this little encounter are entirely with me."

"With you?" repeated Droone curtly.

"Exactly. The treasure you seek so urgently is well beyond your grasp, and you can be quite sure I shall do nothing to assist you in your search. You, on your part, will not harm me, for I am the only man in the world who knows where the collection is concealed."

Caleb Droone tightened his lips.

"You are speaking boldly, Mr. Lee," he said grimly. "But you are under a misapprehension. The advantages are not with you—but with me. For I shall force you to speak! I am not the man to be foiled so lightly."

The detective smiled and yawned.

"The conversation is becoming dull," he remarked coolly.

Caleb Droone, although aflame with exasperation and anger, showed no sign of this outwardly. He stood gazing at Lee



He set two of his men to work upon it with special drills—two expert cracksmen, who had conquered many a safe ten times the size of this one. But, clever as they were, they found themselves up against a hard nut here.

for a moment, then abruptly tied the scarf round the detective's mouth.

He turned to his waiting men.

"Carry him outside," he said curtly. "Place him in the car."

The men obeyed swiftly. Between them, they lifted Lee out of the chair, and took him out into the dark Triangle. Then, with much exertion, they carried their burden across to the wall, hoisted him over, and at length deposited him in the back of a big closed car, which was standing on the grass border of the lane without lights.

One man remained with Nelson Lee.

He took his seat beside the detective, and warned him in grim tones that he was "in for a packet." Nelson Lee, knowing Caleb Droone, quite believed this. Any thought of escape was quite out of the question.

Left alone, Lee might, perhaps, have rid himself of his bonds—for he was almost as skilled as the celebrated Houdini when it came to freeing himself from ropes or cords. Nelson Lee had made a study of this art, and on many occasions had gained his liberty through the knowledge.

But with a guardian sitting next to him all idea of getting free was out of the question. Lee could only wait. Perhaps a chance would come later. He had no

real fear that the Night Owl would take drastic action.

Lee smiled rather grimly to himself as he pictured what was taking place within the school. Droone and his remaining men were probably engaged in ransacking the study—and other rooms, too.

Nelson Lee's surmise, in this respect, was correct.

The study had already been turned practically inside out. The result was disappointing, for no sign whatever of the prize had been found. There still remained the safe, and Caleb Droone had regarded this object thoughtfully.

Somehow, he didn't believe that Nelson Lee had placed the Don Santos treasure within the safe. It was, after all, the most obvious place—and Lee was hardly the man to act in that way.

However, after Lee's bedroom had been ransacked in vain, Droone turned to the safe in sheer desperation. He was aware of the fact that the actual hiding place might be in one of a score of rooms. But it was quite impracticable to search the whole school.

Already, he had stayed too long.

The safe, however, presented no difficulties. It was only a small affair, cunningly concealed behind a book-case. Droone imagined it to be just an ordinary safe.

It wasn't!

He set two of his men to work upon it with special drills—two expert cracksmen, who had conquered many a safe ten times the size of this one. But, clever as they were, they found themselves up against a hard nut here.

For this apparently insignificant safe was a proposition such as they had never before encountered. Their costly drills were ruined within the first five minutes. The steel sides of the safe were super-hardened in a manner that was new to these cracksmen.

And, although they worked unceasingly for half-an-hour, the result at the end of this time was precisely nil.

"It's no good, Chief—we're beat!" said one of the men, at length. "This blame thing's no ordinary safe!"

"A charge of dynamite wouldn't do no good, neither!" growled the other man.

Caleb Droone grunted.

"I might have expected something of this sort," he said curtly. "The very strength of this safe convinces me that the treasure is within."

"Yes, and it's likely to remain within, too," said one of the men disgustedly.

"I never see such a safe as this! We can't do a darn thing, Chief! Our drills are busted up, and I don't believe oxy-acetylene would do much good."

The Night Owl bit his lip. It wouldn't have mattered so much if the safe could have been unlocked with a key. For they

might have found this key on Nelson Lee's person.

But it was a combination lock, and only the accurate knowledge of that combination could serve to open the door. It was not Droone's habit to waste time in indecision.

He called his men away, and they left the school as silently and as mysteriously as they had entered. And no alarm had been raised. The rest of the inhabitants of that great College remained slumbering peacefully.

And the Alliance of 13 left empty handed—at least so far as the booty was concerned. But they had Nelson Lee.

Droone gave some curt orders as soon as he arrived at the car. And within a few moments the automobile was gliding silently down the lane, still lightless.

Nelson Lee wondered what was afoot!

But the ride, after all, was not a long one. By taking the quiet by-lanes, the car eventually came out upon the edge of Bannington Moor. And, quite close by, the old ruined mill—known so well to the Remove juniors—reared its rotting sails towards the night sky.

No spot could be more lonely at this hour of the night. On one side lay the black, impenetrable barrier of Bellton Wood, and on the other the moor stretched out in a seemingly limitless expanse. And not a house or a cottage was anywhere within sight or sound.

Nelson Lee was hustled out of the car, carried into the mill, and then hoisted up the short wooden ladder to the first floor. This place was quite dry and habitable. A small electric lamp was switched on, and Caleb Droone lost no time in putting the position to his prisoner.

"I have brought you here, Lee, because I felt that it would have been risky to remain too long at the school," he said frankly. "I know your methods—and I had half a fear that the police might appear at any moment. You generally have a way of taking full precautions."

"But this time, Droone, I miscalculated," said Nelson Lee, the scarf being removed from his mouth. "Well, what do you propose? Personally, I see no benefit in this little jaunt. The spot is quite private, but you are no better off here than you were in my own study."

"We will see about that!" said Droone harshly. "Where is the treasure?"

"I regret my inability to enlighten you."

"Enough of this mock politeness!" snarled the Night Owl fiercely. "I am willing enough to keep up the farce to a certain extent—but my patience will brook no further delay."

"Then you are indeed unfortunate!"

"By Heaven! I'll make you change that mocking tone of yours!" exclaimed Droone hotly. "You will answer my questions, or

the results will be even more horrible than you can imagine!"

"We are getting quite melodramatic!" murmured Nelson Lee.

Slap!

The Night Owl caught Lee's right cheek with his open palm.

"I scarcely thought you capable of such a coward's blow, Droone," said the detective quietly. "I shall remember it—and one day I shall repay you. At the moment I am at a disadvantage."

The Night Owl breathed hard.

"This is no time for formalities!" he snarled. "Answer my questions, hang you! Is the Don Santos Collection in your safe?"

"Of what use would my answer be?" retorted Lee. "If I say 'yes,' you will set me down as a liar—and if I say 'no,' the result will be the same. Therefore I shall refuse to make any reply."

"Very well," snapped Droone. "Very well! You are bringing this upon yourself, Lee. I will force the truth from your lips! I will have you tortured until you speak!"

Nelson Lee laughed.

"Your optimism is amusing," he said coldly. "And I am grieved to learn, Droone, that you have so sadly misjudged my character. Threats of that kind weigh nothing with me. And I tell you frankly that your torturers can wreak their ghastly work on me until I swoon—but I will never open my lips. Force is not the method to employ with me."

There was something so convincing about Nelson Lee's tone that Caleb Droone turned away with a muttered curse. The Night Owl knew well enough that his threats were indeed idle.

He knew, furthermore, that a system of torture would be barren of result. Such methods could be adopted with success when it came to an ordinary man. But Nelson Lee was not of that type.

However, the conversation had borne one result.

Droone was convinced that the safe in Nelson Lee's study contained the Don Santos treasure. Having failed to frighten the detective into submission, the only possible course that remained was to smash open that safe at all costs.

And it could be done by one method only—high explosive.

Droone thought rapidly for a few seconds. And, brief as this space was, he made up his mind. He would return to the school—make one bold bid for the treasure—and if successful he would return and settle his account with Nelson Lee.

In short, the Night Owl had determined upon—murder!

But not until the Don Santos Treasure was recovered. If that safe proved barren, then Droone would keep Nelson Lee alive, and carry him off, a prisoner. So, whatever the result of that return visit to the

school, the outlook for Nelson Lee did not appear to be very promising.

The Night Owl gave his instructions briskly.

He sent two men off in the car upon some urgent errand—in short, to obtain the necessary explosives to shatter the door of the safe. Droone himself and two other men set off for St. Frank's on foot.

One member of the Alliance was left in the mill with Nelson Lee. Although the detective was bound, Caleb Droone had no intention of leaving him unguarded. With this watcher present the whole time, Nelson Lee could make no attempt to get away.

Thus, ten minutes later, the great detective was alone with his thoughts. For the man on watch offered no conversation, but sat apart, near the trapdoor, smoking. He was fully armed, however, and Droone had given him instructions to shoot if Nelson Lee gave any trouble.

Outside, the moor lay bleak and desolate.

A faint wind was moaning through the heather and bracken. And Bellton Wood, like some black pall on the face of the fair country, lay between this prisoner and the nearest habitation.

Caleb Droone and his men had gone on their desperate errand.

For it was, indeed, desperate now. The Night Owl was to make one bid for victory. The blowing up of the safe would awaken the whole school—but before anything could be done, the Alliance of Thirteen would have seized their spoils and vanished. That was the programme.

But, even now, at the eleventh hour, there was just a possibility that the Night Owl would again meet with failure.

For outside the old mill there lurked a dim, silent figure—creeping nearer and nearer to the ramshackle doorway.

That figure, to be exact, belonged to me.

CHAPTER VII.

THE EXPLOSION!



YES, I was on the job.

Perhaps it will be considered somewhat tall that I should be lurking about on the moor in the small hours of the morning. As a matter of fact,

there was nothing of a coincidence about the affair whatever.

Much earlier—when that little adventure with Buster Boots & Co. had concluded—Nelson Lee had sent me back to bed, declaring that he had no further need for my services.

It doesn't always happen that the gov'nor and I think eye to eye. He considered he didn't want my help—but I considered he did. Consequently, instead of going to bed, I only made a pretence of doing so.

I knew that Nelson Lee had planned to remain awake all night, so that he could guard the Treasure of Don Santos. But,

confident though the guv'nor was, I felt that it would be a good idea to lurk in the offing, as Archie might have said, keeping my eye open for anything that might transpire.

It will be realised how wise this decision of mine was!

For Nelson Lee, through no actual fault of his own, now lay in a position of complete helplessness. And I was on the spot to render assistance. It had been comparatively easy for me to locate him.

I had seen Droone and his men carrying the guv'nor out, and I had taken no action at the time, because I was not in a position to do so. I should only have made matters worse by attempting any rescue then.

But, crouching in the hedge near the motor-car, I had heard Droone say something about the mill. It occurred to me at once that there was only one mill in the neighbourhood—and this was the old ruined structure on the edge of the moor. Just the very place to take a prisoner to!

Consequently, while the car went round by the lanes, I took the footpath through Bell-ton Wood, and ran for all I was worth. And I arrived at the mill just as Droone and his men were departing. Again luck favoured me, for I caught a few words.

"... can't move an inch," Droone was saying. "Bound hand and foot, and No. 10's on guard. I'll settle with him later."

From these few words I had no difficulty in picturing the position. Nelson Lee was a prisoner, and he was helplessly bound. In addition to this, one member of the Alliance was on guard.

And soon afterwards Droone and the rest vanished—bent upon some diabolical mischief, I was sure. It behoved me to act as speedily as possible. At the same time, caution was necessary.

The man on guard had been given orders to shoot if necessary—of that I had no doubt. For the Night Owl and his myrmidons were unscrupulous and villainous.

I allowed five minutes to elapse, so as to make fully certain that none of the men were returning. Then, at length, I crept forward. And I succeeded in getting into that ramshackle doorway without making a sound.

Glancing upwards, I saw some faint chinks of light through the cracks.

No sound of voices came to me. But after a moment or two a few creaks sounded, and then the scratch of a match. Nelson Lee and his guard were not on chatting terms, evidently, and the latter was indulging in a smoke.

I resolved upon a simple ruse.

There was no time to think of anything elaborate. Indeed, the simpler the trick, the better.

While approaching the mill, I had come across a chunk of wood—a kind of natural club. And this I carried in one hand, in

readiness for emergencies. It gave me a feeling of security.

And now I used it in a peculiar way.

Very gently I scraped the club against the side of the wall, making a sound that would appear peculiar to the man above. The only way of reaching that upper floor was by means of a perpendicular ladder, which was attached to the wall. Immediately above there was a trap-door.

My object was to entice the man down.

And as he would have to descend backwards, owing to the very nature of the ladder, I should have him at my mercy. So I kept up the scraping.

After a while all movement above ceased. And I felt pretty sure that "No. 10" was listening. He had heard the sounds, and was wondering what on earth they could be.

Perhaps he was thinking of rats. At all events, after about two minutes had passed, the trap-door opened, and the dazzling beam of a flashlight shot downwards.

It was lucky for me that I had been prepared for this emergency.

And I was crouching close against the wall, in the corner behind the ladder. Thus, the ladder itself concealed me from the view of anybody above. The man flashed the light over every corner of the lower apartment—except my corner. And the place seemed quite empty to him.

However, the very instant he switched the light off, I again made the scraping sound.

This was too much for the fellow, and with a grunt he commenced descending. What happened next was over in the space of ten seconds. The man came down the ladder quickly, but before he could step off it I acted.

Crash!

I brought the club down on the man's head with considerable force. He gave a grunting grasp, and collapsed. I had no compunction of delivering that blow from the rear, for it was my only method of assisting the guv'nor in a desperate situation.

Besides, it didn't hurt the man much.

He was dazed for a few seconds, but no more. During these few seconds, however, I fairly jumped on him, and before he could gather his scattered wits together, I had succeeded in whipping my scarf round his ankles, and a handkerchief round his wrists.

Temporarily bound, the man was helpless.

I felt that he could be left for a few moments, and like a fly I whizzed up the ladder to the first floor. The apartment was in pitchy darkness—until my own electric torch gleamed out.

"Guv'nor!" I murmured gladly.

"Why, Nipper, this is indeed a surprise!" exclaimed Nelson Lee, in a voice that was quite calm. "You are the last person I expected to see."

"I asked if I could stay to help you, sir, but you didn't want me!" I replied,

somewhat bitterly. Instead of going back to bed, I hung about. And here I am!"

"I admit that my judgment was at fault, Nipper," said Nelson Lee. "You see before you a man who is suffering from the folly of his own self-confidence. But we may yet be in time to avert disaster."

"Good!" I said eagerly.

While talking, I had been cutting through those cords which bound Nelson Lee. And now the gov'nor stood up, and hobbled painfully about, until his circulation was restored.

When we got down to the ground floor, we found that the Alliance man was making desperate attempts to break free. He had recovered so far that his wrists were already freed, and he was making frantic efforts to unfasten the scarf round his ankles.

In another minute he would have been off.

We jumped upon him, and held him down. The cords that had secured Lee were now brought into use for this rascal. And he was left there, quite helpless. We had no time to take him with us.

"In all probability the wretch will be gone by the morning," said Lee, as we set off at a run for St. Frank's. "But we shall have to chance that. The main thing is to get back to the school, and to foil the Night Owl's plan."

"What plan, sir?"

"The man intends to force open my safe with high explosive!"

"Great Scott!" I ejaculated. "And—and is the Don Santos Treasure in the safe?"

"It is," replied the gov'nor. "I never dreamed that Droone would go to such lengths as an explosion. But he is desperate, and is staking all at one throw."

"But an explosion like that will wake up the whole school," I protested. "And not only the school, but half the village as well!"

Nelson Lee nodded.

"Droone is counting upon swiftness of action," he replied. "He figures that he will be able to snatch the prize before any order can be restored out of the chaos—the chaos and confusion which will naturally arise immediately after the explosion. The Night Owl is confident that he will be able to slip off into the night in safety."

"My hat!" I said breathlessly. "We'd better get a hustle on."

Considering that we were already running swiftly, this remark was rather unnecessary. We took the short cut, and at length arrived within sight of the school.

It was now early morning—very early morning—and St. Frank's lay more deeply in slumber than ever. There was no sign of activity as we approached. For all that we could see or hear, the Alliance of Thirteen might have been hundreds of miles away.

We became very cautious as we approached the wall—for it was more than likely that Droone had placed guards on

watch—scouts who would give the warning if anybody approached.

Our caution, however, was unnecessary.

For just as we arrived there came a dull, booming explosion. It wasn't so very loud. The sound was muffled and concentrated. But in the stillness of the night, it appeared to shake the very earth itself.

"By James!" muttered Lee curtly.

Without another word he leapt over the school wall like a monkey, and fairly raced across the Triangle in the direction of his study window. But before he had gone ten paces he paused, and grasped at my arm—for I was close behind.

"The car, Nipper!" he exclaimed tensely.

"The car?" I repeated, not comprehending.

"My rager—get it from the garage—and hurry!"

Lee jerked out the words, and raced on. I didn't stop to question the order, or to wonder why it had been made. I swerved as I ran, and went off towards the garage.

But I must admit that I was sadly disappointed, for I had hoped to take part in the scrap. Nelson Lee's idea, obviously, was to be prepared for any emergency.

From the gov'nor's window came a cloud of smoke. The window itself was no more—the glass and the frame had been shattered to fragments. And even as Lee approached, another figure, armed with an electric torch, and wearing a muffler round his mouth and nostrils, dived through the smoke.

The man was Caleb Droone.

Lee thrilled at the sight of the man. He knew exactly why Droone was dashing into that smother. The explosion was over, and only smoke and dust remained. Droone intended to examine the result, and snatch the loot. And Lee had come just in time to prevent him.

And then, at that moment, three figures seemed to rise from the very ground itself. They hurled themselves at Nelson Lee as the latter was about to make for the window.

Of course, they had been on guard—covering the Night Owl's movements. And the Alliance men fairly hurled themselves upon Nelson Lee. They grappled with him, and the detective had all his work cut out.

His first emotion was one of intense anger that these brutes should bar his way. He fought desperately; but without losing his coolness. All his efforts, however, were of no avail.

In spite of Lee's skill, the odds were too heavy for him.

He was held back successfully, and, at length, thrown to the ground and kept there.

In the meantime, the Night Owl was taking advantage of the confusion.

He knew well enough that boys, and masters, and servants were becoming active all over the various buildings; he knew that lights were being switched on, and an examination would be made within the next few minutes.

But for a few precious seconds, he was safe.

And Caleb Droone made good use of the time that was at his disposal. Fighting his way through the acrid smoke, he stood within the mass of wreckage that had formerly been Nelson Lee's study.

His powerful electric torch cut through the smoke and fumes. And there, to the Night Owl's joy, he saw the safe—the door of it blown completely away. And so cunningly had the explosive been laid that no damage was done to the interior. Droone's men were experts at their work.

During the first few seconds, Droone cursed violently—even losing his famous imperturbability. For he believed that his work had been for nothing—that the treasure was not here, after all.

For the interior of the safe seemed quite barren except for some books, money bags, and a few other unimportant items. But then, at the very rear, Droone found a strongly made dispatch case.

He seized it, and wrenched open the lid.

"A sharp cry of triumph escaped him. For there, before his eyes, lay the wonderful Don Santos Collection of diamonds, emeralds, and other precious stones!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE CHASE THROUGH THE NIGHT.



"GREAT SCOTT!"

"What—what was that?"

"Blessed if I know!"

"It's an earthquake! Quick, you chaps——"

"Fathead! Something exploded!"

The Remove dormitory in the Ancient House was in an uproar. The juniors, awakened out of their deep sleep by the explosion, were either sitting up in bed, or else rapidly jumping into their clothes.

There had been no mistaking that shattering boom, and the resulting shock which set the whole Ancient House a-quiver. Most of the fellows only remembered a vague tremor, for they had been asleep when the explosion occurred.

But they were all certain that something big had happened.

Lights were appearing on the other side of the Triangle—gleaming out one after the other in the windows of the College House. Already the Remove juniors were crowding the windows of the dormitory.

"I—I can smell something!" exclaimed Armstrong, sniffing the air. "Smoke! Like—like gunpowder!"

"Fire!" wailed Teddy Long frantically. "Help! Fire! Yaroooooh!"

"Stop that noise, you young idiot!" snapped Reggie Pitt, who had hurled a shoe at Teddy. "Do you want to start a panic?"

"The school's on fire!" moaned Long, terrified.

"Rats! It seems to me that someone's been messing about with fireworks!" said Handforth. "I can smell the giddy powder!"

"Your surmise is right," said Clarence Fellowe, leaning out of the window. "But I see no light! The fireworks, if any, could not have been many. There is no fire—so Long is a Liar!"

"My hat! He's starting poetry in the middle of the night!" snapped Handforth. "Dry up, you ass, or I'll biff you!"

"The rhymes come unbidden—in fact, they're quite hidden!" said Fellowe, somewhat grieved. "I am merely concerned on the way things have turned. We must hurry downstairs, and forget all our cares?"

"We'd better forget you, to begin with!" said Armstrong tartly. "By the way, where's Nipper? I haven't seen him! Nipper—Nipper!"

"It's no good—he's not here!" said Tommy Watson. "I looked for him as soon as the explosion happened; but he's missing."

"Well, I'm blessed!"

"Where's the ass got to?"

Handforth gave a triumphant laugh.

"I've got it," he said. "Nipper must have gone off on his own to give those Monks a bit of a surprise! I expect he's let off some fireworks——"

"Of course, he'd let them off in the Ancient House, wouldn't he?" asked Pitt sarcastically.

"By George! I forgot that!" said Handforth with a start.

"Besides, there's something more in this than fireworks!" went on Pitt. "Don't forget those crooks! And don't forget how they tried to get hold of some valuables that Mr. Lee had in his possession!"

"Crooks!" said Handforth dreamily. "As a matter of fact, I was thinking about those rotters all the time! Quick! We'd better shoot downstairs, and get on the trail! They've probably robbed the school by this time! And they may have murdered Mr. Lee, and the Head, and——"

But nobody listened to Edward Oswald.

The sudden recollections of the earlier happenings of the night caused the fellows to become excited. The thought of criminals being responsible for that explosion made the whole dormitory throb with interest.

Reggie Pitt, at the window, gave a sudden yell.

"Look here, you chaps!" he exclaimed. "There's somebody down here—fighting like the dickens!"

Pitt pointed, and the other juniors joined him. And, sure enough, Reggie was right in what he said. Gazing down, they could see four figures struggling desperately in the Triangle.

The fight was most uneven, for three of the men were opposed to one. And this one, although the odds were so great, was putting up a valiant resistance. By degrees, however, he was being overpowered.

"My goodness!" murmured Pitt suddenly. "It's—it's Mr. Lee!"

"My only hat!"

"Mr. Lee—fighting against three of those

rotters!" went on Pitt. "Quick! This is where we take a hand!"

"Yes, but—but how?"

"Sheets!" rapped out Reggie. "Buck up!"

A few of the others understood, and sheets were ripped off the beds without compunction. It was merely a matter of seconds to knot them together. Then one end was tied to a bed rail, and the bed itself was pushed to the window.

Pitt was the first to swarm down.

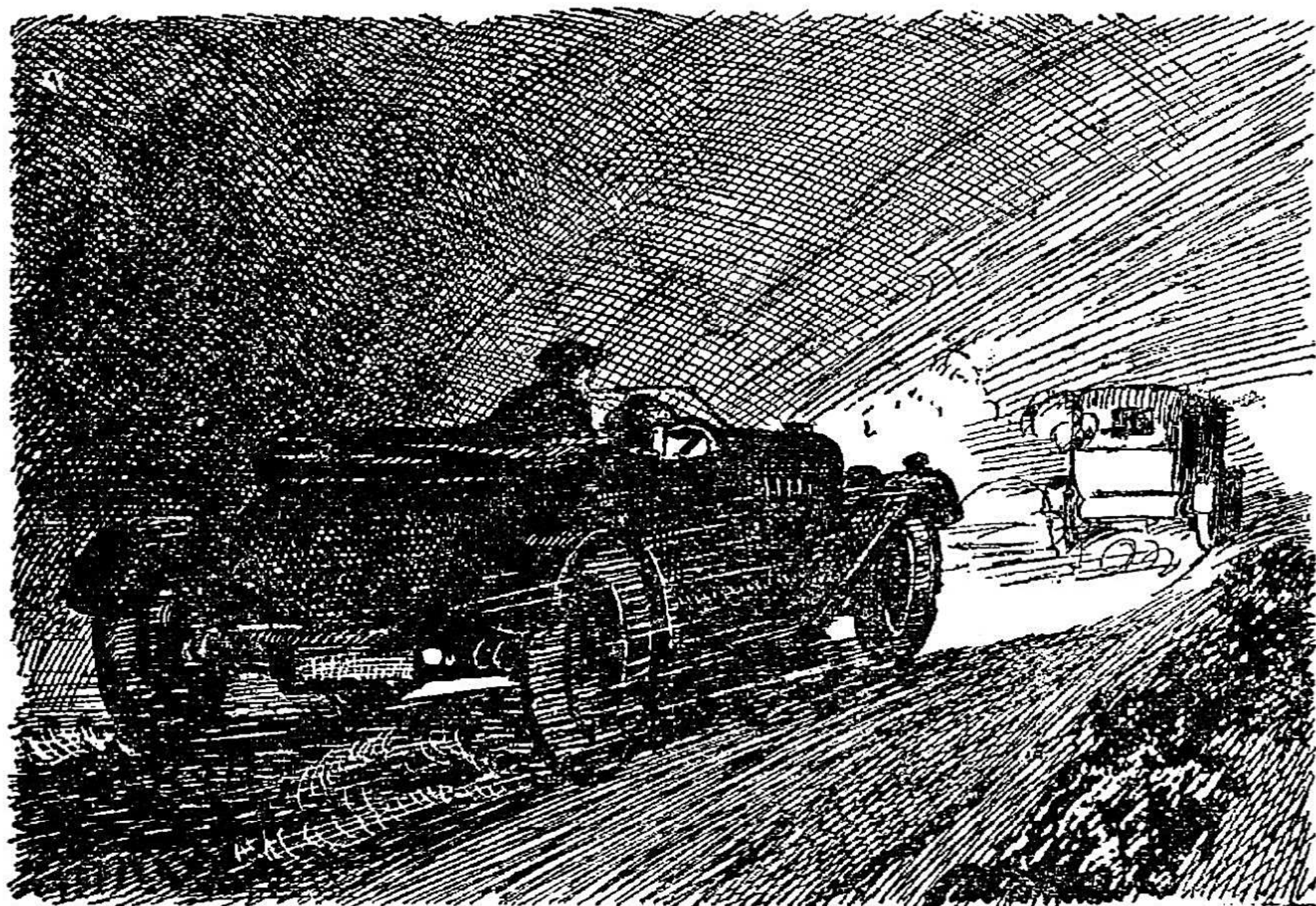
A number of others followed in quick succession, including Handforth and Watson and Grey and Adams. The rope proved quite strong enough for the weight of the juniors,

greater determination than ever. Handforth was fighting hard, too, and with fresh juniors arriving with every moment, the three men were in considerable peril of capture.

They were not slow to realise this.

They knew that the odds were becoming too great, and although they feared their chief, they feared capture even more. To fall into the hands of the police would be a disaster, for every one of these men was urgently wanted on some serious charge or other.

Finding the horde of boys too much for them, they broke away, and dashed across the Triangle for liberty. The juniors tore after



Crack! Crack! Crack! Members of the Alliance of 13, seeking to cover up their chief's escape, were desperately attempting to stay our progress. They fired at Lee himself, and at the tyres of the car.

and one by one they landed in the Triangle. And then they dashed to the rescue of Nelson Lee.

Only just in the nick of time, too, for the detective was just about done. The three men had got him down, and were holding him securely to the ground. One fellow, indeed, was in the act of smashing the butt of his revolver into Nelson Lee's face.

But Pitt, arriving at that moment, jerked the man's hand aside—at the same time, delivering an uppercut which caught the Alliance man squarely on the jaw. After that the fight was more desperate still.

Nelson Lee, finding himself relieved, scrambled to his feet, and sailed in with

them in a shouting throng. And by now seniors were appearing.

Even the Head himself had become active—members of the household staff were hurrying about, trying to discover the cause of the commotion. Mr. Suncliffe, of the Third, and Mr. Paget, of the Fifth, were hurrying out of the Ancient House doorway.

But Nelson Lee did not wait to speak to a soul.

He knew that the Night Owl had had sufficient time to recover the treasure—if, indeed, the explosion had smashed open the door of the safe. But in spite of the delay, Lee hoped he would be able to frustrate Caleb Droone even yet. He arrived at the window

of his study, and was just about to climb in when a man came charging out.

In a flash, Lee saw that he was face to face with the Night Owl, and under the man's arm was tucked the dispatch case which contained the valuable property of Don Santos.

Crack!

The Night Owl acted drastically. Without giving Nelson Lee any chance to grapple with him, he whipped his revolver out, and fired at Lee point blank. Something had warned the detective of what was coming—some instinct.

He leapt sideways with the agility of a squirrel, but even so he was too late. He felt an intense, burning sensation in his right arm, and he staggered back, knowing well enough that he had been hit.

And as he staggered, Droone followed up his shot by hurling the revolver itself at his enemy. Lee went over, and the Night Owl tore across the Triangle at full-speed.

He acted so swiftly that none of the boys had time to give chase. The man was over the wall almost before anybody saw him.

Reggie Pitt was the first to get to Nelson Lee's side after the shot had been fired. Pitt was filled with terrible alarm. He had heard the report, and he had seen Nelson Lee fall.

"Are you hurt, sir?" he asked tensely.

"It's all right, my boy—a mere graze!" panted Lee, as the juniors helped him to his feet. "Which way did the man go?"

"Straight across the Triangle, sir!" said Handforth excitedly. "Shall I help to capture him—Why, great Scott! You're bleeding, sir."

Edward Oswald stared in horror at Nelson Lee's hand. Blood was, indeed, trickling down the detective's arm. Lee glanced downwards, and whipped out his handkerchief.

"It's nothing!" he said briefly.

"As a matter of fact, the great detective had a rather painful flesh wound in the upper part of his arm. It bled somewhat, but was by no means dangerous. No muscles had been severed.

And at the present moment, Lee paid practically no attention to the hurt. His only thoughts were for Caleb Droone. The man had got away, and had taken the Treasure of Don Santos with him!

That was the one fact that Nelson Lee realised.

And, without wasting another second, he hurried away across the Triangle. He knew that Droone had a car waiting. And he bitterly told himself that the Night Owl would get clear away unless luck now came to his aid.

Masters and prefects were shouting from various points now. But Nelson Lee took no notice. He raced across the Triangle, and was midway between the Ancient House and the gates when he heard the sudden throbbing of an accelerated motor outside, in the lane.

"Confound!" he muttered. "I am too late!"

But at the same moment there came another roar, and a low, powerful racing car came swinging round the Ancient House at a dangerous speed, with headlights blazing with their full intensity.

"Here you are, guv'nor!" I roared.

I had brought the racer round in the nick of time, apparently. Nelson Lee gave a shout of satisfaction as he saw the racer. But he observed that the gates were closed and locked.

And delay owing to this circumstance would be exasperating in the extreme. The gates were of wrought iron, and no amount of battering would conquer them. But just as Nelson Lee was beginning to fume, he caught sight of the bow-legged Mr. Cuttle, the school porter.

"The gates—the gates!" roared Nelson Lee. "Unlock them, man!"

Mr. Josh Cuttle did not mistake the tone. He rushed to the gates, whipping out his keys.

"There was queer goings on when honest folks should be abed," he muttered gloomily. "Why was there queer goings on? Ask me! Because there was crooks hanging about! Drat 'em!"

Swiftly, he unlocked the gates, and swung them wide open.

Almost before he was clear, the racing car came whirling through—Nelson Lee himself now at the wheel. All this had only taken a few seconds—and the Night Owl, in his limousine, had just managed to obtain a fair start.

The racer swung round on two wheels, and old Josh Cuttle was nearly caught between the off-side wing and the gate. But he needn't have worried. Nelson Lee was a master of driving, and he knew that he had sufficient room.

But Mr. Cuttle's heart throbbed wildly.

"There was nearly a man killed!" he muttered. "And that man was me!"

He stared after the racing car, and a crowd of juniors came rushing out to join him.

The chase had begun. How would it end?

CHAPTER IX.

THE SPOILS DIVIDED.



CRACK—crack—crack!

As Nelson Lee's racing car thundered down the lane, with the throttle wide open, a series of cracks sounded from both sides of the lane, and I caught sight of tiny points of red fire.

"They're shooting, sir!" I gasped.

"Let them shoot!" rapped out the guv'nor.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Members of the Alliance of 13, seeking to cover up their Chief's escape, were desperately attempting to stay our progress. They fired at Lee himself, and at the tyres of the car.

But such was our speed, and such the hasty aim of the Alliance men, that no material damage was done. The shots either went wide, or embedded themselves harmlessly into the body.

Later on we certainly did find a scored groove in one of the rear tyres, where a bullet had cut clean through the rubber without touching the cord fabric. The shot had been a near thing. A fraction lower, and the tyre would have blown out like a miniature cannon.

But at the time we were only aware of the one fact that the ambush had failed. We had got through safely, and were even now beyond range. And Nelson Lee sat at the wheel, as grim as ever I had seen him.

The gov'nor had determined to keep the treasure in his possession, and to foil every one of the Night Owl's plans. And here, through that one careless act of his, Droone was escaping with the spoils.

It might not be too late, at this eleventh hour, to frustrate the Night Owl. But it would be a close thing. The advantage, undoubtedly, was with Nelson Lee. For Droone was driving a heavy closed car, probably capable of sixty miles an hour on a good road.

Our racer had done eighty and ninety on many an occasion.

Not that it was possible to attain any speed of this sort on these country roads. There were too many twists and turns—and the road itself was altogether too narrow for taking such chances.

All the same, we literally hurtled into Bellton, and charged through the sleeping village like a tornado. As Ulysses Spencer Adams would have said, we burned up the roads to some purpose.

At the fork, at the end of the village, we were obliged to come to a halt. For Lee did not know whether the fugitive had taken the Bannington road or the Caistowe road.

Fortunately the question was settled without either of us leaving the car. For as soon as we had slowed down we could distinctly see the marks on the road, caused by a recent automobile. There had been a slight shower of rain an hour earlier, and Caleb Droone's tracks were clearly defined.

"Caistowe, sir!" I yelled.

Lee nodded, opened the throttle, and we leapt forward so suddenly that I was nearly thrown out backwards. The racer was capable of extraordinary acceleration. Within a few seconds we were doing forty.

How on earth the gov'nor kept the car on the road will always be a mystery to me. We sped along that narrow lane at a speed that was not only dangerous, but absolutely reckless.

"Heaven help us if we meet anything!" I breathed.

Not that this contingency was likely. At the hour of three o'clock in the morning the Caistowe Road was absolutely deserted.

Besides, I was consoled by the thought that Droone would be the first to hit anything—for he was tearing along ahead of us.

Although we didn't know it at the time, the Night Owl was alone in the closed car. He had instructed his men to stop any followers at all costs. And Droone cursed wildly when he first became aware of our pursuit.

He was driving the limousine at a dangerous speed, and it was only by sheer skill that he kept the car on the road. His object was to get as far away as possible—and he had taken the lane to Caistowe because he had a motor-boat hidden down on the rocks near by the seaside town.

Once out to sea, he would be able to laugh at any pursuit.

But he knew, before he was half way to Caistowe, that his plan was not to succeed. For, glancing round at a bend, he caught sight of two brilliant points of light in the distance behind.

"Fools—fools!" he snarled. "They failed!"

Droone's feelings were bitter and fierce. His men, in spite of their number, had allowed the pursuing car to get through the ambush! And Droone lost all his usual composure.

In sheer, utter desperation, he pressed his foot upon the accelerator, and the heavy car instantly responded. The Night Owl was now driving madly, and it seemed providential that he was not wrecked time and again.

But in some miraculous fashion the car kept to the road, and hurtled onwards at fifty miles an hour.

And in the rear, creeping nearer and nearer, came the racer with Nelson Lee and myself aboard. We had thought to overtake our quarry quite rapidly, but he still remained ahead.

"By Jingo, he's going, sir!" I gasped.

"Yes—and he'll come to grief soon!" muttered Lee.

He was not taking any risks—for he knew that it would only be a matter of time before Caleb Droone would be forced to succumb. There was absolutely no sense in risking everything by making a burst of speed here, in this narrow, rutty lane.

But, even so, Nelson Lee drove the car at close upon fifty miles an hour—which was quite fast enough for me! He kept in the rear of the limousine, intending to draw alongside as soon as the road widened out—as it did just before entering the Caistowe High Street.

Lee knew that Droone could not turn off this road.

There were numerous bye-lanes, of course, but fifty miles an hour was too great a speed for any turn. Disaster would have followed on the instant.

And so the two cars roared onwards through the night.

And it seemed that Caistowe arrived within a few moments. Droone was only bent upon speeding now. He had given up all thoughts of reaching that hidden motor-boat.

His one hope was to outdistance his pursuers.

Through the sleeping seaside town the two cars raced. And now Nelson Lee touched the accelerator, intending to forge alongside. But, almost at the same second, he closed the throttle, and eased down.

The limousine shot ahead.

"What's the idea, sir?" I shouted, in surprise.

"We've got him, Nipper—that's all!" replied Lee grimly.

"But—but—"

"Look!"

I did look, and saw Caleb Droone's car growing further and further away. In my excitement it seemed to me that Nelson Lee was deliberately allowing the scoundrel to escape.

And then, in a flash, I grasped the situation.

Down at the end of the wide road I caught a glimpse of a red light. And then I knew. The way was barred! Caleb Droone would be forced to come to a standstill, without Lee taking any drastic steps.

I remembered that Caistowe was like many another small town, and the main line of the railway crossed the High Street. And there, winking at us, was the red light affixed to the level crossing gates.

A train was due—the gates were closed!

"Hurrah!" I yelled. "You're right, sir—we've got him!"

And the Night Owl, in his own car, was almost insane with rage. He had succeeded—he had got the treasure—and after all his trouble he was to be beaten!

Strong as the man was, he nearly went mad. And there, straight ahead of him, were those heavily built level crossing gates. And an express train was hurtling along the iron way with a roar and shriek of wheels, and a shrill blast from the engine.

Caleb Droone made up his mind.

To stop would mean two things—the loss of the treasure, and capture! For he did not fool himself with the hope that he could still evade being taken. He had thrown his revolver away—casting it at Nelson Lee—and was now unarmed! In those few fleeting seconds, during which he had time to decide, all these thoughts scurried through his fevered brain.

And he grimly told himself that he would never submit to capture. There was one chance left to him—one desperate chance.

And, with set teeth, he opened the throttle to its widest extent, and charged headlong at the level crossing gates!

Only a man, maddened by the thought of defeat, would have taken such an appalling risk. Many a car had charged gates of this kind without injury to the occupants—but

that is no certainty that any car can do the same with impunity. The limousine, already travelling at forty miles an hour along the smooth, deserted road, accelerated to close upon sixty. It simply tore at the gates in one maddened rush.

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Nelson Lee hoarsely.

For he could see what the Night Owl intended. And it suddenly occurred to the gov'nor that this might be one of those chances in a thousand where desperation wins.

If only Droone got through he would probably win his liberty! For the wreckage of the gates would undoubtedly cause a considerable delay to the pursuing car.

Everything happened in a second.

Crash!

The limousine struck the gates with a deafening, splintering crash that was heard half a mile away. The noise and confusion was greatly increased by the mail train, which bore down at almost exactly the same second.

Indeed, the car only just cleared the tracks when the train thundered by. Battered and smashed, the limousine rocked and swayed as it smashed through the second gate. And the mail train, encountering the wreckage of the wood gates, sent splinters and fragments flying far in all directions. It was only by a matter of luck that the train was not derailed.

Nelson Lee and I had pulled our car to a halt, and were fascinated spectators of the dreadful scene.

But we were unable to see what had happened to the Night Owl—owing to the crossing of the train. As a matter of fact, Caleb Droone failed in his mad enterprise.

Miraculously unhurt by the flying fragments of wood and glass, Droone was still at the wheel. But the shock to the car was so great that he utterly lost control.

The heavy automobile swayed, heeled over, and then giddily overturned with a deafening crash.

Droone was flung out of his seat, dazed, bruised, and scarcely knowing whether he was dying, or only suffering from shock. Blood was streaming from his neck, where a splinter had penetrated, and his left arm was dead. He believed it to be broken.

But, hardly knowing what he was doing, he crawled out of the smash. And his fingers encountered something that felt familiar. Dizzily he gazed down, and saw a necklet—a superb necklet of magnificent emeralds.

It was the most prized object of the Don Santos Collection! The dispatch-case had burst open in the crash, and the contents were strewn far and wide. By the best of good luck the wreckage did not catch fire.

The Night Owl was too dazed to do anything except clutch that necklet and crawl away. He did not even remember the rest

of the treasure. His own desire—his one object—was to escape.

Scarcely three minutes later Nelson Lee and I were on the scene.

Leaping from our racer, we ran across the tracks, picking our way among the splinters and debris. The train itself was grinding to a standstill, with locked, shrieking wheels, further down the line.

"He's wrecked, sir!" I shouted breathlessly.

"Yes, and probably killed!" exclaimed Lee, as we ran towards the battered, overturned car. "The fool! If ever a man committed suicide, Caleb Droone did. He has got his deserts at last."

But a surprise awaited Nelson Lee.

Upon flashing the light from his electric torch into the wreck, he was startled to find no trace of a human being. No face, at all events, except for some significant spots of blood.

"He's gone, sir!" I said thickly.

"Yes, the man's got as many lives as a cat!" snapped the gov'nor. "But he can't be far away——"

Lee broke off as something gleamed and scintillated in the light of the torch. And then he saw the dispatch-case was there, half the Don Santos Collection still within it, although the lid was burst open. Other portions of the Treasure were lying scattered about.

Great was Nelson Lee's satisfaction—until he failed to locate the emerald necklet. Having already examined the collection many times, Lee knew every piece—every gem. And the emerald necklet was the only missing article.

Later, when help arrived, the wreck of the car was shifted, and every single inch of ground was searched. But in vain. Lee was forced to the conclusion that the Night Owl had taken the necklet with him.

"Well, Nipper, there has been some excitement over this affair—but apparently it is not over yet!" said the gov'nor. "I shall not rest until I recover that necklace!"

And, several miles away, skulking in a dense spinney, nursing his hurts, Caleb Droone made a solemn oath. By this time he had recovered the full use of his wits, and was amazed to find himself comparatively whole.

But the only portion of the Don Santos Treasure that remained with him was that emerald necklet.

"I'll have the rest!" he swore fiercely. "I'll beat Nelson Lee even yet! And, what is more, I'll kill him—I'll kill him—I'll settle my account!"

It certainly did not seem that the Night Owl was a beaten man. By all appearances, there would be even more thrilling events at St. Frank's in the immediate future!

THE END.

Editorial Announcement.

My Dear Readers,—

The duel between Nelson Lee and the Night Owl is not yet ended, though the Alliance of 13 nearly lost their leader in the motor-car smash. So far, the honours rest with the Schoolmaster Detective, who has succeeded in restoring all the jewels except the emerald necklace. Nelson Lee will not rest until he has run the Night Owl to earth and secured the missing necklace, which is one of the most valuable jewels in the collection. Similarly, the Night Owl is determined to recover the other jewels from Nelson Lee and to wreak his vengeance on the man who had dared to upset his evil plans. So, my chums, you can look forward to another and even more exciting encounter between

these two men in next week's grand concluding story of this fine series—

"THE NIGHT OWL'S PREY!"

Write to Your Editor!

I am very anxious to know what you all think of the St. Frank's Magazine, and, when you have a moment to spare, drop me a line giving me your opinion of the various contributions and those which you like best. Suggestions for improvements or additional features will be heartily welcomed. Communications should be addressed to the Editor, The Nelson Lee Library, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. To ensure an answer to your letters, you should enclose a three-halfpenny stamp.

Your sincere friend,

THE EDITOR.



MY AMERICAN NOTE-BOOK

By the Author of our St. Frank's Stories.



No. 1. New York—Times Square.

TIMES SQUARE, in New York, is the very heart of the "White Light" district. Here, after sunset, the great electric signs blaze out, lighting Broadway in a manner that must be seen to be really appreciated. No pen-picture can possibly do justice to this wonderful sight.

When I entered Times Square for the first time, it was a clear, crisp evening in December; and, accustomed as I am to our many brilliant sky-signs in London, I must confess that I was amazingly impressed.

Let me attempt to give a description of the immediate geography. Times Square, strictly speaking, is not a square at all, but a big, curiously shaped oblong where Broadway cuts diagonally across Seventh Avenue.

That famous thoroughfare, Forty-Second Street, crosses both Broadway and Seventh Avenue at this point, and the Times Building—from which the square apparently gets its name—here raises its lofty summit to the sky. It is one of New York's older skyscrapers, and the home of that well-known daily newspaper, the "New York Times."

Standing on the wide pavement, facing north, in front of the Times Building, one can look far up Broadway to the left, and far up Seventh Avenue to the right. On one hand there is the great Hotel Astor, and on the other hand the Criterion Picture House and Lowe's State Theatre.

The fronts of both these theatres are literally a glaring blaze of electric lights. Opposite is the wonderful Wrigley's Chewing Gum sign—extending for a considerable distance over the frontage of the high buildings, and far up into the night sky.

Further down, on every available inch of space, the electric signs gleam out, turning night into dazzling day. There are not an abundance of tricky, moving signs; they are chiefly still.

And it must not be supposed that this blaze is confined to Broadway. Down every street in this section, on both sides of the square, the theatres abound—crowding upon

one another, shoulder to shoulder. And they all have their glare of different coloured lights.

By night the scene is a fascinating one. On many occasions I have stood on that broad pavement in front of the Times Building, watching the ever-changing picture. By about seven thirty the crowds are tremendous; the pavements, or side-walks, as they are always called in America, are crowded with every imaginable type of humanity.

In this one square one can see practically every nationality—American, British, German, French, Polish, Russian, Chinese, Japanese. White, yellow, brown, red, black, and all within the space of a few minutes! New York is indeed a city of mixed nationalities.

The Square is thronged with taxi-cabs, with their typically American yellow tops. Street cars, long, low and coloured red and green, clang and clatter by. Private motor-cars glide along in the thick of the traffic, and the policemen, with their shrill whistles, have all their work cut out to control the never-ceasing flow.

And from the Subway—New York's Underground Railway—further crowds come out of the depths to add to the multitude. The majority are theatre-bound.

Even after midnight, when all the theatres are closed, Times Square is still a blaze of light, with countless yellow taxis plying for hire. And later still, in the small hours of the morning, you can get a taxi, you can enter a restaurant for a meal, you can get a street-car or a Subway train. For New York never sleeps.

It is in the daylight that one receives a disappointment. For Times Square in the full sunshine is a place totally and absolutely different from the Times Square of the "White Lights." For there, stark and ugly, rear the spidery frameworks of the sky-signs, raising their unlovely summits to the sun-lit heavens.

Times Square! By night a place of impressive wonder—by day a disfigurement to the many imposing buildings.

"FOOTBALLERS' NAMES" COMPETITION.



First Prize £100

Second Prize £50

30 Splendid "JAMES" MOTOR-CYCLES.

(Complete with Lamp, Horn and Licence-holder—Value £50.)

10 Two-valve WIRELESS SETS

(Value £20 each.)

100 "JAMES" Comet Cycles

Complete with lamp, bell, etc. Value
£7 15s.

20 GRAMOPHONES.

50 Pairs of BOXING GLOVES.

100 MATCH FOOTBALLS.

100 FISHING-RODS.

6 "Riley" BILLIARDS TABLES.

20 Model Steam LOCOMOTIVES (with rails).

40 FOOTBALL OUTFITS.

(Boots, Stockings, Shorts, and Shirt.)

100 Pairs of ROLLER SKATES.

250 BOOKS AND OTHER CONSOLATION PRIZES.

All these Magnificent Prizes of Big Sums in Cash, MOTOR-CYCLES, WIRELESS SETS, GRAMOPHONES, etc., are open to YOU and YOUR FRIENDS—and the way to be a winner yourself is simple! It is THE OPPORTUNITY OF A LIFETIME!

ALL YOU HAVE TO DO is to write IN INK in the allotted space under each of the puzzle pictures the name of the Footballer which you think the picture represents. You have already had the full list of names used throughout the competition, so that you have only to fit the correct name to each picture. Having done this, fill in the coupon under this week's picture-set and cut out the whole tablet—DO NOT CUT THE PICTURES AND COUPON APART. Next collect the other seven sets which you have kept from previous weeks, see that you have filled in your answers properly in all the spaces, remembering, too, that only one name may be written in each space, then pin them together and post to:

FOOTBALLERS' NAMES CONTEST.

c/o "Nelson Lee," Gough House,

Gough Square, London, E.C.4.

so as to reach that address not later than Tuesday, December 18th.

COMPETITION RULES AND CONDITIONS

Which must be strictly adhered to.

1. The First Prize of £100 will be awarded to the competitor who sends in the correct, or most nearly correct solution of all eight sets of the pictures, according to the Editor's official solution.
2. The Second Prize of £50, and the others in the splendid variety of prizes, will be awarded in order of merit.
3. All the prizes will be awarded. If two or more competitors tie, however, the prize or prizes, or their value, will be divided, and the Editor reserves full rights in this respect.
4. Any number of entries may be made, but in each case only the complete series of eight picture-sets (pictures Nos. 1 to 48, that is to say) will be admissible. No responsibility will be accepted for communications lost or delayed in the post.

Any entry arriving after the closing date, Tuesday, December 18th., will be disqualified.

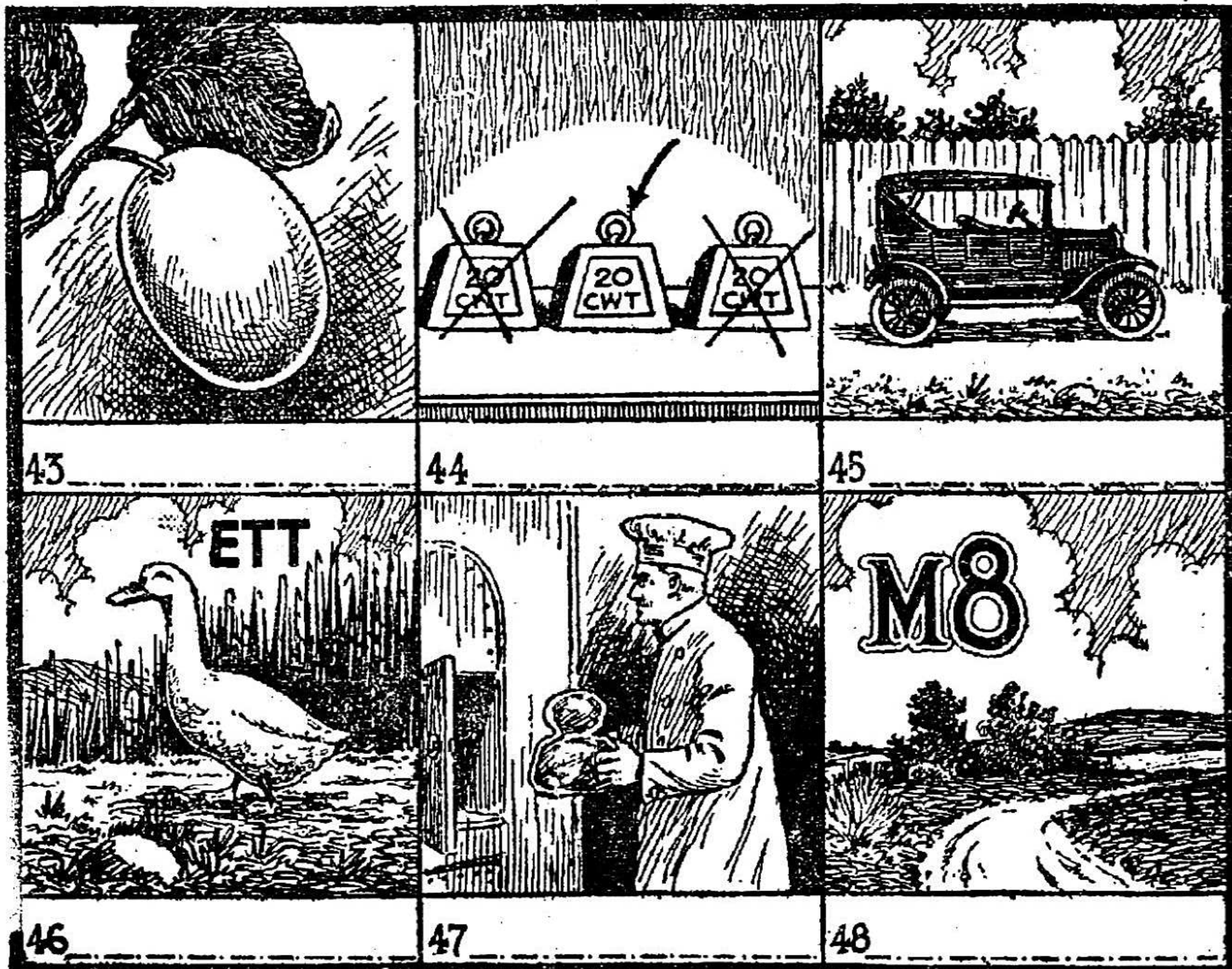
5. The names under the pictures must be written IN INK.
6. Employees of the proprietors of this journal are not eligible to compete.
7. Entry to this competition is on the full understanding that the Editor's decision is final and legally binding throughout.

Readers of "The Champion," "Boys' Friend," "Union Jack," "Boys' Realm," "Pluck," "Magnet," "Young Britain," "Gem," "The Popular," "The Rocket," and "Boys' Cinema," are also taking part in this Contest, so that additional attempts may be made with the pictures from these allied journals.

See next page for the Eighth and Last Picture-Set.

FOR NEW READERS

Newcomers can obtain previous issues containing, between them, all the other picture-sets used in this contest, together with a complete list of footballers' names, by sending to the Back Numbers Dept., The Amalgamated Press, Bear Alley, Farringdon St., S.E. 4. Stamps for 2d. for each copy should be sent, with 1d. for postage and another ½d. postage for each additional copy. Ask for "Nelson Lee" Issues, Nos. 440-443 inclusive.

FINAL SET!
LAST WEEK!


In entering FOOTBALLERS' NAMES Competition, I agree to accept the Editor's decision as absolutely final and binding.

Name

Address

Closing date, Tuesday, December 18th.

N. L.

SPECIAL CONTRIBUTIONS BY THE BOYS OF ST. FRANK'S!

No. 2. Vol. 1.

Edited by Nipper.

December 8, 1923.



St. Frank's Magazine

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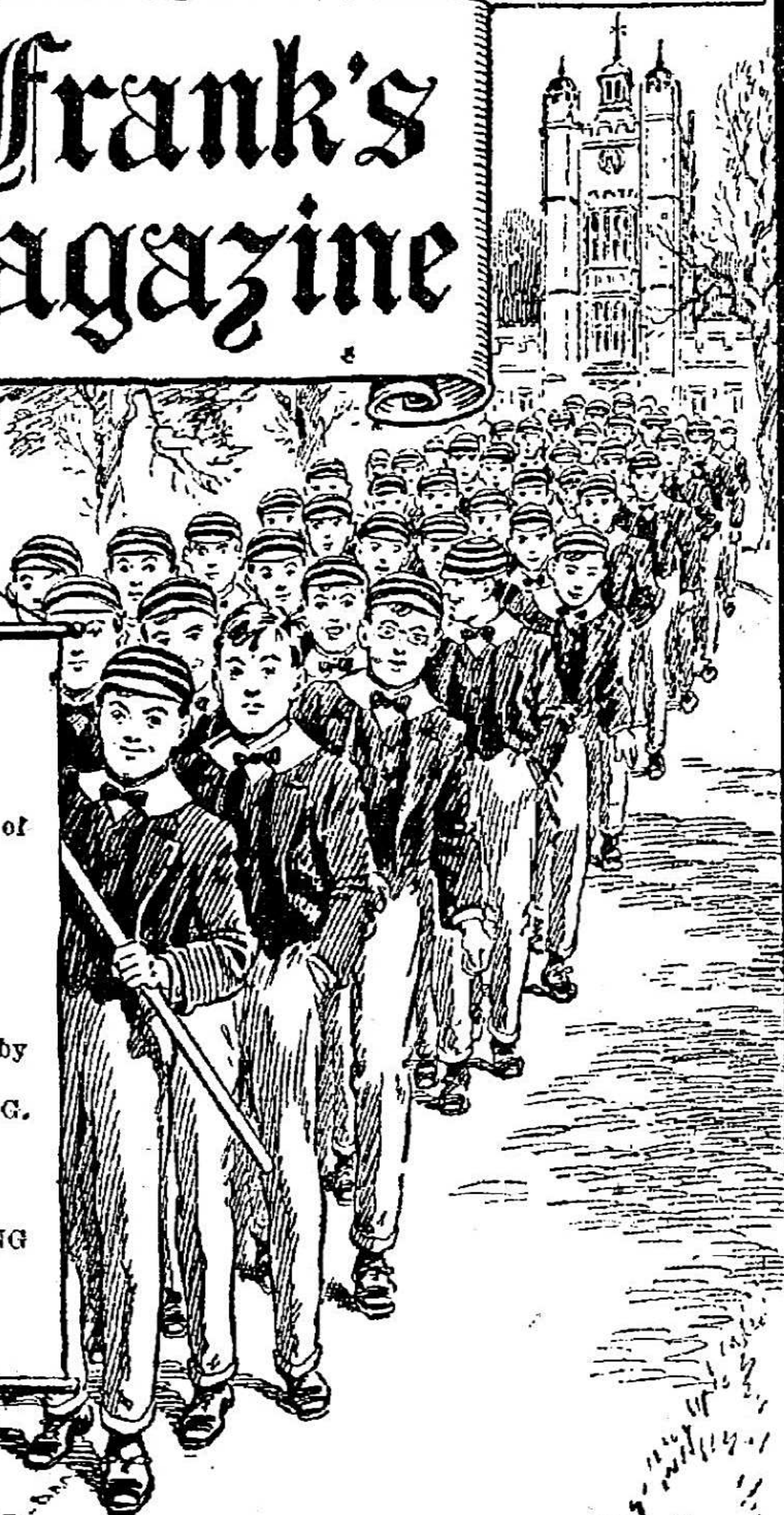
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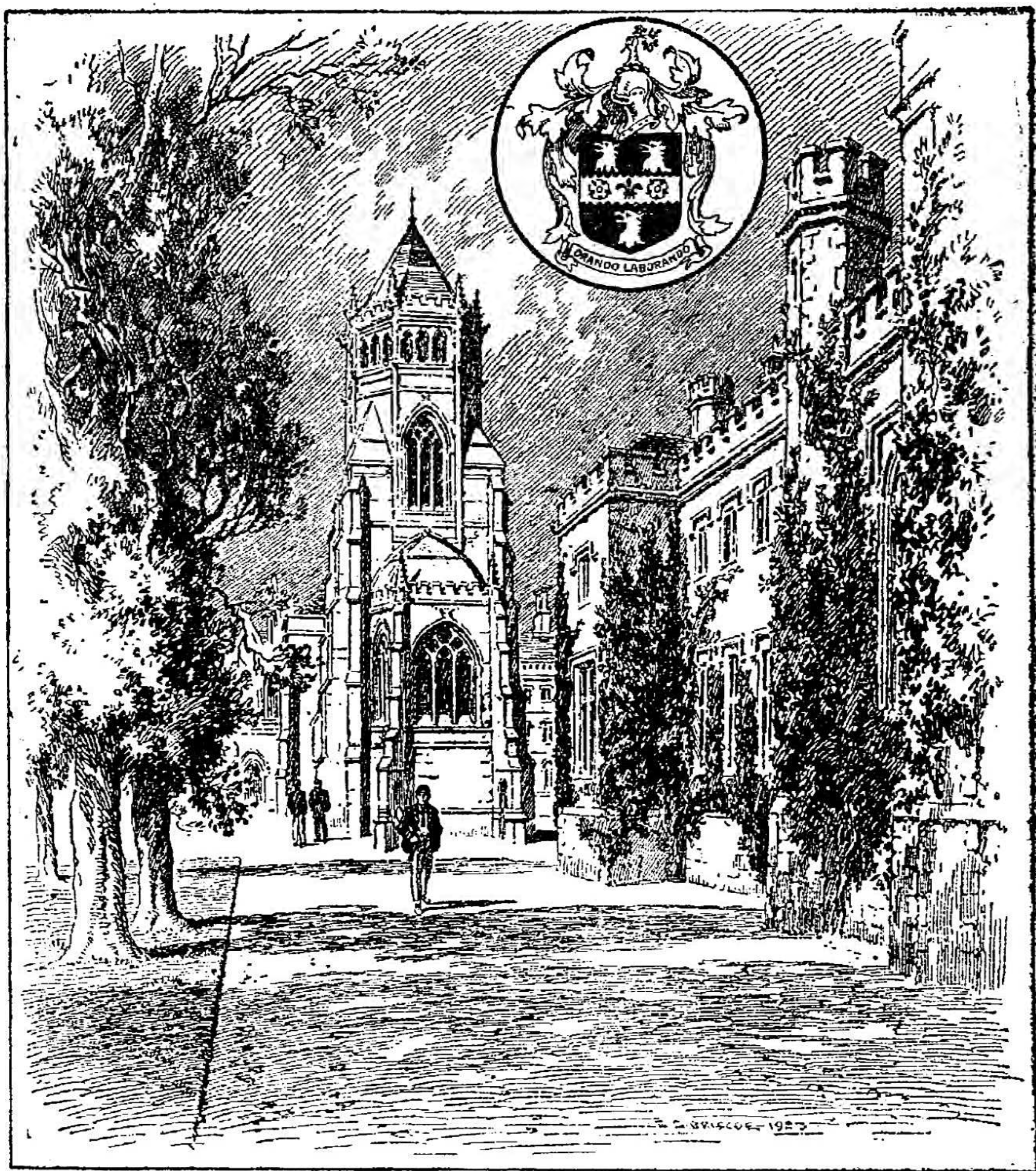


A BRIGHT LITTLE PAPER FOR DULL DAYS!

OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

SPECIAL SERIES OF ART SKETCHES BY MR. E. E. BRISCOE.

No. 4. RUGBY SCHOOL.



Founded in 1567 by Laurence Sheriff, a merchant grocer and servant to Queen Elizabeth, Rugby ranks with Eton and Harrow as one of England's most famous public schools. It has stood on its present site since 1740-1750, and was rebuilt in 1809. Many additional buildings have been added during the latter part of the last century. The fine chapel, dedicated to St. Lawrence, was enlarged and reconsecrated in 1872, a swimming bath installed in 1876, the famous Temple observatory, containing a wonderful equatorial refractor, by Alvan Clark, being

erected in 1877, and in the following year was added the Temple reading-room and art museum. The new big school and classrooms were built in 1885. Rugby can boast of many famous Heads, the most celebrated of whom was Dr. Arnold, 1827-42. The well-known book, now almost a classic, "Tom Brown's Schooldays," gives a faithful picture of life at this great school in the days of the stage coach. One need hardly add that the popular game of football known as "Rugger" emanated from this school.



Editorial Office
Study C,
St. Frank's.

My Dear Chums,

Early last Wednesday morning a big package arrived for me. Needless to say, I was expecting it, and so was the whole school. Now there was nothing very extraordinary in my receiving a parcel, yet the amount of interest it created among the other fellows was somewhat startling. No sooner had Tubbs, struggling manfully with the bulky load, deposited it on our study floor, than a queue of fellows assembled outside, cheering lustily for No. 1 of the St. Frank's Magazine. Yes, the Mags, had arrived, and you can imagine with what feverish haste I ripped open the parcel. In an incredibly short time practically every copy was snapped up, and, I suspect, devoured at brekker.

A DAY TO BE REMEMBERED.

That day will stand out as one of the proudest in my life. I knew the Mag. would be a success, but I did not expect to be chaired and carried round the playing fields, and to be honoured by a special feed that night in the dorm. As a result of the congratulations, my right hand was nearly wrenched from my arm and my shoulder was black and blue by the following morning from sundry slaps. I was glad that my worthy contributors came in for a share of the honours. In vain did Archie attempt

to hide himself in the seclusion of his study. The author of "Absolutely a Rotten Gang" was unearthed while in the very act of penning his next effusion, and, to the accompaniment of "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow," he was carried to the Common Room, and nothing less than a speech would secure his release. As for the perpetrator of Trackett Grim, he was very much in evidence, and, according to Church and McClure, has been spoiled by success. They tell me that he dons a dressing-gown and wears carpet slippers when thinking out his Trackett Grim adventures, and that life in Study D is becoming more thrilling than ever with Handy's daily rehearsal of the great detective's exploits.

COMING ATTRACTIONS.

The unique pen drawings of other Public Schools, which began in the Nelson Lee Library a few weeks ago, will be continued every week in the Mag., Westminster, Charterhouse, and Marlborough being the next schools to appear in the series.

I regret not being able to publish a Trackett Grim story this week. Space being rather limited, it was only fair to give some of the other chaps a look in. Next week, however, there will appear another Trackett Grim story, entitled, "The Case of the Missing Millions." There will also be contributions by Clarence Fellowe, Archie, and other well-known juniors

Yours to a cinder,

NIPPER.



PITHY PARS FOR PUSHING PEOPLE

These Short Articles on Everyday Subjects
will be of Tremendous Value to Every Boy.

Collected by C. de V.

COUNTRY WALKS

Does it?

Personally I have never seen it do so. I wish it would. It might take a stroll into the Ancient House. How surprised Mr. Crowell would be to see the country come walking in through the door!

In it would step, with its woods and fields and hills hanging on to its arms. Imagine a nice white, winding lane tripping over Mr. Crowell's feet! Or a whole wood of pine-trees trying to squeeze into the front row of desks!

SHOOTING STARS

This is a pastime usually pursued in the winter.

As is well known, stars only come out at night, since they are busy at work all day. And since the nights are longer in winter the stars can get out a great deal more.

There are various methods of trying to shoot stars, none of them very successful. Some people use guns for the purpose. If they miss, they are usually accused of aiming at the moon.

The difficulty about hitting the stars is partly because they are such a great distance away, and partly because they travel at such ridiculously fast speeds.

Some of the stars are millions of miles off, much further than Land's End or even John o' Groats. While the speed at which they travel is thousands of miles an hour. That's pretty fast, and, if you don't believe it, have a shot at shooting stars yourself. You won't bag many!

TUCK HAMPERS

That is another common mistake. Ask Fatty Little. It never hampered him! As a matter of fact, it helps people to live. Tuck is something to eat. And if you didn't eat you'd die. So it is wicked to say things like that about tuck. Ask Fatty Little!

Tuck derived its name from a very fat man who was in Robin Hood's band. His name was Friar Tuck. He always ate a terrific lot, and grew enormously fat.

So that, whenever people saw a very fat man, they used to point at him and say "Tuck!" Thus the word got applied to anyone who liked a lot of food, and after that to the food itself. Ask Fatty Little!



PAINFUL PARODIES

PERPETRATED

By

Clarence Fellowe.

OWEN MINOR IN THE MORNING

(With apologies to the composers of
that popular song, "CAROLINA
IN THE MORNING.")

Washing is good time wasted,
So all the Third Formers say.
When they're at home they're pasted
Unless they wash each day;
But at St. Frank's it's diff'rent,
And this is what leads me to say:

Nothing could be finer than to see young
Owen minor

In the morning!

Everybody oughter come and see him
dodge the water

In the morning!

In the dirt he glories,

And his neck's a sight;

Then he will tell such stories

That he had a wash last night.

Lounging in the lobby is the bounder's
favourite hobby

In the morning!

Down the stairs he's stumbled, with his
hair all rough and tumbled,

And he's yawning!

If he was in charge of things for only
a day

He'd grab the soap and throw it
away—

Heathens out in China are more clean
than Owen minor

In the morning!

Have you a Wireless Set?

Mr. E. J. BARNARD, Welling, Kent, writes:

"I think I ought to tell you how much I value 'The Amateur Mechanic.' It has proved of great assistance in a variety of jobs, and especially as to the article on WIRELESS TELEGRAPHY. I constructed an instrument entirely according to the instructions, and was rewarded with success on the first trial. I may add that until I became interested in the article in your 'Amateur Mechanic' I had not the slightest elementary knowledge of Wireless Telegraphy."

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chair from an old cask—To stuff animals—To dress furs—To stuff and mount birds—Wood inlaying—To prepare working drawings—To renovate a grandfather's clock—To make garden arbours, arches, seats, summerhouses, etc.—To use metal drilling tools—To renovate mirrors—To mend china—To do fretwork—To limewhite poultry-houses—To do gold-plating and silver-plating—To clean a watch—To mend keyless watches and ordinary watches—To distemper ceilings and walls—To make picture-frames and frame pictures—Curtain fitting—Metal Castings—To clean paint off glass—To clean boilers—To fix an anthracite stove—To re-gild and restore picture frames—How to use spanners—To make doors and windows draught-proof—To paint walls—To do nickel-plating—To cure noises in hot-water pipes—India and glue varnishes—To make plaster casts, etc., etc.

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N.L.Y., 1923.....



E Sopp's Fables

By
Edgar Sopp of the Fifth

No. 2. The Fable of the Lost Opportunity.

THERE is such a thing as being Too Smart. Being Too Smart is worse than not being Smart Enough. And there once lived a Fellow with a Big Head, although it seemed that this Big Head was not full of Brains, but was suffering from a Most Curious Complaint known throughout the land as Swelled Dome.

Now, the name of this Fellow with the Swelled Dome was Cuthbert Chambers, and he considered himself to be the Shining Light of a Select Body known far and wide as the Fifth Form At St. Frank's.

It came to pass that one day a Lesser Boy visited the abode of Cuthbert, for the Strange Purpose of selling what he called a Jolly Fine album of Absolutely Unused Balkans. Chambers, being one of those Strange People who collect postage stamps as a Hobby, knew at once what the Lesser Boy was Getting At.

And, lo, when he examined the Unused Balkans, he found them to be Wondrously Interesting, and turning unto the Lesser Boy he spoke, asking why he wanted to sell such Ripping Specimens, and how much were they?

Now, the Lesser Boy, whose name was Jack Grey, and who Belonged to the Remove, did not actually want to Dispose of his Precious stamps. It gave him a Pain to contemplate such a thing. But it chanced that he had recently come a Frightful Cropper on a two-wheeled Vehicle which Grey always referred to as his Jigger. Not only had the off-side pedal become loose, and the front brake Wonky, but the whole Machine, broadly speaking, was a Nasty Mess altogether.

Upon venturing forth with the Remains, and placing them before the Eagle Eye of the village Repairer, this latter Gentleman had Reckoned Up, and had come to the Conclusion that the Bill would come to at least Two Quid. And Gray, not wishing his People to hear of the Disaster, was now engaged in the Unsavoury Task of Raising the Wind.

All this he related with Abundant Detail to Cuthbert Chambers, adding that he had already sold a Pocket Knife for Two Bob, a Camera for Fifteen Bob, and sundry other

Personal Effects for Various Amounts. He was exactly Fifteen Shillings Shy. That is to say, he asked Fifteen Bob for the Album of Unused Balkans.

Now, Cuthbert was a Fellow who thought himself extremely Clever. He saw that Grey was in Desperate Need, and was therefore an Easy Mark. Cuthbert pooh-poohed the Price, saying that he would give no more than Half A Quid. He even went so far as to say that he was doing Grey a Favour by offering such a Sum. In reality, Chambers knew that the Stamps were worth Double. He was, in fact, On the Make.

With Indignation, Grey proceeded to Burst Forth into protest, saying that Chambers was a Rotten Shylock—not that he intended any insult to the Jews by this Remark. However, to be perfectly Honest, it must be Observed that Chambers was displaying a most Decided Hebraic Strain.

He remained Firm, and added that for Two Pips he would reduce the price to Seven-and-Six. And the Lesser Boy who simply had to raise fifteen by Hook or by Crook (as the Man was outside waiting for his Money) retired from the Study, shouting Vile and Insulting remarks connected with Chambers' Ancestors.

And behold! In the Passage the Lesser Boy Barged into a member of his own Flock—a Languid Youth who went by the name of Archie Olenthorpe. Now, this Languid Youth was Celebrated for his Wealth, and he was Known to possess a Kind Heart. On the Spur of the Moment, Grey offered the album to Archie, declaring that the stamps were worth a Quid but he would sell for Fifteen Shillings.

Archie, making a remark to the effect that he was Dashed Flustered, took the album and examined it through a fragment of glass which he called a Monocle. Finally, he spoke, saying that he didn't actually want the Bally Thing, but was willing to buy it if Grey really wanted him to. He insisted, however, upon paying the Full Price, and thereupon Whacked Out a pound note.

With joy in his Heart, Grey went forth into the wilderness to Settle Up with the Repairer, and Archie retired to his study, say-

ing that he would Have a Stab at the album. And thus it appeared that the affair was Ended.

But lo, the next Day a visitor entered Archie's room, this visitor being no less a Person than Fenton of the Sixth, who was an Ardent Stamp Collector. He was surprised to see the Album, and expressed Astonishment that Archie went in for That Sort of Thing. Archie thereupon explained that he Didn't, and related the Circumstances.

And it came to pass that Fenton turned over a page of the album, and his Eyes bulged. For to his wonderment and joy he Beheld a Rare and Costly stamp that for Countless Moons he had longed to possess. Fenton, in his Great Wisdom, knew much more about stamps than Jack Grey.

So it happened that Fenton offered the Magnificent sum of a Fiver for that One Stamp. Archie, confessing himself Abso-

lutely Faint, referred Fenton to Jack Grey, and thus matters became smoothed out. For Archie refused to keep possession of the album under the Circs. Out of the Great Wealth that Fenton paid to Grey, the latter was enabled to Wipe Off his indebtedness to Archie.

And when Cuthbert Chambers, He of the Big Head, heard this story he proceeded to Tear his Hair, and utter strange and awful Maledictions. For Cuthbert had no scruples like unto Archie, and would readily have Made Much Profit for himself over the Deal.

But now, owing to his Failing to Grasp the Opportunity, all was Lost. And soon it was spread Far and Wide throughout the Land that Chambers had been even a Bigger Fathead than usual. But this was no Consolation to the disappointed Cuthbert.

MORAL: NEVER PUT A THING OFF—DO IT NOW!

We notice that a chemist in Bannington is holding a price-slashing sale of ointment and liniment. We commend this to the immediate notice of Church and McClure, who should make all haste to take advantage of this golden opportunity.

Willy Handforth & Co. have been talking about clubbing together to form a Third

Form Jazz Band. But why waste money on buying instruments? They make as much noise as a jazz band by mere vocal efforts alone!

Ulysses Spencer Adams's bitter complaints about the absence of steam-heat in the studies leave us as cold as Ulysses himself. And the American chap claims that he is hot stuff! Tut-tut!

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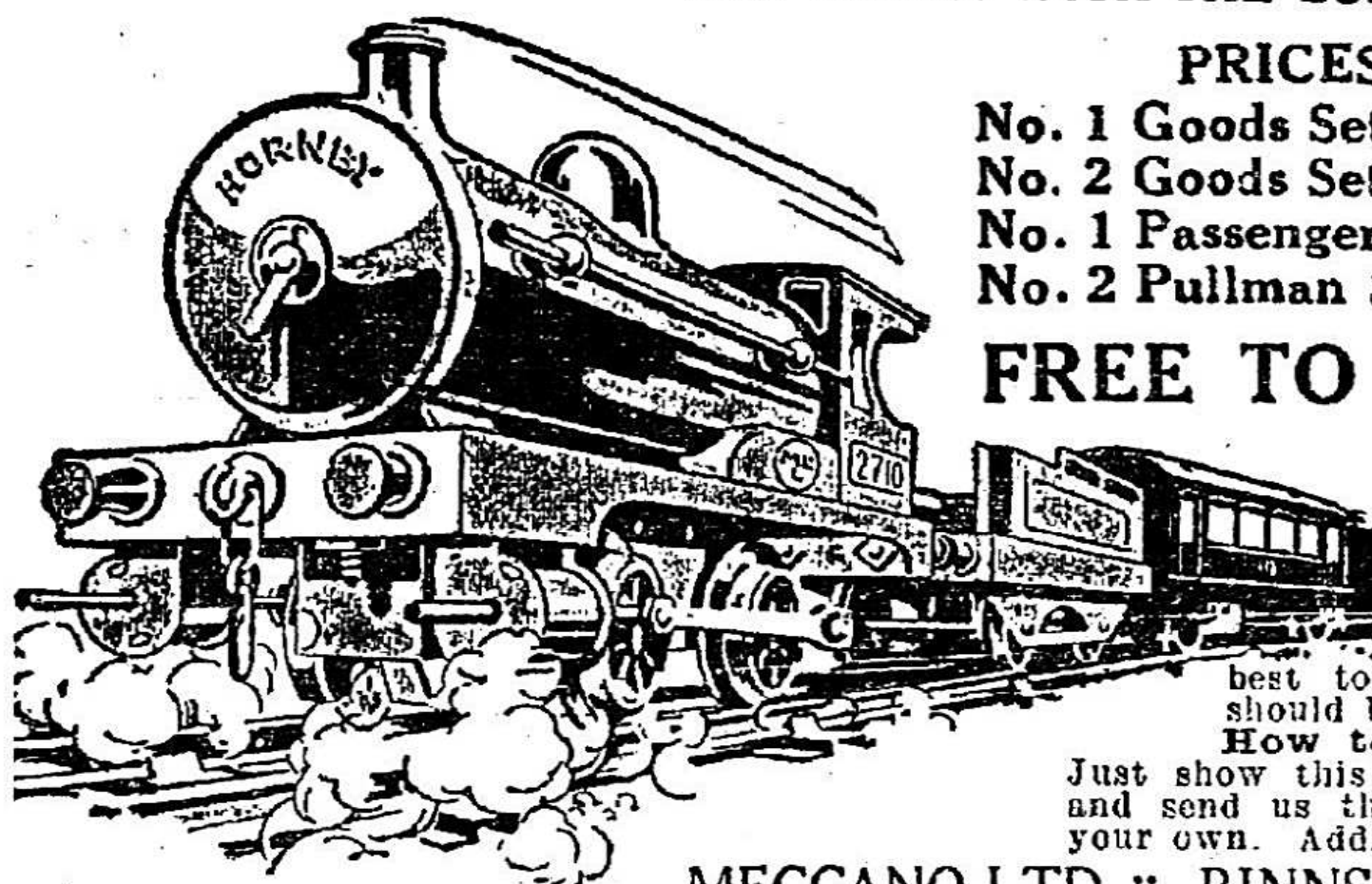
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COME on, Bill—we'd better be goin'; the bird-lime's gettin' on, you know; besides, if you have any more o' that finger an' thumb, you'll get elephant's trunk!"

Everybody, at some time or other, has heard scraps of the peculiar rhyming slang which is familiar to every true-born Londoner; but it is doubtful if the uninitiated could understand a quarter of the queer phrases which are frequently encountered in the great metropolis.

For instance, the man who spoke the sentence above, while standing in a public-house with a friend, merely wished to impart the information that the time was growing late—concluding his remark by reminding his companion that further indulgence in rum would result in his becoming drunk. But instead of using the orthodox words, he substituted their equivalent in rhyming slang.

And the same thing occurs in countless other instances; for your true Cockney has his own peculiar expression for practically everything. It is my intention to introduce a few of them to the reader—although, of course, it is only possible to deal with a very small number in this little effort.

It will be as well if we return to the two men in the public-house, and listen to what they are saying.

"Don't you worry abaht the bird-lime, Ted!" replied the other man. "We'll just 'ave a glass o' Royal Mail (ale), 'op on a bother an' fuss ('bus), an' be 'ome with the trouble an' strife (wife) in about three cock linnets (minutes)!"

Bill nodded.

"Right-o, matey!" he replied. "But wot abaht my skin an' blister (sister)? Didn't we arrange to take 'er to the Isle of France (dance) to-night—just to exercise our plates o' meat (feet)? She's 'ot stuff on 'er Scotch pegs (legs), an' she won't 'arf be angry if we disappoint 'er! In

fact, she'll like as not send me to bo-peep (sleep) with a bash on the I suppose (nose), or a slosh in the north an' south (mouth)! You know wot a terror she is when she gets angry! She knocked out a few o' my Hampstead Heath (teeth) once, an I ain't forgot it, neither!"

Ted grinned.

"Ain't you a cheerful sort o' bloke?" he said lightly. "Wot are you worryin' abaht? We shall be quite Isle of Wight (all right) I tell yer! 'I'll bunk off 'ome on a bother an' fuss, an' you'd better 'op on a pot o' jam (tram), an' pick up Liza. By the time you bring 'er along I shall 'ave 'ad me ocean wave (shave), an' 'ave changed me round the 'ouses (trousers)! All I got to do then is to shove on me I'm afloat (coat), make up the Anna Maria (fire), lock up the rat an' mouse (house), an' there you are! My old gal will be ready an' waitin', with 'er Barnet Fair (hair), al' fluffed up like a greengage (stage) 'eroine, so we shan't 'ave to wait for 'er!"

Bill nodded again.

"That's t'e sort o' talk, cully!" he said. "Where shall we go—same old place?"

"Yus! Can't beat the ole 'all in Walworth Road!" said Ted. "We'll get to the Underground Station in about two ticks, and I'll stand treat for the bat' an' wickets (tickets)! The Barry Pain (train) will git us to the Isle of France (dance) in no time, an' when we're there we'll 'ave a good old blow-out! Cups o' Rosie Lee (tea), an' 'hunks o' Joe Blake (cake), better'n you can get anywhere else in the Charlie Brown (town)! I tell you, matey, I'm just longin' to hear the old Johanna (piano) goin'!"

"Rather!" agreed Bill. "That's the stuff to make yer gasp for Macbeth (breath), an' bring a sparkle to yer mince pies (eyes)! Not 'arf! Then 'ome to Uncle Ned (bed), with a nice soft weepin'

willow (pillow) to rest yer weary lump o' lead (head) on!"

"You're right!" said Ted. "But afore I pops off to bo-peep (sleep), I allus likes to 'ave a look at the linen draper (paper), or else read a chapter o' my butcher's 'ook (book)! There ain't nothin' to beat it for making a bloke drowsy—unless, per'aps, it's a nip o' I'm so frisky (whiskey) or maybe Jack the Dandy (brandy)! Still, we can't afford luxuries o' that sort nowadays, so I usually substitute a pig in the poke (smoke), an' content meself with that!"

"Yes; the bees an' honey (money) ain't too plentiful just now," agreed Bill. "Still, we ain't 'ard up for a Lord o' the Manor (tanner), so we'd better be gettin' on the frog an' toad (road)!"

The two men left the public-house, and Ted turned to his friend as they emerged into the street.

"Well, so-long, old pal," he said. "Don't be late! An' mind you use the Home Sweet Home (comb) an' the linnet an' thrush (brush) on your Barnet Fair (hair)! Last time we went to the blinkin' Isle of France (dance), you looked like a golliwog in a fit!"

Bill grinned.

"Don't worry, Ted!" he said. "My skin an' blister (sister) will see to that! I've got some new almond rocks (socks), and a new pair o' daisy roots (boots), so you can bet I'll look after my thatch all right! Must do that—or else the two ends o' me wouldn't Colney Hatch (match)! I'll bet a saucepan-lid (quid) that I'll take the bloomin' shine out o' you to-night—so look out!"

And the two Cockney pals separated—to meet again later at a famous Walworth Road dancing hall. We can only assume that they enjoyed themselves with that whole-hearted thoroughness which characterises the happy-go-lucky Londoner, and that Bill spent a happy evening in the company of his "skin and blister," while Ted was equally contented by the society of his "trouble and strife."

In any case, we must leave them at the "Isle of France"—that glittering "Rat and Mouse" (house) where the Cockneys of London enjoy their "tanner" "'ops."

We report, with regret, that Mr. Suncliffe is suffering from a slight attack of tonsillitis, and is confined to his bed. While expressing our sympathy, we also congratulate Mr. Suncliffe. Even tonsillitis must be a relief compared to presiding over the Third.

Somebody heard Chubby Heath, of the Third, declaring that when he grows up he'll make himself famous on the stage by going in for classical dancing. Heath means to start dancing lessons at once.

Ridiculous! He doesn't need lessons—all he requires is a Russian name.

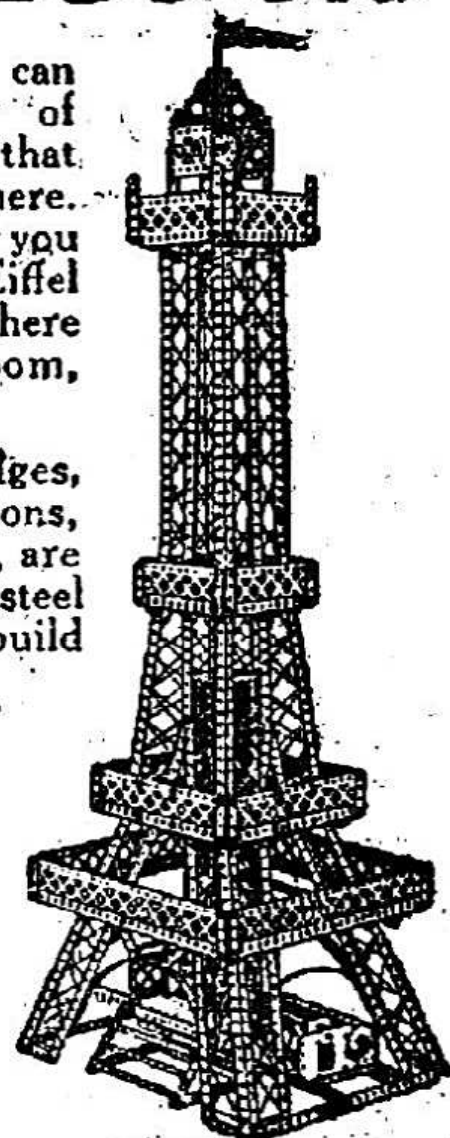
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MY MINOR!

By E. O. HANDFORTH.

I 'M a peaceable kind of chap. Everybody at St. Frank's knows that. I don't often lose my temper. But this is the limit! Did you see that rotten article in the last week's issue of the Mag.?

My—my hat! It almost makes me ill to think that any member of my family could write such rot. It wasn't even spelled correctly. I counted at least a dozen spelling mistakes myself.

I'm talking about the article called "My Major," by my young brother.

I don't suppose many people read it. But a few may have. And if they did I want to apologise for him. Of course he's very small, and doesn't realise any better.

But I don't want anybody to hit him very hard. He deserves it. Oh, yes, he deserves it. If anyone poleaxed him it wouldn't be more than he deserved. But still, as I say, I don't want him hurt, because he is only a kid.

And, besides, I have tried to show him what utter rotten cheek it was for him to write such a lot of rot. I gave him just a gentle lesson. I just smacked his head. Then I boxed his ears. Then I kicked him out of the study. After that I pulled him in again by his right ear. Then I punched his nose. Afterwards, as I wanted the little ass to remember that I was rather annoyed with him, I put him on the floor and sat on his head.

In case that wasn't enough, I pulled his

hair and then pinched his arm. Church and McClure came in then, and said I was being a bit rough on him. I think they're a bit tender-hearted. Very decent chaps in their way, but a bit inclined to be too sympathetic.

However, to oblige them I let young Willy go, and punched Church's nose for interfering. Then I gave McClure a black eye.

My chums got a bit ratty after that, and I had to let myself go. After all, I must maintain discipline. I had to punch them both a bit more. And then I knocked their heads together to show I meant it.

That's what happens when a silly little fathead like my young minor starts writing for the Mag. Besides ruining the paper, it causes such a lot of unpleasantness in Study D.

Usually Study D is the quietest of studies. We get on very well together. Church and McClure agree with me about everything. Even if at first they think I'm in the wrong, they very soon alter their opinion.

And then the stupid little fat-headed chump of a half-boiled owl starts writing rot for the Mag. Of course it leads to a row!

However, I've stopped all that. I've quite forgiven Willy. I don't want to boast, but everyone knows I'm a peaceable chap. I can stand a joke against myself as well as anyone else. And I never lose my temper. But things can go too far. I had to show young Willy, the silly fathead.

Well, I've shown him. And that's all there is to it. And if you'd like to hear what I think about the way the Mag. is edited—

(Sorry. The space in this number is engaged. Ring off.—Nipper, Ed.)

CORRESPONDENCE.

The Editor.

Dear Sir,—Your Magazine is very useful to us in Study A. We use it to light the fire with.

Yours, etc.,

FULLWOOD & Co.

The Editor.

Sir,—With due regard to the deference due to the Editor from one of his contributors, I feel I must really lodge a protest at the treatment I have received at your hands. A week ago I deposited within your sanctum a short manuscript suitable, I was convinced, for your valuable pages. The short effusion was a little affair of some fifty close-written pages on the entertaining subject of "The Archaeological Aspect of the Antediluvian Ants." Now, my dear sir, this contribution has neither appeared in your paper, nor has it been returned to me. I can only imagine its non-inclusion is due to some oversight on the part of one of your staff. I should be glad if you would rectify it at your earliest convenience.

Yours, etc.,

TIMOTHY TUCKER.

The Editor.

The St. Frank's Magazine.

Sir,—I am delighted to see the Magazine once more being published. Under its new name it bids fair to be more popular than ever. I have shown your first number to the Head, and he quite agrees with me. We both think it is better and brighter day by day and in every way. Good luck to the paper and its editor!

Yours, etc.,

NELSON LEE.

The Editor.

Dear Sir,—I have read your first number, which I found lying about in the tuck-shop. And I have a very good suggestion to make. Here it is. Why not arrange a simple competition. I would suggest seeing who can eat the largest number of pastries. As prizes for the lucky winners you could present free tuck hampers. I think this would be a very popular competition.

Yours, etc.,

FATTY LITTLE.

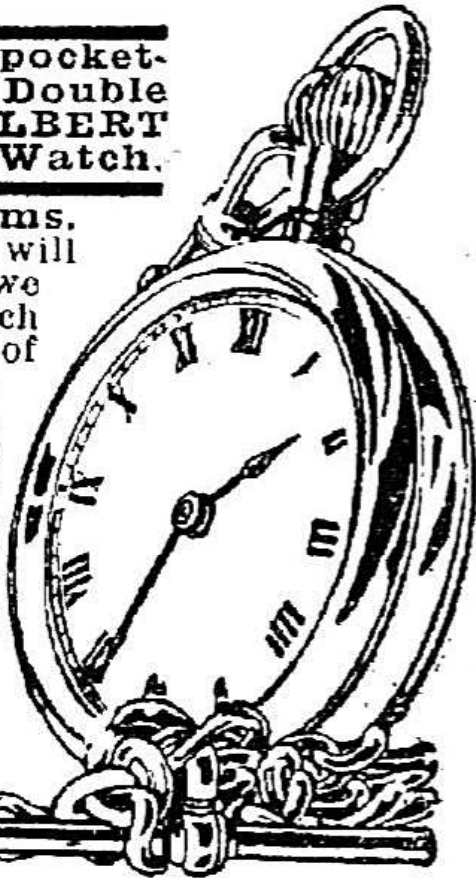
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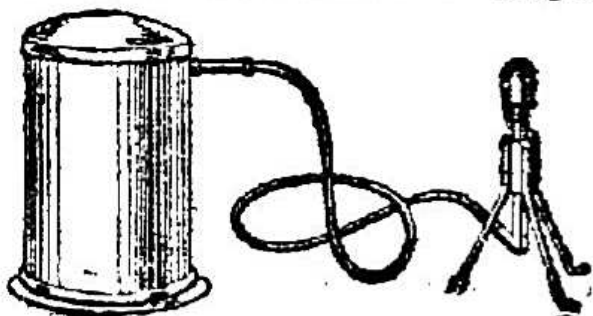
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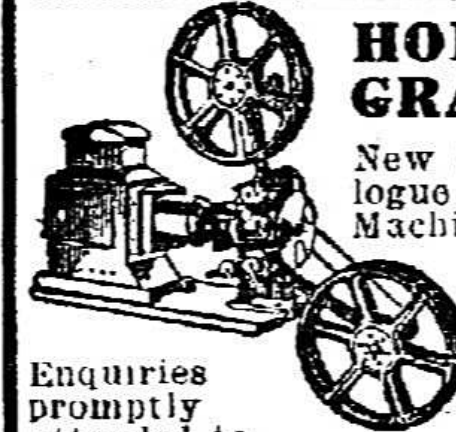
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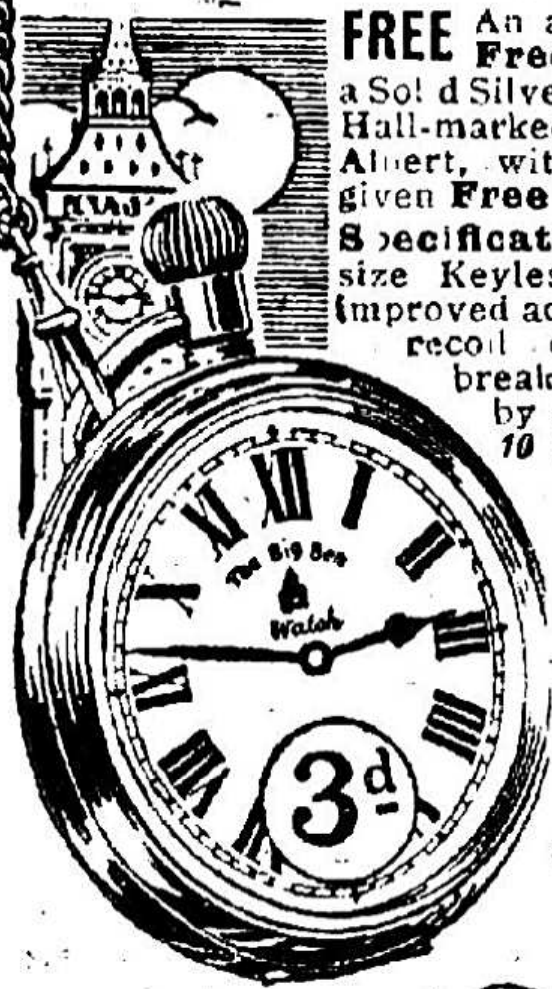
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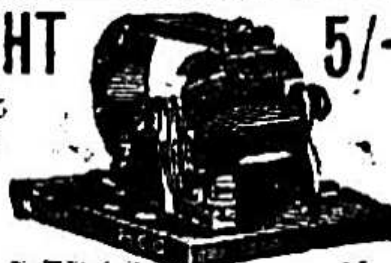
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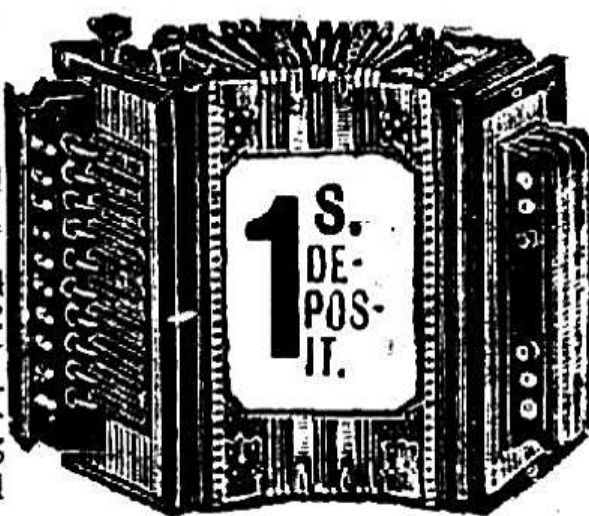


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