

**DON'T MISS THIS WEEK'S BUMPER No. OF THE MAG. !**

# *The* **NELSON LEE**

**LIBRARY &  
ST FRANK'S MAGAZINE 2<sup>D</sup>**

Without having time to protest, Archie was bundled into the open trunk. (From this week's story).



Grand Concluding Story of the Night Owl Series:—

## **THE NIGHT OWL'S PREY!**

See Within!





"I am serious, Lee, and your flippancy is not in keeping with the present circumstances!" snapped the Night Owl. "I have come here for the Don Santos Treasure, and I shall take it away with me!"



# THE NIGHT OWL'S PREY!



Caleb Droone, the Night Owl, and leader of the notorious criminal organisation, known as the Alliance of 13, is plotting to recover the priceless treasure of Don Santos, which he had stolen from a Spanish nobleman, and which is now, with the exception of a valuable emerald necklace, in the hands of Nelson Lee, the famous Schoolmaster detective. Only by the skin of his teeth did the Night Owl escape death in a motor-car smash while being pursued by Nelson

Lee. He was unable to get away with the bulk of the treasure, though he managed to retain the emerald necklace.

He knows that Nelson Lee means to get back the necklace, and to hand him over to justice. Few have dared before to cross the Night Owl's path with impunity and, in consequence of Nelson Lee's interference, the leader of the Alliance of 13 intends to bring all his power and resource to bear in the destruction of his enemy. As to how far he succeeds in his diabolical plot I must leave you to discover in this, the final story of the thrilling Night Owl series.

THE EDITOR.

*The Narrative Related Throughout by Nipper.*

## CHAPTER I.

### CALEB DROONE'S SECRET!

"EXTRAORDINARY!" said Mr. Pagett. The master of the Fifth Form at St. Frank's came to a halt in the old Triangle, and peered through his spectacles and the gloom. The December evening was cold, and the hour rather late. There was more than a hint of fog in the atmosphere, too.

"Extraordinary!" repeated Mr. Pagett. "I'll swear I saw a figure moving!"

The good gentleman was on his way from

the College House—where he had been having an interesting chat with Mr. Langton on the subject of philology—to the Ancient House, there to shepherd the Fifth Form up to bed.

And he was just passing the fountain when he fancied he saw a dim figure lurking against some bushes near the school wall. As Mr. Pagett paused, the conviction came upon him that this matter needed looking into.

Being of a somewhat suspicious nature, Mr. Pagett immediately jumped to the conclusion that some guilty junior was making



an attempt to sneak in—having missed calling-over. And the Fifth Form master strode forward again with a pleasant sensation of enjoyment. Mr. Pagett rather liked dropping upon unwary juniors; it was one of his few pleasures in life.

"Come out, sir!" he commanded sternly. "It is quite useless for you to attempt to hide. Come out, and let me see who you are!"

The bushes remained coldly indifferent.

"How dare you defy me?" barked Mr. Pagett, secretly pleased that the poor wretch of a junior was mortally afraid of him. "Unless you show yourself at once, boy, I will double your punishment!"

Still the guilty one remained unresponsive.

"Upon my soul!" gasped Mr. Pagett. "This is outrageous!"

He walked forward, and bravely pushed the bushes aside, peering in among the branches. He expected to find the cowering, shivering figure of some unhappy Third-Former. And he uttered an ejaculation of triumph as he saw a dim, crouching form.

"Ah! So I was right!" said Mr. Pagett pleasantly. "So I was right; You wicked young rascal! How dare you openly defy me in this disgraceful way? Let me see your face——"

The words died away in Mr. Pagett's throat, for at that second he did see the unknown's face—and it wasn't at all what the Fifth Form master expected. He went pale and his knees suddenly felt wobbly.

"Good gracious!" he muttered huskily.

For the face was masked! And beneath the sinister mask a scrubby chin could be seen. Mr. Pagett had no opportunity of seeing anything else, for, all in the same second, the stranger sprang to the attack.

Mr. Pagett, valiant though he was when it came to ordering boys about, lost all his courage at this crucial moment. He staggered back, uttering a sound that was suspiciously like a bleat of terror.

And the mysterious stranger, seeing that he had nothing much to fear, merely gave the Fifth Form master a violent push, and sent him flying over backwards. Before Mr. Pagett could recover, the man had vanished into the gloom.

"Help!" moaned Mr. Pagett feebly. "Burglars! Help!"

Unfortunately—or, perhaps, fortunately—there were no juniors or other boys in the Triangle at the moment. And Mr. Pagett's voice fell upon the empty air. No aid came to him, and at last he floundered up.

To his great surprise and relief, the scoundrel was not bent upon committing gory murder. Mr. Pagett's life was safe, and the stranger had entirely disappeared. Trembling with the unusual excitement of such a terrifying experience, Mr. Pagett rose unsteadily to his feet, and ran like a hare towards the Ancient House doorway.

All thought of dignity was forgotten. And it would indeed have been a sad thing for Mr. Pagett if his boys had seen him at that

moment. Fairly bulky, it was astounding the speed which Mr. Pagett attained.

Gasping heavily, he reached the Ancient House lobby, and paused, fighting for breath. And, to his infinite relief, Nelson Lee came striding along at that moment.

The Fifth Form master clutched at the door-post for support.

"Why, Mr. Pagett!" exclaimed the House-master-detective. "What on earth is the matter? Are you ill, sir? Allow me to——"

"I—I have been attacked!" moaned Mr. Pagett.

"Attacked?"

"Yes, sir—brutally assaulted!" panted the Fifth Form master. "A desperate ruffian sprang out of the bushes upon me—a miscreant who probably had designs upon the school plate! Indeed, I have not the slightest doubt that my intervention has frustrated a serious burglary!"

Nelson Lee regarded Mr. Pagett curiously.

"Come, come, my dear sir!" he said gently. "Please don't imagine for a moment that I wish to discredit your statement; but I really think you must be mistaken——"

"Nothing of the sort, sir—nothing of the sort!"

"But the hour is absurdly early for burglars!" said Nelson Lee drily.

"That is nothing to do with the matter!" snapped Mr. Pagett, recovering himself somewhat. "No doubt you think I was needlessly alarmed. But this man was a desperate character—lurking among the bushes, awaiting his opportunity."

"Can you describe this man, Mr. Pagett?"

"No, I cannot!" snapped the other. "I only know he was masked——"

"Masked!"

"Ah, you are impressed, eh?" said Mr. Pagett triumphantly. "Yes, Mr. Lee—masked. He attacked me without warning—without giving me the slightest chance to defend myself! A brutal, unprovoked assault!"

Nelson Lee looked duly grave.

"In that case, Mr. Pagett, I am intensely relieved to see that you are recovering so rapidly," he exclaimed. "And it will be advisable, I imagine, to keep this matter private. Possibly the man you saw was just a lurking tramp——"

"A tramp?" broke in Mr. Pagett curtly. "Upon my soul! Do you think I am a fool, Mr. Lee? This man was no tramp—he was a real desperado! And I intend to ring up the police at once, and have the whole thing investigated."

However, Nelson Lee succeeded in calming Mr. Pagett down after a while, and he made the indignant gentleman realise that this affair was hardly one for publicity. And Lee's efforts were so successful that Mr. Pagett finally went off half-inclined to believe that the fellow had been a tramp, after all.

But as soon as Nelson Lee was alone, he looked very thoughtful.



"I wonder!" he murmured slowly. "I wonder!"

He went to his study and sat down in his favourite easy-chair, and lit his pipe. Then he fell into a thoughtful mood, reviewing the events that had recently been taking place at the old school.

And he came to the conclusion that this "masked miscreant" of Mr. Pagett's was probably a member of the Alliance of 13—that grim, criminal organisation which was directed by Caleb Droone, sometimes known as the Night Owl.

Nelson Lee had been engaged in a tussle with Caleb Droone for some little time, and had passed through some exciting episodes. The chief cause of all the trouble was a wonderful collection of precious stones worth hundreds of thousands, the property of a Spanish millionaire named Don Sebastien Santos.

This collection was not only valuable in itself, but it had great historical value, too. For it had been brought from Peru by one of the old Spanish adventurers of centuries ago. The various costly trinkets which composed the collection were believed to have belonged to the Ancient Incas.

At all events, the Night Owl had got wind of this wonderful booty, and he had successfully burgled El Camino Castle, the ancestral home of Don Santos. But after arriving in England with his prize, his mortification was complete when Nelson Lee wrested it from him.

Quite recently—less than a week ago, in fact—the Night Owl had made a desperate attempt to recover the collection. In spite of the fact that he had all his best men on the job, he failed.

But, owing to a stroke of sheer luck, Caleb Droone had obtained possession of an emerald necklet—the most prized of all the items in the treasure. The Chief of the Alliance of 13 was now scheming to get the rest of the stuff.

And Nelson Lee, as he sat smoking in his armchair, wondered if Mr. Pagett had encountered one of Droone's spies. Judging by the Fifth Form master's story, there seemed little doubt that this was the case.

Nelson Lee was by no means as easy in mind as he looked. He had been worried for some days—exasperated, too. It was very annoying to know that the Night Owl was in possession of the emerald necklet. And for Lee to make any direct attempt to recover it was impossible—for Droone kept well in the background.

Lee was a keen judge of character, and he was convinced that the man would never be content to let the matter rest in its present state. Droone wanted the whole treasure—not a minor portion of it. And for this reason—assisted by the fact that Don Santos was slightly ill in his London hotel—Nelson Lee allowed the whole thing to hang fire.

He took no action himself, and he had not yet delivered up the treasure to his client.

He had two reasons for this. Firstly, he was grimly determined to deliver the collection complete. And, secondly, he was keeping it at St. Frank's as a lure for Caleb Droone.

Once delivered over into the hands of Don Santos, Droone would transfer his activities to that gentleman—or give up the task altogether. But while Lee kept possession, there was more than a hope that the climax would come. The risk was fairly great, but Lee never gave a thought to this.

He was still musing over his pipe, when there came a tap at the door, and Tubbs, the Ancient House page-boy, looked in.

"Well, Tubbs?"

"Please, sir, the 'Ead says he'd like a few words with you, sir, if you ain't busy," said Tubbs. "The 'Ead's compliments, sir, and would you go to his study at once, sir?"

Having dismissed Tubbs, Nelson Lee knocked out his pipe, and went along the passage to Dr. Stafford's sanctum. He had half an idea why the Headmaster wished to speak to him.

"Thank you, Mr. Lee; it was good of you to come so promptly," said Dr. Stafford as Nelson Lee seated himself. "I have no wish to criticise you in any way, but I feel that I must register a protest against your action in keeping these Don Santos jewels in the school."

"You think there might be some danger?" asked Lee.

"Good gracious, Mr. Lee, think what happened last week!" exclaimed the Head, looking grave. "Masked men prowling about, explosions, and Heaven knows what else! And, for all we know, these distressing events might break out again!"

Nelson Lee thought it inadvisable to mention that he was half-hoping that the Alliance of 13 would commence these "distressing" events. For, until the Night Owl acted, Lee would have to cool his heels.

"You can accept my assurance, doctor, that everything will soon be quiet and peaceful," smiled Lee. "Christmas will soon be here, you know, and it is only a matter of days before the boys will be off for the holidays. I don't think there will be any danger for them in the meantime."

"I trust not, Mr. Lee—I trust not," said the Head, with a worried look. "But those jewels! I feel that they ought to be elsewhere!"

Outside, in the cold and gloomy Triangle, a dim figure was creeping slowly and cautiously towards the Head's window. For some time this dim figure had been standing like a statue near the school wall—watching.

He had seen the light go out in Nelson Lee's study. He had seen Nelson Lee pause for a moment at one of the corridor windows. And then he had seen the detective's shadow clearly and distinctly on the blind of Dr. Stafford's sanctum. And now the man acted.



Even a novice would have been able to put two and two together—he would have known that Lee had gone to the Head's study for a chat. The chances were that the conversation would be purely scholastic. But the Night Owl's spy was ready to seize at any chance.

At last, without having made a sound, he stood just against the Head's window; but took care not to show himself against the lighted frame. He wanted no more encounters like that with Mr. Pagett.

Unbuttoning his heavy coat, he pulled out a curious-looking instrument. It was a small, cup-like arrangement with a rubber edge to the rim. And from the centre projected a small tube. This tube was connected with the cup, and was provided with two ear-pieces, not unlike a wireless listening-in head-gear.

Without making a sound, and reaching up carefully, the man applied the hollow part of the cup to the lower window frame. A slight pressure caused a vacuum to form, and the cup hung there, securely attached to the glass.

And the man, crouching low beneath the sill, adjusted the headgear. Every word that was being uttered within the room came to him as through a telephone.

This eavesdropping apparatus was an invention that had never been patented—for obvious reasons. The inventor himself was a member of Caleb Droone's Alliance.

And thus it came about that as Dr. Stafford and Nelson Lee sat conversing quietly in that private room, their conversation was distinctly overheard by the crouching figure outside.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE MARK ON THE WINDOW!



**D**R. STAFFORD was by no means satisfied. "Yes, I feel that these jewels ought to be elsewhere!" he repeated. "It is absolutely a menace to the school, Mr. Lee, to keep them here. I am right in my surmise, am I not, that these precious stones are actually in the school?"

"Yes," said Nelson Lee.

The man outside gave a peculiar smile of satisfaction. This item of definite information would please the Night Owl a lot.

"Yes, the jewels are here," said Lee. "But don't let that worry you, Dr. Stafford—"

"It does worry me!" interrupted the Head. "Why do you not take this collection and deliver it over to Don Santos, who, I believe, is staying at the Savoy Hotel, in London?"

"For one reason, our Spanish friend is laid somewhat low at the moment by an attack of influenza," replied Nelson Lee. "Our changeable climate is probably trying, after the sunny skies of Spain. I think it

better to keep the collection here in my own possession, until Don Santos is well."

Lee did not add that the attack of influenza was very slight, and that he could have seen the Don at any time he liked. There was no necessity to tell Dr. Stafford the whole truth.

"I quite appreciate your reason for not disturbing your client," said the Head. "But that, after all, is beside the point. Why cannot you take these jewels to London, and place them in a bank, or in a safe deposit vault? There they would be absolutely safe, and your responsibility at an end. While they remain in the school, I feel uneasy and—I must confess—somewhat nervous."

Nelson Lee smiled.

"Then let me reassure you," he said smoothly. "There will be no more burglaries here, Dr. Stafford—no more blowing up of safes."

"But how can you be sure of that?"

"Last week's affair was different," continued Lee. "Droone knew that the jewels were in my safe—and, consequently, he blew it open. But Droone knows nothing now—he is completely in ignorance regarding the exact whereabouts of the collection."

"But he knows that these jewels were in the school."

"My dear sir, even a daring criminal like Caleb Droone would not attempt the hopeless task of searching the whole school!" smiled Nelson Lee. And I can assure you that the Don Santos collection is not to be easily found."

The eavesdropper outside listened anxiously—believing that the exact whereabouts of the treasure was about to be disclosed. But he was doomed to disappointment.

"I will only tell you that I have hidden the stuff somewhere within these walls," continued Lee. "Droone will never find it—and he would not dare to make another attack. If he takes any action now, Dr. Stafford, it will be peaceful action, and the only possible victim of his cunning will be myself. And I am quite willing to stand the risk. So let me set your fears at rest, and urge you to forget the affair altogether."

It required a good many words, and all Nelson Lee's persuasion, but at length Dr. Stafford was convinced. And, after half an hour, Nelson Lee bade the Head good-night, and took his departure.

The Alliance man, outside, detached his listening cup, and stole away like a shadow into the blackness. He was elated, but this elation was tinged with a slight disappointment. He had hoped for better results; but was not grumbling. He had much to tell his chief.

By this time the school was fairly quiet, for all the juniors had gone to bed, and the seniors were just preparing. The Triangle was quiet and deserted. And Nelson Lee took it into his head to indulge in a little stroll.

The detective was thinking deeply, and it really seemed that he had certain suspicions.



For his footsteps took him across in the direction of the Head's window. Here he bent low, and by the aid of an electric torch, he carefully examined the ground. He was not entirely dissatisfied.

Any untrained eye would have seen nothing significant on the hard gravel beneath the window of Dr. Stafford's study. But Nelson Lee saw much. And, instead of being startled he was highly pleased.

And when, transferring his attentions to the window itself, he saw something further, he even broke into a smile of sheer enjoyment. Faint, but quite distinct, a curious mark was impressed upon the lower pane.

It was a circular mark, and when Lee touched it, it quickly vanished. He knew that it had been caused by something soft being pressed against the smooth surface.

"Our friend, Mr. Droone, is quite up-to-date in his methods," murmured Lee contentedly. "A listening-in apparatus, evidently. So the gentleman who upset Mr. Pagett heard that little conversation between the Head and myself. Splendid! I rather fancy that the Night Owl will be pleased. But I will warrant that his pleasure is not quite so keen as mine!"

The detective went indoors soon afterwards, and he had a shrewd idea that events would soon move. He had suspected from the very first that Mr. Pagett's assailant was a spy, and that this spy was on the spot for the purpose of obtaining information.

Nelson Lee had thoughtfully provided him with some.

The detective had taken care to show himself conspicuously so that any keen-eyed watcher would be aware of his movements. And, while conversing with the Head, Lee had chosen his words with care. For he wanted Caleb Droone to know for a certainty, that the Treasure of Don Santos was within the school walls.

Caleb Droone did know it.

For the spy took the information to his chief without any delay. The man, having left the school, made his way towards Bannington Moor. And having covered at least two miles, he came to a secluded hollow.

Here, in this deserted spot, he found a small wooden hut.

By all outward appearance, the place was deserted. But after the spy had tapped upon the door, it was cautiously opened, and he entered. Then the door was closed, and a heavy travelling rug was hung over it.

A shaded light from a small electric lamp was switched on. And there, sitting at a little square table, was the Night Owl himself.

It was characteristic of the man to sit here as though his surroundings had been quite normal. He was attired in a heavy travelling coat and a tweed cap. He sat there, his eyes flat and expressionless, without the trace of a blink.

"Well, No. 10," he said evenly. "You have a report to make?"



And the man, crouching low beneath the sill, adjusted the head-gear. Every word that was uttered within the room came to him as through a telephone.



"Yes, chief."

"Let me have it."

"I went to the school, and hung about for some time," said No. 10. "But at last I spotted Lee, and found that he had gone to the Headmaster's study. I listened to their conversation—"

"Anything important?" rapped out the Night Owl.

"Yes, chief. The stuff is there—in the school—"

"You are certain of this?" demanded Droone, again interrupting.

The spy went into details, explaining exactly what he had overheard. The Night Owl sat listening, and there was now a hint of triumph in his expression. He was beginning to see his way clear.

Without changing his expression, he looked at the two men, for there had been another member of the Alliance with Droone before No. 10 arrived. He waved his hand towards the door.

"Go!" he said curtly.

"No further orders, chief?" asked one of them.

"Go!" repeated Droone.

The Alliance men glanced at one another, and made their exit fairly rapidly. They knew better than to argue with their leader. Droone was a man who treated his associates liberally—they found it paid them better to work for him than to work independently, but he demanded strict obedience to orders—unquestioning compliance on the instant.

Alone, the Night Owl allowed that "dead" expression to leave his eyes. Now that he was unobserved by others, Caleb Droone relaxed. And into those curious eyes of his there came an expression of deadly, venomous hatred.

"I'll get you, Lee!" he muttered softly. "By Heaven. I'll get you!"

Unfastening his heavy coat, he took out a small velvet bag. And from this he produced the emerald necklet—the pride of the Don Santos Collection. His eyes almost took on a glitter as he gazed upon these wonderful stones—which lay, a scintillating, dazzling mass of green fire, in his palm.

"You've been a lot of trouble, but you're worth it all!" he murmured, as a miser might gloat over his gold. "You're priceless—every stone that goes to make you a whole is worth tens of thousands! And I am going to get your friends, too—I'll have you all together again within twenty-four hours."

The Night Owl's men would have been surprised if they could have seen their leader now—whom they knew as a cool, unemotional being. It was only in moments of solitude that Caleb Droone revealed himself.

He slipped the emerald necklet back into its bag, and on the instant his mood changed. The expressionless look came back into his eyes, and he rose to his feet. His cunning brain was already grasping the finer details of the scheme that was to outwit Nelson Lee!

## CHAPTER III.

ARCHIE, THE AUTHOR!



EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH had a dreamy look in his eye.

"Three!" he said abstractedly. "Three—at least!"

"Eh!" said Church, with a start.

"Three!" replied Handforth. "If not four!"

Church and McClure looked at their leader, aghast. Recently, Handforth had been somewhat prone to go off into these abstract moods. Church and McClure knew the cause of them, too.

Blunt as Handforth was, rough and ready as were his methods, he was really an extraordinarily susceptible junior. Any fellow had only to be in a little trouble, and Handforth would be almost precipitate in his eagerness to lend a helping hand. It was one of his favourite tricks to lend money to fellows, and forget all about it a minute afterwards.

But Edward Oswald was susceptible in other ways, too. He professed to have a kind of pitying contempt for the fair sex. He always talked about girls as though they were mere infants, quite beneath the contempt of a great hulking schoolboy. Actually Handy was positively "soft" when it came to a question of girls.

And since the Moor View School had opened, just along the lane, Handforth had smartened up considerably in appearance. Nowadays, he never thought of going out without washing his face, and brushing his hair, and being quite certain that his collar was clean.

One girl in particular—a fair-haired, blue-eyed maiden named Irene Manners was Handforth's favourite. She was certainly a pretty girl, and although Handforth regarded her somewhat fondly, it is extremely questionable if Miss Irene ever gave the hero of Study D a second's thought.

Church and McClure knew all about it—Handforth had a habit of talking aloud when in an abstracted mood. And at the present time they were not only startled, but aghast.

"Three!" repeated Church faintly. "If not four!"

"With luck, five!" said Handforth.

"You—you fathead!" stuttered McClure. "If you're thinking of taking out four or five girls at once—"

"Of course," said Handforth thoughtfully—"of course, if Reggie Pitt's in just the same form as usual he ought to score one or two on his own. Nipper's in fine form, too. He might be able to score twice. That makes four—"

"Are—are you talking about football?" howled Church.

Handforth started, aroused by the tone.

"Football?" he repeated, sitting up in the easy chair. "Of course I'm talking about football, you duffer! What did you think I



was talking about—marbles? I never knew such chaps for asking unnecessary questions! I should think you must like to hear your own voices!”

Church and McClure gave one another a glance of sheer relief. They both realised what a ghastly bloomer they had nearly made. For if they had revealed to Handforth what was in their thoughts earlier, swift and awful slaughter would have taken place in Study D.

“Oh, you’re—you’re just talking about football?” said McClure feebly. “Of course! Good! But I don’t know about scoring four or five goals, old man. I shall be content if the team gets from Helmford with a win, no matter how narrow.”

“Pooh!” scoffed Handforth. “The Remove Eleven’s in terrific form just now. Naturally, it all depends upon the attack. If the forwards don’t get any goals, the result will be a draw. Even if they score once, it’ll be enough. But it’s better to give the other side a really good licking.”

Church coughed.

“You appear to have forgotten the possibility of Helmford scoring!” he said pleasantly. “I believe the Helmford chaps are playing a few forwards in the match, you know. It’s generally done in football!”

Handforth glared.

“Trying to be funny?” he asked tartly.

“Not—not at all!” Church hastened to exclaim.

“Because, if you are, my fist can be funny, too!” said Handforth. “You pitiful ass! Have you overlooked the fact that I’m playing in goal?”

“Er—well——”

“I’m playing in goal!” repeated Handforth firmly. “That’s good enough! Helmford won’t score—they can’t score—with me between the posts, they won’t even know they’ve got a net!”

“Well, of course, there’s nothing like it!” remarked McClure.

“Nothing like what?”

“Nobody ever accused you of being modest, old man,” explained McClure. “We know what a fine goalie you are, but, at the same time, it does sound a bit—a bit—well, a bit swanky——”

“Swanky!” howled Handforth. “Are you calling me a swanker?”

“Well, I mean, even you might trip, or something!” said McClure. “It’s not the goalie’s fault when he slips, and the ball goes into the net! Accidents are always liable to happen. By the way you talk, a chap might think you’re going to put trellis-work over the goal-mouth!”

“Just the same thing!” said Handforth airily. “I’m the trellis-work!”

Church and McClure, feeling that the subject might become awkward, pursued it no longer. They knew well enough that Hardy was only saying all this just to exasperate them. Church changed the subject.

“There’ll be room for a dozen extra chaps in the charabanc,” he remarked

carelessly. “And it’ll be time to start soon. Who do you think we ought to take?”

“Why not Archie, for one?” suggested McClure, catching on.

“Yes, by George!” said Handforth. “We’ll jolly well force that lazy beggar of a Glenthorne to turn out! I’ll bet he’s fast asleep on his sofa now! But instead of slumbering all the afternoon, he’ll watch football! We’ll yank him out at the last minute!”

The idea quite appealed to Handforth, who had a peculiar kind of love for yanking people about without any adequate reason. As Ulysses Spencer Adams would have remarked, Handforth was “sure a snappy guy when it came to the rough stuff.” Nothing, in fact, was too rough for Edward Oswald.

But his thoughts concerning Archie Glenthorne were somewhat unjustified. That amiable youth was not indulging in “forty of the very best” after all. To be quite exact, he was in the throes of literary composition.

He was seated at the table in his luxuriously appointed study, pen in hand. Now and again he industriously chewed the end, as though the flavour was particularly pleasant.

But Archie was only striving for a happy phrase. Judging by the pained, screwed up expression on his face, the effort was a weighty one. And, of course, in the midst of this ordeal, Phipps had to appear.

Phipps was Archie’s valet, and he had a habit of gliding in like some solidified ghost. Sometimes, Archie almost brought himself to believe that Phipps had the faculty of oozing through the keyhole.

“My word, Phipps!” ejaculated Archie, as he glanced up and found that the valet had materialised in front of him. I mean to say, my word! This and all that is dashed sudden! Why do you do it, Phipps? Why do you appear in front of a chappie like some bally apparition?”

“I am about to pay a visit to Bannington, sir,” said Phipps respectfully. “I thought it possible that you might have some little commissions for me, sir.”

Archie adjusted his monocle, and regarded Phipps coldly.

“Go, laddie!” he said. “Kindly whizz forth!”

“Very good, sir——”

“Dash it! I mean, dash it twice!” exclaimed Archie. “Here am I, absolutely working the old brains to a bally thread, and in you waltz, bothering me with dashed silly questions about commissions! Don’t you realise, Phipps, that the young master is in the midst of literary creation?”

“Indeed, sir?”

“Yes, absolutely!” said Archie. “And literary creation, let me tell you, is a pastime that comes dashed near to hard work! By the time I’ve written fifty words, Phipps, the old tissues are weak and feeble!



I mean to say, it requires massive brain power to write these priceless stories!"

"You are actually writing a story?" asked Phipps, surprised out of his customary imperturbability.

Archie looked pained.

"Without wishing to stress the point, old lad, you seem to be dashed dubious!" he exclaimed. "I mean to say, your tone implies that the old statement requires a frightful amount of swallowing, what?"

"I must confess, sir, that I am pleasantly astonished," said Phipps. "I did not know that you were so wonderfully gifted."

"Well, of course, putting it that way makes a diff," said Archie. "It makes a

any of the stories and articles. Perhaps I have missed something, sir."

Archie dropped his monocle.

"Missed something!" he repeated. "Why, gadzooks and oddslife! You've dashed well missed everything that's worth while. The St. Frank's Magazine is a perfectly priceless sheet. I mean to say, just think of the contributors! Nipper, and Handforth, and Sopp of the Fifth, and Chambers—and myself! I don't want to brag, but if you didn't read my recent story about bushrangers and outlaws and all those johnnies, you missed a dashed thrill!"

Phipps was quite contrite.

"In future, Master Archie, I will take

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decided diff., Phipps. But, dash it, you can't mean to tell me—you can't mean to stand there and spout forth that you haven't see the jolly old Mag?"

"The Mag, sir?"

"Come, Phipps! Come!" protested Archie. "The Mag, don't you know. The good old St. Frank's Magazine, printed and published weekly by the Remove, subscription rates—I mean, what about it, Phipps? You can't honestly assure me, as one chappie to another that you're ig. on the sub.?"

"Now you come to mention it, sir, I have seen the Magazine," replied Phipps. "But I have never had the pleasure of perusing

good care to possess myself of a copy of this interesting magazine," he said. "And, without wishing to be curious, sir, may I inquire the subject of your present—er—effusion?"

Archie started.

The word effusion may be a dashed good one, but it has painful memories," he said sadly. "Several chappies not only called my first short story an effusion, but they proceeded to describe it as a chunk of piffle and a solidified mass of junk! One blighter even went so far as to call it tripe!"

"That was too bad, sir."

"It was, Phipps—altogether too bad,"



agreed Archie. "Tripe, I daresay, is a succulent article—mainly indulged in by the masses. But, I mean to say, when a chappie's brainwork is called by the same name, it's jolly well time to kick! And, dash it, I did kick! I tore the bally thing up, and wrote another one!"

Archie gazed down at the paper in front of him.

"Of course, I don't go in for anything simple," he went on. "I mean to say, none of the love stuff, and detective twaddle. Any chappie can write those bally things. I mean, a cove can sit down, and use pots and pots of ink on detective stories. I go in for something finer—something on a higher plane."

"A flying story, sir?" asked Phipps, with interest.

Archie stared.

"You pain me, old lad," he said, with regret. "I have always regarded you as a chappie with bulging masses of brain matter. And here you go talking about flying! Come, Phipps, pull your socks up! Just an expression, you know—I don't mean to say that your socks are lying in rucks! If any thing is worse than another it is to see a chappie's socks lying in folds over his bally shoes! I mean to say, I'd rather be jolly well stabbed!"

"We appear to have drifted somewhat from the subject, sir," hinted Phipps. "You were remarking that your literary work is on a higher plane. I see your meaning now, sir. You have aimed for something really noble."

"Absolutely," said Archie. "At last the cells have begun to function! You, Steve, have got me! If you like, Phipps, I will read you the opening paragraphs of this stirring narrative."

Phipps winced, and glanced at his watch.

"I—I was thinking of catching the early train, sir," he said hastily.

"Good, Phipps—distinctly good!" said Archie. "But, laddie, the train doesn't go for another half-hour yet, so you have heaps of time. Take a seat, old lad. Make yourself at home. Take two seats if you like. And unfasten the good old ear-flaps and listen."

Phipps, finding that escape was quite impossible, sat down and prepared to listen. Archie picked up the paper in front of him, adjusted his monocle, and gazed at the neatly written heading and the commencement of the story.

And this is what he saw:

**"THE TRAITOR OF TYBURN TREE!**

**"A Stirring Tale of the Civil War, Oliver Cromwell, Cavaliers, and Roundheads, and so Forth. Introducing that Priceless Chappie, Dick Turpin, the Highwayman.**

**"By ARCHIBALD WINSTON DEREK GLENTHORNE."**

Phipps listened attentively while Archie read this out aloud. And Phipps, who regarded the whole ordeal as agonising,

refrained from mentioning that Dick Turpin had no actual right to appear in the story at all, since he wasn't born until about fifty years after Cromwell had died.

Archie cleared his throat, and continued:

"Chapter One—Yo-ho for the Commonwealth!" he read out, in a ringing voice. "How's that, Phipps? Pretty dashed good, what? Through the cobbled streets of Old Worcester Town, with clinking armour and jingling spurs, rode the priceless army of Oliver Cromwell."

"At the head of the column rode Cromwell, a hefty blighter with the good old V.C. pinned to his breastplate. The battle of Worcester was just over, and the streets swam with sundry gallons of redness. We mean to say, the bally place was littered up with dead and dying chappies who had fallen in the cause of Charles Stuart, the King."

"Just behind Cromwell was Lieutenant Jack Daring, a fine, strapping cove with curly hair, velvet breeches, top boots, and what not. This young spark—sometimes called a gay young blood—was so dashed handsome that all the flappers of Worcester absolutely worshipped him."

"Lieutenant Jack, the hero of our story, had covered himself with glory, and mud, and single-handed he had spitted a dozen members of the dashed enemy. Even now his sword was frightfully gory."

"And then, as it were, confusion hove into the offing, and whizzed forthwith down the old line of mounted infantry. To be absolutely exact, a horseman came staggering into the scene."

"Odds death! What now?" cried Oliver Cromwell. "Who cometh, and whence? By my halidom, I will have the scurvy knave swinging from Tyburn Tree ere the dawn breaks! Ho, Colonel Blood, bestir thy lazy self, and see what this poisonous chappy wants. Away with ye, old tulip!"

"Colonel Blood was about to obey when the horseman reined up. That is to say, he leapt from his steed and shoved out a couple of foul-looking revolvers. One of these he pointed at Cromwell, who was somewhat scared. As a matter of fact, who dashed well wouldn't be, under the circumstances?"

"Hold!" cried the horseman. "Bring out your dead! I mean to say, your money or your life! Plague on you for a varlet! Hands up, rat ye!"

"Seize this dog!" roared Cromwell. "Sdeath! Who is he, forsooth?"

The horseman laughed a dashed horrid laugh.

"I am Dick Turpin, and I am riding from London to York!" he quoth. "Odds wounds! Wouldst defy me, you milksop?"

Phipps, obviously in pain, held up a hand.



"One moment, sir—one moment!" he protested.

"I mean to say, Phipps, that's pretty ghastly," said Archie. "Interrupting a chappie just when the interesting part comes along. Just wait until you hear how Cromwell shoves it across the bally highway merchant! I mean, this story is destined to become a bally classic!"

"Quite so, sir," agreed Phipps hastily. "But don't you think you have made a little geographical mistake?"

"What? I mean, what? A mistake, Phipps?"

"Dick Turpin would hardly ride through Worcester on the way from London to York," said Phipps gently. "You see, sir, Worcester is too far to the westward——"

"Dash it all, Phipps," interrupted Archie stiffly. "That's nothing more nor less than a bally insinuation! You're trying to make out that I don't know anything about geography. Dick Turpin had to make a detour, because Jonathan Wild, or some such bounder, was lying in ambush on the York Road!"

"In that case, sir, the matter takes on a different aspect," said Phipps gently. "And now, Master Archie, I really must go, or I shall lose my train."

"Oh, but I say!" said Archie. "I've got four more pages to read yet, Phipps. I say I've got four more pages—— Phipps, you dashed traitor! Come back, and listen to the rest! Oddslife! I—I mean——"

Archie paused, for Phipps had apparently become very deaf. For he glidingly stole out of the room, and closed the door after him. Even the risk of earning his young master's displeasure was slight compared to the ordeal of hearing the rest of that remarkable narrative.

## CHAPTER IV.

### FICTION—AND FACT!



"READY?"

Handforth put the question briskly as he came hustling into Archie's study—just when the elegant junior had got settled down into his

literary efforts again. Archie looked up with a pained expression.

"Dash it all!" he protested. "This, as it were, is becoming not only thick, but absolutely poisonous! Go, laddie! Trickle forth, and do not bother the scribe when at work!"

Handforth stared.

"What's the idea?" he asked bluntly. "Get yourself ready, and hurry up!"

"But, my dear old horse, you appear to be labouring under a misapprehension," said Archie. "I'm not getting ready, and I'm not hurrying up. The fact is, I intend to stay indoors all the afternoon."

"You—you slacker!"

"Oh, really! I say! I've absolutely got to object to that!" said Glenthorne stiffly. "Here am I, labouring intensely, and you come shooting along with the remark that I'm slacking!"

"What about the football?" demanded Handforth.

"Football?" said Archie vaguely.

"It's a game," explained Handforth, with sarcasm. "Two teams play on a field, and they've got to kick a big leather ball——"

"By gad, do you think I don't know what football is?" put in Archie warmly. "The game is quite priceless—I'm not much of a player, but I jolly well know that football is stunning. At least, Reggie Pitt said so last week, when somebody kicked him on the head! I mean to say, it must be perfectly foul to have a chappie kick the other chappie on the head!"

"It was a foul, as a matter of fact," said Handforth. "The ref. awarded us a free kick, and Nipper scored from it. But all that's got nothing to do with to-day. Are you coming or not?"

"Well, just between ourselves, I'm rather inclined to believe that I'm not!" replied Archie mildly. "You see, old fruit, the flow is just beginning to run smoothly, and I've got to get busy while the inspiration calls. I mean—— Kindly remove. Dash it——"

"See that?" demanded Handforth grimly. He had planted one of his huge fists under Archie's nose, and the swell of the Ancient House visibly wilted.

"See that?" repeated Handforth.

"As a matter of fact, I can see nothing else!" said Archie faintly. "I mean to say, it blots out the whole bally scene, as it were. Good gad! Have you been exploring a paraffin factory, or something? I don't like to mention it, old son, but there's a most shocking odour wafting up from the old digits!"

Handforth snorted.

"I've just been trimming my bike lamp!" he snapped.

"Really?" breathed Archie. "I thought perhaps you'd been assisting in the kitchen, or something. There's not only a poisonous odour, but I must be allowed to remark that your fingers are dashed grimy!"

"You leave my fingers alone!" roared Handforth.

"Why, dash it, I wouldn't touch them!"

"My hat!" snorted Handforth. "I never knew such a chap for wasting time! There's the charabanc outside, all waiting to go, and we're keeping it there! Come on! Get a hustle on!"

"But, really, I don't want to get anything on—decidedly not a hustle!" stammered Archie. "I don't wear the things—— I mean—— If you're so keen about dashing away, why don't you do it? Why drag me into the horrible affair? I'm busy——"



Handforth waited for no more. He grasped Archie firmly and grimly, yanked him to his feet, and propelled him towards the study door. Archie went out into the passage, protesting, but making no determined resistance. It was too much fag to exert himself over a small matter such as this.

The pair of them shot into the lobby, and Archie was pushed into the cloakroom. Handforth stood at the door.

"Hat and overcoat!" he said curtly. "And look sharp!"

"But—but, I say——"

Archie feebly gave it up. For just then Church and McClure and Armstrong and Griffith and one or two others hustled in.

And they told him, quite frankly, that unless he got a move on they would take him out just as he was.

It was rather rough on Archie to be carried off like this, just on the very afternoon when he really did intend to keep awake. But the other juniors were in ignorance of his energetic intentions.

The charabanc, outside, already contained most of the fellows who were in the Remove Eleven. And although the team was not so optimistic as Handforth regarding the result of the match, it was felt by all in general that the game ought to be a win.

We were playing a return match with the Helmford College Junior Eleven. And it would be rather a big feather in our cap if we could defeat the Helmfordians on their own ground.

With his protests growing weaker and weaker, Archie was pushed into the rear seat of the charabanc, and he lay back, recovering his breath. By the time he had mustered up sufficient energy to explain the position in full, the charabanc was well away.

"What's wrong, Archie?" asked Reggie Pitt. "Why the pained look, old son? And what's this? Great goodness! Do my eyes see aright? You've actually come out with a crumpled collar!"

"Gadzooks!" said Archie, faintly.

An expression of absolute horror came into his eyes, and he felt desperately at his collar, which, although crumpled in one tiny spot, was nevertheless cleaner and more elegant than any other collar in the whole charabanc.

"I'm shocked!" said Pitt severely. "I'm surprised at you, Archie."

"But, laddie——"

"Our fashion plate!" said Pitt. "Our glass of form! Actually appearing in public in a crumpled collar! And—yes!—I'm hanged if you haven't got a smudge on your nose."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Archie's expression caused the other juniors to yell. It may have been imagination, but the Removites were willing to swear that Archie really turned pale.



"What-ho!" exclaimed Archie, for want of something better to say. "What-ho! So here we are, old thing! Greetings, and all that!"

"Hands up!" snapped the stranger. "And no nonsense!"

"Stop!" he moaned. "Allow me to alight, you foul rotters! I—I mean to say, I've got to stagger back to the school—I've got to sneak behind hedges so that no eyes will gaze upon me!"

"This'll teach the lazy bounder a lesson," said Handforth callously. "He was going to stay in all the afternoon, if you please—in front of a big fire! We'll teach him a few things!"

"I suppose you found him asleep?" grinned Jack Grey.

"Well, no," admitted Handforth. "Surprisingly enough, he was writing."

"Absolutely!" declared Archie, with indignation. "I was positively in the throes of creation! Writing about Dick Turpin, and Cromwell, and all those merry old sports!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"You mean that you were doing a story for the Mag?" I inquired, looking round from my seat.



"Absolutely!"

"You meant to spend the afternoon at it?"

"Absolutely twice!"

"Then it was too bad of Handforth to force you out," I said. "You ought to have had more sense, Handy. If the chap had been really slacking, I would have agreed to the whole affair—but it's a bit thick to pull a chap away from his work."

"Why didn't he tell me he was writing a story?" demanded Handforth hotly. "Besides, what's the good of it, anyway? If Archie writes a story, it'll only be useful for lighting a fire with!"

"Archie's stories are unique!" I said firmly. "They may be written seriously, but unconscious humour is always best! If we let you get out, Archie, will you go back and continue the good work?"

"Absolutely!" said Archie eagerly. "Of course, I may be too frightfully fagged to do any more actual writing——"

"Then you stay where you are!" I declared. "We'll only stop the charabanc on the condition that you finish the story before tea!"

The prospect caused Archie to feel queer, but it was far better to get back to the school than to be carried off to Helmford.

Consequently, the charabanc was stopped amid much laughter, and Archie was bundled off. And there he stood, midway between Bellton and Bannington, as the heavy motor coach continued on its way.

"This is about the most ghastly thing that could possibly happen to a chappie!" murmured Archie, in despair. "I've a dashed good mind to write a story about it. A bally tragedy! What, as it were, shall I do if somebody happens to come along? I mean, a crumpled collar—a smudged nose! This is the kind of thing that sends coves into the dashed asylum!"

He was intensely relieved to see that the road was quite deserted, and he remembered that it was possible to reach St. Frank's by taking one of the side lanes, and then cutting through Bellton Wood—thus missing the village altogether.

These plans of Archie's were quite unnecessary, of course—for in spite of his slight defects in appearance, he was still as elegant as any junior really could be.

And as Archie trudged along, taking care to avoid the muddy spots, his thoughts rambled back to that stirring narrative of cavaliers and roundheads, to say nothing of masked highwaymen.

Indeed, by the time five minutes had elapsed, Archie was quite lost in the drift of his thoughts. He was enthusiastic about this literary work. He had surprised himself. He had never thought himself capable of doing anything so pricelessly good. And now that he was in the mood, he wanted to continue. Besides, he had undertaken to get the story finished before tea.

The great problem of the moment was how Oliver Cromwell could satisfactorily

dispose of Dick Turpin—for Archie had a vague idea of using Dick Turpin in a further story. His present plot involved the destruction of the unfortunate Dick in a big gas explosion. It never occurred to Archie that gas had not been used in those days. These details were immaterial to such a mighty author.

"Now, of course, the whole thing's getting frightfully involved," murmured Archie. "But I must say I like this style of story. Absolutely! I mean, it gives a chappie breadth—it gives him something to work on! When these coves keep barging in, and saying 'oddslife' and 'rat me' and 'oddsboddikins,' and all that sort of thing, it gives a chap a chance! He can bally well spread himself, and turn out some red-blooded stuff, as it were!"

Archie looked up almost unconsciously, for he thought he caught sight of a movement near one of the hedges. His thoughts were far away—in the days when highwaymen swarmed on the turnpikes.

So Archie was startled to find himself staring at a masked stranger!

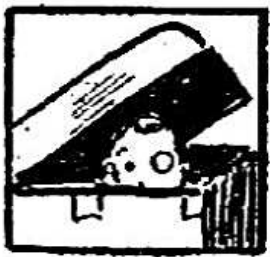
"What-ho!" exclaimed Archie, for want of something better to say. "What-ho! So here we are, old thing! Greetings, and all that!"

Even as Archie spoke the words, he realised that this was scarcely the correct form of address to use in connection with a masked man who was fingering a heavy revolver.

"Hands up!" snapped the stranger. "And no nonsense!"

## CHAPTER V.

### ROUGH ON ARCHIE!



**A**RCHIE GLENTHORNE was not merely surprised—he was so startled that ordinary speech was denied him for a moment. He just stood there, gazing at the masked

stranger.

And he became aware of the fact that another masked man had appeared on the other side of the road.

"Better look lively!" came the command. "Up with your hands, young shaver."

"Absolutely not!" said Archie stoutly, partially recovering himself. "I mean to say, it's a dashed undignified proceeding to shove one's hands above one's head. I refuse! And, what is more, I regard you as a particularly foul blot on the landscape!"

Archie was not the only surprised one. These men—members of the Alliance of 13—had expected to see the junior crumple up, and shiver with fright. Archie, however, was merely looking indignant.

"I mean, dash it—you're pinching my plot!" exclaimed Archie warmly. "Absolutely lifting the bally thing intact! Only I must say that Dick Turpin is several degrees more handsome than you, old



scream. What, as it were, is the idea? Dash it all! You're going to rob me, what?"

The men were not in a mood to waste further time.

The road, after all, was a public one, and although it was deserted at the moment, a motorist or a cyclist might easily appear. So it was necessary to end this little scene swiftly.

"It's all right, Jack—the kid's harmless!" said one of the men. "Grab him before he can bunk!"

Archie half turned, as though to make a break for freedom. Actually, he had no such thoughts in mind—for the very idea of running away was abhorrent to him. The Glenthornes never ran.

"You poisonous bounders!" he exclaimed. "If you dare to touch me, I'll dashed well use large supplies of energy, and knock you right and left! When my blood's fairly up, let me tell you, I'm a frightfully dangerous character!"

But in spite of Archie's valiance, he was swiftly seized by the two men, and forced through a gap in the hedge. He fought really well—struggling fiercely, and hitting out to such good purpose that the Alliance men received several hard knocks.

Up to a certain point Archie would remain cautious—for the thought of ruffling his clothes horrified him. But once that point was passed, Archie would throw all his scruples to the wind, and enter into a scrap with as much vim and vigour as Handforth himself.

Once his blood was up, he forgot his clean collar, and his creased trousers and his beautifully parted hair. He simply sailed in like a Trojan. Consequently, on this occasion the Alliance men were taken by surprise.

"You darn spitfire!" snarled one of them. "Quick, Jack! Hold his arms! He's got a punch like Dempsey."

Whack! Crash! Biff!

"Take that!" panted Archie grimly. "I mean to say, take it and keep it! And that, too, dash you! Allow me to inform you, you dirty dogs, that I'm absolutely furious! The famous Glenthorne ire is positively aroused!"

Quite a sharp tussle took place. But the odds were against Archie from the very beginning. He did extremely well, under the circumstances, proving himself to be brave and resourceful. But even bravery was useless against superior strength and power.

At last Archie was flung down, and held down.

"Got him!" panted one of the men. "The little demon!"

"Remember, you blighters, you'll pay for this!" murmured Archie, gasping for breath. "You'll be shoved into chokey, and you'll break stones, and for the rest of your life you'll eat skilly. Chappies who commit robbery with violence are absolutely slaughtered!"

"Don't you worry, kid—we're not going to rob you!" growled the man. "Just stay quiet, and you won't come to no harm. We're going to treat you like you was a lord!"

"Really?" said Archie. "I mean, dash it, it's not usual to shove lords into the grass, and sit on them? Quite apart from the undignified position, it's frightfully uncomfortable, too. I regard you as a pair of bally miscreants!"

The elegant junior was very surprised to find that no attempt was made to search him. His wallet remained intact—his gold watch and chain were not even tampered with.

But, if not robbery, what was the object of this hold-up?

Archie racked his brain in vain. He couldn't understand the affair at all—particularly as the men just sat there, taking no further action. They held Archie down, and appeared to be waiting.

This wait, indeed, proved to be a long one.

The minutes ticked by slowly—until Archie was beginning to feel the dampness of the earth penetrating his clothing. He made some protest, but without effect. It was quite obvious that the men were expecting something.

They were just behind the hedge, and in such a position that they could peer through the tangle of branches, and obtain a clear view of the road in both directions.

And if a cyclist happened to pass, or a tradesman's cart, Archie would have a heavy scarf held tightly over his face, so that he could make no possible outcry. He was becoming more and more mystified.

There was no earthly reason why he should be kidnapped. He wasn't an heir to millions, or anything of that sort, and he finally came to the conclusion that these men had made a blunder.

"I say, you rotters!" he remarked at length. "I say! Kindly allow me to explain things. You've made a most frightful bloomer—"

"Best cut out the talk, young 'un!" growled one of the men.

"Absolutely not," said Archie. "My name is Glenthorne. I belong to the Remove at St. Frank's. It appears that you have mistaken me for some other unfortunate cove—"

"We've made no mistake!" said the man.

"My word! You really wanted to grab me, then?"

"It didn't matter which kid we took—you happened to be handiest!" said Archie's captor. "Just your luck, kid. But you needn't get the wind up. As soon as we're away from here you'll be treated well, and you'll have every comfort."

The second man gave an exclamation of relief.

"It's all right—Bill's coming now!" he said.

Bill proved to be a very ordinary-looking



individual in charge of a light Ford truck—one of those covered-in commercial vehicles which are pretty well ubiquitous.

As a matter of fact, Bill was another Alliance man, and this affair was all part and parcel of Caleb Droone's latest scheme.

While one man held Archie down—a bit of a job, for Archie insisted upon struggling—the other two men opened the back of the van, and took out a very large travelling trunk. They worked swiftly, for the road was clear just now and they might not get another opportunity.

Dumping the truck down just against the hedge, the lid was opened.

"In with him!" said Bill sharply. "All clear."

Without having time to protest, Archie was bundled into the open trunk, and the lid was pulled down—to be securely locked and clasped. Then the trunk was hoisted into the Ford van, the three men clambered aboard, and the vehicle started away.

Three or four minutes later, passing a stolid constable on a bicycle, the three Alliance men smiled to themselves. Little did this British policeman realise what had been going on so near by!

Archie, within the trunk, was having what he afterwards described as a perfectly foul time. He recalled the words of one of his captors. He was going to be treated well, and he would have every comfort.

"Dash it, the chappie is nothing more nor less than a bally liar!" murmured Archie indignantly. "Comfort, what? Treated well! My only sainted aunt! This whole affair is becoming putrid!"

Nevertheless, Archie was obliged to confess to himself that the rascals had not left him entirely unprovided for. The interior of the trunk was padded, and there were many air-holes, so that there was no danger of his suffering from suffocation.

But when it came to a question of dignity, the adventure was ghastly. Even a dog doesn't like to be shoved in a box, and carried away. And for Archie, the elegant, it was an experience he would remember for years.

But all things come to an end in time—even rides in a Ford van. Archie had no suspicion of the direction that had been taken. He only knew that the ride itself was comparatively short.

As a matter of fact, the van went down a number of quiet bye-lanes until it had reached the other side of Bannington. By making this detour, the town had been missed altogether. There would have been no real danger in going through Bannington, but the Night Owl had given strict

orders, and his men had to obey. They were taking no unnecessary risks.

And now, at length, a few miles beyond Bannington, the Ford van came to a stop just near the bank of the river. The place was a quiet, peaceful one—a little back-water which in the summer-time, was a veritable little paradise.

Even now, in the bleakness of December, the scene was not without its charm. The stream was, of course, the River Stowe, although this stretch of it was unfamiliar to the St. Frank's fellows. It was very seldom that school boats went beyond the locks near Bannington.

Moored in the river here, quite close to the bank, lay a grimy, ancient-looking craft. It was, in fact, a wherry—a type of craft which can generally be seen on the Norfolk Broads.

A thin whisp of smoke was rising from the little chimney, and a weather-beaten, stumpy gentleman in blue reefers was squatting on an upturned keg. He fitted the picture to perfection. But the Ford van didn't.

It was only a matter of minutes before the trunk was taken out, transferred on to the wherry, and carried below. And all this, remember, was done in open daylight.

But who would have suspected any foul play?

If anybody had witnessed this trifling affair, it would have been at once assumed that some stores were being carried on board the wherry. There was nothing whatever to hint at the true state of affairs.

Once the trunk was below, the Ford van departed, and Archie was safe in his new quarters.

To his intense relief, he was released from the trunk, but found that his new prison was very little better—being a tiny, box-like cabin without any window. The place smelt of tar and other mingled, indistinguishable odours inseparable from a craft of this order.

But it was quite warm in there, and fairly cosy.

There was a comfortable settee, which could be converted into a bunk. A little oil lamp glowed on the wall, and there were books and papers lying on the little flap-table.

Archie was not allowed to ask any questions. Having been hoisted out of the trunk, he was bundled into the cabin, and the door was closed. He heard some bolts being shot into place. The door itself was of ancient, matured oak. A coal hammer wielded with full strength would hardly have made any impression on that stout English timber.

The man who had seen Archie into his new quarters placed the trunk in another small cabin, and then passed into the quaint little saloon—a low ceilinged, roomy cabin with many lounges, comfortable chairs, and other refinements. Here, seated on a lounge, was Caleb Droone himself.



The Night Owl turned his flat eyes on the newcomer.

"Well?" he said shortly.

"The boy's in the cabin, Chief, and the whole thing was done without a hitch," replied the man. "We were on the look-out for one of the other youngsters, but this kid was walking along so invitingly that we decided on him. One of them smart young guys."

"You have done well," said the Night Owl. "Leave me."

He waved his hand, and the other departed. Caleb Droone was left alone, and he slowly and softly rubbed his well-manicured fingers together.

"And now, Mr. Nelson Lee, I rather fancy that I hold the trump card!"

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE NIGHT OWL'S DEADLY THREAT!



"HURRAH!"

The St. Frank's Junior Eleven had just returned from Helmford, and those juniors who had not been fortunate enough to accompany the footballers were under no misapprehension regarding the result of the match.

The Eleven was in high good humour—the juniors laughing, joking, and generally celebrating in all sorts of noisy ways. It was as much as I could do to keep my men from creating a real disturbance.

We had won the match by a comfortable margin of two goals—the actual score being three-one. But, although a number of fellows were inclined to chip Handforth for allowing even one goal to be scored, Handy had not been at fault.

The shot that had beaten him had come during the scramble in front of the St. Frank's goal, and Handy had not even seen the leather. And the fact that we had scored three times made everybody happy.

Reggie Pitt was really the hero of the hour, for two of the goals had followed some delightful movements that Pitt had initiated on the left wing. Of course, the inside forwards had been called upon to provide the final touch, and they had done this with complete glory.

"Where's Archie?" grinned Tommy Watson, as the Eleven was surrounded by a crowd of enthusiastic fellows in the lobby.

"Has he finished that story yet?" asked Handforth.

"We haven't seen Archie all the afternoon," declared Owen major. "And what do you mean—finished what story?"

It so happened that Phipps hove in sight just then, and Reggie Pitt turned to him.

"Is Archie still hard at it?" he asked.

"Master Archibald has not returned, sir," said Phipps. "I understood he was with you young gentleman, and as a

matter of fact I was looking for him at the present moment."

"But we only took him a little way," I put in. "As soon as we found that he was engaged in writing a story, we sent him home. He ought to have been back here within twenty minutes."

Phipps shook his head.

"Master Archie has not come in," he said, slightly worried.

"Well that's queer," said Pitt. "I wonder what could have happened to the ass? He ought to have been back hours ago."

And, with this brief discussion, the subject was dropped. Within ten minutes everybody had forgotten about Archie, and the usual events of the evening went on their smooth course. Only Phipps was concerned. And Phipps was extremely puzzled, too.

It was decidedly unlike his young master to act in this way. And for Archie to miss his afternoon cup of tea was practically unheard of. According to all rhyme and reason, Glenthorne ought to have turned up not a minute later than three o'clock—and that was allowing him heaps of time to walk back from the spot where he had been dropped off the motor-coach.

And now the hour was getting on for seven!

Outside, the Triangle was in total darkness—the lanes were dismal and bleak, and an icy wind had sprung up. It seemed utterly incomprehensible that Archie should deliberately stay out of his own accord.

He was a junior of very precise habits. And he always had consideration for Phipps. If for any reason he changed his plans while away from the school, he invariably rang Phipps up and informed him of the alteration. But the valet had received no word of any kind.

Phipps even went to Nelson Lee, and informed him of the situation.

"I shouldn't worry, Phipps," said Lee, with a smile. "No doubt Glenthorne met some friends, or possibly he took it into his head to pay a visit to his home, near Bannington."

"I have already rung up Glenthorne Manor, sir, and Master Archibald has not been seen."

"Oh, well, he will surely turn up," said Nelson Lee. "But if you see no sign of the lad by supper time, come to me again, Phipps."

"Very good, sir," said Phipps respectfully.

He passed out, and Nelson Lee laid down his pen, and leaned back in his chair. He wasn't actually suspicious of any untoward happening, but the strange disappearance of Archie, at such a time as this was undoubtedly food for thought.

Lee had been waiting for some sign of activity from the Alliance of 13. But, so far, nothing whatever had happened.



Could it be possible that the vanishing of Archie—

Tap!

"Come in!" called Lee, his train of thought interrupted.

It was only Tubbs, and he brought with him a neat sealed envelope. Nelson Lee took it with a glance of inquiry.

"Gent's waiting now, sir," said Tubbs. "He told me to give this to you, in your own hands. Says he wants to see you on important business, sir."

Nelson Lee opened the envelope, and withdrew just a small slip of pasteboard—an ordinary visiting card. But as his eyes fell upon the face of it, they became keen and decidedly grim.

For on the card was printed the name "Caleb Droone," and in one corner there were the tiny printed figures "13"—the latter being the sign of the Alliance. Tubbs, who was looking on with interest, was rather disappointed. Nelson Lee had not appeared surprised at all.

And Tubbs had been scenting a mystery, too. It wasn't usual for visitors to hand in their cards enclosed in sealed envelopes. Besides, Tubbs didn't like the look of the caller at all. The pageboy had a great, overwhelming awe of Nelson Lee, whom he regarded as some superior being, higher up than any mere mortal.

"Shall—shall I show the gent in, sir?" asked Tubbs, at last, unable to contain himself any longer.

"One moment, Tubbs—one moment!" said Nelson Lee slowly.

To look at his dreamy expression, one would not have realised that the famous detective was thinking with great rapidity. And there was every reason for him to be inwardly startled.

Caleb Droone had had the utter audacity to come to the school openly! The Night Owl was here—careless of capture. Lee had always known him to be a cool, calculating customer, but this latest move on the Night Owl's part was startling.

And Lee instinctively felt that there was something behind it. Droone would never have acted in this way if there was the slightest possibility of danger to himself. And to venture right into the lion's den, as it were, seemed the height of folly.

For there was more than one warrant out for Caleb Droone's arrest, and Lee had only to hand him over to the police to earn Scotland Yard's intense gratitude. This clever crook had never failed to slip through every net that had been spread for him.

But to refuse to see Droone would be a fatal mistake. Lee had no fear for himself. He knew that he could look after his own safety. So he turned to Tubbs and gave a slight nod.

"Show the gentleman in at once, Tubbs," he said evenly.

"E's a queer lookin' gent, sir—"

"It is not your place, Tubbs, to pass

any criticisms upon visitors," said Nelson Lee drily. "You may go."

"Yessir," gasped Tubbs.

He slipped out of the room, and Lee opened a drawer ready to his right hand, and pulled out a small loaded revolver. Knowing how audacious Caleb Droone was, he intended to be prepared.

A minute later Tubbs ushered the Night Owl into Nelson Lee's presence. Droone was not disguised in any way. He was wearing an ordinary lounge suit and a heavy frieze overcoat. He bowed slightly as he entered.

"Good evening, Mr. Lee—delighted to see you looking so well," he said, in his quiet, toneless voice. "I trust I am not disturbing you in the midst of your scholastic duties?"

Nelson Lee, rather admiring the man's absolute nerve, waved his hand towards a chair.

"Be seated, Mr. Droone," he said. "My scholastic duties can wait."

Tubbs retired, very curious, but he was not the kind of youngster to listen at the door. It wouldn't have been much good, if he had been an eavesdropper, for Nelson Lee's door was voice-proof.

"Well, Mr. Droone, I must acknowledge that your visit has taken me rather by surprise," said Nelson Lee. "I should like to know your business as concisely and as briefly as possible."

The Night Owl nodded.

"It is not my intention to delay you long, Mr. Lee," he said. "And it is quite unnecessary for you to handle that little revolver. I am unarmed, and alone. I have not come here for the purpose of committing violence. I am never violent unless driven."

"Nevertheless, Mr. Droone, I consider the precaution necessary," replied Nelson Lee. "Do you realise that you have placed yourself in a very perilous position? I am in no mood for melodramatic pleasantries."

"For that matter, neither am I," said the Night Owl. "That being so, why insist upon the revolver? You know well enough, Lee, that you will not use it. The law would never uphold you in shooting an unarmed man—even though that man happens to be badly wanted by the police. We are in England, Mr. Lee—in quiet Sussex—not in the United States, where the administration of the law is something of a farce."

Nelson Lee could not help smiling.

"We are wasting time, Droone," he said. "What do you want here?"

"The Don Santos collection," replied Caleb Droone smoothly.

"Indeed! Your requirements are very modest!"

"I am serious, Lee—and your flippancy is not in keeping with the present circumstances," snapped the Night Owl. "I have come here for the Don Santos Treasure, and I shall take it away with me."

Nelson Lee eyed his visitor calmly.



"And what if I refuse this little demand of yours?" he asked. "How do you intend to force your will upon me, Droone?"

"You may be quite sure that I made full preparations before placing myself in this seemingly fatal position," replied Droone. "I shall take the treasure, Lee, because you will not dare to refuse me."

"I will not dare?"

"If you do refuse, the life of one of your boys will be forfeited," said the Night Owl, a touch of triumph entering his voice.

Nelson Lee started—but so slightly that Droone did not see it.

"One of my boys?" repeated the detective.

safety or not. Agree to my demands, and the boy shall be escorted safely back."

Nelson Lee looked at the Night Owl sharply.

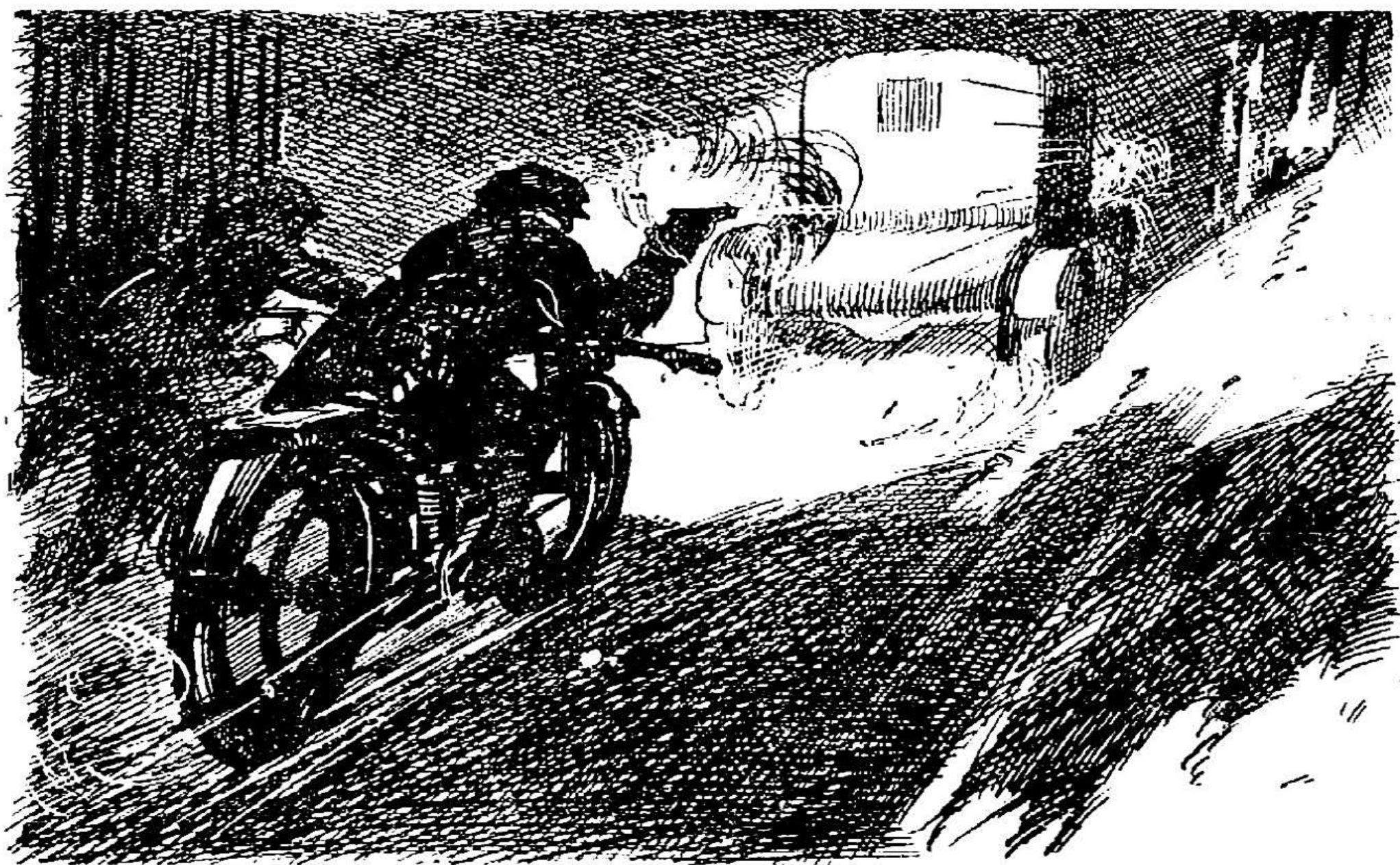
"You are suggesting, I take it, that I should hand over the Don Santos Treasure in return for this boy's release?" he asked.

"That, Mr. Lee, is the position in a nutshell."

"And do you really think, Droone, that I am imbecile enough to believe your word?" asked Lee coldly. "If I hand you these jewels, what guarantee have I got that the boy will be safely returned?"

The Night Owl laughed.

"You do not quite understand my proposition," he said. "I will readily grant you, Lee, that I never expected you to



The sharp report of the revolver was instantly followed by the loud burst of one of the rear tyres. The coupe rocked from side to side, swerved, and finally came to a standstill on the grass border of the road.

"Glenthorne—of the Junior School."

Lee lay back in his chair, his face quite immobile. The Night Owl, watching, saw no reflection of what was passing in Nelson Lee's mind. But, as a matter of fact, the detective was horrified.

So this was the reason for Archie Glenthorne's failure to return! He had been seized by the Alliance of 13, and was being held as a hostage. Nelson Lee could now understand why Caleb Droone had had the nerve to present himself so openly at St. Frank's.

"So you have taken this boy and imprisoned him?" asked Lee grimly.

"You need have no fear for the youngster's safety," said Droone. "It rests with you, Lee, whether Glenthorne returns in

take my word. I, however, will be content to take yours."

"Indeed!"

"This is my proposal," went on Droone, sitting back in his chair and crossing his legs. "You will give me your word of honour—your pledged, solemn promise—that if I bring this boy back unharmed, you will at once hand to me, intact, the remainder of the Don Santos Collection. As you know, I already have the emerald necklace."

Nelson Lee looked at Caleb Droone almost amusedly.

"And if I refuse to give my word?" he asked.

"In that event, Mr. Lee, I regret that



the boy will die—and his blood will be on your hands—”

“You hound!” interrupted Lee. “You dare to shift the responsibility from your own shoulders on to mine?”

“If you refuse to part with this collection of trinkets, it proves that you care nothing for this boy’s life,” replied Droone. “Let me add, that if I am forcibly detained here, the boy will die just the same. My men have instructions to go the extreme length if I fail to return within two hours. Therefore, I should advise you to be very cautious, Lee. Agree to my simple terms, and Glenthorne will not have a hair of his head injured.”

Lee was looking abstractedly at the Night Owl’s feet.

“Let us have this quite clear,” said the detective slowly. “I am to give you my promise that the jewels will be handed over to you as soon as you bring Glenthorne safely back?”

“Exactly.”

“You are satisfied to accept my word?”

“I am.”

“That is very generous of you, Mr. Droone,” said Nelson Lee quietly. “I did not know that I had such an excellent reputation.”

“Come, Mr. Lee, we are wasting time,” said Droone. “You are the one man in the whole of England that I have some respect for. And I know that if you give me your solemn promise, you will keep it. And I demand that promise now.”

“Demand?” repeated Lee, in a dangerous voice.

“Yes—demand,” emphasised the Night Owl. “I am in a position to demand. For if you refuse this offer of mine, the boy will never be seen again alive. It is useless to hedge, Lee—you’re in a corner. You have only one course, and nothing is to be gained by wasting time.”

Nelson Lee reached for the bell-push.

“What are you doing?” demanded Droone sharply.

“I am about to ring for Tubbs, so that he may escort you out,” replied Nelson Lee quietly. “Your presence is not desirable, Droone.”

The Night Owl sprang to his feet.

“You defy me?” he asked hoarsely.

“Nothing of the sort,” said Nelson Lee. “I simply refuse to make any bargain with an unmitigated scoundrel. I have my principles, Droone, and in the whole course of my career, I have never deliberately betrayed my client. I shall not do so now.”

“But—but the boy?”

“I am sorry, indeed, that any innocent youngster should be in your vile clutches,” said Nelson Lee, his voice vibrating somewhat. “But rest assured, Droone, if that boy is harmed, you will pay the full penalty.”

Droone stood there, breathing hard, all his calmness gone.

“By Heaven! You’re mad!” he half

shouted. “You don’t realise what you’re saying! Unless you promise to give me those jewels, this boy will die. You hear me—die! Will you let me go, knowing Glenthorne’s fate?”

“I have nothing to add to my previous remarks,” said Lee evenly.

“You—you infernal fool!” snarled the Night Owl.

Lee rose to his feet, and he looked very dangerous.

“Wait—wait! I apologise!” panted Droone. “I didn’t mean that, Lee—I’m sorry! But, man alive, don’t you realise—”

“I realise that you are exerting yourself needlessly,” interrupted Lee. “I have already told you that I make no bargains with scum of your type. That is my final word, Droone.”

Lee sat down again, and eyed his visitor narrowly. And the Night Owl stood there, utterly and absolutely at a loss. Five minutes earlier he had been gloating over the fact—or apparent fact—that he was the master of the situation. He had never believed for a second that Nelson Lee would take up this attitude. Which only proves that he didn’t know his man.

As for Nelson Lee, he had judged the Night Owl with an accuracy that was quite remarkable. From the very outset he had weighed up his visitor, knowing precisely what the effect of his refusal would be. He waited. And the effect was not long in showing itself.

For the Night Owl was in a corner himself, if he had only realised it. His threat to kill Glenthorne was grim enough, but it rang false. Even Droone would not add cold-blooded murder to his long list of crimes for no purpose whatsoever. For he would gain nothing by killing Archie. Once Lee had refused, the man was back at his starting-point.

“Very well, Lee—very well!” panted the Night Owl at length. “You are obstinate now, but you may not be obstinate after you have thought this thing out. I will give you two hours.”

“You are too generous!” said Lee mockingly.

“The time is now seven-thirty; I will return at nine-thirty,” explained Droone. “Again, I warn you to set no trap for me. For, by Heaven, that boy will die if you do! At nine-thirty I will give you one more chance.”

Nelson Lee touched the bell-push, and this time the bell rang.

“And let me add that you had better not follow me!” went on Droone quickly. “I shall not be fool enough to approach the place where Glenthorne is hidden. And my men are watching—silent and alert. If you make any attempt to locate the boy during this period of two hours, you will fail.”

Nelson Lee made no comment whatever.



In spite of the grim situation, he was half-amused. He had been expecting this change of attitude on Droone's part—he had gauged the man accurately, knowing that he would give Nelson Lee time. And that was just what Lee wanted.

In this battle of wits, the famous detective had triumphed.

Droone ceased talking abruptly as Tubbs appeared. And, with another slight bow, he took his departure.

Little did he imagine that it was Lee who now held the master card!

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE CLUE OF THE BLACK STAIN!



**A**CTION was required—swift, decisive action.

But, on the face of things, Nelson Lee was in a position of the utmost difficulty. He knew nothing of Glenthorne's prison, and it would be an act of sheer madness to search about at random over the countryside.

It was also impossible to set a trap for the Night Owl when he returned. Lee did not believe that Archie Glenthorne would be brutally murdered by Droone's men—but he would undoubtedly suffer harshly. These rascals would take revenge of some kind.

There was only one thing to do—locate Archie, and rescue him.

But in this enterprise Nelson Lee would need assistance. Frequently enough he preferred to work alone; but in this instance he would require helpers. He thought for a moment, realising that every second was of value.

The Alliance men were watching. That had been no idle statement on Droone's part. Without any question whatever, the Night Owl's myrmidons were skulking about in the December darkness—on the look-out for any move on the part of Nelson Lee.

It behoved the detective, therefore, to act with extreme caution. Every step in this delicate game would have to be taken with care. The slightest slip, and failure would result.

Within one minute Nelson Lee had made up his mind. He touched the bell, and presently Tubbs appeared. Lee, who was busily foraging in a drawer of his desk, looked up.

"Find Phipps at once, Tubbs, and say that I want him as soon as possible," said Lee crisply.

"Yessir!"

"Also tell Nipper that I require his presence."

"Yessir!"

Tubbs went off post-haste, dimly aware that something unusual was afoot. I received the message wonderingly, and lost no time in hurrying to the gov'nor's study. As I turned the corner of the passage, Phipps

appeared from the opposite direction. We met outside the Housemaster's door.

"Hallo! You going to see the gov'nor, too?" I asked.

"Yes, Master Nipper," said Phipps. "Mr. Lee sent for me."

We went in, and Lee nodded with approval. And, on the instant, I knew that something was in the air. There was an indefinable atmosphere of drama hovering about.

"Good!" said the gov'nor. "Phipps, I want you to help me."

"I shall be only too honoured, sir," said Phipps, with a touch of eagerness.

"Where do I come in, sir?" I asked.

"Your assistance will also be required, my boy," said Nelson Lee. "There is no sense in beating about the bush. Glenthorne has been captured by the Alliance of 13 and is now in the hands of the Night Owl."

"Great Scott!" I ejaculated, startled.

"Master Archibald captured, sir!" said Phipps, his voice tense and anxious. "Then—then this explains why he has not returned."

"It does, Phipps!" said Lee grimly.

And without further ado, but as briefly as possible, the gov'nor put us in possession of the facts. He told us of Caleb Droone's visit, and of the latter's offer.

"And you refused, sir?" asked Phipps, aghast.

"I did."

"But—but my young master, sir!" protested Phipps, in horror. "These scoundrels will carry out their threat—"

"Under no circumstances, Phipps, could I enter into any bargain with a professed criminal," interrupted Nelson Lee curtly. "And you need not worry regarding Glenthorne—he will not be harmed. Droone is a clever man; not a fool. His threat was an idle one; and, moreover, he has been generous enough to give me two hours of grace," added Lee drily.

"But what can we do in two hours, sir?" I asked tensely. "As you say yourself, these Alliance men are on the watch, and if we go searching for Archie we shall be stopped—probably attacked. And how can we hope to find Archie without the trace of a clue?"

"I do not remember saying that I had no clue," replied Lee smoothly. "Indeed, I have decided upon this course because I have every hope of locating Glenthorne at once."

We stared at the gov'nor breathlessly.

"There's something you haven't told us, sir," I exclaimed.

"Yes. Caleb Droone, for all his astuteness, made a very bad slip," continued Nelson Lee. "While sitting opposite to me in that chair, he was incautious enough to cross his legs—thus exposing to me the sole of his right shoe. That apparently insignificant action on his part has, I believe, put me on the right track to Glenthorne's prison."

Our stares were now absolutely blank.

"His—his right shoe!" I gasped. "You



think you can get on the track of Archie by what you saw on the sole of Droone's right shoe?"

"Exactly," said Lee. "There were distinct traces of tar visible—not only on the used portion of the sole, but on the instep. And, firmly adhering to a small patch of this tar was a reed."

"A reed?"

"At least, a slender portion of a leaf which one usually sees growing in profusion on the banks of a river," proceeded Nelson Lee calmly. "Now, separately, the tar and the reed would have little significance; but taken in conjunction they become very enlightening."

"I must confess, sir, that I am at a loss," said Phipps.

"My deductions are quite simple," proceeded Nelson Lee. "I am well acquainted with every road in this district, and there is only one spot that I know, within six miles, where the authorities are engaged in tarring operations. For you surely realise that Droone got the tar on his feet through walking on a freshly tarred road surface."

I looked at the gov'nor sharply.

"Tarred road!" I exclaimed. "Why, there's a patch just beyond Bannington! We came over it to-day, on the way home. Just beyond that bridge over the Stowe—Why, by Jove—"

"You are beginning to see, eh, Nipper?" said the gov'nor, as I paused. "Yes, that section of the highway is the only place where tarring operations are in progress. And the scrap of river-reed on Droone's instep becomes very significant indeed. In my opinion, it proves not only that he walked on that road on the other side of Bannington, but he also took the towing-path."

"Remarkable, sir—remarkable!" said Phipps enthusiastically. "Now that you have explained your deductions, they appear perfectly simple. And I really fail to see how the marks on Droone's shoe can be read otherwise."

"In any case, Phipps, we are going at once to that reach of the River Stowe which commences from the second bridge after passing Bannington. I am convinced that Glenthorne is held a prisoner somewhere in that vicinity; and by careful searching and with luck, we may locate him. Droone incautiously admitted that he had come straight from Glenthorne's prison," said Nelson Lee. "In any case, our enterprise is in the lap of the gods, and we must hope for the best."

Even now we were still puzzled.

"It's a great idea, gov'nor; but I can't see how it's going to be done," I protested. "Of course, we've got to hurry off—but what about these Alliance men who are on the watch?"

"If we play our parts well, they will be tricked," replied Lee. "Phipps, of course, will not be suspected if he goes on a trip to Bellton—especially if he is accompanied by Tubbs. Any Alliance watchers will merely

assume that two members of the household staff are off for a little jaunt."

"Then you're going to bring Tubbs into it, sir?" I asked.

"Not at all—you'll be Tubbs," said Lee calmly.

"Oh! You—you mean I've got to disguise myself?"

"I mean that I shall disguise you," said the gov'nor. "There is no necessity to bring Tubbs in—I can work from memory. I like the boy well enough, but it is not worth risking his chattering tongue. Phipps and Tubbs, going down the lane, will not cause any suspicion."

"It's a great stunt, sir," I declared. "But what about you?"

"I shall disguise myself effectively and follow soon afterwards," replied Nelson Lee, smiling. "Phipps and Tubbs will arrive in Bannington by train, and, with luck, I shall be there, too. We must hurry, for the evening train is due within thirty-five minutes."

As Nelson Lee rapidly commenced the task of converting me into an excellent imitation of Tubbs—sandy hair and snub nose, all complete—he went into fuller details of his plans, arranging what we should do after reaching Bannington, and so forth.

Thus, fifteen minutes later, there was nothing whatever remarkable about the fact that Phipps, the valet, and Tubbs, the page-boy, passed through the Triangle, chatting amiably—hurrying somewhat, in order to catch the evening train for Bannington.

They went down the lane, engaged in a heated argument, in which their voices were raised, on the subject of servants' hours. Phipps maintained that servants, on the whole, were well-treated. Tubbs stoutly declared that there ought to be more "off" time, and he even talked about giving notice.

While they were talking in this strain a man suddenly loomed up out of the darkness. Instinctively, Phipps and Tubbs held themselves ready for anything that might crop up.

But the stranger was apparently alone.

"Half a tick, gents!" he said, planting himself in the fairway.

"Hallo! What's the trouble?" asked Phipps.

"Lorst your way, mate?" said Tubbs.

"No; not that a man couldn't, in this here darkness," said the stranger. "My pipe's out, and I want a match. That's all."

Phipps produced a box, and handed them over.

"Thanks!" said the other. "You're a gent."

He struck a match, and as the light flared up it clearly illuminated the faces of Phipps and Tubbs. The stranger gave them one swift, comprehensive glance, and then lit his pipe.

"From the big school, ain't you?" he asked, handing the matches back.

"Thanks!" said Phipps. "Yes, we're from the school. Come on, kid, or we'll lose that darned train."



"Crikey! We've only got five minutes!" exclaimed Tubbs. "Let's hop!"

They hurried off, and the stranger, puffing at his pipe, looked after them. He was, without doubt, an Alliance man—and he was satisfied that these two were merely unimportant servants.

Phipps chuckled as he and Tubbs hurried through the village High Street.

"We fooled him, eh?" he murmured.

"You bet we did!" grinned Tubbs delightedly. "So far so good, as the chap said, as he cut the top off his egg. I'll bet there was an ambush there, and we skipped through it without a hitch!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

### A SHOCK FOR THE NIGHT OWL!



"HALLO! Hallo! Who's this queer old bird?"

Church made that remark as he entered the lobby, accompanied by McClure and Handforth. They were just on their way from Study D to the common-room, and were somewhat surprised to find a stranger pottering about the lobby.

"Looks a funny merchant, anyhow," murmured McClure.

"I'll ask if he wants anybody," said Handforth, striding forward.

The elderly stranger was a very harmless-looking specimen. The juniors took him to be an uncle or grandfather of one of the fellows. He had just come from one of the passages.

"Anything I can do, sir?" asked Handforth obligingly.

"Eh? Eh? What's that?" said the old man. "Thank you—thank you! You need not bother—"

"No bother at all, sir," interrupted Handforth. "Are you looking for the House-master? I'll take you along to Mr. Lee's study—"

"No—no!" said the stranger hastily. "I am just going out, young man. I—er—have completed my business in the school, thank you."

Handforth looked disappointed.

"Then we can't do anything, sir?" he asked.

"Eh? No, I'm afraid not," replied the mysterious old man. "Now, boys, run away—run away! It is quite unnecessary for you to interest yourselves in me. Good-night to you—good-night!"

He pottered towards the doorway, but Handforth wouldn't be denied.

"We'll escort you to the gates, sir," he said, as obliging as ever.

The old man, turning, adjusted his spectacles and gave Handforth a glare. He fingered his grey beard, and tapped his stick impatiently on the floor. Dressed in sombre black, the old fellow seemed very out of place in the lobby.

"Go away!" he said testily. "I don't want you to escort me to the gates! I won't have it! Do you hear me? I won't be bothered in this fashion! Go away, you young rascals!"

Handforth & Co. paused.

"Oh, well, if you don't want us, we'll clear off!" said Handforth, on his dignity.

"We only wanted to be polite, sir."

"Yes, yes, my boy—please forgive me!" said the old man. "But I would prefer to be alone. That is all. Thank you—thank you!"

The juniors went off, very curious—at least, Church and McClure were. Handforth was positively suspicious, and unconsciously came near to spoiling Nelson Lee's carefully laid plan.

"I don't like the look of that old chap!" said Edward Oswald, when they had turned the corner of the passage. "I don't believe he's up to any good!"

"You ass! He's only a visitor!" said Church.

"How do we know?" asked Handy. "He may be a burglar in disguise!"

Although Handforth was startlingly near the mark, his suspicions were not aroused by any imperfections of the stranger's general make-up. Handforth was of a naturally suspicious character, and practically every stranger generally came under Handforth's scrutiny. The hero of Study D was always on the look-out for detective work—his favourite hobby.

"I'll tell you what!" he said tensely. "We'll follow him!"

"Follow him?" said McClure, aghast.

"Yes!"

"But, my dear fathead, he's probably Fenton's grandfather, or Chambers' great-uncle!" protested Church. "For all we know, he might be the Head's brother! And he's probably a lord, or a duke, or something! You can never tell these giddy noblemen by their appearance."

Handforth was somewhat quelled.

"Of course, we don't want to make a bloomer," he admitted. "But, in my opinion, there's something suspicious about the old chap. Anyhow, I'm going to follow him, and get on the track. Then I'll make my deductions—My hat! Look what's oozed up after the shower!"

Handforth paused, and glared at a self-possessed young gentleman who came shooting round the corner at that moment. The self-possessed young gentleman was Handforth minor, of the Third.

"Oh, here you are, Ted!" he said cheerfully. "Went to Study D, but you weren't there. Come on—whack out!"

"Whack out?" repeated Handforth ominously.

"Five bob!"

"You—you young sweep!" roared Handforth. "Do you think you're going to get five bob out of me?"

"No!"



"What the——"

"I don't think anything about it—I know it!" said Willy, with his usual consummate calmness. "My hat!" he added, with a sigh. "What a chap you are for beating about the bush, Ted! You know you'll have to fork out in the end, so why not do it at once! Five bob! I'm broke!"

Handforth gazed at his minor so fiercely that Church and McClure expected to see Willy withering up under the fire. But Willy merely scratched his ear, and held out his other hand.

"Five bob!" he repeated mechanically.

"You—you—you——"

"Exactly!" said Handforth minor. "We know all that! Didn't you promise, only last week, that you'd give me five bob as soon as I was stony? You don't mean to say you're going to repudiate your solemn word?"

Handforth breathed hard.

"Here's your giddy five bob!" he snapped, producing two half-crowns and shoving them into Willy's hand. "And now clear! Your face makes a shiver go down my spine! It makes me lose my appetite!"

"Good!" said Willy. "Thanks, old man. One of these days I'll do the same for you!"

And the leader of the Third marched off, whistling with much shrillness a tune which suggested that he had no bananas. Handforth gazed after him, and uttered a growl.

"I've never forgiven my mater!" he said, grimly. "Fancy rearing a thing like that! He ought to have been smothered at birth! And I've got to acknowledge him as my brother! What a world!"

And Edward Oswald strode towards the Common room, forgetting all about the mysterious stranger. Indeed, it wasn't until ten minutes later that he suddenly remembered his decision to shadow the old man. And then, of course, it was altogether too late.

In the meantime, the mysterious stranger—who was not really so mysterious, after all—emerged out into the Triangle, and proceeded to act in a manner which would have given Handforth every justification for suspecting.

Instead of going straight across to the gates, and passing out, he made his way softly and stealthily in the direction of the main garage. Here he produced a key, unlocked the doors, and went inside. In the gloom he paused for a moment beside Nelson Lee's racing car. But he shook his head, and then gave his attention to the Headmaster's neat little coupe.

"Yes, undoubtedly the better of the two!" decided the old fellow at once.

Climbing in the car, he switched on the ignition, used the electric starter, and the engine purred softly.

The coupe moved slowly out, and the old man closed the garage doors, locked them, and then re-entered the little car. If Handforth had been watching, in accordance

with his original intention, he would have assumed that this stranger was stealing the Head's car. As a matter of fact, the Head knew all about it, having given permission for the coupe to be used.

Switching the lights on, the stranger started off across the Triangle, passed out through the gates, and then proceeded at a sedate pace down the lane towards Bellton.

However, in the darkest part of the lane, where Bellton Wood rose dark and forbidding on one side, a man stepped out into the middle of the road and held up a hand.

Even if the coupe had attempted to pass, it would have been impossible without risking injury to the standing figure—for the lane, at this point, was very narrow.

The old man applied the brakes, brought the coupe to a standstill, and opened one of the doors.

"Well, what is it?" he asked tensely. "What do you want?"

The man in the road was the same fellow who had stopped Phipps and Tubbs. He gave the sombre old man a very searching glance.

"Sorry to stop you, sir," he said. "But can you put me on the right road to Caistowe?"

"Caistowe?" repeated the old man. "You're going the wrong way, my good man—quite the wrong way! The Caistowe road is on the other side of the village. Go straight through Bellton, and take the right hand fork at the other end. You will reach Caistowe in due course."

"Much obliged, sir," said the other, stepping back.

The old man closed the door of the coupe, and a moment later the little car was gliding smoothly on its way again. Leaning back in the driving seat, the elderly stranger chuckled.

"An Alliance man, of course!" he murmured. "But he was fooled!"

The old fellow smiled grimly to himself, and settled down for the short run to Bannington.

And, indeed, it seemed that the whole scheme was working smoothly.

But for once Nelson Lee's carefully prepared plans went wrong. The famous detective had known from the very start that the Night Owl's men were astute, and he had relied upon the disguise to completely hoodwink them.

There was no question that "Tubbs," the pageboy, had passed muster. But the mysterious old stranger aroused suspicions in the mind of the Alliance man who had been told off to watch Bellton Lane.

The very instant the car had proceeded on its way, the fellow hurried into Bellton Wood, and made his way to a small clearing, only a few yards from the road itself.

Here, lurking in the shadows, was a dim figure. In fact, Caleb Droone himself was waiting. The Night Owl was impatient—-anxious. Nelson Lee had failed to fall into



the trap that had been so carefully prepared for him. And Droone was filled with grave doubt as to whether Lee would have changed his mind by nine-thirty. In the meantime, the Night Owl's men were watching all the lanes.

"Report, Chief!" exclaimed the spy, as he hurried up.

"Well, what is it?" demanded Droone.

"Car just gone down the lane," said the scout. "I stopped it, according to instructions, and discovered the occupant to be an old man."

"An old man!" repeated the Night Owl. "Who?"

"Never saw him before, Chief—but he was riding in Dr. Stafford's closed two-seater."

Droone snapped his fingers.

"An old man!" he muttered. "By Heaven! If——"

He turned upon the man furiously.

"What was this old fellow like?" he snapped. "Describe him?"

"Fairly tall, Chief, with grey whiskers and grey hair—and it struck me that the hair looked a bit like a wig," replied the spy. "And I noticed a ring on his hand, too—the third finger of the right hand."

Droone uttered a curse.

"A ring!" he snarled. "A single ruby?"

"Why, yes, Chief——"

"You fool—you blundering dolt!" rasped out the Night Owl. "That man was Lee himself—he was wearing that ring when I interviewed him! And he's slipped through the ambush—he's got away!"

Thus, owing to the Alliance man's sharp eyes, the truth was already known to Caleb Droone. The trifling matter of that small ruby ring made all the difference. But "the old stranger" had gone!

"You have your motor-cycles ready?" demanded Droone sharply.

"Yes."

"Then take Number 6 with you, and follow that two-seater!" rapped out Droone. "It's an absolute certainty that Lee has taken the Bannington Road. In some way he's got to know where that boy is hidden. Hang the man, he's almost uncanny!"

The Alliance man waited for no further orders—he knew how important it was to waste no time. He turned swiftly, and gave vent to a peculiar, hoot-like cry, sounding weird and animal-like. It was the well-known signal of the Alliance.

Before the fellow was in the lane another man came hurrying out, having emerged from the opposite hedge. This man was the fellow whom Droone had referred to as No. 6.

"Bikes ready?" snapped the other.

"Yes—on the opposite side."

"Good! We've got to chase that car and stop it!"

"Why, anything suspicious——" began No. 6.

"Lee's in it—that's all!"



**Nelson Lee crept closer and closer—until, in fact, he was on all fours in the tangled grass. Inch by inch he moved nearer and nearer to the bank. The wherry was quite close up, and with one leap Lee could have been aboard.**

This information was quite enough for No. 6, and a few moments later two powerful motorcycles had been produced, and the two men lost no time in starting off. The machines were astonishingly quiet, and glided off with scarcely a purr.

They went through Bellton at quite a sedate pace—but once upon the Bannington Road, clear and straight before them, with an excellent surface, they opened the throttles, and both machines hurtled along at a speed that was not far short of fifty miles an hour.

And as the Head's coupe was only capable of doing forty when coaxed to the last atom of power, the chase had one inevitable ending. The coupe, in fact, was only going at a comfortable twenty-five, chiefly because one of the plugs was badly missing.

Midway between Bellton and Bannington, where the road was very quiet and lonely, the two motor-cyclists came up with the Head's car. They shot by, one on either side, and accommodated their speed to that of the coupe.

"Stop!" shouted one of the men curtly.

As he spoke, he produced a revolver. But "the old stranger" in the coupe took absolutely no notice of the order. He pressed his foot upon the accelerator, and the little car jumped forward.

Crack!

The sharp report of the revolver was instantly followed by the loud burst of one of the rear tyres. The coupe rocked from side to side, swerved, and finally came to a standstill on the grass border of the road. Instantly the two motor-cyclists flung themselves from their machines, and



snatched open both doors of the coupe. Two revolvers gleamed in at the occupant. "Hands up!" ordered No. 6. "By gosh! If you—"

"All right, my friend—don't worry yourself," interrupted the old man. "I have no desire to die just yet. You've beaten me."

"Thought you were smart, eh, Mr. Lee?" sneered the other Alliance man. "But we were on the lock-out for you, and you don't get past us so easily!"

"So it appears," was the reply. "Yes, I'm Lee—and but for a mere slip I should have hoodwinked you. And what are you going to do now? Let me remind you that this road is somewhat public."

"The Chief will be along in a minute," said No. 6. "We're not likely to be interrupted before then. But if anybody else does come by, you'd better keep your mouth shut—or one of these revolvers will probably go off."

The wait was only brief.

For the Night Owl himself, seated in a small racing car, came up. He had been obliged to delay, owing to the fact that his car was concealed in the wood, and had to be manoeuvred out with care.

"You've got him!" said Caleb Droone, as he jumped out and came across to the coupe. "Splendid! So, Mr. Lee, you thought you would trick me!"

"Yes, I had hopes."

"Allow me to congratulate you upon your excellent disguise," said the Night Owl. "And I am surprised, Lee, that a man of your ability should have overlooked the ring on your third finger."

The disguised man glanced at the ruby ring.

"By James!" he murmured. "And that gave you the clue, eh?"

"Yes, it did!" replied Droone. "I warned you, at the school, that if you attempted to go out in search of Glenthorne you would be stopped. Furthermore, by taking this action you are seriously endangering the boy's life. I have a mind to give you no further opportunity of buying the boy's freedom."

"I am afraid, Droone, that your optimism is greater than your judgment," said the other, in a slightly mocking tone. "I should greatly like to know what you intend doing with me now?"

The Night Owl uttered an oath.

"I'll show you what I intend doing, you interfering hound!" he snarled. "First of all, I'll strip you of these trappings!"

The prisoner by this time had been forced out of the car, and was standing in the road. Droone grabbed at the false beard, and tore it away. Then he pulled off the grey wig.

"Why, what—"

The words seemed to choke in his throat. For, instead of beholding the features of Nelson Lee, the Night Owl was looking at another man! A man of about Lee's own

height, clean-shaven, but with hair neatly trimmed low down by the ears—after the style of a footman or a valet.

"Who—who are you?" snarled Droone, finding his voice again.

The man was quite calm, although tense. "My name is Phipps, and I am in the service of Master Glenthorne, whom you have so atrociously kidnapped!" he replied, his voice firm and steady. "I rather think, Droone, that Mr. Nelson Lee has tricked you completely."

The Night Owl swore violently, and one of his men—the fellow who had been on guard in Bellton Lane—stared at Phipps as though the latter were a ghost.

"But—but this man came down the lane with one of the other servants over half an hour ago—he was with a boy!" panted the Alliance man. "How did he get back? I—I thought—"

"You infernal bungler!" snarled the Night Owl. "I can see now—I can see how Lee fooled us! It wasn't Phipps who went down the lane with that boy—it was Lee himself!"

"Lee!" gasped the spy.

"Yes—Lee impersonating this man, Phipps," exclaimed Droone, vibrating with fury. "And Lee caught the train for Bannington—he's there by now! Why, there's even a chance that he knows—"

The Night Owl broke off abruptly, and rushed to one of the motor-cycles.

"Hold that man!" he ordered. "I'm going straight to the wherry! Even now, I may be in time."

Caleb Droone was filled with utter and absolute consternation. He had, indeed, been tricked by Nelson Lee's astuteness. It was not Phipps and Tubbs who had gone down the lane; but Nelson Lee and myself! The gov'nor had reckoned that we would be able to get past any spies, but it had been doubtful from the first if Phipps would succeed. Phipps, although knowing to danger, had consented to act as the decoy, and he had done this part perfectly. For Droone and his men had been greatly delayed, while Nelson Lee and I were hurrying towards our destination.

But Phipps himself was not such a duffer when it came to brisk action.

The panic-stricken departure of the Night Owl momentarily placed the two Alliance men off their guard. For a second they relaxed their vigilance. For, instead of watching the prisoner, they stared after Droone as he mounted the motor-cycle.

Crash!

It was over in a second. Phipps, seizing his chance with an astonishing display of courage, landed a terrific drive on the jaw of the man nearest to him. As the fellow heeled over backwards, his companion attempted to level his revolver.

But with a swift lunge, Phipps knocked the man's arm up, tripped him, and sent him flying. And before the Night Owl had



covered a hundred yards, Phipps was dashing for the other motor-cycle.

He grabbed it, jumped into the saddle, and gave the kick-starter a tremendous heave. The engine roared in response, and Phipps put the clutch in so abruptly that he was nearly sent flying backwards over the carrier. Somehow or other, he managed to get control.

Crack! Crack!

The frustrated Alliance men fired again and again; but in the darkness their aim was wild. Phipps vanished into the gloom.

## CHAPTER IX

### NELSON LEE'S VICTORY!



"HERE we are, sir!" I said softly.

Nelson Lee and I were on the quiet road, about two miles beyond the outskirts of Bannington. At rare intervals a car would come shooting by—for this was a main highway; but otherwise we had the road to ourselves.

And we had just come upon a stretch of road that was freshly tarred. Near by a bridge spanned the River Stowe. And the banks of the river were quiet, still, and absolutely forlorn. In wintertime the River Stowe was a place to be avoided—except during those infrequent periods when the ice was thick enough for skating.

"It's a bit like looking for a needle in a haystack, guv'nor," I remarked dubiously. "For all we know, Archie may be hidden over ten miles from here."

"I agree, Nipper," said Nelson Lee. "But in this enterprise we must depend largely upon luck. When all is said and done, my deductions were almost at random. But there is at least a possibility that Glenthorne is concealed somewhere in this vicinity."

"We'll hope for the best, anyway," I said. "The main thing is we've ditched those blessed spies! Walked through without a hitch! I wonder how old Phipps is getting on now?"

"If I am any judge of Phipps, I should say he is acquitting himself well," replied Lee. "Come, we will take the towing path. And keep your eyes open for any sign of a hut, or a barn—or possibly a barge on the river."

We were about to take the towing-path near the bridge when Nelson Lee paused.

"Perhaps you had better go the other way, young 'un," he said. "If you find nothing suspicious, return at the end of half an hour. I will do the same, and we will meet here, at this spot."

"Very well, sir," I said promptly.

We parted, and a moment later had lost sight of one another. I may as well say at once that my own quest was absolutely fruitless; but Nelson Lee met with much better luck.

He was hoping against hope that he might be able to locate the prison where Archie was being kept. But he had no real certainty of success. And there is no doubt that Lee never expected the luck that he actually had.

For he had hardly proceeded a hundred yards along the towing-path when he paused, and stared out across the water. The river was fairly wide here, and on the other side he detected a kind of backwater, thickly crowded with willows, and other trees.

A backwater was just what he was on the look-out for, and as he proceeded cautiously along the path for another twenty yards he took out a pair of powerful night-glasses.

Focussing these, he gazed out across the river. To the naked eye, the backwater was a mere blur of reeds and trees. But, through the glasses, Nelson Lee saw distinct signs of a boat of some sort.

This was enough for him.

Without wasting any more time on this side of the river, he retraced his steps, crossed swiftly over, and plunged into the thick trees which lined the opposite bank of the river—for there was no towing-path on this side.

Lee kept a sharp look-out for any possible enemies. For if, indeed, Archie's prison was near by, there was a possibility that some spies were lurking near. But Lee was inclined to suspect that all Droone's available men were placed near the school.

At last the detective came to the backwater.

Parting the branches from low bushes, he peered cautiously through. And his heart gave a little jump as he saw the shape of an old wherry, a thin curl of smoke was coming up from the cabin chimney. And on deck stood a broad, squat man, attired in a heavy coat and a muffler.

It looked innocent enough, that wherry—a peaceful craft, moored in the little backwater for the night. But Nelson Lee was very suspicious just now. This was hardly the kind of weather for a holiday of this kind, and the very absence of lights on the boat seemed significant.

Nelson Lee crept closer and closer—until, in fact, he was on all fours in the tangled grass. Inch by inch he moved nearer and nearer to the bank. The wherry was quite close up, and with one leap Lee could have been aboard.

But he waited—not caring to make a blunder.

An idea came to him—indeed, it was something like a brain wave.

Very low and soft, the sound of a night creature rose upon the air. It had been uttered by Lee, but he muffled it so mysteriously that it seemed to come from among the trees. It was the signal of the Alliance—which Lee had heard on more than one occasion.

He waited, tense and expectant.

That night call would serve a double pur-



pose. If the man on the deck of the wherry was connected with the Alliance, he would give the answering echo. But if, on the other hand, he was quite an innocent wayfarer, he would think nothing of the cry, believing it to be that of some nocturnal creature.

In this way, Lee would obtain his information without even revealing his presence. And it was with quiet satisfaction that he saw the thick-set man place both his hands to his mouth, and give a low, eerie repetition of the cry.

Nelson Lee could hardly believe his luck.

But the thing was proved beyond doubt. That man on the wherry was one of Caleb Droone's associates! And it was a foregone conclusion that this old river craft was Archie Glenthorne's prison.

Lee decided to act swiftly and boldly.

It was possible that another man was below; but more than likely that the fellow on deck was the sole gaoler. In any case, Nelson Lee would have to take the risk.

As soon as the answering call had died down, he rose from the grass, and walked boldly up to the side of the wherry. The thick-set man advanced, unsuspecting, believing this newcomer to be one of his own companions.

Lee stepped aboard, pushed a revolver into the man's ribs, and took him completely by surprise.

"Hands up!" he commanded quietly. "and no noise, my friend!"

"What the blazes—"

The man's pipe fell from his mouth, and smashed on the deck. And his hands shot upwards. There was something in Nelson Lee's tone which advised him to obey promptly.

With a free hand, Nelson Lee drew out a pair of handcuffs, clicked them open, and reached up. In a flash, one of the man's wrists was manacled. And then Lee acted quickly.

Before the fellow could attempt to defend himself, Lee hooked his toe round his ankle, and sent him sprawling. And by the time he recovered his breath, he found that his wrists were securely handcuffed behind him.

"And now, you will please lead the way below!" commanded Lee evenly.

"You're mad!" panted the fellow, who was utterly startled. What's the idea of this? You've made a mistake! I'm a peaceful barge owner—"

"We need not waste time by useless conversation," cut in Nelson Lee. "If you obey my orders, you will avoid all violence."

The whole affair was being done so quietly and so smoothly, that the Alliance man was still flustered. But he instinctively knew that the game was up. He led the way below, and Lee had no difficulty in thrusting him into an empty cabin, and locking the door on him.

By this time, the detective was quite convinced that there were no other enemies

on board. If there had been, the handcuffed man would have yelled for assistance. Moreover, the other man would have appeared long before this.

"Glenthorne!" shouted Lee, in a loud voice.

"What-ho!" came an instant reply, from near at hand. "I mean to say, that sounds dashed like Mr. Lee's voice. Greetings, dear old soul! I—I mean to say, this way, Mr. Lee! I am in sore need of assistance! Many cheers, and so forth, for rescue appears to be at hand!"

Nelson Lee's relief, as he heard those words, was considerable. Diving down a short passage, he came to a door that was securely bolted. Shooting the bolts back, he thrust open the door, and found himself in a tiny, box-like cabin. And Archie Glenthorne stood there, untidy, dishevelled, but in no way harmed.

"So here we are, what?" asked Archie. "Absolutely priceless of you to stagger in, sir. Why, oddslife and gadzooks! It's Phipps! Dear, dashed old Phipps! And I could have bally well sworn that—"

"No, Glenthorne, I am not Phipps," smiled Lee.

"Oh, come!" protested Archie. "Come! Kindly cease the jolly old leg-pulling. Phipps! I mean to say, I ought to know you by this time! Explain to the young master how you hit the old trail."

It was some little time before Archie was convinced that it was, indeed, Nelson Lee to whom he was speaking. And, even then Lee did not go into any details. He knew the necessity for haste. He wanted to get Archie back in the school before nine-thirty.

Archie was intensely pleased to be free, and the prospect of going straight back to St. Frank's cheered him up in a very marked degree. His only trouble was that his appearance was "dashed ghastly" and that he would have to appear in public, for Lee had no conveyance.

The detective led the way up the narrow companionway.

And, exactly at the same time, Caleb Droone stepped on deck from the river bank. He had arrived a moment earlier, and his worst suspicions were founded, for there was nobody on guard.

As Droone stepped across to the companion, Nelson Lee emerged, with Archie Glenthorne just behind him. The very sight of Lee there drove the Night Owl into a frenzy.

His usual composure left him. With a snarl of fury, he burlled himself at Nelson Lee, intending to take the latter off his guard. But Lee, in a flash, dodged the swift drive, and a moment later the pair were fighting fiercely.

"Kindly allow me to rally round, sir!" exclaimed Archie. "I mean, this is where I can dash about like anything and—"

"Keep out of it, Glenthorne—keep out of it!" panted Lee curtly.

The fight was one of the most dramatic



that Archie had ever witnessed. Caleb Droone was intent upon killing Nelson Lee then and there. He was seeing red, and his one desire was to take the life of his enemy. For he knew that all was lost. His carefully laid scheme had failed.

From one side of the deck to the other swayed the fighters. But, slowly but surely, Nelson Lee was gaining the mastery. And the climax came when Droone, leaping backwards, flashed a long knife from beneath his coat.

With a snarl of demoniacal fury he hurled himself into the fight again, intending to dispatch Lee once and for all. But the detective was ready and waiting.

Crash!

His bare fist caught Droone under the chin, and in the same flash, Lee tore round, the knife missing him by a bare fraction. Archie nearly fainted with horror as he saw the narrowness of that escape. But Nelson Lee had gauged the thing to an inch.

Droone was nearly lifted off his feet by that terrific blow. He staggered back, stumbled against a coil of rope, and the next second he had pitched overboard. It was the finish of him, as far as all further fighting was concerned.

Nearly senseless with the effect of that tremendous punch, even the cold water had very little reviving action. He floundered about for a few moments, and sank. But when he came up Lee was ready with a boathook.

The defeated master criminal was hauled on board, without a trace of fight left in him. And with deft fingers, Nelson Lee searched him. And the detective gave a little exclamation of satisfaction as he withdrew the emerald necklet—the one article of the Don Santos Collection which was missing.

Phipps arrived almost immediately afterwards, and was left in charge of the two prisoners—Droone himself being handcuffed and locked below. And Archie was immensely delighted by the fact that this motor-cycle was available—the one that Phipps had arrived on.

A bit later on I turned up, and my disgust was complete and absolute when I discovered that I had missed everything. And I elected to remain with Phipps, in case any other members of the Alliance turned up to cause trouble.

In the meantime, Nelson Lee paid a visit to the Bannington Police Station, gave full details, and Inspector Jameson himself led a strong body of officers to the wherry.

Thus the Night Owl came to the end of his career—at least, for a few years. For penal servitude was undoubtedly his lot. Only three of his men were captured, the rest slipping away, and eluding all the efforts of the police.

And the Don Santos Collection, now in-

tact, was returned to its rightful owner—whose delight was unbounded.

Our adventures, during the past few weeks, with Caleb Droone and the Alliance of Thirteen had kept the gov'nor and I pretty busy. And now that it was all over I felt greatly relieved. I had been more than a little concerned about the gov'nor's safety, for Droone was a heartless, dangerous enemy.

But now that the excitement was ended, I was able to give my attention to the coming Christmas holidays.

Indeed, I realised that they were almost upon us.

In a very few days time the school would "break up" for the most joyous and eagerly looked for holiday of the year. All the fellows were talking about Christmas—about parties—about good things to eat, presents, and so forth. Invitations were extended by one study, and accepted by another. All the fellows could think about was Christmas.

I had made no definite plans yet, but I had a general idea of going up to London with the gov'nor, and then spending Yuletide with Sir Montie Tregellis-West in the latter's ancestral castle. He had pressed an invitation upon me, and I had practically accepted it.

But at that time I knew nothing of the events which were soon to take place at the old school—events which were to put quite a different complexion upon the Christmas holidays for many of the juniors.

But, although our Christmas was totally different to what we expected, it was a time of unusual interest—with plenty of excitement and cheer—and just a little pathos.

But the record of our Yuletide adventures deserves a place to itself.

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# MY AMERICAN NOTE-BOOK

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



## No. 2.—New York's Restaurants.

THE popular restaurants of New York differ considerably from the same type of eating-house in this country. Although I didn't use these establishments frequently during my stay in the great American Metropolis, I was nevertheless very interested in them.

In a similar fashion to the teashops of Messrs. J. Lyons & Co., Ltd., the establishments of Child's are to be found all over New York City. Where we say "Lyons" in London, they say "Child's" in New York.

These restaurants are dotted about in very close proximity, and look something like the ordinary Lyons' teashop, too—except for the fact that the window is not dressed with sundry appetising dishes, and piles of confectionery—as we are accustomed to seeing in London. The windows of Child's restaurants are occupied by smartly dressed young ladies all in white, who perform all sorts of remarkable things upon gas-cookers.

If one enters a Child's, and gives an order for buckwheat cakes, these same cakes are forthwith cooked in full view of the passing throngs out in the street. It is quite interesting to watch the cooking in progress.

But it seems to me that the digestion of the average New Yorker must be of cast-iron calibre, for it is no uncommon sight to see a man attacking a plate of fried sausages and potatoes, and buckwheat cakes and maple syrup—at one and the same time! The Americans, in fact, are rather fond of mixing their food in this way. They invariably eat sweet things, such as preserves or stewed fruit, with various forms of meat dishes.

But the most entertaining type of restaurant, from the point of view of an English visitor, is the ubiquitous cafeteria. Some of these places are conducted on a grand scale, and one or two on Broadway and 42nd Street are really beautifully equipped. Even the smaller ones are by no means uninviting.

One can enter a cafeteria in New York, and obtain almost any kind of dish by helping one's-self. There are no waiters or waitresses in these places—or, as the Americans say, no service. The diner has to provide his own.

As you enter you are handed a tray, and in most cases this tray contains knives, forks, spoons, and a clean serviette. Armed with these implements, one wanders down a vast counter loaded with foodstuffs. If you fancy a plate of ham, you select it, and place it on your tray. You go further down, and choose a salad—and then some pie, or pastry. Finally, at the end of your short journey down the counter, you come upon a gentleman who casts an eagle eye over your tray, and rapidly reckons up the bill.

Having done this, he clips a little ticket for you—in very much the same manner as a collector at a railway station—and you are then free to select a table for yourself and enjoy your meal. Having finished, you just pay the cashier the amount indicated on your ticket, and out you go. It would be quite a good idea, in my opinion, to institute this class of restaurant in London, and I am rather surprised that they have not yet appeared. From the point of view of quick service they are not to be bettered. And the quality of the food in the New York cafeteria is generally quite excellent.

Of course, there are endless numbers of the ordinary type of restaurant. Compared with London, New York probably has four restaurants to London's one. They are to be found everywhere, even in the most unexpected places. A large number of these are of a very inferior type. Housekeeping, as the London housewife knows it, is much less commonplace in New York than on this side of the water. The number of people who "eat out" is absolutely astonishing.

One very good feature of the New York restaurants is that bread and butter is generally provided free of all cost—just as much as one requires. And when one orders any kind of meat, the price includes potatoes. In one famous restaurant—Drakes, on 42nd Street—fancy cakes are also on the free list.

But, upon the whole, I rather fancy that London can easily beat New York when it comes to beautifully appointed restaurants. And there is no question that the quality of food in the London eating-houses is on a higher plane.



**THE PAPER THAT IS RUN BY BOYS  
FOR BOYS!**

No. 3. Vol. 1.

Edited by Nipper.

December 15, 1923.



# St. Frank's Magazine

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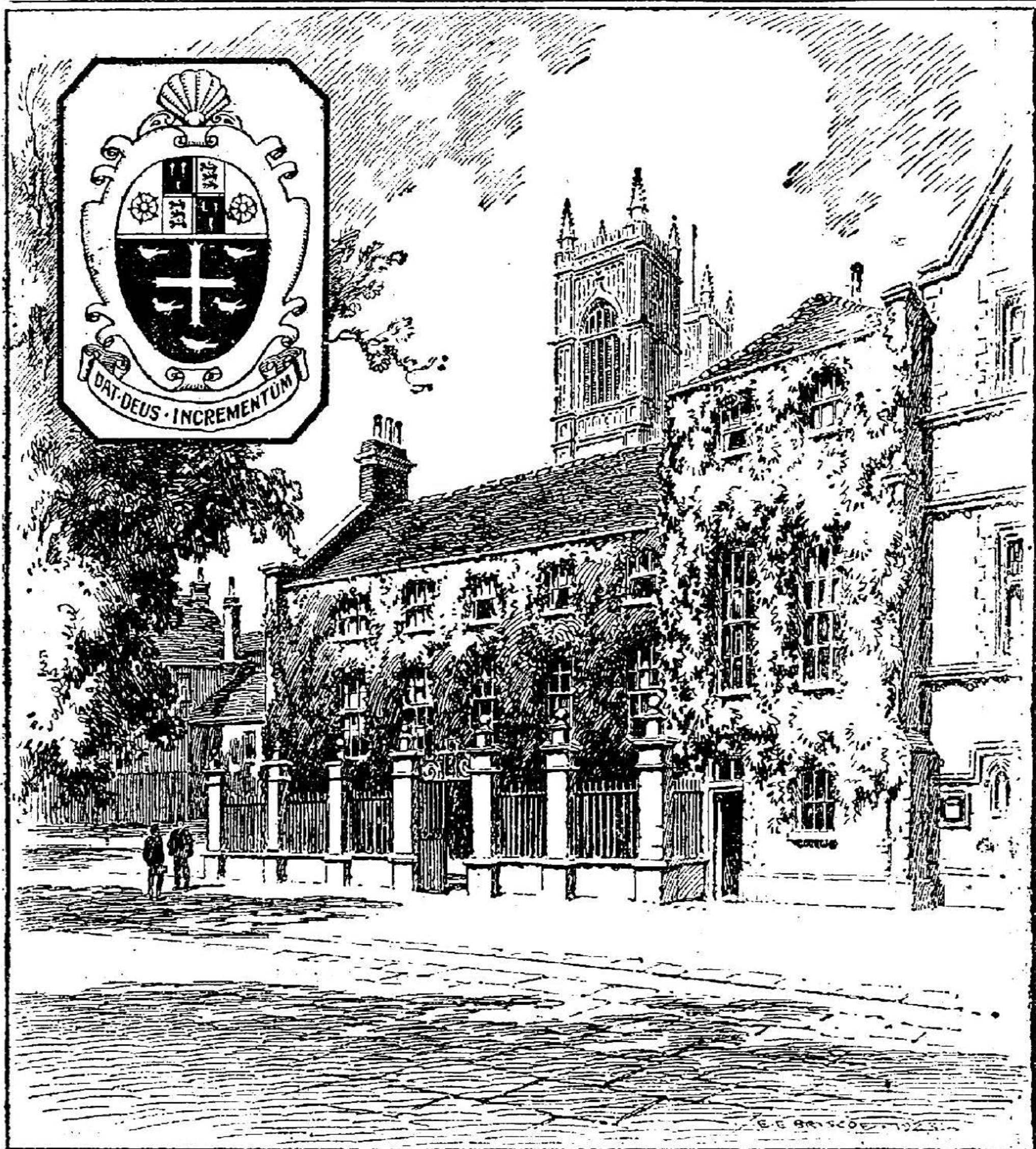
**WHEN YOU HAVE READ THE MAG. PASS IT ON TO  
YOUR CHUMS!**



# OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

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

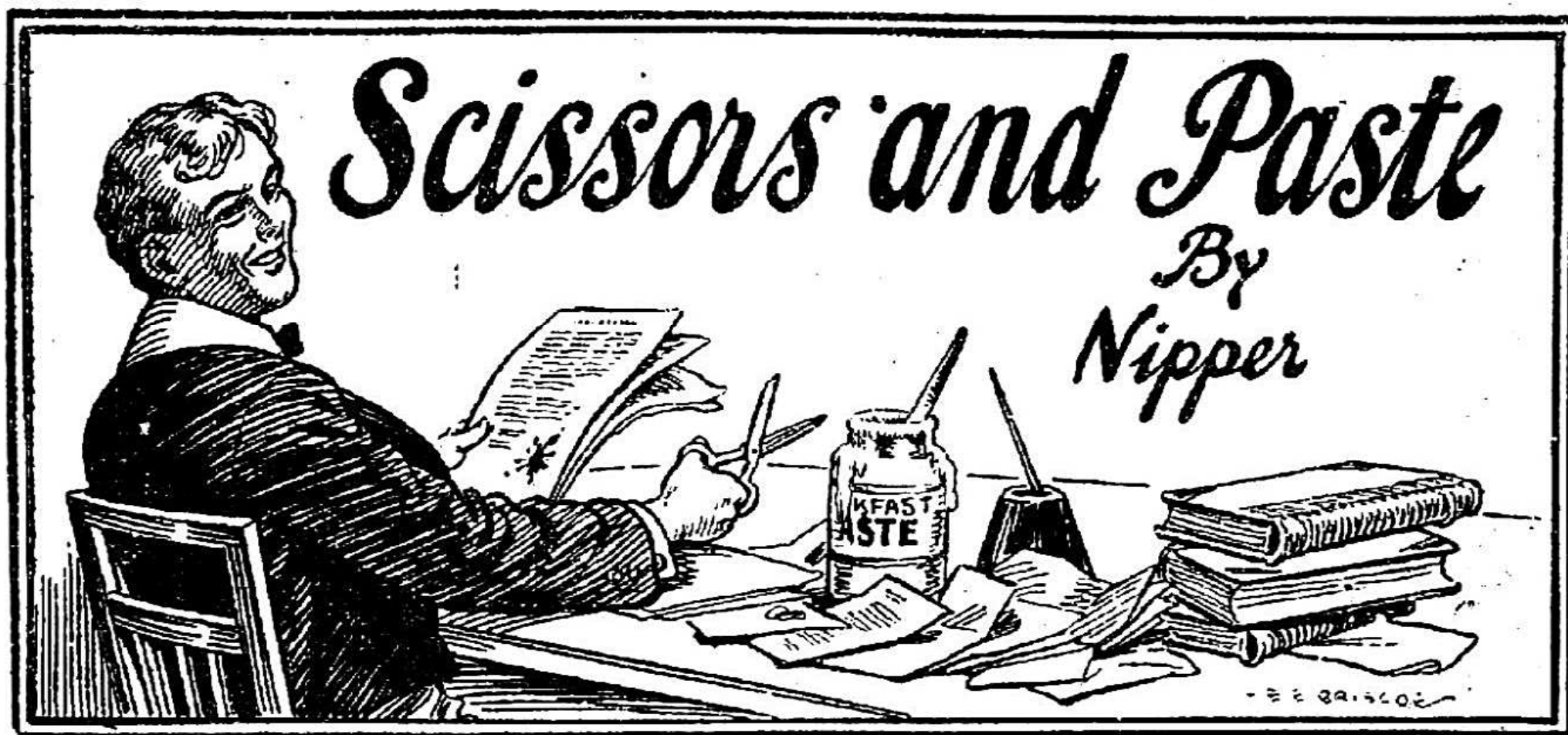
## No. 5. WESTMINSTER SCHOOL.



St. Peter's College, better known as Westminster School, is numbered among the most ancient of English public schools, and it is the only school of high standing which occupies its original site in London. Although the school was supported in early times by the monks, Queen Elizabeth is regarded as its foundress, and a Latin commemoration service to her is held in the Abbey every year. The picturesque school buildings lie around Dean's Yard. The magnificent gateway, attributed to Inigo Jones, leads to the Great Schoolroom, which is a finely panelled hall containing the names and arms of many distinguished scholars.

The school is noted for many time-honoured customs. One of these, is a Latin play enacted in the School dormitory annually, of a humorous character and dealing with the leading topics of the day. Another very popular custom is the "Pancake Grease" on Shrove Tuesday. This consists of a battle for possession of a pancake in the Great Schoolroom, the winner receiving a reward from the Dean. The number of King's scholars is sixty, of whom forty, representing the original number, are boarders. The total number of boys at the school is two hundred and fifty.





Editorial Office,  
Study C,  
St. Frank's.

My Dear Chums,

To be a little rusty in one's Latin is bad enough from the Form-master's point of view. But that any St. Frank's boy should be so ignorant of the school traditions as not to know the meaning of the school motto, "Consilio et Animis," is positively disgraceful. Yet during the past week I have had more than one letter from juniors asking for a translation. It means "By wisdom and courage." My interrogators apparently have more of the latter than the former to ask such a question.

## THE ST. FRANK'S DEBATING SOCIETY.

Timothy Tucker, in a long and rather wearisome tirade, wants to know when we are going to publish an account of the St. Frank's Debating Society's meetings. If our learned friend would abstain from talking such a lot at those meetings, we might find them sufficiently interesting to report in these columns. T.T. deplores the small attendance at the last debate—there were only two boys present last week, he tells me—and requests me to draw everyone's attention to this sad state of affairs. Perhaps if T.T. were to resign the chairmanship, the society would regain its former popularity. The fellows are getting rather tired, I imagine, of the antediluvian subjects chosen by my correspondent.

## OUR FAIR ADMIRER.

An interesting letter has come from quite an unexpected quarter. It is from Miss Irene Manners, of the Moor View High School. She tells me that the St. Frank's

Magazine is read by many of her friends at the school. She says that she had no idea Handforth could write such "stunning" detective stories. She had always thought Handforth to be much too shy and retiring to write thrillers. He seemed to her not to be able to say "Boo" to a goose. Willie Handforth, she thinks, ought to be spanked for writing such a disrespectful article about his elder brother. She concludes her letter by saying that she would like to give her opinions of the boys of St. Frank's she has met. I think this would be quite a novel feature, and if Miss Manners likes to send along some of her impressions, I will see if I can find space for them in the Mag.

## COMING CHRISTMAS ATTRACTIONS.

Since the next number of the Mag. comes out only a few days before Christmas and the following number makes its appearance during Christmas week, both these numbers will contain stories and articles specially written for the festive season. Cecil de Valerie is writing a real creepy ghost story in two instalments, while Fatty Little is giving a vivid account of his adventures in Frightful Land—which occurred after a particularly big feed one Christmas time. Clarence Fellowe is busy with one of his Painful Parodies for the coming number—he will not disclose the title yet, but I know it is something to do with Christmas. Some other leading light is engaged on a number of Hints for Christmas, and with a few more breezy articles thrown in, you can look forward to an exceptionally attractive Christmas Number of the St. Frank's Magazine.

Always yours,  
NIPPER.



## FARMAN THE FEARLESS!

By CHARLES OWEN.

### I.

#### JUSTIN B. GETS BUSY.

**T**HE common room was crowded. Outside in the Triangle the winter rain sizzled and splashed monotonously, making it impossible for the juniors to leave the cover of the school buildings. It was not often that a half-holiday turned out to be so utterly dreary, and the Removites were feeling anything but cheerful.

Reggie Pitt was standing near the fire with a good few others, and he looked round with a twinkle of amusement in his eyes.

"Well, considering that the weather has given us all the pip," he observed, "I vote that we induce Archie to tell us one of his entertaining little yarns—his latest adventure with his tailor, for instance!"

The Genial Ass of the Remove looked up with a horrified expression, and shook his head emphatically.

"Absolutely not, old fruit!" he protested, adjusting his famous eyeglass and stuffing his hands into his pockets. "The honour is declined—with large quantities of thanks! I mean to say, the old tissues need restoring somewhat after the dining business, and forty of the best appeal to me much more forcibly than the yarning department! Kindly transfer your request to a more energetic cove, old darling, and leave little Archie in peace! Gadzooks! You've made me go all dithery, if you know what I mean! Absolutely!"

Pitt grinned.

"Lazy slacker!" he exclaimed. "I thought you'd back out of it! Still, it doesn't matter—there's plenty more chaps who'll oblige, I'll bet!"

Timothy Tucker stepped forward, and beamed through his glasses.

"Exactly, my dear sir!" he said. "I shall be most happy to deliver a lecture upon the perplexing problems which are presented by the Solar Prominences. In other words, the protruding masses of heated gas which are seen around the sun—"

"Great pip!" interrupted Handforth, pushing his way towards Tucker, and glaring at him fiercely. "Do you think we're going to waste our time listening to your piffle? Not likely! But if the chaps want! He began yarning to me a little and sensible, I'll tell 'em a yarn which will make their giddy hair stand on end!"

"Concerning the marvellous Trackett

Grim, I suppose?" suggested Tommy Watson. "No thanks, Handy—there's nothing Handforth snorted. doing!"

"Why, you fathead, I've got a terrific story about him—one of the best I've ever thought out—" he bellowed.

"Well, that's not much of a recommendation!" cut in Pitt, with another grin.

Handforth glared round, and then smiled bitterly.

"All right!" he said. "I don't care! But you needn't try to kid me, Pitt! It's jealousy, pure and simple! You know jolly well that I'm the only chap here who can tell a really terrific yarn, and yet you refuse to listen! Blow you! Rats to you!"

The great Edward Oswald stalked off with his nose in the air, and Solomon Levi gave a sigh of relief.

"By my life!" he exclaimed. "We ought to thank our stars for a lucky escape! But I've got an idea that Farman's the man we want! He began yarning to me a little while ago about a train hold-up in the States—but he didn't finish the story. I vote we get him on the job right away!"

"Good idea, old man!" said Jack Grey, turning to the American junior. "Come on. Farman—out with that yarn! And, while you're at it, you might as well garnish it with a sample of your Western method of speech—just to give it a flavour!"

Justin B. Farman looked round with a smile.

"Waal, guess I'm ready to shoot the dope if you're hankerin' for it!" he drawled. "But this hyar partickler yarn ain't nothin' to holler about! I jest happened to mention to Levi a few details concernin' a blamed hold-up to the California Limited—but as you've all been in the ezact locality whar it happened, I'm thinkin' that per'aps I'd better cut it out—"

"Nothing of the sort!" said Pitt. "The fact that we've all been over there only makes it more interesting."

The juniors were always willing to listen to the American's picturesque tales of his own country, and since the summer holidays—which had been spent in a long tour across the vast American Continent—they were all the more eager.

Farman looked round, and smiled.

"Good enough!" he said. "Guess it's up to me to git real busy! I'm comin' across with the goods—an' I'm makin' it snappy!"



## II. THE HOLD-UP OF THE CALIFORNIA LIMITED!

**J**USTIN B. FARMAN cleared his throat, and commenced—purposely making use of all the lurid Americanisms he could call to mind.

"I reckon this hyar yarn concerns a trip which me an' my pop was makin' from Kansas City to Denver, in Colorado," he began. "We boarded the train at St. Louis, but that don't cut no ice, 'cos from there to Kansas nothin' out o' the ordinary occurred. It was after the blamed train pulled out o' Kansas that the fireworks started—an' when they did start things got good'n lively, I'll tell the world!"

Pitt grinned.

"That's the stuff to give us, old man!" he said encouragingly. "I suppose your



"Great pip!" interrupted Handforth. "Do you think we are going to listen to your piffle? Not likely!"

train was held up by a gang of bandits?" Farman nodded.

"Sure!" he agreed. "The California Limited was buzzin' along good'n plenty, (Continued on next page)"



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and some little time after nightfall she was travellin' through the lonely desert-like country in the heart o' Kansas State. This partickler region is a favourite haunt o' the hold-up man—but it ain't often thet they get busy nowadays! Howsun! They sure reckoned to make a dandy clean-up on this hyar occasion—an' they'd hev done it, too, if it hadn't been for a slice o' luck which was handed right out to me!"

Farman paused, and grinned.

"I take it, old fruit, that you managed to save the bally situation—what?" asked Archie, with interest. "In other words, you got frightfully busy, and sent the dashed bandits about their business, and all that sort of rot?"

"You've hit it, pard—sure!" agreed Farman. "I ain't sayin' that any praise is due to me—not on your life! I jest happened to be in a position which made it possible for me to turn the tables on them guys, an' I should hev been a blamed yaller dorg if I hadn't seized the opportunity! Waal, I'll say the night was durned dark an' sultry, an' the folks was jest beginnin' to think of turnin' in, when the Limited gave a blazes of a jerk, an' started pullin' up quick an' sudden. Me and my pop was sittin' down, talkin, jest about then, an' he looked at me with a gleam o' fire in his eye.

"Guess it's the bandits, sonny!" he snapped. "Why the blazes them durned coyotes should choose this hyar train fair gits me! Right now I'm carryin' a wad o' seven hundred an' fifty thousand dollars, an' if they git hold of it we'll be down an' out—sure! Say, you an' me has got to save this wad, boy! D'you get me?"

"Sure, pop!" I said, lookin' round

quick. "Guess the best thing we can do is to hide the dollars somewhere——"

"You've said a mouthful, son!" cut in pop. "But whar in thunder can we hide it? There ain't time to do nothin'! The blamed hoboes are boardin' the Limited right now. Say, take this wallet an' git under the seat—lively!"

"As he spoke my pop thrust the case containin' the wad into my fist, an' afore you could look round I was under the seat. Great snakes! It was a blamed near thing, too—'cos jest at this second two o' the bandits entered the coach—one of 'em at each end! It sure ain't necessary for me to add that each o' the guys held a six-shooter, an' they started loosin' off good'n proper—jest to scare the travellers into the right frame o' mind!"

Farman paused and looked round. All the juniors were listening to him with rapt interest, and Tom Burton, the Ko'sun, slapped his thigh.

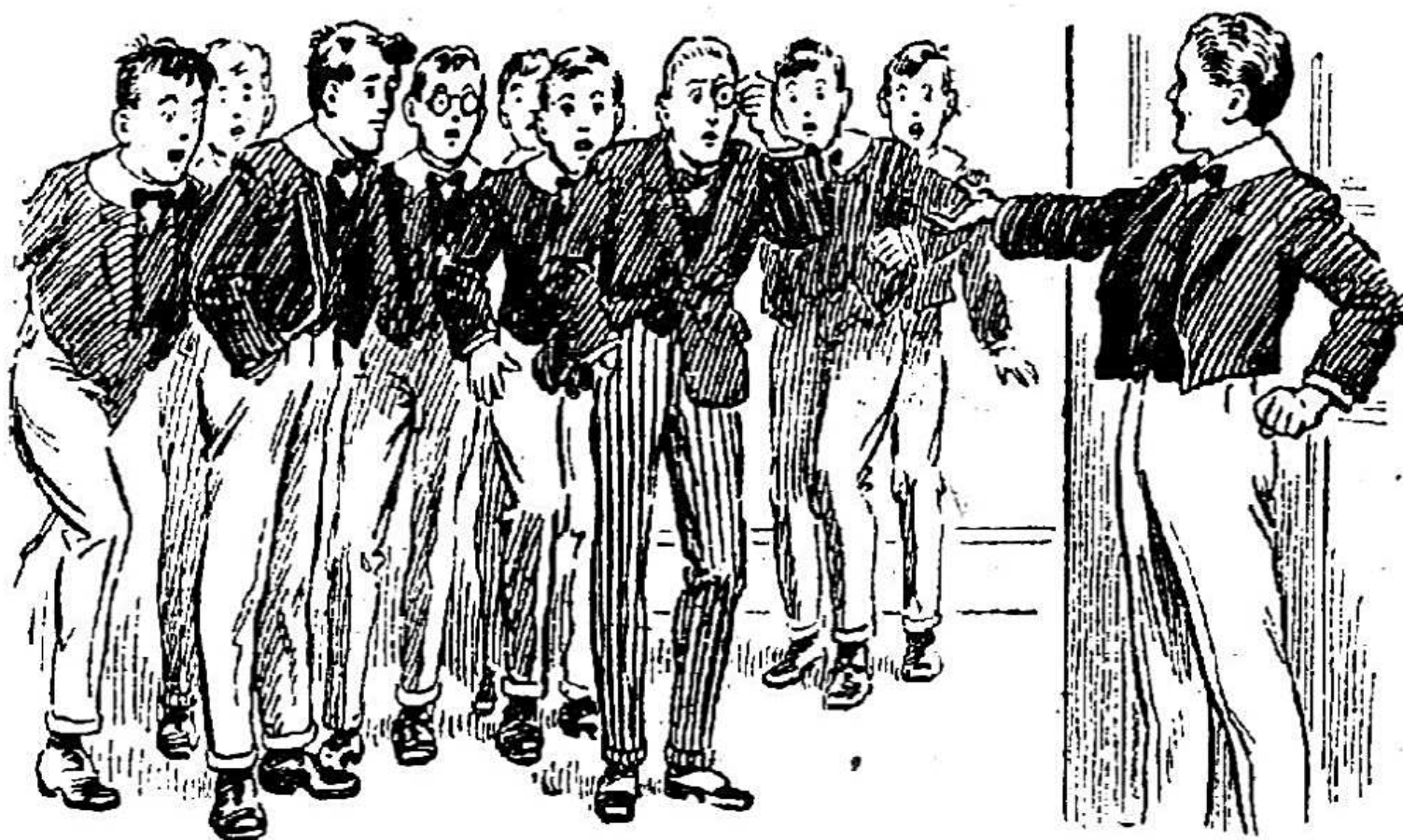
"Bust my mainmast!" he exclaimed. "This yarn of yours is one of the right sort, Farman, and we're waiting to hear how you got the better of the low-down swabs!"

The American junior nodded.

"Guess I'm comin' to that, pard," he returned—"but I'll say right now that it was durned easy! Bein' under the seat, I was out of sight of the hold-up men, an' I didn't lose no time in gettin' busy! Nope! First thing I did was to hide the money wallet in a niche under the seat, an' then I caught sight o' my pop's bag on the floor. That gave me a dandy notion right away, and I opened it an' got my fingers round the butt o' a bully revolver! Say, the feel o' that gun made me almost dance with joy, an' I didn't lose no time in makin' use of it!"

"You mean you fired at the bandits?" asked Hubbard.

"That's so, pard," agreed Farman, with a nod. "Slowly an' stealthily I raised my head above the level o' the seat, an' then let fly! Gee! You oughter seen the robber drop! He went down like a ninepin—but his pal at the other end o' the coach soon started gettin' his revenge! Say, afore I had time to turn, he loosed off three shots at me in quick succession—but I'll allow that his aim wasn't worth notic-



"I take it, old fruit, that you managed to save the bally situation—what?" asked Archie with interest.



In! Leastaways, he didn't come anywhere nigh on hittin' me, an' I jest hollared for joy!"

Pitt looked at Farman curiously.

"Hang it all, that's a bit thick!" he exclaimed. "Do you mean to say that a train robber couldn't hit you in three tries?"

"I ain't sayin' he couldn't—I'm only tellin' you jest what happened!" replied Farman. "That feller's aim wasn't worth a toss, an' I plugged him with my gun afore he could pull the trigger a fourth time. He was standing by the open door at the time, and I guess he jest threw up his hands and plunged backwards on to the railroad track! After that, natur'ly, things got kinder easy, an' all the passengers were free to breathe agin. Both the bandits were sufferin' from a dose o' lead-poison, you see, an' that bein' the case, there was a general rush to get hold o' weapons stowed away in grips an' bags."

Farman paused again, and looked round.

"Well, what happened then?" asked Pitt.

"Guess the passengers formed a sort o' police posse," said Farman, "an' went out on the trail o' the other holdup men. Waal, to cut a long story short, we rounded up the hull bunch, and stowed 'em away in a freight car, an' took 'em along to Denver.

Say, there was a good deal o' merry-makin' when that blamed train proceeded on its trip, for nobody had lost a cent's worth o' property! My pop was almighty pleased, an' he came across with a wad o' dollar bills which nearly made me collapse in a faint!"

Fullwood had been listening for some time, and he gave a sneer.

"What about the other passengers?" he asked. "I suppose you're goin' to tell us that they raised you shoulder high, an' generally made a terrific fuss of you—as the hero who saved the train?"

Farman nodded slowly.

"Wall, I didn't reckon to include that," he admitted. "But, since you hev put it so cutely, pard, I'll say you're right! The passengers guessed that it was me who had turned the tables, an' they went ragin' mad! I felt kinder rattled, 'cos I ain't the sort of guy who hankers after that sort o' much! Howsum! It was soon over, an' that's about all there is to it!"

Farman ceased speaking, and Pitt looked at him with a grin.

"When did all this happen?" he asked. "You've been over here a good time, Farman, and you must have been a mere kid! If you did all this, I must say you deserved all you got in the way of praise!"

(Concluded on page 10.)

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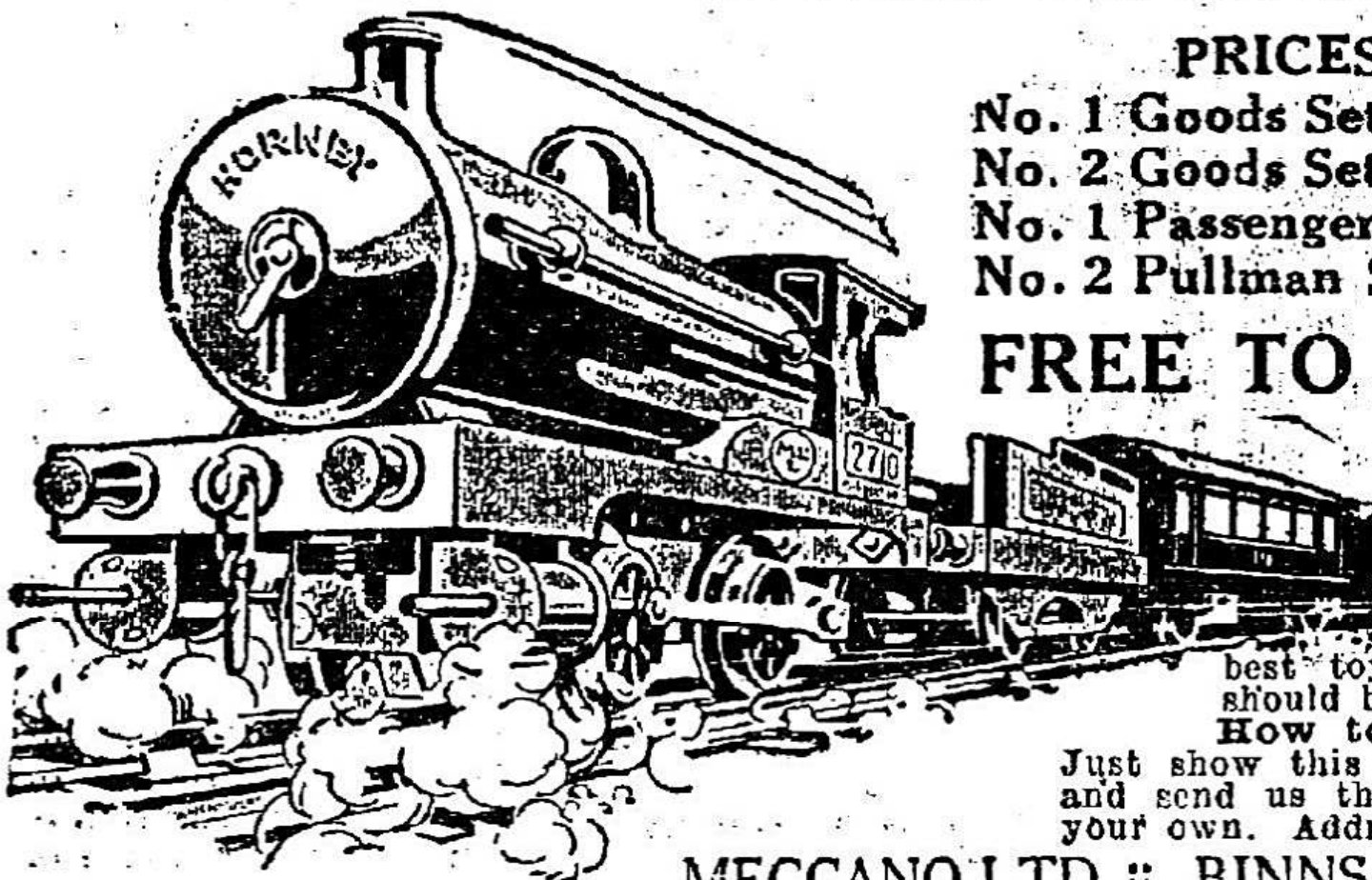
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## THE CASE OF THE MISSING MILLION!

A Breathlessly Exciting Adventure  
of Trackett Grim and Splinter.

BY

ED. O. HANDFORTH.

**T**AP! Tap!

A knock sounded on the door of Trackett Grim's consulting-room.

The famous sleuth was seated in an armchair vigorously knitting himself a false beard out of brown wool. His marvellous young assistant, Splinter, sat opposite him.

"What on earth is that?" gasped the lad.

The great detective put away his knitting before replying, and neatly filled himself a pipe of tobacco.

"It's a knock on the door, Splinter," he answered shrewdly.

Trackett Grim was perfectly right, for, in reply to his summons, his landlady entered.

"A visitor wishes to see me," Trackett Grim said, without giving the landlady a chance to open her mouth. The good lady's jaw dropped. The wizard of Grocer Road had taken the words out of her mouth—that was what made her jaw drop.

"Show the visitor up," went on the detective curtly.

A second later a stout man came into the room. He advanced towards Trackett Grim and shook his hand warmly.

"I am Sir Tainley Knott," he announced.

"And your Christian name is Archibald," the detective said keenly. "Sit down; you will find an armchair just behind you!"

Sir Tainley looked round, and gasped with surprise as he saw the famous incriminator was quite correct.

"Wonderful, my dear sir!" he ejaculated.

"Not at all," laughed Trackett Grim.

"Just a little deduction. It is quite simple. For instance, you have come to see me with regard to a case. I can also tell you other things. You are man of middle age, your height is medium, you have grey eyes, and a small, ragged moustache."

"Miraculous!" gasped Sir Tainley. "Is there no end to your cleverness?"

"None," returned the great sleuth modestly. "I know that your hands are trembling, that your hair is white and very thin on top, and that you have come here to ask my help."

"My dear sir," exclaimed Sir Tainley, "you are more than human! All I have heard about you——"

"Is quite correct!" snapped Grim, fixing a small false beard on to his chin as he spoke. "Tell me about it in your own words," he added, dexterously removing his coat.

"I have been robbed!" cried Sir Tainley. "I have been robbed of a million pounds! I had to leave my office for ten minutes, and when I returned, the money had gone."

"I quite understand," nodded the detective, removing his dicky and slipping into a pair of goloshes. "You have been robbed of some money. Now, Splinter," he added, turning to his clever young assistant, "you have heard Sir Tainley's story. The money was stolen; what does that suggest to you?"

"That it was taken by a thief," replied the lad, without a moment's hesitation.

"Exactly!" shouted Grim. "Just my idea."

"We will go to your office, Sir Tainley," he went on, and pressed a button in the floor with his foot.

Immediately the room began to sink as though it was a lift. When it came to a stop, the window opened like a door, and there was the great detective's car all ready. Grim took the wheel, and the other two got into the car. They were whirled along to Sir Tainley's office.

It was a magnificent apartment on the first floor of a large block of offices. Sir Tainley led the way to it and threw open the door. In the room were a big desk, on which stood a telephone; two chairs, and a small bookcase. The floor was expensively carpeted.

"This is where you do your work, I surmise?" said the great incriminator. "And you write at this desk."

"You amaze me!" gasped Sir Tainley. "It is the truth. On this desk was a cheque for a million pounds. I had filled it in, and left the room. When I came back——"

"It had vanished!" snapped Grim astutely. "Well, Splinter, cast your eyes round the room. What do you see?"



"A room with three people in it," returned the bright young assistant.

"Good!" said Grim. "But there is something on the floor; do you see it?"

"Why, yes, guv'nor!" Splinter cried. "The carpet!"

"I see something else," replied Grim; and, bending down, he picked up a large foolscap envelope which his trained glance had shown him lying in the middle of the room.

He quickly opened the envelope and drew out a piece of paper. On it was the following baffling series of letters:

I H VE AKEN YOUR ONEY. IT  
IS IN THE ANK.

"Ha!" remarked the great incriminator.

"Sir Tainley, this is a message accidentally left by the thief. What do you make of it, Splinter?"

The clever lad took the message and read it.

"It's simple, guv'nor!" he said. "It means 'I have taken your honey and it is in my handkerchief.'"

"Very good, Splinter!" said the sleuth, with a nod of approval. "What would you suggest doing?"

"Find his handkerchief," suggested Splinter at once.

Grim pulled himself to his full height, and smiled.

"You are a clever boy," he said. "But I

(Continued on next page.)

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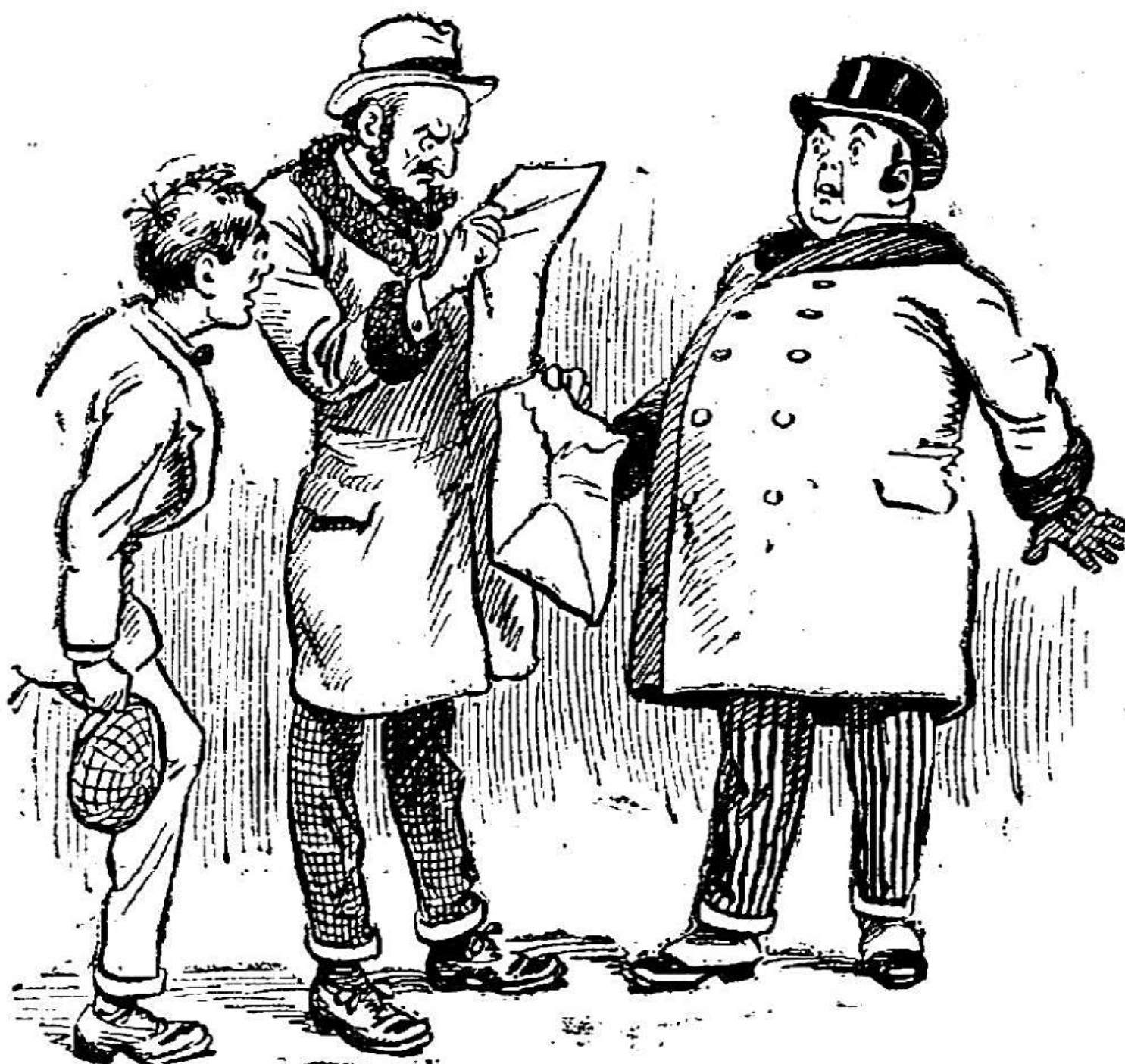
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He quickly opened the envelope and drew out a piece of paper. On it was the following baffling series of letters:  
**I H VE AKEN YOUR ONEY IT IS IN THE ANK**

am inclined to think you have made two slight mistakes. The first is with regard to the word 'ONEY.' I believe you will find that it is part of the word 'MONEY.'"

"Great guns!" gasped Sir Tainley. "I see it all. Why, Mr. Grim, that refers to the million pounds which have been stolen from me."

"Precisely Sir Tainley."

"It is like magic," said the baronet. "Now, if we could only find that handkerchief."

"I have another little surprise for you," went on Grim. "I believe the letters 'ANK' carry a different interpretation. They refer, in fact, to the very place where money is most likely to be. Now, Splinter, use your wits and tell Sir Tainley what I mean. Where is money often kept?"

"I've got it, gov'nor!" shouted Splinter triumphantly. "In a purse!"

"Not in this case," Grim explained. "But in a bank!"

"Why, of course, Mr. Grim," agreed Sir Tainley breathlessly. "I never thought of that. The way you have cleared up this amazing case is positively extraordinary."

"Not a bit," said the great incriminator, with a shrug of his shoulders. "If you will

ring up the bank, I expect you will find the money has been paid in."

"I will ring up now," cried Sir Tainley, and picked up the receiver.

In answer to his frantic inquiry, the baronet received the reply that the million pound cheque had just been paid in to his account. He turned to the detective, with a beaming smile.

"You are going to thank me, Sir Tainley," he observed, removing his false beard and slipping his goloshes into his hip-pocket. "There is no need. Come, Splinter, we must be off. We have three more celebrated cases before tea. Good-day, Sir Tainley."

And, before the baronet could reply, the famous incriminator, followed by his young assistant, had nimbly jumped through the window and alighted upon the top of a passing 'bus.

THE END.

## FARMAN THE FEARLESS!

(Continued from page 7.)

Farman strolled towards the door before answering, and then looked at the juniors with a smiling face.

"As far as I can remember, these incidents took place about a couple of days ago!" he said coolly.

"What!" came a chorus of voices. "Two days ago?"

"Sure!" returned the American. "I've jest been relatin' a somewhat vivid dream I had the other night! It seemed so blamed real that I thought I'd trot it out—since you asked me for a yarn! Hope you enjoyed it good'n plenty!"

There was a general rush towards the door—but the American junior had vanished without the loss of a second. All the Removites were grinning broadly, and they now understood why their overseas companion had adopted a sort of "Farman the Fearless" attitude while telling his yarn. This was totally unlike the genial Yankee—but anything is permissible in a dream.

THE END.

**Order Early Next Week's Bumper Christmas Number of the Mag.!**





## PAINFUL PARODIES

PERPETRATED  
By

Clarence Fellowe.

### WHERE MY MOTOR-BIKE HAS RESTED

(With apologies to the authors of the well-known song, "Where my Caravan has Rested".)

Where my motor-bike has rested,  
Grease, I leave you on the grass;  
All the relics of toil and misery,  
You will find them when you pass—  
Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah!  
Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah!  
You will find them when you pass.

You will understand the trouble  
As you gaze upon the ground;  
Bits of rubber tube, nuts and other things,  
They are waiting to be found—  
Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah!  
Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah!  
They are waiting to be found.

When the sparking-plug gets sooty  
Then the engine goes all wrong,  
Out come spanners and—if you're fortunate  
You will not be stopped for long—  
Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah!  
Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah!  
You will not be stopped for long.

Then the mag. will go off duty—  
Once again the old bike stops;  
And the things you say are just terrible  
Till the engine once more pops—  
Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah!  
Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah!  
Till the engine once more pops.

After that you get a puncture—  
Nearly skid you into a ditch;  
Oh, the pleasures of motor-cycling—  
You will always find a hitch—  
Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah!  
Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah!  
You will always find a hitch.

Where my motor-bike has rested,  
Bits and pieces always lie,  
But if other chaps see these painful spots,  
Shed no tear—and pass them by—  
Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah!  
Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah!  
Shed no tear—and pass them by?

## BEAUTIFUL HAIR

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3. A bottle of "Uzon" Brilliantine, which gives the final touch of beauty to the hair, and is most beneficial to those whose scalp is "dry."

4. A copy of the newly-published "Hair-Drill" Manual.

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#### NOTE TO READER.

Write your FULL name and address clearly on a plain piece of paper, pin this coupon to it, and post as directed above. (Mark envelope "Sample Dept.")





# *E. Sopp's Fables*

*By*  
*Edgar Sopp of the Fifth*

## **No. 3. The Fable of the Three Young Fools.**

**O**NCE upon a time there lived Three Fools. Of course, there were various Other Fools littered about at the Same Period, but our fable deals with These Three, who were known throughout the land as Gullwood & Co.

They were Swanky Chaps, who had large and Inflated Ideas of their Own Importance. Whilst believing themselves to be Big Bugs, they were really nothing but Insignificant Bacteria. In other words, these Three Young Nuts can be accurately described as Poisonous Germs.

It came to pass one day that Gullwood approached his Companions, who were called Belliver and Full. At least, these names will Serve. The Wise Reader will, no doubt, Draw his own Conclusions. And it Appeared that Gullwood was Much Elated, having received what he termed a Gilt Edged tip straight from the Horse's Mouth. And, behold, Belliver and Full were likewise excited, and talked of having a Little Flutter.

Now Gullwood, in the Kindness of his Heart, imparted the Tip to a Sporting Elder, belonging to that section of the Community known as the Sixth. This Elder, a Fearful Rotter named Moreken, listened to the News with Eager Ears, and forthwith decided to Have a Quid On.

Thus, Gullwood approached a certain Merchant of the Neighbouring Town who carried on the business of a Bookie on the Quiet. It will now be Seen that these Reckless Youths were engaged in that Risky Pastime known far and wide as Backing Gee-gees.

Gullwood's faith in his Fancy was so great that he went to the Length of putting his Shirt on it. Translated into Plain Language, this means that he used all his Available Cash, amounting to the Sum of Thirty Bob. Belliver and Full each risked their All.

And, lo, when evening approached, Gullwood and his Companions were Strangely Restless, gazing repeatedly at their Watches, and longing for the arrival of the Evening Paper, wherein would appear the Result of the Three-Thirty.

At last the Paper arrived, and with feverish, trembling Fingers Gullwood turned to the Stop Press column. There, to his Joy, he saw that Corncob had won the Sheffield Plate at Ten to One. This does not refer to Cutlery, but to the Name of the Race.

And it was not run at ten minutes to one, as might be surmised (ten to one being merely the Price), but at half-past three.

Great was the Rejoicing, for Corncob was the Horse they had Backed. Here, forsooth, was an Occasion for Celebrating. But, having put all their Money on the Race, Gullwood & Co. were Broke. But the Difficulty was solved by the Elder, who Whacked Out a Fiver on the Understanding that it would be Returned on the Morrow out of the Winnings. As Gullwood alone had Fifteen Quid To Come, there seemed to be no Risk. Moreover, the Elder felt himself to be under an Obligation to the Nuts, since he had won a Tenner.

The Celebration was a Great Success, the Elder's fiver being spent on Riotous Living. And it happened that on the Morrow Gullwood went forth into the Neighbouring Town and presented himself Boldly before the Bookie, who for some reason seemed Surprised, and who actually laughed Outright when Gullwood requested him to Fork Out the sum of Thirty Five Pounds—this representing the Combined Winnings of the Four.

Now, Gullwood was much angered at the Bookie's attitude, and he proceeded to call him Base and Uncomplimentary Names. And in return the Bookie waxed Wrath, and threatened to take Gullwood by the Scruff of the Neck and kick him Hout into the Gutter unless he could keep a civil Tongue in his 'Ead. Whereupon Gullwood cooled down Much, and demanded an Explanation.

Great and Vast was his Dismay when the Bookkeeping Merchant showed him the Morning Paper—which Gullwood had failed to Quiz. Therein it stated, in plain type, that Corncob had been Disqualified for a Technical Offence on the Jockey's part known as Bumping.

And the Elder, when he heard the Dread News, gnashed his teeth and tore his hair, and referred to Gullwood as a Swindling Young Cub and a Blithering Idiot. And the Elder's Fiver was seen no More, and Gullwood & Co. Wailed and Moaned at their Rotten Luck. But, in Reality, it was not a matter of Luck. Their Money had only taken the same Swift Road to Eternity as the Money of Other Fools.

**MORAL: NEVER COUNT YOUR MONEY UNTIL IT IS IN YOUR HAND.**



OUT TO-MORROW!

# YOUNG BRITAIN

2<sup>d</sup>



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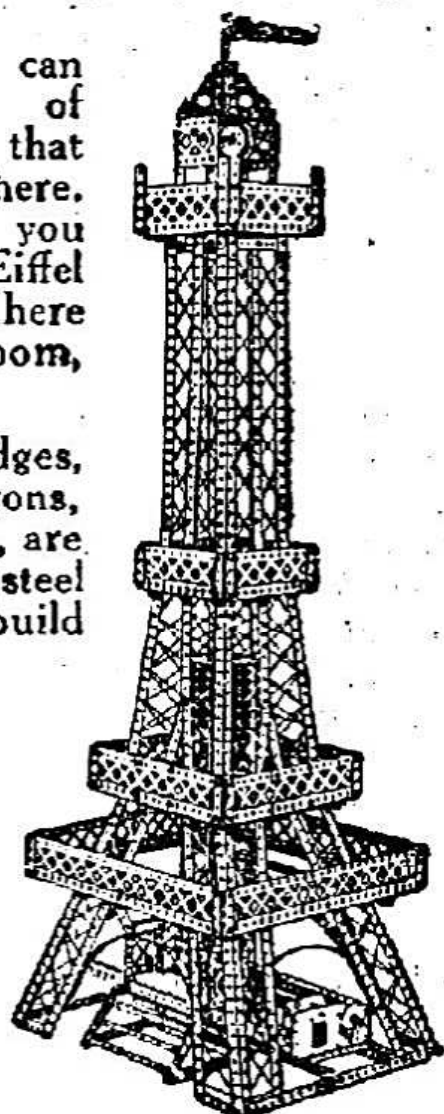
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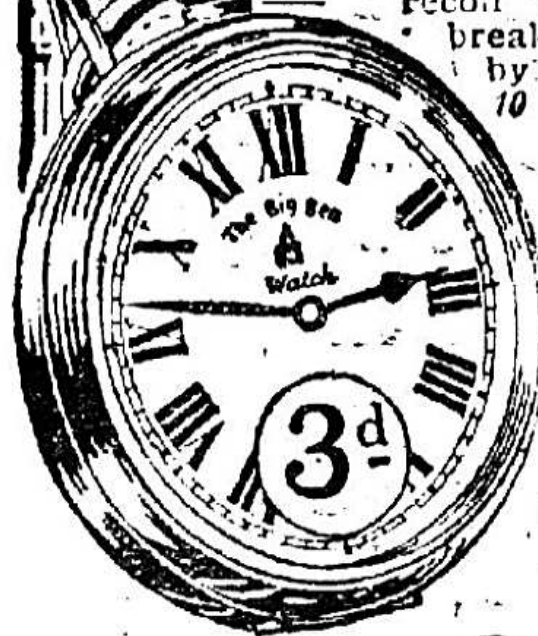
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