

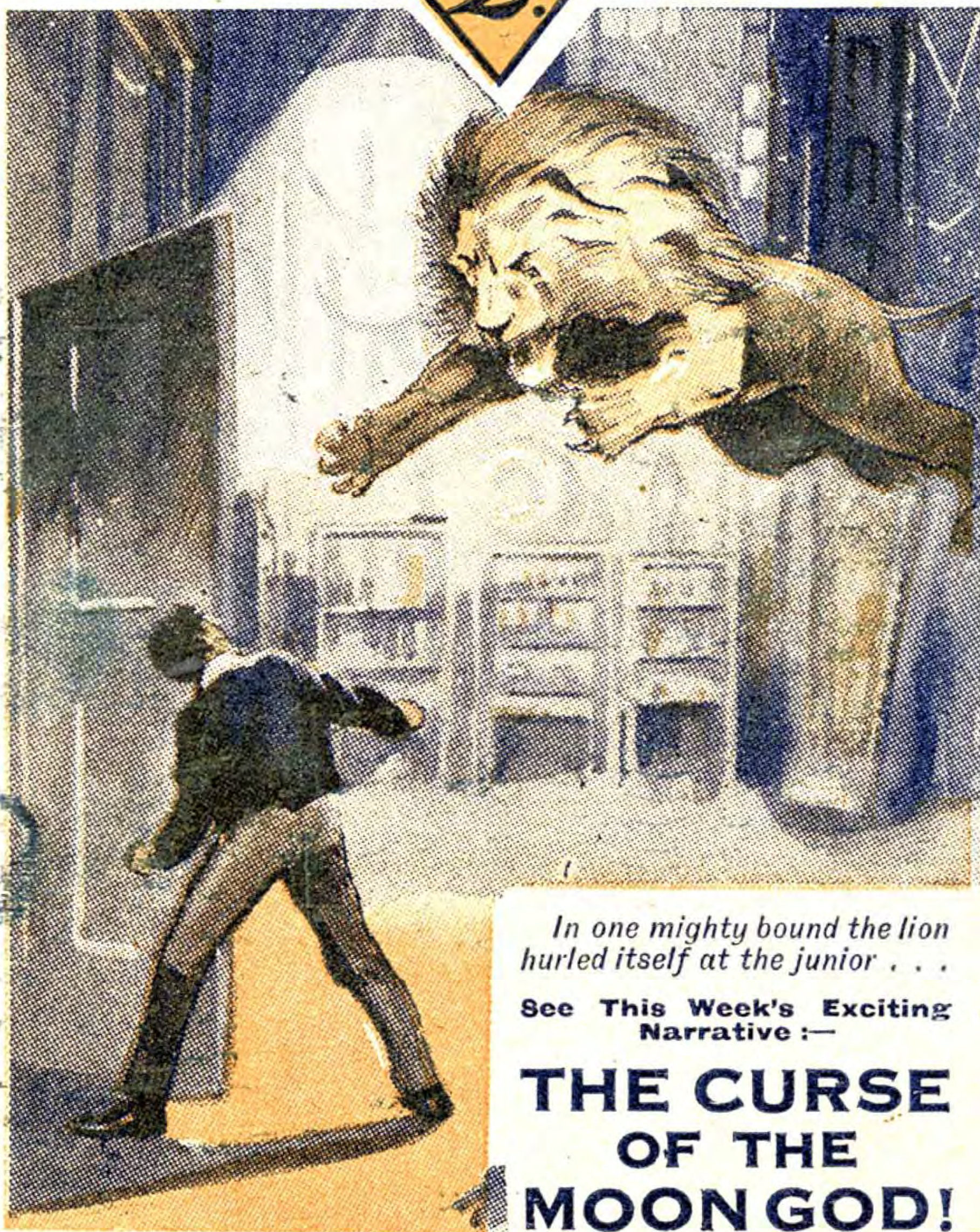
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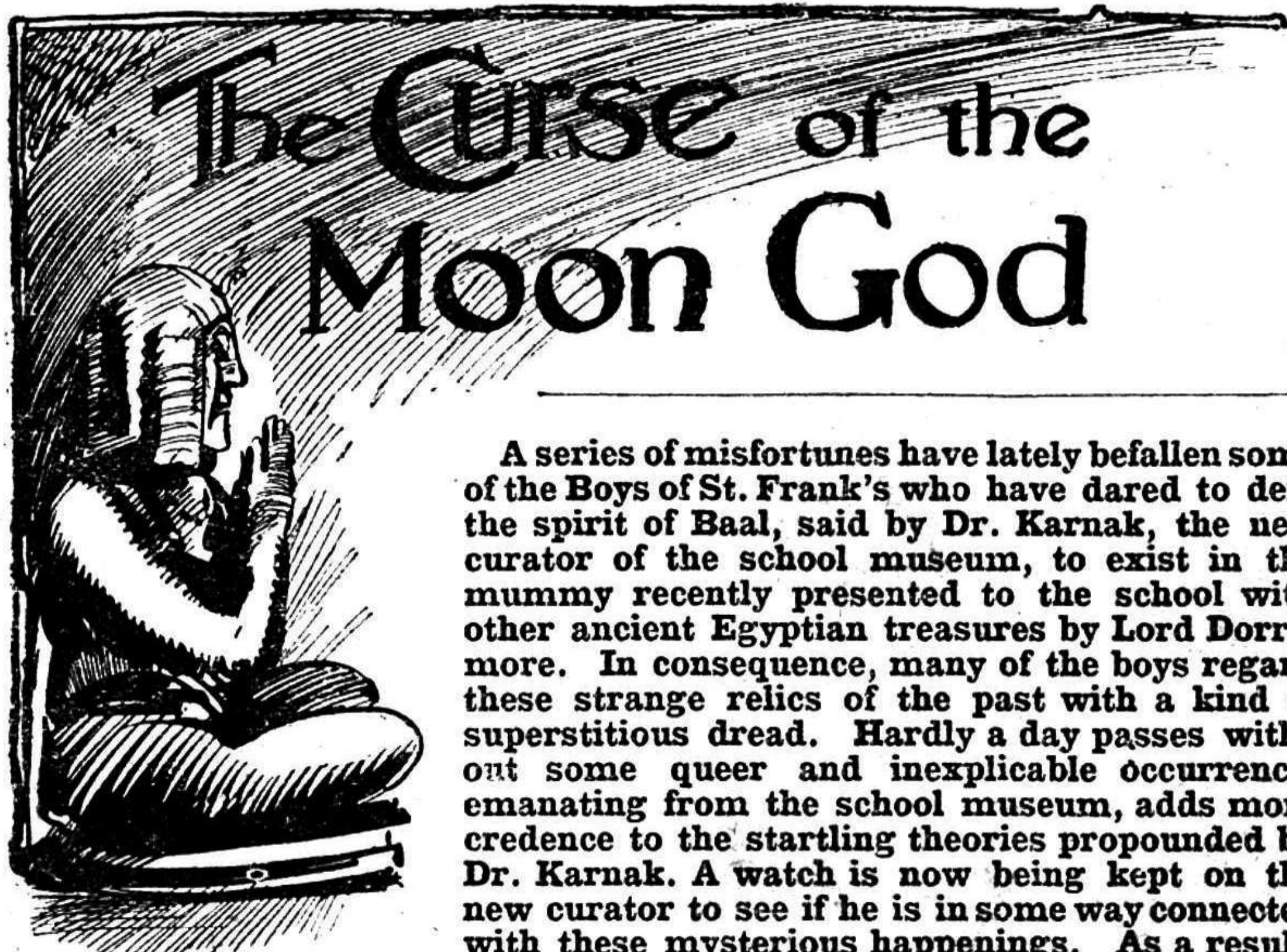
*In one mighty bound the lion
hurled itself at the junior . . .*

**See This Week's Exciting
Narrative :—**

THE CURSE OF THE MOON GOD!



It was a face—a face that looked through the window pane, into the study.



The Curse of the Moon God

some extraordinary disclosures, related in the following exciting narrative, are made.

THE EDITOR.

The Narrative Related Throughout by Nipper

CHAPTER I.

THE FACE AT THE WINDOW.

A BROODING quietness hovered over Study D, in the Ancient House at St. Frank's. This unusual silence was to be accounted for by the fact that Handforth and Church and McClure were busy at prep.

Only the slight scratching of a pen, the turning of a leaf, or the creak of a chair disturbed the stillness. Church was deep in the throes of arithmetic, and his head was full of figures as he absently looked up from his work, the end of his pen between his teeth.

The problem was a difficult one, and Church rather hated arithmetic of any kind. Still, it had to be done. He didn't want to appeal to his chums for any assistance, for they were busy on their own account and wouldn't welcome an interruption.

Unconsciously he looked towards the study window. And then, abruptly, Church stiffened slightly in his chair. It was almost as though he had become rooted

where he sat, and the colour fled from his cheeks.

It was such a startling change that Handforth and McClure would have noticed it at once if they had been looking. But their heads were bent over their own books, and as Church made no sound, they knew nothing.

In that one glimpse at the window, the arithmetic fled from Church's mind. He had seen something—something hovering out here, in the gloom and the coldness of the old Triangle.

It was a face—a face that looked through the window-pane into the study.

And Church went as white as a sheet, for the glimpse he got was truly appalling. He could see an indistinct object, with two glittering eyes, and a mop of tangled, shaggy hair—almost like a mane. The face itself was nairy and revolting and like nothing 'on earth. It was neither human nor animal.

And Church sat there, unable to speak, unable to move an inch. The face came slightly nearer for a second, and then in a

flash vanished. And Church, with a little sigh, slumped down suddenly in his chair.

Handforth and McClure went on with their work, still unaware that anything was wrong. Handforth was wrestling with history, and he suddenly turned to Church, and glared at him.

"When did Oliver Cromwell die?" he asked bluntly. "Blessed if I can understand Mr. Crowell! Who on earth wants to know when Oliver Cromwell pegged out? It's all silly rot— Why, what the dickens— Hey, Church, what's up with you, you fathead?"

Handforth's urgent tone caused McClure to start up.

"Don't yell like that," he said irritably. "How can I work—"

"Quick!" gasped Handforth. "Something's happened to Church! Look at him! He's gone as pale as a sheet, and he won't answer!"

McClure dropped his pen on his work and ignored the fact that a great blot resulted. He started up, and went to Church's side. There was something about the junior that quite alarmed his chums.

Normally, Church was as healthy as a horse, and had quite a good colour. But now he lay humped up in his chair, deathly pale, and very limp. Handforth grabbed him by the shoulder roughly.

"Wake up!" he said huskily. "Why, what— Good heavens!"

For Church was so limp that he nearly fell to the floor at the touch, and gave absolutely no sign of response. There was something horribly cold and still about him. His eyes were half open, and the effect upon Handforth and McClure was great.

"He's—he's dead!" gasped Handforth hoarsely. "He must have died as he sat in his chair—"

"Eh? What's that; who's dead?" I asked, as I entered the study. "Just came along to ask you fellows about the paper-chase—"

"Church is dead!" said Handforth frantically.

One glance at the two juniors convinced me that they were nearly scared out of their wits. And Church lay there, in his chair, looking about as bad as any human being could look. Handforth and McClure had some excuse for jumping to such a startling conclusion, for Church looked lifeless.

"How did it happen?" I asked sharply.

"We—we didn't know anything about it," wailed McClure, almost sobbing. "Handforth just spoke to him, and when we looked up he was—he was like that. We didn't hear anything; we didn't know—"

"Don't be silly; he's only fainted," I broke in quickly. "You're not going to tell me that a healthy chap like Church pegged out without warning! Rush off and get some cold water."

"But—but he's dead!" breathed McClure.

I bent down over Church and felt on his heart. There was a distinct and steady

beat. And even now he was beginning to show the first signs of coming round. He uttered a long sigh, and shifted slightly.

McClure was off like the wind to fetch the water, more relieved than he could say. And Handforth and I lifted Church into the easy chair, and I rapidly unfastened his collar.

By the time we had rubbed his hands a bit McClure was back, and two or three dashes of cold water into his face had an almost instant effect. He shivered, fully opened his eyes, and tried to sit up.

"Go easy, old man," muttered Handforth. "Don't get excited!"

"What's happened?" asked Church faintly.

"I say, don't be dotty! What's the idea of swilling me like this? I'm drenched!"

"Hold still, old man," I said quietly.

"You'll be all right in a minute or two if you'll keep quiet. You must have come over giddy, or something. You've been a bit queer, that's all."

"Queer?" asked Church dully.

"Yes, you ass; you fainted!" growled Handforth indignantly. "You gave us the scare of our lives!"

"Fainted!" repeated Church, the word startling him into sudden activity. "What rot! I fainted? Why, I've never done such a thing in all my life! Only girls faint."

He looked round, much stronger, and as his gaze fell upon the dark window, some of his colour fled again. An expression of fear came into his eyes, and he suddenly clutched at my arm.

"The face!" he muttered. "I—I remember now. The face at the window."

"What!" gasped McClure, staring uneasily at the window.

"It's not there now—but I saw it," muttered Church. "It stared in at me, and then vanished. I don't seem to remember what happened after that. Great Scott, don't tell me I fainted!"

"But you did," said McClure. "You were as limp as a rag."

"Oh, my hat! Don't tell any of the other chaps," pleaded Church. "I'll never hear the last of it if you do."

"It's all right—you needn't worry," I said. "We'll keep it dark. But we'd like a little more detail, old man. What was this face you saw at the window? I mean, what was it like, and who did it belong to?"

Church shivered, and even now he was badly shaken. We looked at him queerly. And I knew well enough that the shock must have been a very severe one to make him go off into a faint.

Certainly some very strange and uncanny things had been happening at St. Frank's recently—ever since the arrival of Dr. Karnak, the Egyptian science lecturer. There had been talk of ghosts and evil spirits and such like. And what was more, to the point, certain eerie things had happened, giving rise to general uneasiness among the juniors.

But even after taking all this into consideration, it must have been a very extraor-

dinary face to cause Church to swoon in his chair.

"It—it was a face," he muttered. "It wasn't human, and it wasn't like an animal—it was big, with glittering eyes, and the whole face was covered with horrible looking matted hair. I've never seen such a ghastly sight in my life. Oh, it—it was horrible!"

We looked at Church wonderingly.

"Are you sure of this?" asked McClure doubtfully.

"Sure? Of course I'm sure!" replied Church. "You don't think I'd imagine a thing like that, do you? I tell you I saw it—staring in at me."

"Well, it's a queer thing we didn't see anything," said Handforth. "McClure and I were here all the time, sitting at the same table. Why the dickens didn't you shout, or something?"

"That's easy enough to understand," I broke in. "He was so startled that he just sat in his chair, unable to speak or move. And then he must have fainted without attracting your attention. Unusual, of course, but there's nothing queer about it."

"But hang it all, what face could he see?" argued Handforth. "Perhaps one of the chaps just came and looked in for a lark—a practical joke——"

"It wasn't—it wasn't!" persisted Church. "Do you think I don't know the difference between a human face and—and a devil?"

"Somebody wearing a mask," said Handforth.

"A mask—a mask!" shouted Church angrily. "What do you take me for? I tell you it was a horrible face, and I didn't imagine it. If you don't like to believe me, you can do something else!"

"There's no need to get in a temper about it, old son," I said quietly.

"These chaps think I was scared over nothing!" growled Church.

I walked over to the window and raised the lower sash. Outside, the Triangle was chilly, for the sky was overcast, and there was a raw wind. Early in the evening there had been a shower, but no rain since.

"Half a minute," I said. "Perhaps I can find something out here."

I hopped out of the window, pulling a small electric-torch out of my pocket. I never went without that handy little torch. It was Nelson Lee who had taught me to always carry one.

I had very little hope of finding any footprints, for the Triangle was beaten hard by constant use. But just beneath the window there was comparatively little traffic, and after that shower of rain the gravel would be rather soft.

I pressed the switch of my torch, and the velvet darkness was stabbed by the beam of light. It shot down, revealing the ground clearly.

"Phew!" I whistled softly.

Just against the window there were two footprints—strange, extraordinary footprints. Once before I had seen them, down in Bell-

ton Lane, when Nelson Lee and I investigated an incident that had happened the previous week. We had found these same footprints behind the hedge.

They were neither human nor animal, but seemed to be a mixture of both. And before Handforth and Co. could come to the window, I roughed up the ground with my toe. I did this on the spur of the moment. It would not improve their peace of mind if they saw those uncanny footprints.

"Well?" asked Handforth, coming to the window.

"All quiet out here," I replied. "Nothing to see, and it's no good searching for a vague face. The best thing to do is to let the matter drop."

I got back into the study, and Church had so rapidly recovered that he was now determined to conclude his prep. He didn't want to talk about the affair at all. So I promised him that I would say nothing, and went out.

But even if Handforth and McClure doubted him, I didn't. That unaccountable monster had come to the window and looked in—the same ghastly creature that had seized Reginald Pitt on one occasion; the same horrific thing which had chased some of the juniors in the lane.

Nobody knew what this shape was. Dr. Karnak, the curator of the museum, had repeatedly said that the monster was the earth form of an evil spirit. He had warned the juniors to steer clear of the mummy in the museum, solemnly stating that the mummy was cursed. It contained the spirit of Baal, the moon god, and was to be feared.

But although Dr. Karnak had gathered a few followers, the majority of the fellows regarded him with frank suspicion and dislike. They believed that he himself was partly responsible for the misfortunes that had recently occurred.

Without any question, the Remove had recently had a bad time. And this was the subject of a heated discussion in the Common-room that very evening. Handforth was prominent in this talk.

"It's about time we did something," he declared firmly. "Just think of the misfortunes that have come on us since the term began—since Dr. Karnak came here."

"It's all the fault of yourselves," declared Cecil De Valerie. "Those who have faith in Dr. Karnak have come to no harm. These troubles have been brought about by the scoffers and the unbelievers."

"I don't care how they've been brought about—it's time something was done," persisted Handforth. "We haven't won a match since the term began; two or three of the fellows have been ill; Glenthorne was found unconscious out in the lane; I nearly broke my leg by falling downstairs, and a hundred and one other misfortunes have come upon us."

"Handforth's right," said Armstrong. "You can't get away from it. And it's all the curse of that mummy. Didn't Dr. Karnak warn us?"

"Of course he did," said Skelton. "That mummy is dead enough, but the spirit of Baal hovers over it. And any fellows who sneer are punished. That's why there's been such a lot of misfortune."

Handforth snorted.

"Blow the mummy, and blow all this piffle about an evil spirit," he said. "Dr. Karnak's to blame; he's the culprit. If he wasn't here there'd be no trouble at all."

"If he wasn't here the trouble would be intensified," said De Valerie quietly.

"Eh?"

"Without any master mind to warn us, we should be at the mercy of that evil spirit," said Cecil De Valerie. "You fellows have only got to heed Dr. Karnak and everything will be all right."

"Rot!"

"Piffle!"

"Absolutely!" said Archie Glenthorne. "Kindly allow me to agree, with emphasis, that the whole thing is piffle. I mean to say, here we are, in the good old twentieth century, and you reel out these bally chunks of rubbish concerning evil spirits."

"What difference does the twentieth century make?" asked De Valerie quietly. "If these things could happen in ancient Egypt they could happen now. But just because this is an age of electricity and wireless and a hundred other marvels, you all think that sorcery is dead."

"It's dead, because it never had any life," I said sharply. "Take my advice, De Valerie, and stop preaching that rubbish. Sorcery and witchcraft were the weapons that tricksters and charlatans used against their ignorant followers in the old days. People are too highly educated to swallow that tosh nowadays. And Dr. Karnak ought to be ashamed of himself for preaching such things to schoolboys."

"Hear, hear!" said Handforth approvingly. "He's at the root of all the trouble. And what I suggest is a deputation to the Head."

"When?" asked Armstrong.

"When?" repeated Handforth. "Why, now—this minute!"

CHAPTER II.

THE HEAD DOESN'T AGREE.



HANDFORTH looked round, and the fellows were dubious.

"It's all very well going to the Head, but what can we tell him?" asked Tommy Watson. "Don't forget that Dr. Karnak is in practically the same position as a master, and the Head wouldn't like us to complain."

"Besides that," I pointed out, "Dr. Stafford has complete confidence in the Egyptian. He's helping him with a book, or something, and they get on first-rate together."

"I thought the Head had more sense!" growled Pitt.

"It's not that at all," I explained. "You see, the Head lives in a different world to us—he doesn't know what goes on in this part of the school. And he only sees Dr. Karnak as a highly qualified archaeologist—a man who has his subject at his fingertips. There's no mistake that Dr. Karnak is tremendously clever. That's why it's such a pity that he goes in for all this sorcery stuff. But all great brains have a kink."

"That's why they say I'm a bit queer now and again," remarked Handforth modestly.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Weak brains have a kink, too," I hastened to add.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Fathead!" snapped Handforth. "I might have expected you to be funny! Are we going to get up this deputation, or not?"

"Not!" said Reggie Pitt promptly.

"Coward!" taunted Handforth. "You're afraid to go, because the Head might give you some lines! Well, I'm not afraid—and if you rotters won't come with me, I'll go alone!" he added defiantly.

"Hot dog! That's the dope!" said Ulysses Spencer Adams.

"I'll put the whole thing in front of the Head, and tell him to kick Karnak out!" went on Handforth grimly. "I'll show you!"

"Attaboy!" grinned Ulysses. "Say, we've sure gotta show some speed to catch up to you! Gee! You're some little guy!"

"If you call me a guy, I'll punch your nose!" hooted Handforth.

"Aw, gee, don't get sore!" said Ulysses. "You got me wrong. Any swell feller is a guy when you're speaking honest-to-goodness language. I guess I'm not trying to pass any bull on you, kiddo. Go right ahead with that snappy talk of yours. For the love of Mike, keep cool!"

"If you think I can keep cool, listening to all this tosh, you've made a mistake!" snapped Handforth. "I'm going to the Head! And any fellow who wants to come with me had better step forward."

Nobody stepped forward.

"A fine lot of supporters, ain't you?" said Handforth bitterly. "I've got courage enough to go and demand Dr. Karnak's kick-out, and not one of you rotters can back me up!"

"Oh, I say!" protested Archie. "I say! That's frightfully rough, dear old soul. I mean, I'd rally round like anything if I thought it was worth it. I'd dash hither and thither, and I'd buzz this way and that way, if there was the slightest chance of doing something. But the scheme strikes me as being a dashed forlorn hope!"

"I agree with Archie," I said. "The time isn't ripe for going to the Head. Besides, there's no proof—no evidence. We can't substantiate a single statement, and the Head will only believe that we're a set of imaginative asses."

"We can prove that Dr. Karnak started this Sorcery Club!" retorted Handforth.

"That's nothing," I replied. "If that came before the Head, Dr. Karnak would simply say that it was a harmless scientific affair. No, we've got to have something more tangible before we can move."

"Then you all refuse?" demanded Handforth curtly.

"Yes, O rash one, we all refuse," said Pitt. "But if you're looking for some trouble, you can go alone!"

"I will go alone!" said Handforth excitedly. "After all, why should I ask you chaps for support? I should only do all the talking, anyhow. I'll go to the Head,

won't take advice, then your fate won't be nice."

"If you don't stop that rotten rhyming, there's no telling what your fate will be!" retorted Handforth darkly. "Well, I'm going!"

"I think you mentioned that before," said Pitt. "My idea is to sit tight for a bit longer, until we've got something more definite——"

Handforth didn't wait to hear the rest. He marched out of the room with his head high in the air. And before his determination could ooze away, he went straight to the Headmaster's study, and tapped at



It was not a hut as we knew such things in England. There, under the tall trees, lay a kind of primitive shelter, and it strikingly reminded me of Central Africa.

get Dr. Karnak dismissed, and then I'll have the laugh on you."

"I say, better chuck it up, old man," I said quietly.

"I'm going!" roared Handforth. "It's time Dr. Karnak was kicked out."

"The scheme is good, and the object sound," said Clarence Fellowe. "But I fear that you'll get badly downed. The Head's all right, but I shouldn't go to-night. Far better to wait—until a future date."

"Rot! I'm going at once," said Handforth obstinately.

"Then I'll say nothing more—but your haste I deplore," said Fellowe. "If you

the door. Even as he did so, he felt a desire to flee. But it was too late.

"Come in!" came the voice of Dr. Stafford.

Handforth entered, steeling himself for the ordeal.

"Ah, Handforth," said the Head pleasantly. "What brings you here at this hour? I don't think I sent for you?"

"No, sir. I—I came."

"So I observe," said Dr. Stafford, laying his book aside. "What is it you want?"

"Well, sir, it's a bit off-side—Dr. Karnak ought to be kicked out," said Handforth bluntly. "He's a rotten trickster and a

beast. All the chaps hate him, and it's about time he was pushed off!"

The Head started, and sat forward. It would have been better, perhaps, if Handforth had paused to choose his words more delicately.

"Good gracious me!" said Dr. Stafford. "Explain yourself, Handforth. How dare you come to me with these unwarrantable insults against Dr. Karnak? If you have any grievance, be good enough to state it concisely. But remember, I strongly disapprove of any junior boys criticising a master."

"But Dr. Karnak isn't a master, sir," retorted Handforth. "He's only a lecturer."

"The moon god!" he gasped blankly. "Haven't you heard about the mummy, sir?"

"I have certainly heard about the mummy—and I have seen the mummy," replied the Head. "But you were not talking about that mummy. You made some incomprehensible remark concerning a moon god. What is the matter with you, Handforth? Why have you come to me with this absurd tissue of nonsense?"

Handforth turned red, and seemed to have a little difficulty in swallowing something. As a matter of fact, the interview wasn't going quite as he had anticipated.

"It—it isn't nonsense, sir," he said

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And he's responsible for all the misfortunes in the Remove. We haven't won any football matches, and I fell downstairs, and Glenthorne was knocked off his bike in the lane, and Church saw a horrible face at the window!"

Dr. Stafford stared at Handforth in amazement.

"Good heavens, boy, are you insane?" he asked. "What is this—this preposterous rignarole? What is this fantastic story concerning Dr. Karnak? How can that gentleman possibly be responsible for the loss of a football match?"

"It's the curse of that moon god, sir."

Dr. Stafford started.

hastily. "This moon god, you know——"

"Which moon god?" interrupted Dr. Stafford. "Explain yourself, sir!"

"Why, the—the mummy is supposed to be—— That is, this mummy is really an evil spirit called Baal," said Handforth. "Dr. Karnak has been causing it to bring misfortune on the Remove."

"Upon my soul!" ejaculated the Head. "Are you seriously telling me, Handforth, that you credit such rubbish as that? You actually think that some ridiculous superstition attaches itself to a mere relic from Egypt? This mummy is quite an excellent specimen, presented to the school museum by Lord Dorrimore."

"I know that, sir," said Handforth. "But Dr. Karnak tries to make out that all sorts of evil will happen if the chaps don't believe in his tommy-rot about the curse."

"Good gracious! The curse?"

"Yes, sir. There's an evil spirit hovering round, so Dr. Karnak says, and all sorts of misfortunes have come over the school because we don't believe it," said Handforth indignantly. "So this deputation has come to you to demand the instant dismissal of Dr. Karnak."

Dr. Stafford became very calm.

"This—er—deputation?" he asked questioningly.

"I—I mean—I have come, sir," said Handforth. "It was to have been a deputation, sir, but the other fellows backed out."

"I am very pleased to hear that the other boys refused to have anything to do with this absurdity," said the Head coldly. "And so, Handforth, you have calmly come to me, and you demand the instant dismissal of Dr. Karnak?"

"Yes, sir," said Handforth boldly.

"It is not merely a request?" asked Dr. Stafford ominously.

"Well, er—you—you— That is, I—"

"I can well understand, Handforth, that you are somewhat at a loss," interrupted the Head acidly. "Fortunately, I know you to be a boy of unimpeachable character, and I also know that you are subject to foolish impulses. Otherwise, I should regard this visit as a piece of intolerable impertinence—"

"Impertinence, sir!" gasped Handforth.

"Yes, sir—impertinence!" thundered the Head. "You have the audacity to come here, to face me, and to demand the dismissal of Dr. Karnak! Why, upon my soul, it is little short of insanity!"

Handforth gulped, and made one last effort.

"Yes, sir—insanity!" he said fiercely. "That's just what's happening! Dr. Karnak is driving the chaps off their rockers—"

"Dr. Karnak is doing what?" snapped the Head.

"Sending the chaps dotty, sir!"

"Dotty?"

"You know, sir—silly in the head!" said Handforth impatiently. "And since he's been at the school we haven't won a football match, I've fallen downstairs, strange monsters chase us in the lane—"

"Strange monsters chase you in the lane?" repeated the Head, aghast.

"Yes, sir—an awful Thing that runs about six times as fast as any human being," said Handforth grimly. "And there's a hundred and one other little disasters that can't be accounted for. And Dr. Karnak is responsible!"

"You contradict yourself, Handforth," said the Head curtly. "You declare that these misfortunes cannot be accounted for, and in the same breath you say that Dr. Karnak is responsible. In other words, you

have picked upon this perfectly honourable gentleman as a scapegoat for all the trifling misfortunes of the Lower School! I am convinced, sir, that you are in a poor state of health!"

Handforth looked blank.

"But it's true, sir," he persisted. "And we demand—"

"Enough!" interrupted the Head. "Do not speak again, Handforth."

He touched the bell, and a moment later Tubbs appeared. The pageboy was instructed to take a message at once to Nelson Lee. And within four minutes, the famous schoolmaster-detective arrived.

"Thank you, Mr. Lee," said Dr. Stafford. "I requested your presence because I wanted you to take this boy, and see that he is made as comfortable as possible in the sanatorium—"

"The sanatorium, sir!" blurted out Handforth wildly.

"It appears to me that the unhappy boy is suffering from delusions," went on the Head. "It will be as well, I think, to send without delay for Dr. Brett, so that Handforth's mental state can be ascertained."

"I am grieved to hear this," said Nelson Lee, with concern.

"I have not come to this conclusion without full justification," said Dr. Stafford gravely. "Handforth has informed me that Dr. Karnak must be instantly dismissed. He has accused Dr. Karnak of perfectly ridiculous offences, without one shred of justification. In Handforth's opinion, Dr. Karnak is responsible for every minor misfortune of the Lower School, and I can only conclude that the lad is mentally unbalanced."

And Handforth, dismayed and utterly staggered, was gently led away by Nelson Lee, and taken straight to the school sanatorium. The startled Edward Oswald failed to grasp the fact that the Head had been quietly sarcastic, and that the sanatorium treatment was not really to be taken seriously.

But so much for Handforth's wonderful effort!

In the sanatorium, Nelson Lee talked to Edward Oswald seriously, and discovered exactly what he had done.

"A very foolish move, young man," said Nelson Lee. "And a very impertinent move, too. It was sheer impudence to go to the Headmaster with such an unsupported story. You must remember, Handforth, that when you make an accusation, it is absolutely essential to have full and complete proof. It is worse than useless to make a charge without the substantiating evidence. Your personal views regarding Dr. Karnak are of no interest to the Headmaster. You should have come to me, instead of going to Dr. Stafford."

Handforth looked crestfallen.

"And—and have I got to stick here, sir?"

he asked desperately. "The chaps will be all yelling at me—"

"I do not think we need take the Headmaster too literally," smiled Nelson Lee. "Upon due consideration, Handforth, I pronounce you to be normal, and ineligible for the sanatorium. So let this be a lesson to you. Do not presume to approach the Headmaster until you can do so in perfect safety."

"Oh, thanks awfully, sir," said Handforth, with gratitude. "And what about Dr. Karnak? Won't you keep your eye on him, sir—"

"We will not discuss Dr. Karnak," said Lee, quietly. "It is not your place to criticise the gentleman, or to question me regarding him. Go back to your own quarters, Handforth, and leave this matter to run its own course. I can assure you that you will soon have no cause for dissatisfaction."

And Handforth had to be content with that.

He went back to the Remove passage by no means thankful for his lucky escape. He failed to realise that he might have received a flogging for his impertinence. Solely owing to Nelson Lee, he had escaped scathless.

He went into Study D, and found Church and McClure there.

"Well?" asked Church, with interest.

"It's no good—I can't do anything alone!" growled Handforth disgustedly. "What's the good of one voice crying alone in the wilderness? If I'd only had support, it would have been a different thing! But I'm not finished—I'm more determined than ever."

"About what?"

"About Karnak!" said Handforth firmly. "The next time I go to the Head, I'll have proof—I'll have all my data at my fingertips! I'll have concrete evidence! And how?" he added fiercely. "How?"

"Oh, my hat! He's asking riddles now!" groaned Church.

"How?" repeated Handforth impressively. "I'll tell you how! I'm going to investigate! I'm going to bring all my detective power into play, and I'm going to get conclusive evidence against Dr. Karnak!"

Handforth slung himself into a chair, and Church and McClure exchanged pitying glances.

CHAPTER III.

THE CREATURE IN BELLTON WOOD!



"SO we're going to be the hares?" asked Reggie Pitt.

"That's the decision of the committee," I replied. "And it's up to us, old man, to show a clean pair of heels, and get home. And we shall have to put in some training between now and Saturday, too."

Pitt looked thoughtful.

"And it wouldn't be a bad idea to go over the ground," he said. "Roughly, the course will be a ten mile circular route. But it's up to us to pick out the best twists and turns. And we shall be able to keep the hounds off a lot better if we have a general idea of our course."

"That's right enough," I agreed. "There's nothing like being prepared."

Pitt and I were standing in the gymnasium. It was midday, and afternoon lessons would soon be commencing. There had just been a Sports Committee Meeting, and all arrangements had been made for a paper chase on Saturday—there being no football fixture for that afternoon.

And by a big majority, Reggie Pitt and I had been selected as the hares. The big pack of hounds would include Handforth and Co., and Tregellis-West, and Watson, and a goodly number of College House fellows.

And Reggie and I were quite determined to get home winners. And it was undoubtedly a fact that we should improve our chances if we went for a run over the ground in advance.

"It looks like being fine this afternoon," I said, going to the door, and glancing at the sky. "And it'll be quite light enough for an hour's run after lessons. How about it? It'll give us a good appetite for tea."

"I'm game," replied Reggie.

And so it was fixed. As soon as afternoon lessons were over we hurried outside, and were off. There was still a good deal of daylight left, and it was a clear January afternoon, with a keen nip in the atmosphere.

"We'll jog along down the lane, cut through the wood, and then make our way through Edgemore," I suggested. "And the more twists and turns we can plan, the better."

"Rather!" agreed Pitt. "We'll show the giddy hounds that we're equal to them—and better."

"Hallo! What's the idea?" asked Handforth, who was standing by the gates.

"Just getting ready for Saturday," I replied as he passed. "It wouldn't be a bad idea for you fellows to put in some practice, too."

Handforth sniffed.

"You're the hares, ain't you?" he asked. "You won't get more than half a mile before you're collared! I've decided to capture the pair of you single-handed."

We grinned, and passed on.

"A perfect example of an optimist—that's Handy!" chuckled Pitt. "Remember the way he went off to interview the Head last night? Full of confidence, and absolutely certain that he'd secure Dr. Karnak's dismissal. He hasn't been very talkative about that interview!"

"I bet he's got a pretty fine lecture," I replied. "It's not a bit of good jibbing

against Dr. Karnak until we've got something against him. It's worse than useless to take idle gossip to the Head."

"Oh, blow Dr. Karnak and all his works!" said Reggie. "We're out in the open now, under the blue sky, and all that sorcery business seems fantastic. That rot is only suitable for dark nights and heated imaginations."

We jogged along, and when we arrived at the stile, we crossed, and then made our way along the footpath through the dense trees of Bellton Wood. Presently, Reggie came to a halt, and grinned.

"Why keep to the beaten track?" he asked.

"Eh?"

"What's wrong with branching off somewhere, and preparing a route through the undergrowth?" he asked. "We can go over the ground to-day, and keep it in our mind's eye. On Saturday we shall know it, and can slip through the wood in no time. But the hounds will have a dickens of a job, even though they've got the paper trail to help them. By the time they get out of the wood, we'll have stolen a clear mile extra start."

"Good idea!" I said promptly. "Let's do it!"

We struck off at random, plunging carefully through the dense part of the wood. In the summer-time a few enthusiastic fellows of the naturalist type would sometimes penetrate to these forest fastnesses in search of specimens. But during the winter months hardly a soul left the footpath.

And we went cautiously, keeping our eyes well open, and marking our forthcoming trail keenly. We took note of every tree, of every different formation in the ground. Thus, on the Saturday, we could slip along without wasting any time.

And we cut in and out, through little gullies, round boggy patches, and stored all this information well into our minds. We grinned as we pictured the hounds struggling along this track, growling at the unavoidable delay—for, of course, they would be compelled to follow the trail of paper.

We were in the very heart of the wood, and in a section that was probably not once visited by humanity during the course of a whole year. And suddenly I came to a halt, peering through the trees.

"What's up?" asked Pitt, pausing beside me.

"What's that funny-looking place there?" I asked. "Looks like a hut—but it can't be. Nobody lives in this deserted spot."

"The light's none too good," said Pitt. "I expect it's only a fallen branch."

He was about to pass on, but I wasn't quite satisfied. We stood there for a moment, and could almost feel the intense, brooding silence. There was practically no wind, and there, in the heart of the wood,

we felt isolated and cut completely off from the world.

Although the trees were leafless, the tangled branches overhead only allowed a certain portion of the fading daylight to filter down. And the effect, now that we had halted, was somewhat mysterious and eerie. Somehow, the interior of a thick wood always impresses one in this way.

"Better be going!" suggested Pitt softly.

He could feel that curious influence, for he unconsciously sunk his voice—although there was no earthly reason why he should have done so. But the very idea of shouting seemed wrong. One could no more shout there than in the interior of a cathedral.

Without realising why, I pushed through the undergrowth cautiously. Some instinct, perhaps, warned me that there was something unusual here. At all events, I went forward with extreme care.

And although my first surmise had seemed fantastic, it proved to be correct. For we presently found ourselves gazing upon a rather extraordinary structure.

It was not a hut as we knew such things in England. There, under the tall trees, lay a kind of primitive shelter—and it strikingly reminded me of Central Africa. It was as though this place had been built by a native of some black tribe. The place was a mere shanty of the most primitive type—but constructed with remarkable neatness, nevertheless. Branches and leaves had been entwined together very cunningly. And there was even a kind of doorway. And for this place to exist in the heart of this thicket was very singular.

"What do you make of it?" whispered Pitt, as he drew a bit nearer. "I expect it was left behind by some tramp—a relic of last summer."

I shook my head.

"No; this was built only recently," I said softly. "Those branches are all leafless, and this place wasn't constructed by a tramp, either. It's too well made for that. I think we'd better have a closer look."

We approached, and just as we had reached the doorway, and were about to look inside, we received a severe shock.

For, abruptly, there was a swift movement within, and then something tore past us and fled. The movement was so unexpected, and so sudden, that we only obtained a glimpse. The light was not good, either.

We saw the thing only hazily—a curious, shaggy monster that leapt through the doorway in one bound. We staggered back, breathing hard. More startled than we could tell of, we stared through the trees.

"Great Scott!" gasped Pitt. "What—what was it?"

"Goodness knows!" I replied huskily.

The most amazing thing of all was that the strange creature had bounded upwards in an almost impossible manner—different

to any animal that I had ever heard of. And, certainly, no human being could have acted in that way.

"My hat! It's stopped!" said Pitt suddenly.

I knew it. The monster had apparently only travelled a few yards. For the crashing of twigs and branches suddenly ceased, and we thought we heard a curious groan.

Reggie Pitt looked at me doubtfully.

"What are we going to do?" he asked tensely.

"Follow it—and see what it is," I replied. "Here! Better take along a piece of wood, or something, in case of emergencies."

It only took us a moment to seize two heavy pieces of wood, and then we cautiously advanced. I felt a desire to flee, and I am sure Pitt had the same sensation, too. But we badly wanted to find out what this thing was, and we stifled our inward alarm.

The thought struck me that the creature was a wild animal of some kind—a fugitive from some menagerie. But I dismissed this at once, for no wild animal could build itself such a shelter. But the very idea of such a monstrous object being human was equally fantastic.

So the only thing was to approach, and make sure.

We had an idea of the direction that the thing had taken, and we moved along cautiously, with Pitt just in the rear of me. I had insisted upon taking the lead. And then, almost before we knew it, we were face to face with the fearsome denizen of the wood.

"Good heavens!" muttered Pitt hoarsely. I said nothing, for I was too surprised. My heart was thumping heavily, and I instinctively gripped my stick more firmly.

For we found ourselves gazing upon a creature of horrible aspect. At the first glance I knew that it was human—but in all my days I had never beheld such a specimen of humanity as this before.

He was obviously a black man, and at first glance I believed him to be a native of Africa—some member of a quaint tribe from the interior. His head was covered in a mop of shaggy black hair. His face itself was bewhiskered to such an extent that hair seemed to sprout from every inch of him—with two gleaming eyes in the midst of the tangle.

And he was clothed in roughly made furry skins, with his legs bare, and his feet unshod. And, without a doubt, the man was a monstrosity—a freak of nature. In the old days, the celebrated Mr. Barnum would have made a fortune out of this peculiar being.

"Oh!" breathed Pitt. "He—he can't be a man!"

"He must be—there's no animal like this living," I replied.

But there was every excuse for Pitt's horrified remark. For the grotesque freak

was unlike any ordinary man in build and general appearance. His head was set straight on his shoulders, with practically no neck. His arms appeared to be normal, but his legs were startling.

For they were at least double the length of any ordinary human legs—lanky, bony legs with two deformed feet. Standing, the man must have been well over eight feet in height—the majority of this space being occupied by legs.

I've seen giants in my day, and I've seen unfortunate monstrosities of other kinds, but this hapless creature was absolutely novel. And he lay there, among the dead leaves, with his great legs hunched up, regarding us with fear in his small, glittering eyes.

"It's all right—we're not going to harm you," I said, approaching cautiously. "Can you speak English?"

The black man shrank back, muttering in a manner that was incoherent to us.

"Where on earth can he have come from?" asked Pitt. "Anyway, he doesn't seem to be very dangerous. But why didn't he keep on running? We should never have caught him."

I moved a step nearer, and the black man crouched further back. I saw him wince, and a low moan escaped him as his foot caught against a jutting root. And then, in a flash, I understood.

For I transferred my attention to his foot. And I could see that it was badly swollen and puffed. On the side of it, near the heel, was an ugly, highly inflamed sore.

"Don't you understand?" I asked. "The poor thing's injured!"

"Injured?" repeated Pitt.

"Yes—his left foot. Look how horribly it's swollen," I said. "I say, we may be able to help the poor beggar. We passed a brook two or three hundred yards back. Get some water, Reggie."

"Yes, but—"

"I don't think he'll attack me," I said quietly. "He seems harmless enough."

I don't think Pitt felt quite comfortable, but he hurried away, leaving me alone with the stranger. Now that I knew he was only a pitiful malformed specimen of humanity, all my horror went.

And the look of that foot, even at a distance, told me that it was badly gathered, and likely to develop into a serious case of blood poisoning. But it would be a difficult business to make the man understand that I had no warlike intentions.

I lifted my own left foot, tapped it, and then pointed to his. Instantly, the man grinned, showing his white teeth, and he nodded. He understood that I was inquiring about his injury.

"All right," I said crisply. "We'll soon have it right."

From an inner pocket I took out a small first-aid case. I always carried it, and

time after time it had proved to be wonderfully handy. One never knows what may happen.

By the time I had prepared a bandage, with lint and ointment, Reggie appeared, carrying a baked-bean tin full of water.

"Found it down in the hollow," he said. "Jolly handy, eh? I expect this merchant must have been gorging himself on tinned goods."

I took the can of water, placed it on the ground, and then dabbed another piece of bandage into it, soaking the material. I held it up, and pointed to the man's injured foot.

He had been watching half-fearfully, but with an animal-like curiosity. I guessed that his injury was causing him intense pain, or he would never have stayed there so long.

He understood my meaning at once, but shook his head, and tried to pull himself back. However, after persistent efforts, he gave in—apparently grasping the fact that our intentions were friendly.

Once he had allowed me to grasp his foot, the rest was easy. I found, upon examination, that a deep gash had been made some days earlier. The wound had swollen and gathered badly, and was now intensely inflamed. The pain must have been excruciating at the least touch.

Very gently, I bathed the place, and noticed at the same time that the foot itself was deformed in a curious way. There were no ordinary toes, but peculiar stumps which would leave a remarkable imprint.

When I was satisfied with the bathing, I then carefully applied the ointment, covering the wound with lint, and then bandaging it with great care. Finally, I tore my handkerchief up, and wrapped this round as a final protection.

The ointment, as I well knew, was of an excellent quality, and possessed almost instantaneous soothing properties. Our strange companion must have felt much easier, for he was grinning quite cheerfully now, and chattering away like a pleased child. His gratitude was obvious.

"There you are, old man," I said briskly. "That's better. I know you can't understand what I'm saying, but actions speak louder than words. You know, anyhow, that we haven't got any evil designs on you."

"What's that just above his heel?" asked Pitt.

"Another cut," I replied. "I hadn't noticed it at first, but it doesn't seem any too healthy. I think we'd better wash it, and put some ointment on. Hallo! No water left. It's my turn this time," I added. "You stay here while I run back and get some water."

But before I had travelled many yards I heard a sudden shout from among the trees. I came to a halt, rather startled. I had been comfortable in leaving Pitt with the



He lay there, with his great legs hunched up, regarding us with fear in his small, glittering eyes.

black man, for I was sure he would make no attack.

"That you, Reggie?" I shouted.

"Yes! Quick!"

I hurried back, and when I arrived I found that Reggie was alone—somewhat dishevelled, but unhurt. I looked round, but saw no sign whatever of the man we had lately befriended.

"Where's he gone?" I asked quickly.

"You must have some kind of power over him, or something," growled Pitt. "Anyhow, he seemed scared of me. As soon as you'd gone, he jumped up. I tried to get him to stop, but he leapt away like a kangaroo. I started running, but stumbled, and came down with a biff. By the time I got up, he was gone."

"Oh, well, it's no good trying to catch him," I said. "Thank goodness he didn't make any attack on you."

Reggie looked at me queerly.

"Yes; I've been in his arms once," he said quietly.

I knew what he was thinking of. Some nights earlier Pitt had been seized by an unknown monster and carried off. And it was Dr. Karnak who had used Cecil De Valerie to guide us to the spot where Pitt had been lying.

"You think that this is the—the Thing that took hold of you that night?" I asked.

"I'm certain of it," replied Pitt. "And I'm relieved, too. That horrible mystery is explained now. Things are getting a bit clearer, old man. As long as we know that there's nothing supernatural about that 'Shape,' there's nothing to be afraid of."

I nodded.

"By Jove!" I said grimly. "So this unfortunate freak is Dr. Karnak's precious Elemental—the earth shape of the moon."

god! Pah! What a despicable trickster! Stuffing the chaps up with that yarn, and he knew all the time that it was mere foolery!"

"We knew it, too—but we lacked evidence," said Pitt. "We still lack it, as a matter of fact. The man's gone, and we've got no proof even now. But that creature is the tool of Dr. Karnak."

"Absolutely!" I agreed. "I shouldn't be surprised if he's got some hypnotic power over the poor brute. Karnak makes him do his will, and the black beggar is nothing more nor less than a slave. Perhaps Karnak's influence is not very strong just now. That's why the black was so docile. And we've got to admit that Dr. Karnak, for all his cunning, has done no actual harm to anybody."

Pitt nodded.

"All the same, he's a dangerous beast to have about," he said gruffly.

"The gov'nor and I found some footprints in the lane," I said. "We couldn't make them out; but it's a pretty sure thing they were made by this black chap. Well, we're learning things. And it won't be long before we have Dr. Karnak where we want him. I believe there'll be developments soon."

And Pitt and I decided to go back. Somehow, we didn't feel like remaining in the wood any longer. For although that creature had appeared to be harmless, the knowledge that he was lurking about somewhere did not give us any feeling of comfort.

Many things were suddenly explained. Handforth & Co. had been chased by a mysterious Shape that overtook them while cycling. This African, with his enormous legs, could easily have done that.

But Reggie and I decided to say nothing for the present. We would keep this matter quite to ourselves.

CHAPTER IV.

LORD DORRIMORE'S LATEST!



"H A L L O! H a l l o! What's all this?"

Tommy Watson gazed across the

Triangle curiously, and a number of other juniors in the rear came crowding

forward. Morning lessons, in fact, were just over, and the fellows were making the usual dash for the open air. On a fine day nothing could keep the Remove indoors.

"It appears, dear old souls, that a vast quantity of goods and chattels are arriving," observed Archie, adjusting his monocle. "Oddslife! Looks like a piano, or something."

"Oh, something for the Head, I suppose," said Armstrong.

"Then what's Dr. Karnak doing there?" demanded Handforth warmly. "Just like

him to stick his nose into the Head's business!"

The juniors crowded out into the Triangle, and stood looking on. Standing there was a big motor-van, and two or three carmen were in the act of hoisting down an enormous packing-case—a thing of vast dimensions.

Apparently, the van had arrived with its load while everything was quiet—while the various Forms were at work. And any diversion was better than none. The juniors watched the operations with interest.

Handforth, being an inquisitive chap, forced his way to the front, and regarded the case with suspicion.

"What's this?" he demanded.

"Ain't no good asking me, young gent," grinned one of the carmen. "Although I do 'ear as there's specimens inside this 'ere case."

"Specimens?"

"For the museum," explained the man.

Handforth looked grim. And at the same moment he caught sight of a label on the packing-case. The word "Cairo" was plain, and the packing-case was directed to "Dr. Karnak, St. Frank's College, Sussex, England." Handforth fairly turned red with rising indignation.

"By George!" he exploded. "Are we going to stand this?"

"Stand which?"

"Why, this giddy case is full of those rotten Egyptian relics!" roared Handforth. "Haven't we had enough trouble with that giddy mummy? It's likely we're going to have a lot more mouldy specimens in the museum!"

"Hear, hear!"

"We don't want any more relics!"

"Let's grab the case, and shove it back in the van!"

"Good!"

"Go it, you chaps!"

The juniors rapidly became excited, and before a minute had passed there was quite a commotion. In the midst of it, Dr. Karnak came along, and faced the noisy throng.

"Dear me!" he said mildly. "What is the meaning of this disturbance?"

"Have you got some more specimens for the museum in there, sir?" demanded Armstrong.

"Well, there is one specimen, certainly," said Dr. Karnak. "But why this unseemly commotion? What is the matter with you, my boys?"

"We don't want any more relics!"

"Take it away!"

"Yes, and chuck the mummy out, too!"

"Hurrah!"

"Steady, you chaps!" I said curtly. "There's no sense in making all this noise! After all, what is a museum for, unless it's—"

"We've got enough in the museum!" roared Handforth.

I was rather glad that Nelson Lee appeared at that moment. There was an immediate

hush. The Remove respected Nelson Lee, and waited eagerly for him to take a hand.

"Perhaps you can explain this extraordinary scene, Nipper?" asked the gov'nor.

"Oh, the chaps are objecting to any more relics in the museum," I replied. "They're fatheads, of course. Don't take any notice, sir. It's like their cheek to make all this fuss."

Nelson Lee turned to the crowd smilingly.

"Let me set your doubts at rest, young men," he said. "This packing-case does not contain the relics of an Egyptian tomb, but something quite prosaic and ordinary. It is, in fact, a superb stuffed African lion—very generously presented by Lord Dorrimore."

"Oh!"

"By what I understand, this lion is a truly magnificent lord of the forest," went on Nelson Lee. "Our friend Dorrie shot it himself and went to the great expense of having it stuffed for the one purpose of presenting it to the school."

"Good old Dorrie!" I said approvingly. "Now then, you chaps! Got anything else to say? Or are you all scared stiff by a stuffed lion?"

The crowd grinned rather sheepishly.

"Well, of course, we don't mind a lion," said Handforth gruffly. "But we all thought another blessed mummy was being brought in! And we're just about fed up with mummies!" he added, glancing at Dr. Karnak.

The other juniors were more excited than ever now that they knew what the case contained. But if they thought they were to obtain a glimpse of the lion at once they were disappointed.

For the packing-case was carried into the museum, and the latter was closed by order of the Head. There was some talk of it being opened again by the evening.

By the time the van had gone, the incident was almost forgotten. And the juniors went about their ordinary pastimes. As soon as afternoon lessons were over, however, somebody spotted a notice on the board.

It briefly announced that the school museum was now open, and the members of the Junior School would be admitted as they pleased. There was no time lost in making a dash for the museum.

And it was soon discovered that the stuffed lion was a huge creature—a fine specimen, with shaggy mane, lifelike eyes, and he was placed in a prominent position in the museum—resting on a special stand.

"My hat!" said Tommy Watson. "The blessed thing looks almost alive! You half expect it to give a sudden spring. Fancy meeting a thing like that in a quiet forest glade."

"Absolutely," said Archie. "Personally, I don't think I should care for that kind of excitement. I mean to say, even if a chappie's armed with a bally rifle, he might miss. And these lions are pretty vicious. I mean, for two pins they'll convert any ordinary chappie into a breakfast!"

"Well, there's no danger of this one making a spring," I grinned. "He probably made his last leap when Dorrie pumped lead into him. A jolly fine addition to the museum—that's my verdict."

"Hear, hear!"

Everybody approved. Specimens of this kind were heartily welcome, for they were of just the type to interest boys. The Egyptian relics were too sombre and uncanny.

"It's hardly worth looking at," said Cecil de Valerie, with disdain. "The mummy is worth twenty lions. For the mummy conjures up visions of Egypt's past glory. It makes a chap think of that wonderful civilisation which flourished thousands and thousands of years ago."

"I agree with you, my dear sir—I agree with you," said Timothy Tucker. "Indeed, the civilisation that existed in those days was greater than the so-called civilisation of 1924. What, I ask you, is our present-day civilisation? What does it amount to?"

De Valerie grunted.

"There's no need to start a lecture—" he began.

"But think! Pause, my dear friend, and think!" went on T.T. "There are people to-day who prate about our wonderful civilisation—our great advance in all branches of economics. But, when you sift this talk, what do you find? What is our civilisation? People to-day are just as primitive, and just as savage as ever! The intelligence of the masses is deplorable. Were this not the case, my dear sir, these same masses would rise in their might and crush down the oppressive tyranny of the so-called capitalist class!"

"Tyranny?" repeated De Valerie. "What the dickens would the working classes do without capital?"

"Dear, dear, dear!" said Tucker mildly. "This is lamentable! Can you seriously mean to assure me, my friend, that you hold those obsolete views? You really believe that Capitalism is essential—"

"Shut up!" roared De Valerie. "I may agree with you in some things, but if you start any rot about Socialism, I'll punch you on the nose!"

T.T. lifted his finger warningly.

"Ah!" he said, with triumph. "Proof! Proof of my very words! Here we see an example of the brute instinct. It is the brute instinct that lies dormant in the most advanced type of humanity. Merely because you do not agree with my views, you are prepared to resort to violence! Shocking! Quite so! Allow me to point out that the civilisation of the Ancient Egyptians was magnificent and superb! And what, I ask, was the domestic policy of the Ancient Peruvians?"

De Valerie groaned.

"He's talking about Peru!" he said faintly. "Just because I happened to mention something about Egypt! We were talking about

that lion. A stuffed lion, after all, conjures up nothing but a vision of cruelty."

"Cruelty?" repeated Skelton.

"Yes!" said De Valerie. "Imagine that poor beast in the forest, being shot down—just so that it can be exhibited in the museum! What is there in that to make a chap enthusiastic? But the mummy is different. It stands there, a lasting example of the wonderful civilisation of Ancient Egypt. That's why I say the lion is useless as an interesting specimen."

"I agree, my dear sir," said T.T. "I heartily endorse your view. There are some points on which we differ, and that is to be deplored. However, perhaps we will come to a better understanding in time. With regard to to-night's meeting? I trust there will be no hitch?"

De Valerie looked thoughtful.

"Dr. Karnak won't be able to preside," he said. "Of course, when we started this Sorcery Club, we didn't expect Dr. Karnak to be present at every meeting. And this evening he is engaged. He's going to lecture to the Fifth."

"I am grieved—greatly grieved," said Tucker.

"Oh, you needn't worry," went on De Valerie. "We'll hold a meeting of our own—and it'll be rather interesting, too. We'll see what results we can obtain without Dr. Karnak's presence."

"Good idea!" said Skelton eagerly. "I say, it'll be rather fine if we can obtain some manifestations off our own bat. But shall we be able to use the museum?"

"No—but that doesn't matter," said De Valerie softly. "We'll meet in Study M. Somerton and Adams are going over to Bannington this evening, so we'll have the room to ourselves. Tell all the members to be on hand at six o'clock."

"Splendid—splendid!" said Tucker. "I sincerely trust we shall be able to produce some results. I am about to write a book on the subject of Occult Phenomena, and any first-hand evidence will be of great value. Furthermore, it will prove that Dr. Karnak himself is not essential."

CHAPTER V.

THE AMATEUR SORCERERS.



"HUSH!" whispered De Valerie. "We must have complete silence."

Study M, in the Remove passage, was transformed. It was no longer a cheery little junior den, but a place of mystery. The one electric light had been shaded so effectively that only a dim, pale radiance glowed down.

The door was locked, so that there could be no interruptions, and heavy curtains had been hung over the window. Even the fire itself was screened, so that there should be no disturbing flickers.

And in the centre of the study stood a round table. And the members of the Sorcery Club sat there in a circle. De Valerie was the head, with Timothy Tucker, Skelton, Ellmore, and one or two others being present. They were all sitting with their hands on the table, and all hands were joined.

"The circle must be complete," said De Valerie solemnly. "If our hands do not touch, there can be no results. And do not speak. Sit still, and concentrate. Think of Baal. Our object is to obtain some sign from the spirit of the moon god. If we persevere, he will answer."

"But what kind of sign can the spirit of Baal give us?" murmured Skelton. "We must be prepared for what is to come."

"Hush!" breathed De Valerie again. "Hasn't Dr. Karnak told us that we can never foretell the nature of the sign? If our concentration is weak, there will be no result. If it is mediumly strong there may be some slight indication that the spirit of Baal is with us. And if our concentration is good, then the results will be big. So you must all think of the mummy—let your minds dwell upon ancient Egypt and the tombs, and the habits and customs of those ancient days. Even one weak member of the circle will stop all manifestation."

There was no further talk for some time.

The juniors sat there, holding hands round the table, and their efforts at concentration were really sincere and powerful. But it is fairly certain that if any other Remove fellows could have looked in, they would have ridiculed the whole proceeding.

De Valerie himself had his eyes closed, and he seemed to be putting every ounce of his will-power into the seance. For, after all, this was merely a form of spiritualism.

Now and again there came a slight crackle from the fire, but otherwise the study was in total silence. But from outside came shouts of laughter, the sound of running feet, a yell, or many of the other noises that were common enough in the junior passage.

"I fear the outer disturbances are too much," whispered Timothy Tucker, after a while. "These sounds are most distracting—yes, my friends, most distracting. I am afraid my concentration is disturbed—"

"Silence!" breathed De Valerie. "We must not expect results too soon."

Again they all became quiet. A sudden crack from the fireplace sounded like a pistol shot to the tense juniors. But it was only a piece of stone, or some such foreign substance, that had got on to the fire with the coal.

Tap!

As though from nowhere, a slight sound disturbed the stillness of the room. The members of the circle glanced at one

ALL SPORTS

THE TOPICAL ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY

another, almost with apprehension. And again the sound came.

Tap, tap, tap!

"What—what is that?" muttered Ellmore nervously.

"Sssh!" warned De Valerie. "It is the first sign. The spirit of Baal is with us!"

Two or three of the juniors looked round uneasily, but they were quite alone. Nobody could say from which direction the taps came. They seemed to be in the very air itself, out of the gloom beyond the light's radiance.

And the circle was startled. Several of them had never expected to obtain any actual results. They had been concentrating certainly, but they hadn't believed it possible that a spirit would answer.

"If you are with us, Spirit of Baal, make known your presence," said De Valerie in a droning voice.

Tap, tap, tap!

"I—I don't like this, you know," murmured Skelton. "It's uncanny!"

And then another sound came—a sound that caused the juniors to pale slightly as they sat there. It was a kind of rustling noise, as though robes were being swept across a marble floor.

"Behold! I am with thee!" came a whisper.

"Oh!" gasped Skelton. "What—what was that?"

"Fear not, young friend," said the mysterious voice. "For I am near, but unable to touch thee. Thou art mortal, and I am but a spirit. It pleases me to know that thou art interested in my spiritual movements."

The juniors sat there, breathing hard. Two or three of them had gone quite pale and were ready enough to jump up and flee from the room. Only the thought of ridicule stopped them from doing so.

For that strange whisper was eerie and weird in the extreme.

It came from nowhere, and yet was all round them. It appeared to be in the air itself, and the whisper was curiously husky and unreal. Under no circumstances could it have been produced by any member of the circle.

Besides, there were no fakers among this gathering. All were intent upon obtaining genuine results. And the voice proceeded.

"I came in answer to thy call," it said. "Thou hast been thinking of me. Thy minds have dwelt upon the remains of my former life which are now but dried relics. And I am here, to wish thee all success."

"May—may we speak to you?" asked De Valerie tensely.

"Even so! Thou art welcome," came the whispering voice.

"Can you not tell us what it is like in the place where you dwell?" asked De Valerie. "How does England strike you in comparison with Ancient Egypt?"

A very faint whisper, but it was almost inaudible. Apparently the spirit was

attempting to speak, but found the task now difficult.

"Concentrate!" breathed De Valerie. "Somebody is thinking of other things."

The circle became tense again.

"'Tis well!" came the whisper. "I was floating away from thee, for someone among thy number almost broke the spell. But I fear, I can answer no questions, for I cannot stop."

Swish! Swish!

As the voice ceased, one of the pictures on the wall moved from side to side. It did so without any hand touching it. The juniors, gazing up, were startled afresh. The picture whisked up and down, grating against the wall. And then slowly it came to rest.

"I—I say," muttered Skelton, "this is a bit too thick!"

"I am inclined to agree with you, my dear sir," whispered Tucker. "There is something remarkably unnerving in this. Quite so. I submit to the meeting that an adjournment should now be called—"

Crash!

The tongs out of the fender abruptly rose and clattered down again. The manifestation was so sudden that the circle was broken up. The juniors started up from the table, white and frightened.

"I—I'm going," said Ellmore faintly.

"Don't be foolish," said De Valerie. "The circle is now broken, and there can be no further spirit phenomena."

"Look—look!" screamed Ellmore.

As though to give the lie to De Valerie's words, one of the chairs on the other side of the room was slowly moving along the wall. It was an easy chair, and it had stood quietly in the corner ever since the juniors had entered.

"It's moving!" said De Valerie in a husky voice.

They were just about to crowd out when there came a loud rap upon the door—one solemn, significant bang.

"Who's—who's there?" asked De Valerie quickly.

"'Tis I—the earth form of Baal!" came a grim voice. "Open, or I will walk through the door as it stands!"

"The—the earth form of Baal!" gasped Skelton. "Oh, this—this is horrible! That—that ghastly Thing is out there! Don't let it in—don't let it in! It'll kill us!"

De Valerie clenched his fists.

"Fools!" he snapped. "Can't you keep your heads?"

He took a grip of himself, strode across the door, and turned the key in the lock. Then he flung the door wide open. Instinctively the other juniors started back, prepared for they knew not what.

"Hallo! How goes it?" asked the ghost calmly.

Standing in the doorway was Willy Handforth. De Valerie caught his breath in, and a deep frown came over his face. He

caught Willy Handforth by the shoulder, and clutched hard.

"Was that you who rapped just now?" he asked harshly.

"Yes."

"And did you say that you were the spirit form of Baal?"

"Something like that," said Willy blandly. "You see, I wanted to get in, and I had to say something impressive."

"You—you young rotter!" shouted Skelton, anger quickly taking the place of his relief. "What do you want here?"

"Nothing much," said Willy. "I thought you might like to know a few things."

"To know a few things?" repeated De Valerie.

"Yes; the picture, for example."

"The picture!" repeated the amateur sorcerers.

"Wires!" said Handforth minor carelessly.

"Wires!" gasped De Valerie.

"Nothing easier! Just a couple of thin wires fixed to the bottom of the picture and worked on a pulley," said the Third Former. "Pretty good effect, too. It was very thoughtful of you to have had the room so dim."

The club members gazed at Willy with horrible suspicion.

"You—you mean to say you've been fooling us?" demanded Skelton. "What about that voice——" He broke off, biting his lip.

"Oh, the voice!" repeated Willy. "No need to stop like that. As a matter of fact, it was my voice!"

"Yours!" howled Ellmore.

"Of course—disguised very carefully," explained Handforth minor. "I practised it a good bit, and I pride myself that I developed a nice, ghostly effect. Naturally, the telephone helped a bit."

The scene appeared to swim before De Valerie's eyes.

"The—the telephone?" he repeated feebly.

"Nothing much; just one of those cheap toy things," said Willy, with a casual wave of his hand. "You'll find it fixed up behind the coalbox—just in the skirting. You see, we've been down in the cellar, working the effects, as you might say."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A burst of uncontrollable laughter broke from a dozen fags, who, until this moment, had merely exploded with internal mirth. They appeared from both sides of the passage, yelling for all they were worth.

"Yah! Spoofed!"

"How did you like the ghosts?"

"What about the spirit rapping?"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Oh, the rapping!" said Willy. "That was rather ingenious, you know. If you look on the electric light fixture, you'll find a little toy clapper. That's worked with a wire, too. Some of us had to be in the cellar, and another one or two outside. We carried the wires across the ceiling and out through that window. You've got to admit it was smart."

"Smart!" roared De Valerie. "You—you young bounders! I've a good mind to give you a good hiding!"

Willy pushed up his sleeves.

"Come on; I'm ready," he said calmly. "All the same, I think it's a bit offside. We've spoofed you fair and square, and you ought to take it in the right spirit. It took us a full hour to fix these contraptions in position, and we'd only just vanished when you all trooped in."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

De Valerie, utterly mortified by the terrible humiliation, could contain himself no longer. The expression of bland innocence on Willy's face was too much for him. He made a rush at the fag.

But Willy was not unwise enough to fight it out, as he had suggested. He promptly dodged aside and then scooted down the passage with the other fags tearing after him. At the corner they halted and looked round.

"Yah! Spiritualists!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Giddy sorcerers—we don't think!"

"You ought to be mentally examined!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Doors opened all along the Remove passage, and fellows came out to inquire what all the noise was about. Willy & Co. obliged with a full and detailed explanation.

And in less than five minutes the whole Junior School was howling over the joke. It was considered to be one of the richest that had happened this term. And the Removites, in their delight at seeing the amateur sorcerers exposed, forgot to be angry with the fags for daring to jape their elders.

In fact, Handforth minor & Co. were looked upon as public benefactors. And the Sorcery Club was the laughing-stock of all.

CHAPTER VI.

A RIFT IN THE LUTE.



EDWARD OSWALD HANDFORTH pushed his books away and glanced at his watch.

"Just an hour before supper," he said crisply. "You chaps ready?"

Church and McClure, who were just finishing their own prep, looked up. Study D was bright and cheerful, and a nice fire was burning in the grate. And to-night the window-blind was carefully drawn.

Church had quite recovered from his shock of the previous evening, but at the same time he felt far more comfortable with the blind drawn. He and McClure had been waiting all day for Handforth to make some move, and they had rather dreaded this moment. For they had come to a private understanding.

"Ready?" repeated Church. "What for?" "We're going to investigate," said Handforth.

"My dear chap, what do you mean?" asked McClure. "Investigate what? I didn't know you were engaged upon any detective work."

Handforth glared.

"I'm not going to waste any words by arguing," he said curtly. "But you know well enough that I'm determined to obtain evidence against Dr. Karnak. I mean to find proof of his evil habits. And the only way to do that is to keep watching in the museum."

"When—now?"

"Yes."

"But what's the good of that?" asked McClure. "Dr. Karnak will be there——"

"Dr. Karnak isn't there," interrupted Handforth. "I happen to know for a cert. that he's lecturing to the Fifth, and won't be free for another half-hour. At the moment the museum is closed."

"If it's closed, how can we get in?"

"Don't quibble!" snorted Edward Oswald. "It's closed, but it's not locked. I've thought this all out carefully, and I know exactly what to do. —We'll go to the museum, conceal ourselves, and then watch Karnak when he comes in. We'll see what kind of tricks he gets up to."

Church shook his head.

"Not me!" he said firmly. "I'm not going to that rotten museum. Blow Dr. Karnak! If I thought the game was worth the candle, I might agree. But you'll never get any proof against that beggar!"

Handforth snorted.

"Rot!" he said. "Don't argue—and come on! We're going now!"

He strode to the door, and paused as he saw that both Church and McClure still sat in their places.

"You can go if you like, old man, but we're staying here," said McClure quietly. "But if you take our advice, you'll leave Karnak severely alone. You know what happened when you went to the Head——"

"That's got nothing to do with it!" snapped Handforth. "Are you coming or not? By George! Do you think I'm going to stand insubordination like this? If you don't get a hustle on I'll biff you."

"We're not going," said Church uneasily. "And that's final!"

For a moment Handforth was nonplussed. It was only on very rare occasions that he had to deal with point-blank resistance of this kind.

"Oh!" he said, with significant tenseness. "Oh! So that's it, is it? You're defying me? You absolutely refuse to come?"

"Yes," said McClure.

"Funks!" sneered Handforth.

"You—you rotter!" said Church indignantly. "You know jolly well we're not funky!"

"Then what are you afraid of?"

"We're not afraid," snapped McClure.

"Oh, you're not afraid?" said Handforth, with heavy sarcasm, as he closed the door and came back into the room. "You refuse to come to the museum with



On the floor, in the full glare of the shaded light, there was a little disc, gleaming and shivering wickedly. It had not been there before. It had appeared on the floor while Dr. Karnak's back was turned.

me, and yet you say you're not scared? I suppose you think a couple of ghosts will jump out from one of the dark corners or something? Or perhaps you believe that the mummy will walk out of its case!"

"Oh, don't rot!" growled Church. "It's not that at all. But McClure and I have decided that it's a mug's game to monkey about with Dr. Karnak and the museum. The man only lives for publicity—he's nothing but a showman. Leave him alone, and he'll soon fade away."

Handforth slowly pushed up his sleeves. "I'm not going to argue," he said, his voice becoming oily. "This is an occasion when force is necessary. I'll give you just twenty seconds!" he added in a roar. "Twenty seconds! If you don't agree to come by the time I count twenty, I'll wipe up the floor with you!"

"Wait a minute, Handy!" gasped Church. "I—I——"

"Oh! So you're coming?" said Handforth, with a sardonic laugh.

"Nunno! Not—not exactly that," said Church hastily. "We—we—— That is, there's no sense in having a row over nothing!"

"Nothing!" howled Handforth.

"Well, it's nothing much, anyhow," snorted Church. "If you want to go and make these investigations, why the dickens can't you go alone?"

"He's afraid to go in the museum alone!" said McClure, with relish.

A kind of oppressive silence followed. Handforth soaked in the dread meaning of McClure's remark, and realised that McClure had been getting one in on his own account. The air was charged with a kind of thunder.

"So—so I'm afraid!" asked Handforth, his voice quivering.

"I—I didn't quite mean that——"

"But you said it!" hooted Handforth, his calmness vanishing, and his eyes blazing with wrath. "By George! I'll show you! I've never had to deal with such cheek before. I'm going to slaughter both of you!"

Church and McClure were on their feet now, and they had instinctively adopted defensive attitudes. It looked very much as though a great battle were about to begin. It was one of those rare occasions when Handforth's chums flatly and positively refused to submit to his dictation.

Normally, they agreed to the most fantastic schemes, just for the sake of peace. They knew that Handforth was as good as gold at heart, and so they put up with all sorts of trials and tribulations for the general good. But they were only human, after all, and at times their patience was exhausted.

But it certainly appeared that this bust-up was to be a big one.

"Take that!" roared Handforth abruptly.

Fortunately for Church, he didn't take it. He was ready, and Handforth's fist shot by, and the leader of Study D was carried forward by his own momentum. At any other time, Church would simply have left it at that.

But now, to Handforth's startled amazement, Church brought his right round, and delivered a swipe on the jaw that caused Handforth to sag at the knees. He was brought up with a nasty jar, more surprised than hurt.

"Yow!" he gasped. "You—You—— By George! Just for that I'm going to rub your face in the cinders! And then I'll shove your giddy head up the chimney!"

"Do it!" yelled Church defiantly.

"Yah! Bully!"

"Bully!" gasped Handforth faintly.

"Yes!" snorted Church. "All you can do is to threaten us, but this time we're fed up! And we're going to give you a good licking."

"Great pip!" said Handforth dazedly.

"I—I'll show you!"

Again he charged forward, but Church and McClure dodged round the table—
anxious, if possible, to avoid actual scrapping. In spite of their warlike words, they really didn't want to fight.

"You and your detective work!" sneered

Church, anger robbing him of the last vestige of prudence. My hat! If you knew what the other chaps thought of you, you'd go green! Fatty Little would make a better detective than you!"

Handforth swallowed hard, unable to speak.

"All you can do is to interfere in other people's affairs, and kid yourself that you're a detective!" said McClure, backing up his fellow rebel. "And those rotten detective stories you write for the Mag—Nipper only puts them in because they're so silly as to be funny!"

"Stop!" said Handforth thickly. "If you goad me like this, there's no telling what I'll do! But I'm finished with you—and I've been nothing but an idiot to regard such beastly traitors as my chums!"

The period of words had come to an end. Handforth caught Church a biff in neck which sent the unfortunate junior staggering. At the same second, Handy swung his other arm round, and felled McClure without compunction.

But they were both up again in a moment, and by this time they were thoroughly aroused. They absolutely hated Handforth at that moment, and their one thought was to smash him up.

And, together, they went for him. They didn't regard it as unsportsmanlike for the pair of them to attack one. This wasn't a fight at all. It was a case where Handforth needed a lesson.

And, certainly, Handforth got one—and he received a stunning surprise, too. He had never given his chums credit for such determination and strength. They simply mopped him up.

Church got in a blow that caused Handforth to see stars, and he reeled back and sat on the floor with a crash that shook half the building. And before he could rise, McClure leapt on his chest, and proceeded to hammer him for all he was worth. Church joined in, too.

And the three heroes of Study D proceeded to roll over the floor in a confused heap—a mass of legs, arms, and hot, perspiring faces. Furniture was knocked this way and that, and within a couple of minutes the study was looking like a lumber room.

The battle didn't cease until all the combatants were too exhausted to go on. They finally rolled apart, and lay there, gasping for breath. Handforth was the first one to sit up, and he slowly and painfully reeled to his feet.

"All right!" he said dazedly. "Now I know your real characters! I'm finished with you! From this minute I won't speak to you again."

He opened the door, and swayed outside into the passage. Nobody had come along to investigate the disturbance, because violent noises from Study D were quite commonplace.

After Handforth had washed himself and

put on a clean collar, he felt much better. But he didn't go back to Study D. Grimly, he went towards the museum—still determined to carry out his original scheme.

Church and McClure held a discussion—after they had come round. And they were scared and nervous at their own actions. Now that the fight was over, they wondered how on earth they had ever entered into it. But they were obstinate.

"If Handy thinks we're going to apologise, or any rot like that, he'll have to think again," growled Church. "All the same, I don't like his going to the museum. I think we ought to creep along and see what he's doing."

"Rats!" said McClure. "I don't care if he gets spirited away, and never comes back. I'm fed up to the neck with him."

All the same, McClure agreed to go along to the museum with Church. And they were thankful that nobody had questioned them with regard to the recent commotion.

In the meantime, Handforth had passed through the library, and was actually in the museum itself. It was dim and gloomy—only one shaded electric light being on. And Handforth started back almost as soon as he entered.

"My goodness!" he muttered faintly.

For the most prominent thing in view was that great stuffed lion—which Handforth had momentarily forgotten. In his mind's eye, he had pictured the museum as it had been before the latest specimen had arrived. And to see that crouching monster of the forest, with greenish eyes glaring at him, brought him up all standing, so to speak.

"They make these giddy things too natural!" he growled. "That lion's enough to scare anybody."

He was still in the doorway, and before he advanced he looked carefully round. He could just see the shape of the mummy in the gloom. And then, as he turned his eyes the other way, he had a most curious sensation.

Although he wasn't looking at the lion, he could hazily see it out of the corner of his eye, and he could have sworn that the head turned. It was imagination, of course, but Handforth gave a start.

And then he uttered a loud, horrified gasp.

For, without warning, the stuffed lion—that piece of dead animal life—leapt clean from its stand. It took one bound, and then hurled itself clear into the air, in one mighty leap at the junior!

CHAPTER VII.

NO EVIDENCE!

HANDFORTH acted with commendable presence of mind.

He just caught one glimpse of that huge beast, its jaws partially open, its eyes gleaming

ferociously, its shaggy mane ruffled. And then, in the same moment, Handforth leapt backwards through the doorway with one instantaneous spring.

Slam!

He crashed the door to, and fled. He didn't wait for a second to see if the door was properly closed. Handforth was no coward, but to face a full-sized African lion without any weapon was beyond his powers.

Even as he fled, he pictured to himself the lion crashing through the door. For, surely, it would not be able to withstand the onslaught of such a ferocious beast. Handforth tore through the library, and succeeded in getting out to the passage. And as he reached the corner, he ran full tilt into Church and McClure. His pale face, and his wildly excited eyes confirmed their worst suspicions—although, as it happened, they were wrong. They assumed it was the mummy that had caused Handforth to flee in this way.

"What's up, Handy?" asked Church.

Handforth opened his mouth to speak, but suddenly snapped it closed. Even in this extremity, he remembered his vow. And he gave one glare at his chums, and rushed on.

But he paused—remembering the lion. He couldn't leave Church and McClure to face it. And yet he didn't want to speak to them! His mind, in fact, was in a whirl. But the problem was solved for him the next moment.

For Reginald Pitt and I hove in sight.

"What's all this banging down here?" I asked. "Who's been slamming doors—"

"Run!" panted Handforth desperately.

"The lion!"

"The lion?"

"It—it sprang at me!" shouted Handforth. "I went into the museum, and the lion gave one leap, and I only just escaped! It'll be here in a minute! Give the alarm!"

"Steady on—steady on!" I said grimly.

"Pull yourself together, old man."

I grabbed his arm, and shook him. He was obviously wildly excited, and to us it seemed that he was talking the most arrant nonsense.

"Oh, you think I've been seeing things, don't you?" panted Handforth. "But I haven't—I haven't! There's a real lion loose, and if it catches one of us, it'll tear him to pieces!"

"I knew what would happen!" said Church hoarsely. "He's been seeing things! We warned him not to go into the museum! Handy, old man! What do you mean? You know as well as I do that the lion's only stuffed!"

Handforth deliberately turned his back to Church.

"What's the matter?" I asked curiously. "Anything wrong between you chaps?"

"Oh, we've had a row—that's all," put in McClure. "If Handforth likes to be obstinate—let him—"



"Don't waste time here!" shouted Handforth fiercely. "I tell you that lion's real—it's alive! It jumped at me! It's a wonder I'm alive!"

"Look here, old son, we'd better keep this to ourselves," I said quietly. "Don't shout like that or somebody else will hear. And then you'll be the laughing stock of the whole school."

"But—but——"

"Rats!" I cut in. "You've been imagining things, old man. I examined the lion, and it's as dead as catmeat. Just to satisfy you we'll go straight into the museum, and have a look round."

"Don't!" muttered Handforth hoarsely. "Don't go there! I—I tell you the lion's alive! You fools! Won't you believe me?" he added passionately. "Do you think I'm as bad as all that?"

"Let's get out of this passage, for goodness sake!" muttered Pitt. "Somebody's bound to come along, and then we shall have to explain. I'm blessed if I can understand. Handy is the last fellow in the Remove I'd expect to get delusions of this kind!"

"Delusions!" shouted Handforth. "It's true—it's true!"

We wasted no further time, but grasped his arms, and fairly hustled him into the library. It was pure luck that the place had been empty all this time. As soon as we got inside the door, Handforth resisted more strongly.

"Don't go in there!" he muttered. "Pitt—Pitt! Come back, you idiot! That brute's in there, prowling about——"

He broke off with a gulp, for Pitt had flung open the door of the museum, and he had boldly walked inside. A tense silence followed, only broken by Handforth's heavy breathing.

And then Pitt returned to the doorway. "There's nothing wrong here," he said quietly. "The lion's still on its stand."

There was a curious note in his voice, and he gave Handforth a sharp, inquiring look. And Edward Oswald breathed quickly, and into his eyes there came an expression of stupefied amazement.

"I—I must be going mad!" he muttered huskily.

As though in a daze, he walked forward into the museum, and I still kept a grip on his arm. Church and McClure followed. And we all stood looking at the stuffed lion.

"Oh! It's—it's too much!" muttered Handforth.

I went over to the lion, felt it, and found that the skin was as cold as a stuffed skin should be. The eyes certainly looked remarkably lifelike. But I felt one with my finger, and then rapped my nail against it.

"Glass," I said shortly.

Handforth came up, and felt, too.

"Glass!" he repeated. "And the thing's as dead as a door nail! Just a stuffed dummy! Oh, my goodness! Either I'm

off my rocker, or there's some fiendish work going on here."

He was startled beyond measure, for he knew, in his own mind, that he had not imagined the extraordinary happening. And yet the utter lack of supporting evidence was a shock to him.

He realised, with dismay, that his story now sounded fantastic and preposterous. He was sure that we would assume that he had scared himself into seeing something which didn't actually exist.

He turned, and looked at us with gleaming eyes.

"I suppose you think I had a nightmare, or something?" he asked defiantly.

"Hardly a nightmare," I said. "You were here alone, weren't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, this is an eerie place, and that lion is enough to give anybody a jump," I went on. "The fact is, Handy, you saw the thing as it actually stands, but your imagination must have been particularly vivid——"

"It sprang at me—it gave a leap right into the air!" declared Handforth harshly. "I know what I'm talking about, confound you!"

But even as he said the words he realised that they sounded ridiculous. For there, in front of him, was the clear proof that the lion was stone dead. The wildest flight of imagination could not endow that stuffed creature with life. And our very expressions told Handforth the truth.

"Of course, you doubt me, don't you?" he asked.

"My dear old chap, be reasonable," I protested. "You surely don't think you can make us believe a story like that? Look here. Tell us exactly what you saw—or what you thought you saw."

"I came in here alone," said Handforth. "I'll admit the lion gave me a start because I'd forgotten about it. But it was nothing—just a momentary start. Then I looked away, and it seemed to me that the lion turned its head."

"Yes, but that's impossible," protested Pitt.

"It seems impossible, I know," went on Handforth. "But I'm just explaining what happened," he added determinedly. "I looked back at the lion, and it gave one jump off its stand, and then absolutely flew at me."

"And what did you do?" I asked sarcastically.

"I leapt back, slammed the door, and bunked," said Handforth. "Oh, you can grin! Who wouldn't bunk when a lion charged at them? You don't believe me—but I'll swear it happened!...I'll stake my life on it."

"Don't—your life's worth a bit more than that," I said quietly. "The best thing you can do, old man, is to go into Study D, and have a read, or something. You need

to calm your nerves a bit. You can rely on us not to spread this story about. We don't want you to be laughed at by everybody."

"Thanks," said Handforth gruffly. "But you needn't trouble. Those cads who used to be my chums will talk enough!"

"You rotter!" snapped Church. "Haven't you got more faith in us than that? We won't say anything——"

"I don't care if you do!" interrupted Handforth sourly.

He strode away, and vanished through the library.

"Oh—oh! A rift in the lute, eh?" asked Pitt curiously. "And a pretty deep one, by all appearances. Have you fellows had an unholy row?"

Church nodded.

"About the worst bust up I can remember," he said miserably. "And all because the ass insisted upon coming to the museum. I don't care! Rats to him! We're fed up with his nonsense!"

"Fed up to the neck!" added McClure. "He can go and eat coke!"

Pitt shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, it's your affair," he said. "I don't suppose you'll keep it up for long. What shall we do in the Remove without you three chaps always squabbling? Everything seems to be going wrong this term!"

We went back to the junior quarters, and found that it was just supper-time. I noticed that Handforth had gone to an unaccustomed seat in the dining-hall—evidently desiring to get as far away from Church and McClure as possible.

As soon as supper was over, Church and McClure mooched into the lobby, about as miserable a pair as anybody could see.

"Look here, we can't keep this up," growled Church. "I hate rows! Handy's not a bad sort, and t'll be absolutely awful if we can't speak to him. Life won't be worth living."

"Look out—he's coming!" muttered McClure.

They stood there, and Handforth caught sight of them. With a deliberation that was painfully obvious, he made a complete circuit round them, as though they were unclean. And he walked on with his nose in the air.

"Handy!" muttered Church. "I say, old man! Don't keep this up!"

Handforth walked on.

"We ain't lepers, are we?" asked McClure. "There's no need to steer a wide course round us, as if we were contaminated."

Handforth took utterly no notice, and passed out into the Triangle—there to march up and down as gloomy and miserable as ever he had been in his life. For he, too, had a soft spot in his heart for Church and McClure, and hated this quarrel. But he was as obstinate as a mule.

"It's no good," said Church wretchedly. "He'll never come round! He won't speak

to us for days—I know him! We might as well realise at once that we've made a mess of things. Even if we try to get round him, he won't take any notice. And we ain't in the wrong, either."

"I'm blessed if I'm going to say I'm sorry," growled McClure.

All the same, after lights-out in the dormitory that night, and when everybody was getting to sleep, McClure sat up in bed.

"Handy!" he breathed. "I say, Handy, old man!"

Handforth turned over in bed, and pretended to snore.

"Don't keep it up, Handy!" muttered McClure. "We—we didn't mean to hurt your feelings, old son. Let's shake hands, and start to-morrow as usual."

"Let bygones be bygones!" whispered Church, from the other bed.

But Handforth merely continued to snore. And after one more effort, Church and McClure gave it up, and went to sleep in misery.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SIGN OF THE SACRED SCARAB!



DR. KARNAK paced up and down softly and glidingly.

"Ten-thirty!" he murmured. "It's time—quite time!"

He was in the museum, and only the one shaded light was glowing. And Karnak was quite alone, except for the dead remains of bygone days. The great bulk of St. Frank's lay quiet and sleeping.

For by ten-thirty even the seniors had all put their lights out—or, at least, they should have done. And in any case, this corner of the school was always left to itself after ten o'clock. There was practically no fear of Dr. Karnak being disturbed in the museum.

Now and again, Dr. Karnak paused in his pacing, and he glanced at one of the windows of the museum. It was the window that looked out upon the quiet piece of ground near the Head's shrubbery.

But Dr. Karnak could see nothing except one or two twinkling stars. Outside, the night was clear and cold.

Against the door of the museum Dr. Karnak's pet was sitting quietly in a little corner against one of the specimen cases. The Serval cat—looking ridiculously small in comparison to the lion—was industriously cleaning herself, and seemed quite happy in the process, for she was softly purring.

Karnak turned round, and frowned. "Quiet!" he commanded. "Quiet, Esmit!"

The spotted cat looked up, yawned, and instantly stopped the purring. But after one blink at her master, she went on with her cleaning. And at that moment a light, almost imperceptible tap sounded on one of the window panes.

Ah!" murmured Dr. Karnak.

He glanced at the door, to see that it was locked, and then crossed over to the window, and raised the lower sash. He was standing face to face with a great, crouching monster—a shaggy, furry thing that was enough to scare the life out of any normal human being.

Dr. Karnak uttered a soft command, and the creature stepped into the room, his enormously long legs looking grotesque and strange. And when he stood inside the museum, he towered high above the Egyptian.

But almost at once the newcomer squatted down, and remained there silent and submissive, looking up at Dr. Karnak with animal-like submission in his eyes. There was a trace of fear, too.

This remarkable creature was, of course, none other than the deformed black man that Reggie Pitt and I had encountered in Bellton Wood. Apparently, it was his duty to report to Dr. Karnak on that particular evening.

The Egyptian commenced speaking—using a curious clicking language which sounded absolutely unintelligible. It hardly seemed that he was speaking at all, but just making queer sounds with his mouth.

However, the black man understood, for now and again he spoke in the same clicking language. It appeared that Dr. Karnak was giving some instructions, which the other closely followed.

And in the middle Dr. Karnak broke off, and pointed to the black creature's bandaged foot—the bandage now being stained with earth, and quite dirty. But it was still acting as a protection, and, indeed, was quite serviceable.

For a moment the black man shrank away from his master, and when he replied, he vigorously shook his head, and by his very tone it was obvious he was unwilling to speak of the bandage.

Dr. Karnak, apparently, was determined to know who had assisted this deformed wretch in such a way. For, of course, it was abundantly clear that the African could not have performed that service himself.

But nothing came of Dr. Karnak's questions, even though he threatened. The black man would give no explanation whatever.

And so, at length, after completing the instructions, Dr. Karnak pointed to the window. And without a sound the African rose to his extraordinary height, and in a moment was gone.

Dr. Karnak closed the window, and stood for some moments quite still, in deep thought. There was a frown on his dark face, and he commenced pacing up and down once more.

But at last he shrugged his shoulders, and prepared to leave.

But as he reached the door he suddenly turned. Was it his imagination, or had he actually heard a slight sound? It didn't

come from the window, but from one of the other corners.

And, suddenly, Dr. Karnak gave a start.

On the floor, in the full glow of the shaded light, there was a little disc—gleaming and shivering wickedly. It had not been there before. In some unaccountable way, it had appeared on the floor while Dr. Karnak's back was turned. The Egyptian stood quite still for a moment.

"Is anybody here?" he asked sharply, his voice low and soft.

But there came no reply.

Dr. Karnak went forward, apparently with caution, for he kept glancing into the dark corners. He stooped, and picked up the disc. And as his gaze fell upon the face of it, he became a changed being.

He staggered back, and his dark face turned to a sickly, putty colour—unpleasant to behold. There was a light of fear in his eyes, and he gazed fixedly at the disc.

"The sign!" he breathed hoarsely. "The sign!"

There was a frightened note in his voice. The calm, immobile Dr. Karnak was evidently just as human as anybody else. His assurance had gone. He stood there, almost cringing, and he was beset with fear.

And then, again, came a sound. Dr. Karnak twirled round in a flash, and a gasp came out of his throat as he found himself face to face with a remarkable stranger.

The man was half-naked—a tiny, wiry man, wearing the lightest of light attire. He was brown—not black—a native of Egypt. And his eyes were filled with venomous hatred as he gazed at Dr. Karnak.

"What are you doing here?" asked Dr. Karnak thickly.

He spoke in his own tongue, and the other man showed his teeth in a snarl of rage. And for a moment the pair stood facing one another.

"Your time has come—traitor!" he hissed. "I have awaited my opportunity—and now you will die!"

Dr. Karnak took a deep breath, and did not wait. He fairly hurled himself at the man, and the pair closed. The intruder was rather taken by surprise, for he had hardly expected Dr. Karnak to act with such promptitude.

And in a moment the two were battling with all their strength. And although Dr. Karnak was the larger, he was getting the worst of it. For the other was enormously strong, in spite of his small size. His limbs appeared to be all muscle and sinew, and his very smallness helped him.

He was as slippery as an eel, and in spite of all Dr. Karnak's efforts, he wormed his way free, twirled round, and whipped a wicked-looking knife out of his scanty costume.

Dr. Karnak uttered a hoarse cry of fear, and only just succeeded in hurling himself back in time. He was fighting for his life, and he knew it. He knew, too, why he

was being attacked. That fear in his eyes upon looking at the disc had been eloquent.

Almost by a miracle, he succeeded in escaping death a second time. And it was sheer luck that came to his assistance next. His assailant, with a snarl, rushed in with the knife raised. And at that second he slipped against something, and almost fell.

Dr. Karnak seized his chance.

With one heavy swing, he hurled the knife out of the man's grasp, and it went clattering away on the other side of the museum. And with his bare hands, Dr. Karnak clutched at the intruder's throat.

He might as well have tried to throttle a snake. The man twisted round, wriggled, and was free in a moment. And he was

truder. The wiry native saw the cat coming, and half turned.

But he was too late.

The cat landed on his chest, and clung there, digging its sharp claws into its victim's chest. The man screamed, but in a cracked, thin voice. There was not much fear of that sound going beyond the museum.

The man fought madly in sheer panic.

For though he could deal with Dr. Karnak, he was no match for this wild, spitting savage feline. He tore at it in vain, only receiving wicked scratches in return for his efforts.

And Dr. Karnak stood by, watching.

Again the man screamed, and Dr. Karnak



After a moment or two, during which their eyes grew accustomed to the gloom within the case, they shouted with amazement.

game, too. For without an instant's pause he renewed the light.

And then, with a sudden muttered curse, Dr. Karnak caught sight of Eswit, the Serval cat. The animal had been crouching back near the door, her coat ruffled, and her skin drawn back in a snarl over her mouth.

But until she received the word from her master, she would not move. Dr. Karnak had trained the cat with extraordinary skill. And in his extremity, he had forgotten the faithful beast altogether.

"Eswit!" he gasped.

He followed up the name by uttering a panting command. And the Serval cat, with one mighty bound, leapt clean at the in-

gave an uneasy glance at the door. An alarm was the last thing in the world he desired. Under no circumstances could he afford to have anybody investigating.

So he gave a curt command. And the Serval cat leapt down at once, and crouched on the floor, in abject obedience. Her victim staggered back, and made one mad rush for the window.

Somehow, he managed to get it open, and he slithered through, and by the time Dr. Karnak had got to the window, the other had vanished. Dr. Karnak stood there for some moments, and then he closed the window, secured it, and quickly pulled the blind.

Then, with a firm tread, he walked across to the door, and turned on the full switches. The museum became brilliant with light. And Dr. Karnak commenced a thorough and systematic search.

At last he had finished, and he stood under one of the lights, holding that gleaming disc between his fingers. Upon it was engraved a curious design, very much like a beetle. It was, in fact, the engraving of a scarab.

That same look of fear returned to Dr. Karnak. But after a short time he shook himself, and then spent some time in putting the museum perfectly straight—so that there remained no sign of the recent struggle. He even had to wipe away a number of blood spots—for the cat had torn viciously with its claws at the intruder's flesh.

When he was thoroughly satisfied, Dr. Karnak left the museum, and went up to his bed-room. He made no attempt to burn incense, or to change into Eastern robes. Instead, he slumped down into a chair, and sat there in an attitude of brooding worry.

Obviously, things were not going quite right with the worker of sorcery!

CHAPTER IX.

THE DISCOVERY IN THE OLD MILL!

IRENE MANNERS looked thoughtful. "It's dreadful—quite dreadful," she said severely. "I can't understand why you boys should always be quarrelling like this. Why can't you make it up, and be friends again?"

"It's not us, Miss Irene—it's Handy," growled Church. "We've done all we can, goodness knows. But Handy's such an obstinate beggar. He won't listen to reason at all."

"And we're not going to grovel to him," said McClure.

The trio were walking slowly down Bell-ton Lane. It was the next day, and lessons were over. There was still plenty of daylight, and Church and McClure had gone for a stroll, so as to have a quiet talk.

All day long Handforth had not spoken a word to them. He had ignored them utterly and completely, as though they didn't exist. Study D had been a place of depression and misery.

Handforth had done nothing drastic—and that was just the trouble. If he had stormed at his chums, it would have been a good sign. But he didn't. He just ignored them. They had made one or two attempts to speak to him, but after some rebuffs, they gave it up.

When lessons were over, they didn't want tea, or anything to eat. They just felt like mooching out, and taking their misery with

them. They were getting rather tired of being chipped by the other fellows.

And rather to their dismay, they had met Irene—looking exquisitely dainty and fresh in her warm woollen sports coat and furs. It had only taken her a moment to find out that something was genuinely amiss.

Both Church and McClure were fully determined to tell her nothing. But under the spell of her eyes, and unable to resist her imperious commands, they had blurted out the story.

They didn't mention exactly why they had quarrelled with Handforth—it wasn't necessary to go into those details. And Irene was quite upset. For she knew well enough how very friendly these three juniors were at heart.

"And have you tried everything?" she asked, after a while.

"Everything!" said Church miserably. "We've told him we'll forget all about it, and he just turns his back. We've even said we're sorry—and, after all, it was his own fault. But we don't mind taking the blame, for the sake of peace."

"And what did he say when you told him you were sorry?" asked the girl.

"Say?" put in McClure bitterly. "He doesn't say anything—he hasn't spoken a word to us all day!—And it's only his obstinacy—I believe he's more miserable than we are! I'm blessed if we're going to kow-tow to him, and lick his giddy boots!"

"Not likely!" agreed Church.

Irene frowned.

"Don't be so silly!" she said severely. "I don't like you to use those ridiculous terms. If I see Ted, I'll have a word with him. He ought to be ashamed of himself for being so pigheaded. I'm surprised at him."

"My hat!" gasped Church. "He's coming now!"

"Dodge—for goodness' sake!" hissed McClure. "He mustn't see us."

With one accord, they leapt into the hedge. For they could easily guess what Handforth would say if he caught sight of them speaking to Miss Irene. As it happened, they needn't have worried, for Handforth had his head sunk down, and he couldn't see anything a couple of yards ahead of him.

Truth to tell, the leader of Study D was just as worried and wretched as his two chums. He knew all the time that he was wrong. He knew that he ought to have accepted their overtures.

And this realisation only made him worse, for he grimly made up his mind that he wouldn't knuckle under. He would teach them to fight him as they had done! He would make them suffer!

This plan was all very well, but Handforth was merely "cutting off his nose to spite his face," for he was making himself suffer

in equal quantities. And he had come out now for a stroll, in order to forget things. And, naturally, he was remembering trifles that had never occurred to him before.

"They ain't such bad sorts, on the whole," he growled to himself. "Only last week Church went all the way to Bannington in the rain—just to fetch my repaired fountain pen. He offered to go, too. Got soaked, and never grumbled a word!"

He walked on a few paces farther.

"And McClure's decent," he mumbled. "Look at the way he lights the giddy fire, and gets tea ready, and all that sort of thing. I just walk in as though I own the study. Blowed if I know what I shall do without 'em!"

The expression of concern on his face would have been rather comical if the situation had not been serious. And then his look changed, and he frowned deeply.

"I'm getting soft—that's what's the matter with me," he muttered. "The cads! Refusing to do as I tell 'em! I'm not going to knuckle under—not likely! I won't speak to them for a week. I've a good mind to clear out of Study D altogether!"

But this, on second thoughts, struck him as being a foolish move. Why should he leave them in sole possession, just for the sake of being nasty. And then, as he walked along, he caught sight of two dainty feet standing fairly in his path. He looked up with a gasp.

"Good-evening, Ted!" said Irene sweetly.

"Why, I—I— You—you—" gasped Handforth. "That is, g-g-good-evening, Miss Irene! I—I didn't see you!"

"That's not at all surprising, considering that you were staring at the ground all the time," said the girl severely. "Whatever is the matter with you? Why are you looking so miserable?"

Handforth tried to pull himself together.

"Well—er—the fact is, I—I— You see, we—I mean, I'm a little bit off colour," he said lamely. "Lessons, you know," he added, with a vague wave of his hand. "I feel a bit seedy to-day."

"I'm glad to hear it," said Irene severely.

Handforth started.

"You're glad to hear it?" he repeated.

"You deserve to feel seedy," declared the girl. "I'm ashamed of you! I'm downright ashamed of you, Ted!"

Handforth went as crimson as a beetroot.

"You're ashamed of me?" he repeated feebly.

"I think it's disgraceful, the way you treated those chums of yours!" went on Irene indignantly. "All day long you haven't spoken a word to them! They've tried again and again to make friends, but you won't listen to them! I didn't think you were so ill-tempered!"

"Oh, I—I say—"

"And you're sulky, too," went on Irene. "I hate a boy who sulks!"

Handforth felt like sinking through the ground.

"But—but I'm not sulky!" he protested. "And—and how did you know anything about Church and McClure? Those cads have been telling you everything! But what else can I expect?" he added bitterly. "They're only worms!"

Irene stamped her foot angrily.

"How dare you!" she flared out. "Oh, I think you're horrid!"

"Sorry!" gasped Handforth. "I—I didn't exactly mean that, Miss Irene. But I was jolly wild to hear that they had been blabbing to you—"

"They didn't blab at all," interrupted Irene curtly. "They didn't want to say a word to me, but I forced it out of them. If anybody's to blame, it's me. Are you going to call me a worm?"

Handforth wriggled uneasily.

"Oh, I say!" he protested. "Don't be so jolly sarcastic, Miss Irene. There's no need to be hard on a chap. If you must know the truth, we've had a bit of a row—that's all."

"Is it true that you won't speak to them?"

Handforth made no reply.

"Is it true that you haven't spoken a word to them all day?" persisted the girl.

"Well, yes," admitted Handforth grudgingly. "But I mean to teach them a lesson—"

"And why should you teach them a lesson?" asked Irene. "Didn't you fight with them last night? You're just as much to blame as they are, and unless you give me your solemn word that you'll make up the quarrel and be friends, I won't speak to you again!"

Handforth nearly gasped at this example of feminine logic.

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"Well, my hat!" he said blankly. "You accuse me of being a rotter, and you say you're ashamed of me because I won't speak to my chums! And now you're threatening to treat me in just the same way!"

Irene brushed aside the objection imperiously.

"I don't care about that," she said firmly. "I don't want to speak to a boy who's so ill-natured. Will you give me your word, or not?"

Handforth stood up on his feet, and fought furiously for a moment. It would make matters ten times as bad if he refused, because he couldn't speak to Church and McClure, and Irene wouldn't speak to him. So he only took a moment to decide.

"All right, Miss Irene," he said. "I'm game! The next time I see them I'll say it's all over and done with and shake hands. How's that?"

Irene smiled happily.

"Oh, that's lovely!" she said brightly. "I'm so glad, Ted. I knew you'd be decent when it came to the pinch. I was sure you couldn't be so vindictive. I'm ever so glad!" she added warmly.

Handforth was notoriously a fellow of quick changes. He was famed throughout the Remove for doing unexpected things. And now, in a flash, his blackness vanished, and he burst into sunny cheerfulness. And yet it was quite natural. The cloud had been lifted from about him. Without actually knuckling under of his own accord, the problem was solved.

But Irene tactfully made an excuse and tripped away—refusing to allow Handforth to accompany her. She had a reason. For when Handforth turned, he found Church and McClure approaching him. They did so rather cautiously, and looking just a little sheepish.

"Oh, so there you are!" said Handforth gruffly. "I can see what it was—a giddy plot! Still, I suppose I was a bit of a beast. Let's forget all about it, and go for a walk."

"We—we didn't mean to tell Irene—" began Church.

"Didn't I say we wouldn't talk about it?" roared Handforth. "We'll go for a walk over to the moor and get an appetite for tea. And we'll talk about football."

"What about that Trackett Grim plot?" asked McClure. "That one you couldn't quite get the hang of. Perhaps it'll help if you talk it over with us."

"Good wheeze!" said Handforth enthusiastically. "I've got to write that before to-morrow, too—or it'll be late for press. Now, Trackett Grim gets on the trail of some stamp forgers. These miscreants forge postage stamps, and sell them at two a penny!"

And Handforth proceeded to outline his remarkable plot. By the time the trio had reached the edge of the moor, the story

was as good as written. And Handforth was in high good humour.

"Let's go in the old mill," he suggested. "I've got a notebook here, and we'll squat down and make a few jottings. Come on!"

Church and McClure were only too eager to comply. They were relieved beyond measure to be on good terms with their chief once more. For, in their hearts, these three juniors were very fond of each other.

They pushed open the ramshackle door of the mill and went in. They were rather surprised that the door resisted them at first—for as a general rule it stood wide open. And as soon as they got inside, they received a bit of a surprise. For there, almost filling the lower part of the mill, was an enormous packing case—startlingly new compared to its surroundings.

"Hallo! What on earth's this?" said Handforth, forgetting his wonderful story. "My hat! It looks like that case the lion came in."

"Never mind the lion now," said McClure hastily. "We don't want to revive unpleasant memories—"

"Rats!" said Handforth. "I said it looks like the case—but it isn't, because I saw that case round the back this morning, half smashed up. By George! It's heavy, too."

After a brief examination, they found that the labels had been carefully removed. Handforth was not satisfied, and he found a chunk of old iron, and proceeded to hammer up two of the top boards.

After they were prized up, he raised them, and gazed inside. Church and McClure followed his example. And after a moment or two, during which their eyes grew accustomed to the gloom within the case, they shouted with amazement.

For the packing case contained an enormous African stuffed lion!

"Yes, by Jingo, it's stuffed all right," said Church. "It's as solid as anything. But—but what does it mean? Two lions! And why should this one be put here, where nobody ever comes?"

"Look here, we're going to dash back to the school," said Handforth promptly. "We'll find Mr. Lee, and tell him."

And, filled with complete mystification, the chums of Study D rushed away. As luck would have it, they met Nelson Lee outside the gates, just setting out in his car. In a few brief words, Handforth and Co. told the detective what they had found, and within a minute they were being whirled back.

Nelson Lee was quietly puzzled after he had examined the second stuffed lion. He had made a discovery that convinced him that this lion was the specimen that had been sent by Lord Dorrimore. For inside the case there was one of Dorrie's cards—tied, in fact, to the lion's tail! This was quite characteristic of his lordship. And

this lion was a much finer specimen than the one in the school.

Within twenty minutes, Nelson Lee was in the museum, keen and grim. He had permitted Handforth and Co. to accompany him, for they had made the discovery. And without delay, Lee commenced a thorough examination of the spurious specimen which occupied the place of honour.

The very fact that this lion was here convinced Lee that a substitution had been made. But why? For what earthly reason? Obviously, it was not intended to be a permanent fraud, or the real lion would never have been left in the mill, so close at hand.

And it was not long before Nelson Lee discovered the truth. Until now he had never looked at the specimen closely, because he had had no reason for doing so. But in the neck he found a cunningly concealed opening. It was not until the thick hair had been parted that he found out.

And the rest was easy.

Fumbling inside the hollow interior of the lion, Nelson Lee touched a kind of lever. And, instantly, the rigid lion collapsed. And the detective made an even closer examination.

"This thing is an ingeniously devised hiding place," he declared. "And I am convinced that when it was brought into the school, it contained a living man. Without question, the trick was adopted so that the intruder could get inside with perfect safety."

"But—wasn't that going to an awful lot of trouble, sir?" asked Church.

"Trouble—and expense," replied Lee. "But perhaps this man was a foreigner, who would be very conspicuous. Possibly he could speak no word of English. And here is the vital point—it is fairly conclusive, I think, that the man desired to be taken right into the museum. If he had decided to break into the school in the ordinary way, he would have undergone great risk, and might never have located the museum at all."

Handforth suddenly gave a loud gasp.

"Great pip!" he ejaculated. "Now I understand! This lion did move when I came in here last night—it did spring at me; Thank goodness! I thought I was going dotty, or something!"

"My hat!" said Church. "You were right, after all!"

"What do you mean, boys?" asked Nelson Lee. "Tell me of this?"

Handforth quickly related what had happened in the museum in the previous evening. And Nelson Lee listened with pursed lips, and nodded when Handforth had finished.

"Yes, my boy, it could easily have happened," he said. "The cunningly contrived device inside this skin enables the legs and arms to become rigid at the touch of a lever. In that way, the thing could be

carried about without any suspicion that it was a fake. You surprised the intruder, and on the spur of the moment he must have decided to scare you off."

"I'll bet it was Dr. Karnak inside!" said Handforth grimly.

But Nelson Lee shook his head.

"Oh, no," he said. "Not Dr. Karnak. Surely you must realise that Dr. Karnak is altogether too big to squeeze into this skin? There is some other explanation—but I cannot fathom it at the moment."

Later the real specimen was brought from the mill, and the substitute was removed. Dr. Karnak professed absolute ignorance, and appeared to be quite astonished. But there was something in his manner that rather caused Nelson Lee to suspect him.

One thing was quite obvious—the intruder who had entered by means of the fake, had failed to achieve whatever object he had come for. A thorough search failed to reveal any sign of a stranger. And nothing whatever was missing from the museum. So the theory of burglary was dismissed.

But Nelson Lee did not know that the intruder had come for the especial purpose of killing Dr. Karnak! The Egyptian had escaped—thanks to his faithful cat—and matters were very much as they had been before. But Dr. Karnak was now different. It was as though he lived in fear of some sinister danger. He did not venture out by night, and seldom in the daytime.

Although many things were becoming cleared up, and much of the mystery was dispersing, in another direction it was getting deeper. Who had substituted those two cases? How had it been done? And where?

These were questions that Nelson Lee could not answer, although he made the most searching inquiries.

If we had only known, dramatic events were in store!

THE END.

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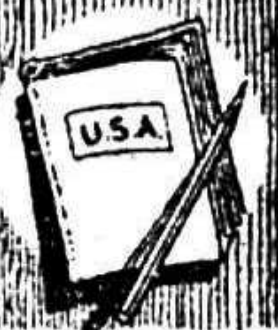
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No. 7. STREET TRAFFIC IN NEW YORK.

DRIVING a motor-car through the streets of New York is a very, very different proposition to driving a motor-car through the streets of London. Woe betide the luckless Englishman who takes a car out for the first time in New York City.

There are pitfalls and traps galore for the uninitiated. First of all, let me try to explain how very different New York is from London. There are practically no tortuous side streets, where one can dodge quickly, in order to avoid congested traffic.

New York, except at the very lower end of Manhattan Island, is built upon a settled, definite plan. The city is a great oblong, and the avenues run lengthwise, stretching away for miles. And the streets just cut across the comparatively short space between the Hudson River and the East River. The only important diagonal street is Broadway.

In consequence of this settled building plan, the houses and business premises are all constructed in blocks. Thus, if you ask to be directed to a certain street, you will not be told that it is three hundred yards further along, but, say, four blocks.

All the street-cars stop at the corner of every block, if necessary, and the motor-omnibuses, which ply chiefly up and down Fifth Avenue, do likewise. It is inadvisable to take a street-car if one is in a hurry, for they just crawl along from one block to another, stopping every few seconds. To get down to the Battery from Times Square, for instance, is a tedious business. It is far better to take the subway.

The first thing the British visitor notices in New York is that all the traffic keeps to the right-hand side of the road—exactly the opposite to the rule in the British Isles. And this is apt to be confusing enough to the pedestrian when he first takes a walk.

But let him take a motor-car out, and he will soon find himself in a state of considerable confusion. In London, in spite of the strict traffic regulations, there is quite a free-and-easy feeling when driving. At a

quiet cross-road, one may cut sharply across into a side turning without invoking the wrath of the law.

But not so in New York. The motorist must take strict care to take the corner fully, without any cutting in. If he fails to do so, a police-officer will probably stride up and demand to know what in the name of blazes he thinks he's doing.

In London one may freely swerve to the wrong side of the road and leave a car there, facing the oncoming traffic. But in New York this is nothing short of a crime. One must always leave a car so that it stands in the same direction as the flow of traffic—and never facing it. This rule applies just as much in quiet, unfrequented streets as it does in the main arteries.

There are the fire-hydrants to be wary of. Leave your car standing close against one of these and again you invoke the wrath of the law. Dare to move your car an inch after a policeman has told you to stop, and the said policeman will probably step on to your footboard and treat you to a string of vituperation and violent abuse such as will give you a shock. And to answer a New York policeman back is merely asking for trouble. Be unwise enough to lose your temper and it is any odds that you will be under arrest within a minute.

Gliding along a quiet, cross-town street, you may observe a few glares from passing taxi-drivers and other motorists. And you rather wonder at it, until you suddenly discover that this particular thoroughfare is a "one-way street," and by travelling along it in the wrong direction you are committing a serious offence against the traffic laws. These one-way streets are frequently changed, and it behoves the motorist to be constantly on the alert.

There are many other features of New York Traffic that I wish to refer to, for I feel sure they will be of general interest. As there is no further space in this little article, I must leave these remarks for my next.

TWO THRILLERS BY E. O. HANDFORTH!

No. 8. Vol. 1.

Edited by Nipper.

January 19, 1924.



St. Frank's Magazine

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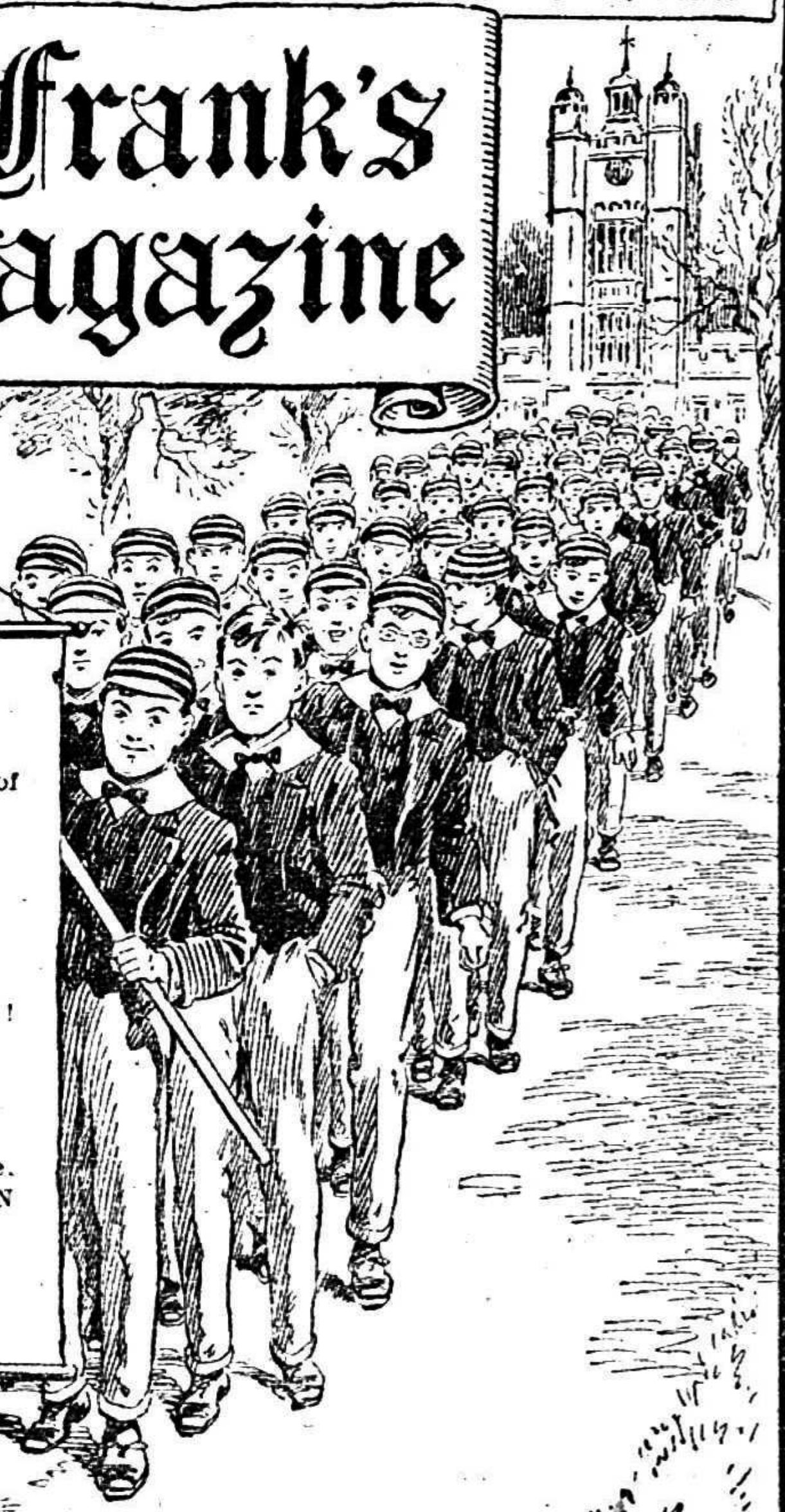
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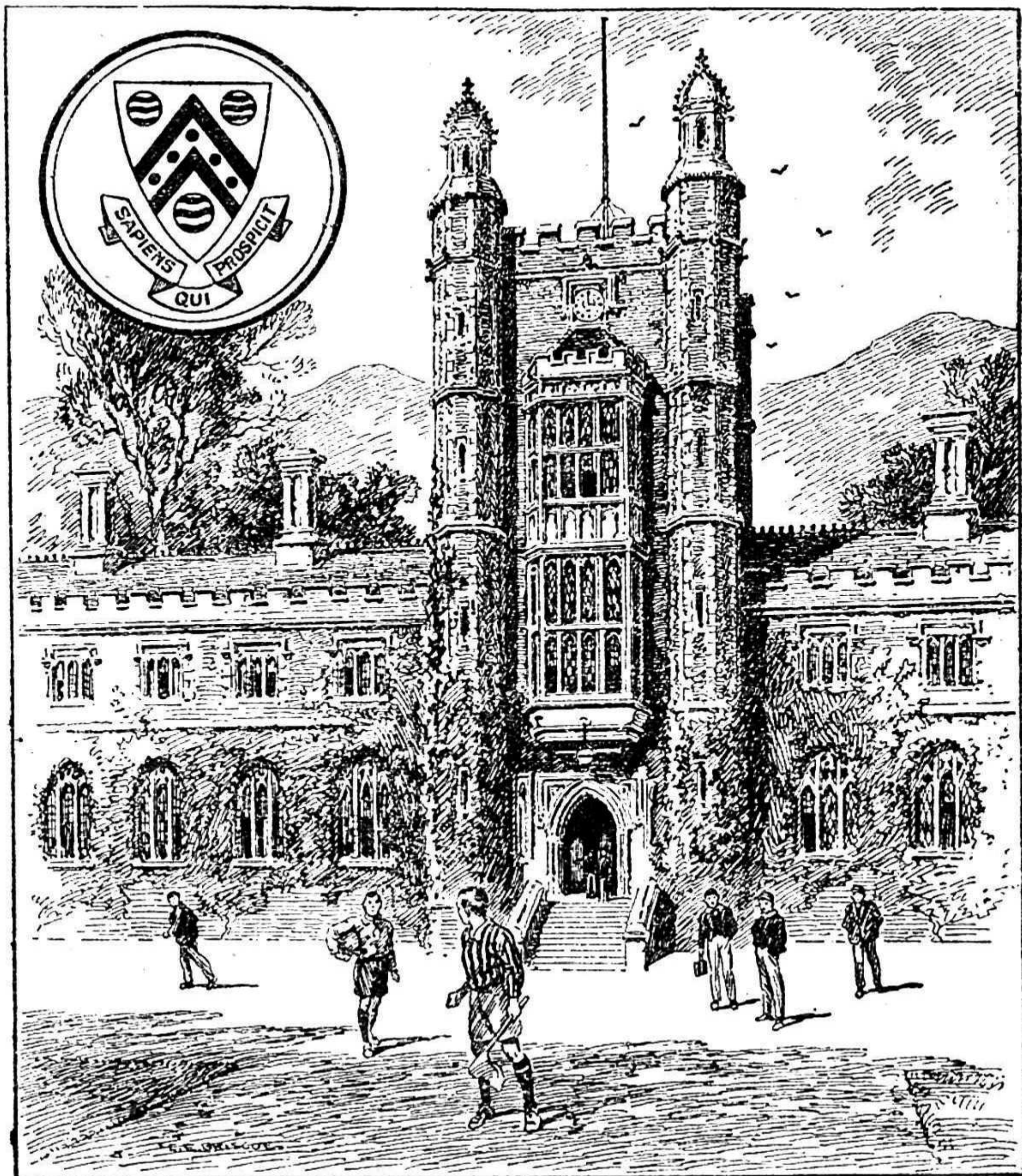


FREE INSURANCE INSIDE against a fit of the blues, and other forms of depression!

OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

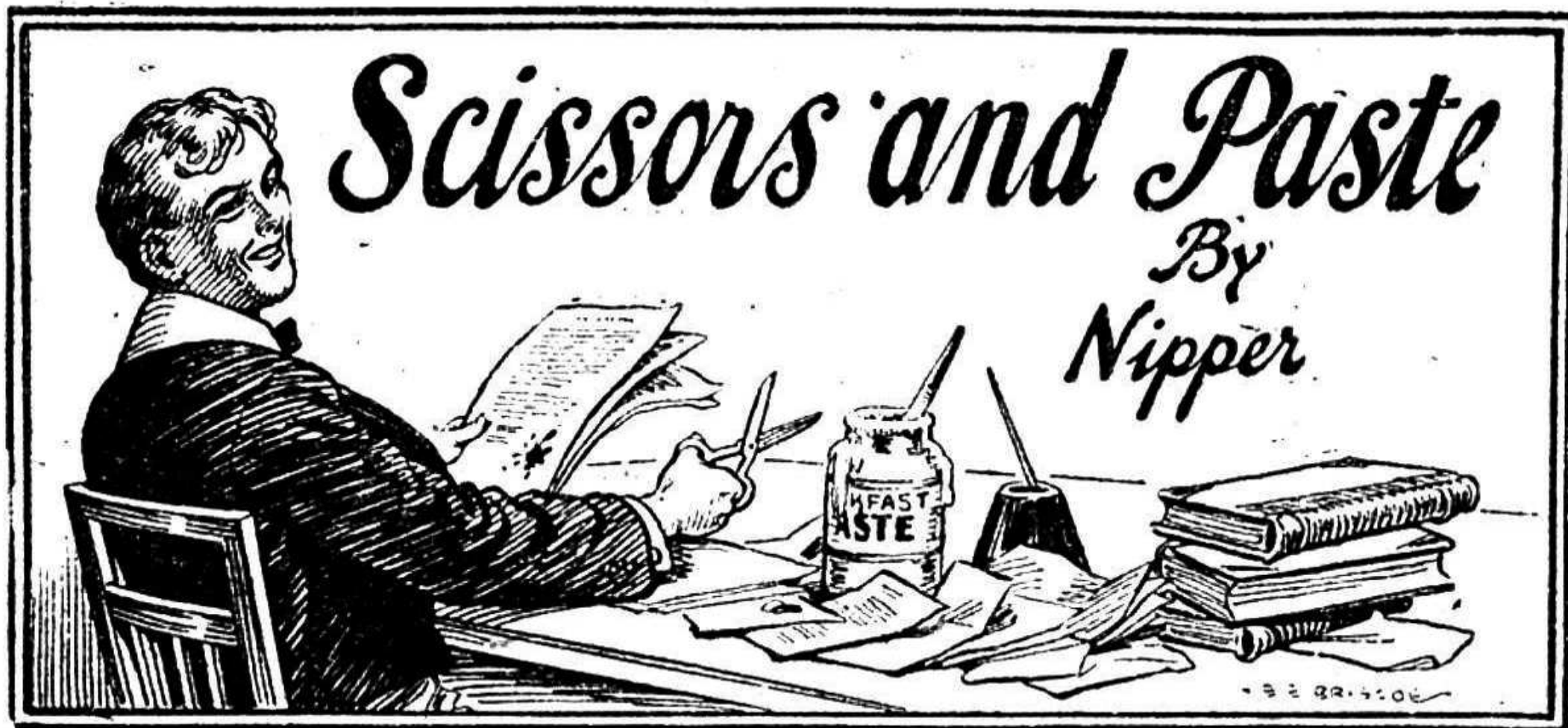
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MALVERN COLLEGE.

Situated at Malvern in Worcestershire, Malvern College was founded in 1862, and opened as a Church of England school in 1865, following a system on the same lines as Winchester. The school is divided into three sides—classical, modern, and army, and in addition there is a school of mechanical engineering. The boys number about 450, and, with the exception of a few day boys, occupy ten houses. Each house has a sick-room, reading-room, and library. The dormitories are arranged on the cubicle system, and every boy has a share in a study.



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

My Dear Chums,—

I heard a few fellows discussing it in the Common Room the other day—that is the polite way of putting it. As a matter of fact, they nearly came to blows; and, to use the language of the newspapers, I should really say that a stormy scene took place. It was all over that vexatious question of the off-side rule in "Footer," a rule that few seem to understand properly. I do not propose to deal with it here. I am merely quoting it as an instance of the many little problems that do crop up from time to time in "Footer" and other popular sports. And I think that it is high time that the Mag. made use of some of its space in a weekly chat on sport in general. We have a most excellent authority on this subject in our Sports Master, Mr. Clifford. I have accordingly invited Mr. Clifford to act in this capacity, and he has very kindly offered his services to the Mag. in supplying, as he called it, a weekly "pow-wow" on "Footer," boxing, running, physical culture, etc. I think you will all agree that Mr. Clifford is a jolly good sort and can be regarded as one of us. That is why I know you will join me in welcoming him as a contributor to our paper. I hope to be able to publish his first article in a week or two.

THE RETURN OF TRACKETT GRIM

I could hardly believe that the exploits of Trackett Grim were so popular. It is said that absence makes the heart grow fonder. The non-appearance of the great detective in the Mag. for the last few weeks has certainly resulted in a number of anxious inquiries from admirers, who have been wondering if the intrepid criminologist had fallen over a cliff, or whether he had been slain by one of his numerous enemies. These readers will be much relieved to find him back again this

week, and none the worse after his long Christmas holiday.

ARCHIE, PLEASE NOTE!

In publishing the following letter from Handy concerning last week's story by Archie, "Under the Jolly Old Roger," I do not necessarily share this critic's opinions.

He says:

"Dear Editor,—

"I am fed up with the stuff in the St. Frank's Magazine. McClure has been sitting in the armchair sniggering all the evening.

"I asked him what he was grinning at, and the fathead passed me the last copy. He pointed out a contribution by Archie Glenthorne. I had already seen the first thing he wrote, but last week's story was even more rotten.

"I read it, and punched McClure's head for reading such piffle. I think such contributions are utter rot. They're absurd! My hat! A pirate captain doesn't talk like Archie says. They never spoke in that way. Why, the silly ass has forgotten that the phrases he uses had not been invented.

"And how could the crew walk along the sea? Of course they could not! They would all fall in. Archie is an utter fool. I can't understand why you print such wretched stuff when there are other chaps who can write a really good adventure story.

"At least, there are one or two chaps who could. Why, I could do a better yarn myself. In fact, I've done one. If you want the Mag. to go, you can't possibly leave it out.

"I enclose it with this letter, so there is no excuse if you leave it out.

"Yours,

"E. O. HANDFORTH."

I always believe in giving every fellow a chance, and so I am leaving you, my chums, to judge for yourselves whether or not you agree with Handy that "The Three Chums of Peru" is a really good adventure story.

Your faithful chum,

NIPPER.

GOSSIP OF THE WEEK

By HUBERT JARROW

IT seems to me that something ought to be done. I mean, just look at the way the chimney smoked in the Form-room on Monday afternoon. I'll admit it created a bit of a diversion, but at the same time, what about our books and papers, and clean collars and things?

Soot is black stuff. I think everybody admits that. It's not so bad when you want to use it for putting round the roots of rhubarb, or something like that, but it's not a bit of good as a hair tonic.

And hair, when you come to think of it, is something that ought to be well looked after and cared for. Some fellows like to have their's plastered down with pints of brilliantine—I knew a chap who used to splash every time he shook his head—and others go about resembling a floor-mop. And partings vary, too. I like to see a parting on the side.

Of course, parting is a pretty wide word, if you know what I mean. When you're parting from your pater and mater, after the holidays, you feel pretty rotten. And parting from that half-quid you owe another chap is a wrench, too. But you absolutely thrill with joy when you're parting from the Form-room. I mean, there it is!

And then these girls. Girls, of course, are essential. How would the drapers live without girls? Who would sell the stuff in the shops? And if it comes to that, who would buy the stuff? Men don't go into drapers' Men always wait about outside, in the rain.

As it happens, we haven't had much rain lately. And these girls of the Moor View School have been pretty much in evidence. I must admit that some of them are jolly good sports—and reasonable, too. Any girl who can talk to Handforth for ten minutes is nothing less than a heroine. I mean, even a chap feels the strain a bit. Only on Thursday I heard Adams saying that Doris Berkeley is a peach.

I suppose that's a compliment. A peach is undoubtedly a particularly nice fruit, but it seems to me that it's wrong to call a girl a fruit. That's what Glenthorne calls his pals, only he refers to them as old fruit. Which, when you come to examine it,

is a horrible insult. I've always understood that old fruit is rotten.

And talking about Adams, you know. These Americans aren't really so smart as they think. And when it comes to language, it won't be long before we have to have text-books and things before taking a trip to New York. There'll be little booklets on the market soon—"American in Ten Lessons," or "Ugo's Easy Method American." I mean, I can hear Adams talking for five minutes, and I can't make head or tail of what he means.

And I think this gambling ought to be stopped. It isn't nice for fellows to toss coins and ask if it's heads or tails. It wouldn't matter so much if it stopped at that. But cards, you know, and all that sort of thing; cards are downright wicked.

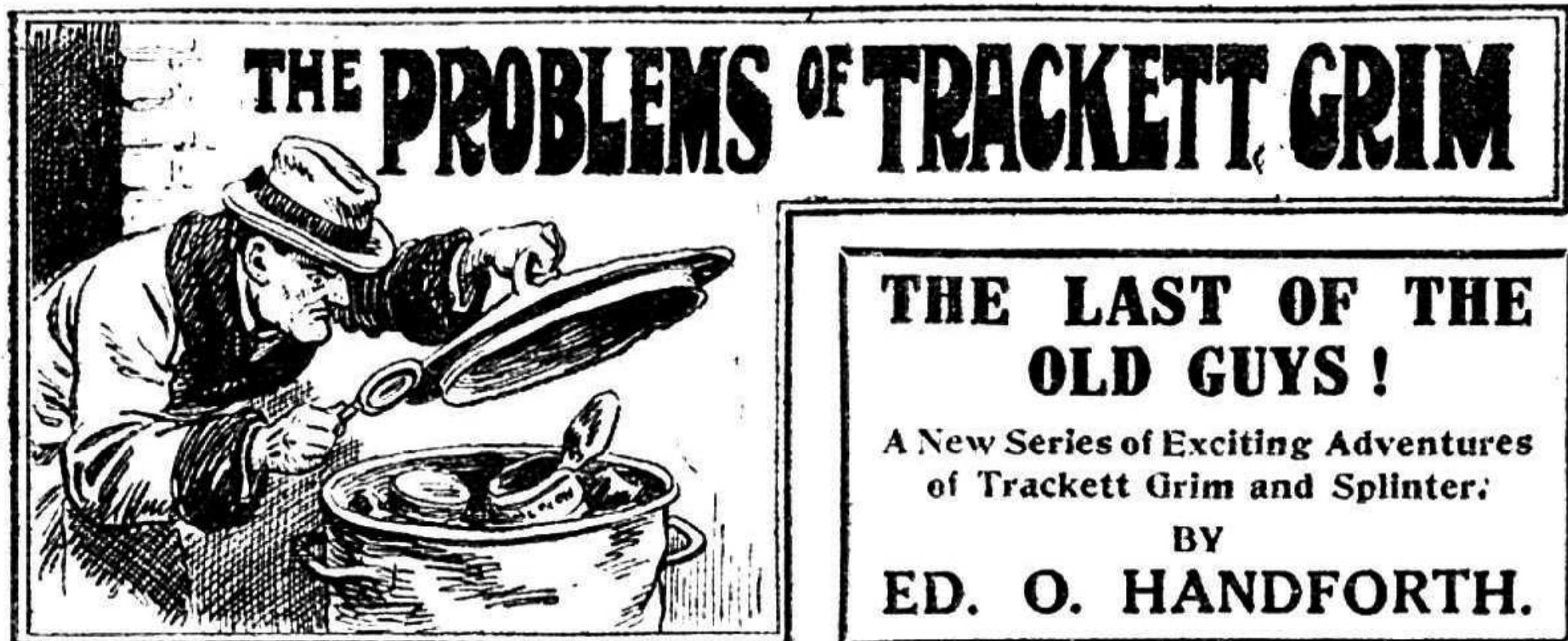
I don't mean postcards. Everybody has to use postcards. But even these are wicked in a way. Fancy having to pay a penny to send a postcard! When you come to think of the millions of pennies that are spent every day on postcards, you absolutely go pale.

Who gets all this money? Of course, we know that Government officials have to be paid. Exactly why they have to be paid we can't say. I mean, anybody can sit in a sumptuous office and read a newspaper all day, can't he? And yet these Government officials get whacking great salaries for having a nap all the afternoon, or popping off to play golf, while their staff of girl clerks make tea and do fancy knitting. A bit thick, you know. It makes a chap quake a bit.

And a quake is pretty awful. I was in an earthquake once. I'll admit that the ground only shook a bit, but it makes you realise how jolly helpless we mortals are. What should we look like if the earth suddenly opened and St. Frank's dropped into a terrific hole?

All these things make a fellow think. And when a fellow thinks, he generally gets brain fag and drops into a doze, or something. I mean, there's a limit—

(There is! You've just reached yours.
—ED. St. Frank's Mag.)



THE PROBLEMS OF TRACKETT GRIM

THE LAST OF THE OLD GUYS!

A New Series of Exciting Adventures
of Trackett Grim and Splinter:

BY

ED. O. HANDFORTH.

THE MIDNIGHT CALL!

"COME, Splinter, come! The game's afoot!" said Trackett Grim tensely.

The celebrated detective shook his assistant's shoulder roughly, and Splinter sat up in bed, shivering from the effects of the jug of cold water which Trackett Grim had just emptied over him.

"A case, sir?" he asked eagerly.

"Yes, a case—a murder in Nottingham!" replied Trackett Grim, with relish. "The first case we have had for seven hours, Splinter. My stagnation is vanishing, and I am again like a hound on the trail. Just as I was getting into bed, at two o'clock, I received the midnight telephone call! Come, we will start!"

In a trice Splinter was dressed. In two trices he and Trackett Grim were seated in their powerful racing car, rushing through the inky, mysterious night, bent upon the cause of justice.

By a quarter to three they were in Nottingham—that famous place which is celebrated for its two First Division football clubs. The night was still black and still inky, and a moaning wind had arisen.

Trackett Grim's great car turned into the private drive of Guy Manor, the ancestral home of Sir Montmorency de Quincy Guy, who now lay stark and dead in the oak-panelled library.

Upon the doorstep awaited the Hon. Cadwallader de Plantagenet Guy—the last surviving member of the ancient family. In fact, he was the last of the old Nottingham Guys. He was a dark young man, attired in evening dress, and a black moustache with twisted ends. At school he had been known as "Cad" for short—not that this really had anything to do with his name.

"Welcome to the Manor!" cried the Hon. Cadwallader, as Trackett Grim and Splinter mounted the great marble steps.

BAFFLED!

The famous criminal detective gave the young man a swift, comprehensive glance which overlooked nothing.

"Thank you, Mr. Guy," he said. "Kindly lead me to the scene of the crime."

"Certainly—but please remember that I am now Sir Cadwallader," said the last of the old Guys stiffly. "Jeems! Come here, Jeems! Show these gentlemen into the old chap's library, and let 'em look at the remains."

Jeems, the old family retainer, gave his new master a fierce, venomous look from beneath his lowered brows.

"This way, gentlemen," he said, in that oily manner which butlers always seem to cultivate. "How I hate 'im!" he added in a demoniacal whisper. "How I hate 'im!"

But Trackett Grim did not hear these significant words. He and Splinter followed the butler into the library, and Trackett Grim gave a short cry of horror. For there, in the middle of the floor, lay the murdered baronet, with a whacking great sword sticking out of his chest.

"Good heavens!" muttered Trackett Grim. "This is murder!"

"It happened at midnight, sir," said Jeems brokenly. "Just going to bed, we was, when the master lets out a fearful howl. I rushes down half-dressed, and finds the body there."

"And the murderer?" cried Trackett Grim curtly. "What of him?"

"He'd made good his escape, sir, by bunking through the French windows," replied Jeems. "See! The windows are still open! Soon afterwards in comes Mr. Cadwallader, the old master's nephew. How I hate 'im!" he added in a whisper.

In suspense and awe, Splinter watched his wonderful master as he crawled about on hands and knees, looking for clues. But, although Trackett Grim spent hours on the job—even looking for footprints outside—he

was baffled. There was not a single clue to be seen.

THE FINGERPRINTS ON THE SWORD!

Then, suddenly, Trackett Grim stiffened, and gave a short cry of annoyance. An idea had come to him which ought to have struck him long since. Going over to the body, he yanked the sword out of Sir Montmorency's heart, and examined the gleaming blade through a magnifying lens.

"Do you see, my dear fellow?" he asked triumphantly.

"Ah!" cried Splinter. "Blood!"

"No, no! I don't mean the blood," said the detective impatiently. "It is

easy to account for the presence of the blood. Such a deduction is quite elementary, my dear fellow. But look closer!"

"Fingerprints!" shouted Splinter, flushing with excitement.

"Precisely!" said Trackett Grim, his voice becoming cold and impassive. "The fingerprints of the murderer! He took this sword down from the wall, and struck the fatal blow from the rear. We have him, Splinter—we have him!"

In a thrice Trackett Grim was out of the library. In the big lounge hall he found Sir Cadwallader and Jeems. The latter was scowling at his young master in a vindictive way.

"How I hate him!" he muttered viciously. "Any clues, Mr. Grim?" cried Sir Cadwallader. "Ah, I see—"

"I regret that I am too busy to answer questions," interrupted Trackett Grim, in his cool, incisive voice. "But make no mistake, Sir Cadwallader, I shall have the murderer by the heels ere long! Come, Splinter—the trail is hot, and we must follow it!"

Upstairs they raced, and Trackett Grim went straight into Sir Cadwallader's bedroom. Splinter looked aghast. A dreadful suspicion was beginning to form in his mind.

"Do—do you suspect the nephew, sir?"

THE MURDERER UNMASKED!

Trackett Grim was eagerly examining a wine glass which had stood untasted upon the dressing-table. Through his lens he



And in a flash the handcuffs were fixed round the wrists of Jeems.

discovered more fingerprints. A moment's comparison was enough.

"They are the same!" he shouted, in a great voice.

With horror in his heart, Splinter followed Trackett Grim down the wide stairs. At the bottom stood the young baronet and Jeems, the butler. Trackett Grim walked right up to them, and in a flash the handcuffs were fixed round the wrists of Jeems.

"I arrest you, my friend, for the murder of Sir Montmorency!" cried Trackett Grim.

"Good Heavens!" shouted Sir Cadwallader. "You don't mean—"

"Exactly!" said Trackett Grim smoothly. "The fingerprints on the wine-glass in your room are just the same as the fingerprints on the sword! Jeems, having committed the murder, took up your nightly glass of port. He was the last man to touch that glass—for the wine was untasted. That proved to my trained mind that you were not the culprit, Sir Cadwallader!"

There is little else to relate.

The wretched Jeems confessed all. He had asked for a rise in salary, and the old baronet had refused. In a fit of rage Jeems had pulled down the sword and struck the fatal blow. And he hated Sir Cadwallader, too, for he also had refused to raise his wages.

Two days later, after a brief trial, the brutal murderer settled his last account. He was hanged in Dartmoor Prison, and once more Trackett Grim was able to congratulate himself upon his amazing detective powers.

FATTY LITTLE'S COLD

By REGINALD PITT

"TISHO-O-O-O!"

Fatty Little buried his nose in his handkerchief, and groaned.

"Great jumping pancakes!" he gasped painfully. "This blessed cold is going to be the death of me! I've been sneezing and spluttering all the afternoon, and if I don't take something for it I shall sneeze my head off!"

The fat junior was in the Remove passage as he spoke, and he addressed his remarks to a little knot of Removites who stood near by. Several of them grinned unsympathetically.

"About the only thing to cure you is to go and have a bite to eat!" said Conroy minor. "Don't forget the old saying, Fatty—'feed a cold and starve a fever!' Anybody can see that you don't have half enough nourishment——"

"I believe you're right!" said Fatty, with a nod. "Talking of grub reminds me that I haven't had anything to eat for at least half-an-hour! Great bloaters! There's a terrific gnawing going on inside my tummy—and that's a sure sign that grub is required! I'll take your advice, Conroy, and recharge the interior!"

Hubbard snorted.

"You greedy glutton!" he exclaimed. "Eating's all you can think of! Why don't you go down to the chemist's and get a bottle of Leno's Lighting Lotion, or Brown's Original Orangejuice? They're both terrific things for curing a cold!"

"Rot!" cut in Skelton, with a sniff. "I know something to beat that hollow! What about Conyer's Concentrated Cinnamon, eh? Two doses of that stuff and you'll be as right as rain!"

Fatty Little looked at the speakers dubiously.

"They sound all right," he admitted. "But I don't believe in cold cures much as a rule! Grub is the only thing that will cure me, at any rate! I know that for a fact——"

"You blithering idiot!" said Handforth, coming out of his study at that moment to see what the argument was about. "As if grub is any good for a cold! Why, it's the worst thing you can do to keep on eating! A porpoise like you ought to starve yourself for about a fortnight to get rid of a cold! At the end of that time you'd be cured!"

Fatty nodded.

"Oh, rather!" he agreed. "There's no doubt of that, Handy! I should be in my grave before the first week was over! Oh, blow the rotten cold!"

He exploded again into his handkerchief, and the juniors grinned once more. Somehow, a fellow with a cold always causes amusement—but there's not much fun in it for the sufferer.

"How the thunder did you get this cold?" demanded Handforth.

"Oh, in the usual way, I suppose," said Fatty. "It came—that's all I know! But I fancy I got my feet a bit damp yesterday——"

"Well, in that case, I know the very stuff to recommend!" said Handforth,

(Continued on page 9.)



"Great pip! It's Fatty!" gasped Handforth. "What the deuce is he doing out here in this state! Hi, Fatty, you idiot! What's up?"



E. Sopp's Fables

By
Edgar Sopp of the Fifth

No. 8.—The Fable of the Fellow who Wouldn't Take Advice.

ONCE upon a time there lived a fellow who had a Generous Uncle. Now, this uncle, although generous, was Sadly Misguided, for, instead of buying his nephew something Useful for a Birthday Present, he sent him a Motor Bike.

This latter article was a Locomotive Vehicle much in vogue at the period, and particularly popular among that section of the Populace known as the Young Sports. Now, this Young Sport of whom we write, and who possessed a Sadly Misguided Uncle, was none other than Buster Boots, of the Remove.

And it came to pass that a Large and Cumbersome crate arrived, containing the Motor Bike brand spanking new from the Makers. And Boots was filled with excitement and Importance.

With his own Hands he unpacked the precious Prize, and he gazed upon it long and lovingly when, at length, it stood alone in the Triangle upon its Stand. And the multitude gathered round and worshipped.

And, behold, there were Those who offered what they termed Jolly Good Advice. Now, Boots had never possessed a Motor Bike before, and he was therefore Ignorant of the Mechanism. In fact, it may be recorded that at first he mistook the Carburettor for the Magneto, and wondered why no spark appeared therein. It must further be placed on Record that Boots believed the Gear Box to be a Receptacle for Odd Tools.

And it came to pass that Chambers of the Fifth sallied forth. And Chambers gazed at the Motor Bike and passed Caustic Remarks, saying that the Jigger was a Dud, being only 2½ horse-power. Now, Chambers fancied himself as a Motor Cyclist, being the owner of an Old Crock which boasted 6 horse-power, but which only developed one boy-power—for Chambers generally had to push.

And Chambers kindly offered to give Boots a few Tips. In fact, he stated it as his Intention to Try Out the Motor Bike, and then teach Buster How to Ride. Now, Boots objected to this, and with Much Tartness he advised Chambers to Go and Eat Coke, adding that it wasn't neces-

sary for him to Shove his Ugly Mug into affairs that didn't Concern Him. And Chambers waxed wrath, and spake, saying that it would serve Boots right if he Broke his Neck.

And, lo, other well-intentioned souls offered their advice. And they were likewise told to partake of Coal Residue. And Buster Boots prepared his Machine for a Trial Trip.

He pumped the Tyres, and he filled the Tanks with Oil and Spirit, and he thereby got himself into a Nasty Mess. But he did not care, for he was Excited, and all eager to Be Off.

And he perspired mightily. For in vain did he attempt to Start the Motor. In vain did he operate the Kick Starter. No explosion came—no revolution of the Engine. And again and again did Boots wangle the controls, and again and again did he kick.

And then a Genius of the Multitude put forth the suggestion that it wouldn't be a bad idea to turn the Petrol On. And Boots raved muchly, asking why the Fathead didn't speak earlier.

And, behold, after a Small Tap had been turned, one kick of the starter worked Wonders. For the Engine commenced to Hum. And Boots allowed the Clutch to drop in, and Boots proceeded to Bite the Dust without undue delay.

For it appears that these Clutches must be dropped in gently, whereas Boots had the Engine Roaring at the time. He was yanked over backwards, and only the presence of mind of the Onlookers averted a Catastrophe.

And again Boots grabbed the Motor Bike, and again he Started Up. But this time he was More Cautious, and, lo, the Jigger moved off slowly—albeit with many a Drunken Wobble.

The wisest of all could not say how Boots got out into the lane without meeting Disaster, but it must be recorded that he Did. And with Smoke pouring forth in volumes from the Exhaust, he whizzed down the lane like Streaked lightning.

And the Joy of Speed and the Ecstasy of Power came unto Boots. The engine responded to his Every Touch. One flick of the Throttle, and, lo, the Old Bike fairly

Hummed. Another touch and she slowed down with many a Pop.

Thus it came to pass that the End of the Long Lane was reached. In other words, Boots reached the Sharp Corner by the River, and, being filled with Caution, and wishing to Live Another Day, he closed the Throttle in order to Negotiate the Corner in Safety.

At least, it was his intention to close the Throttle. But, behold, he made what he afterwards described as a Horrible Bloomer. Instead of closing the Throttle, he opened it Wide.

And with a roar and a jerk the Motor Bike charged forward, with Boots clinging for Dear Life to the Grips. For the period of Ten Seconds he completely lost Control. And Ten Seconds, on a Runaway Motor Bike, is an Age.

Boots lived through his Past Life in that Brief Spell, and wondered whether there would be any Pain. And then he experienced a Nasty Skid, for the lane was somewhat Greasy at the Bend.

And with a final roar the Bike charged Sideways into the Hedge, and Boots vanished over the top. And there came the sound of Much Splashing, for the River lay Beyond.

And, Marvellous to Record, this Reckless Youth was unscratched—although wet to the Skin. And the Motor Bike, in the hedge, was found to be O.K., except for a Slightly Bent foot-rest.

But Boots had learned his lesson, and thereafter he took no more Chances.

MORAL: IT IS A LONG LANE THAT HASN'T ANY TURNING—BUT BE CAREFUL IF THE ROAD IS GREASY!

Fatty Little's Cold (continued from page 7).

with an important air. "Take my advice, Fatty, and get a bottle of Perkins' Perfect Preparation for the Prevention of colds! It's great! I'll tell you what—I'm going down to the village in a tick, and I'll bring it back with me!"

Fatty thanked Handforth for his generosity, and straight away went to Mrs. Hake's little tuckshop—bent on "feeding his cold" to his utmost capacity.

Some little time later McClure brought him the medicine which Handforth had purchased, and the fat junior wasted no time in imbibing it. Neither did he waste any of the "Perfected Preparation," for he drained the bottle to the last drop, apparently enjoying it thoroughly.

Handforth probably thought no more of the matter at all, but as events turned out, he happened to be crossing the Triangle a little while later, when he heard a curious groaning sound. He was accompanied by Church and McClure, and with one accord the trio dashed towards a dark form which was sprawling on the ground.

"Great pip! It's Fatty!" gasped Handforth. "What the deuce is he doing out here in this state! Hi! Fatty, you idiot! What's up?"

A hollow groan was the only answer Handforth received for a moment, but then the porpoise of the Remove sat up.

"Great doughnuts!" he moaned, holding his stomach painfully. "What—what did you recommend that ghastly stuff to me for, Handy? Just now I thought I was going to peg out on the spot!"

Handforth stared.

"What stuff?" he demanded.

"Why—that muck you called Perkins'

Perfect Preparation!" roared Fatty. "You told me it was a good thing for a cold, didn't you?"

Handforth snorted.

"No, I didn't!" he bellowed. "I told you it was terrific stuff for the prevention of colds—and so it is! Where is it?"

"Where is it, you fathead?" gasped Fatty. "I drank it, of course—all the blessed bottleful! And in about two ticks I was nearly doubled up with the gripes!"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Handforth. "You—you silly lunatic! Do you mean to say you didn't look on the label?"

Fatty shook his head.

"No jolly fear!" he said. "I took your word that the stuff was all right, and scoffed the lot!"

Handforth roared again.

"No wonder you felt a pain, you fat dummy!" he said unsympathetically. "That stuff wasn't meant to drink at all! It's a patent preparation for shoving 'on the soles of your boots—to keep out the wet!"

Fatty almost collapsed.

"Great cheesecakes!" he moaned. "Then—then I'm poisoned! I shall have to take an emetic—"

"Bosh!" said Handforth. "The stuff isn't poison! Perhaps it will cure your cold, after all, Fatty! At any rate, it's a dead cert that it can't harm you, whatever it is! You're too thundering well lined!"

Handforth, for once, proved to be right—for Fatty Little survived the ordeal, and was soon stuffing his interior in the same manner as usual. And, strange to say, he did not mention his cold to another soul. Evidently he was not taking any more advice!



THE THREE CHUMS IN PERU

or
The Cave of Gold!

The Best Story Ever Written

By Edward Oswald Handforth.

"At last we have got to Peru," sighed Walter Chapel.
"Thank goodness for that," added Arnold McCleod. "I'm tired out."

The other chap who was with these two chaps was a fine-looking, handsome, strong, big, splendid, good-looking, muscular chap, but very modest. His name was Edward Dauntless.

"Shut up, you fatheads!" he said. "We've hardly done any walking yet."

"We've walked all day," said Chapel.

"We left Mexico at ten o'clock."

"And it's nearly six now," said McCleod.

"I could do with a cup of tea."

"Pooh!" cried Edward Dauntless. "There's no time for tea. Come on, you rotters! You can't back out now. I've got the plan for finding the Aztec's gold in my boot, and we've jolly well got to get it."

Dauntless was a very clever chap as well as handsome and brave. He had thought out the clever wheeze of putting the plan in his boot. It was a jolly good idea. The other two had laughed at him. But it was a jolly good idea.

"You—you lazy asses!" cried handsome young Dauntless. "You can't get tea here. I'll jolly well punch your—"

At that very moment five huge, big men suddenly appeared from behind a bush. They were all over six feet high and had beards.

"Aha!" said their leader. "So here are the young English seniors who have the plan for the gold! Seize them!"

With that, two of the men sprang at Chapel and McCleod, and the other three dashed at Edward Dauntless. His two chums each received a blow on the chin, and both fell down on the ground, and their assailants jeered cruelly.

But Edward Dauntless did not flinch. As the three big men dashed at him together, he bunched his fists.

Bill! Bill! Bill!
Three terrific blows he dealt, and the miscreants fell to the ground.

Edward Dauntless's punches were simply

terrific. Each man received a smashed jaw. They got up again, and all three aimed another blow at the young chap.

Bonk! Bonk! Bonk!

In a second they were on their backs again, knocked clean out by the boy's stupendous blows. But that was not all. Meanwhile the other two men had crept silently up from behind. They sprang upon Edward Dauntless together. But he was ready!

As they launched themselves, he caught each of them by the neck.

Thud! Thump! Bash!

With a dexterous movement he crashed their heads together so that they saw a million stars. They fell apart and writhed on the ground. Then they painfully crawled to their feet and came on once more. But Edward was scarcely out of breath. He picked them up with one of his strong hands; and, one after the other, he threw them from him!

Splosh!

One of them landed clean in the middle of a little stream that was close by.

Boom!

The other crashed into a sharp piece of rock.

Edward Dauntless smiled grimly and faced his chums. They had picked themselves up and were looking rather sheepish.

"My—my hat, Hand—Dauntless!" said Arnold McCleod. "You're an absolute wonder! You must be strong as a lion!"

"Rather!" agreed Walter Chapel.

"Not a bit," replied Dauntless modestly. "It was nothing very much. It takes a pretty strong chap to do that kind of thing. Now, come on!"

The three chums continued their journey, and Dauntless produced a map from inside his hat. It was a clever wheeze of his to think of hiding his map in his hat.

He looked at the map and whistled.

"We are there!" he said. "The very spot we want is only a few yards from where we stand. The gold is in a cave. The cave is marked by a huge rock shaped like a finger."

Why," he added, "there it is, just opposite!"

He pointed in the direction, and his chums saw a huge rock, just as he had said.

The three chums ran towards the rock. When they reached it they found it was a huge piece of stone nearly ten feet high. And there were no signs of any cave round about. Chapel and McCleod looked puzzled. But Edward Dauntless smiled grimly.

"I've got it!" he said. "The cave is under the rock! Stand back!"

Scarcely realising what he was about to do, the two stood back. Dauntless took a short breath. Then, bending down, he put his shoulder to the immense mass of rock.

Creak! Creak! Creak!

The rock groaned under the terrific pressure of his huge shoulder.

Then—

Crash! Bump! Bang!

The terrific great boulder splintered from top to bottom. It fell on to the ground in hundreds of small pieces. Edward Dauntless had shivered it to pieces with his wonderful strength. His two chums cheered him as he passed his hand across his forehead. It was not even perspiring.

Then he found his wonderful feat of strength had shown a large black opening where the rock had been. Telling his companions to wait, lest there should be any danger, Dauntless dashed into the opening. In a minute he returned bearing three huge bags of gold, each weighing over a ton, upon his broad back.

His two chums raised another cheer at his amazing strength.

"We are rich for life, you chumps!" cried Dauntless. "I'll give you a sack between you," he added generously. "And now we'll walk back to Mexico."

Ping! Ping! Ping!

Three bullets sang through the air. McCleod and Chapel fell to the ground. They had been hit. So had Edward Dauntless; but he did not move. The bullet had ripped a great piece out of his arm and another bit out of his back. But he was not afraid. He stood calmly waiting, and then saw an armed horseman galloping up, firing as he came.

"Caramba!" shouted the horseman. "Up with your hands!"

Dauntless never answered. A smile curved his lips. Then he dashed at the horse and rider. With one heave of his strong arms he lifted them into the air and threw them over his shoulder.

Crash! Thud! Bonk!

They landed with stunning force on the ground, several yards away. Edward Dauntless folded his arms with a smile. But only for a moment. For from behind came a yell of fury. Three

Peruvian bandits came dashing at him

"Caramba!" they

cried. "Get out of the way, or you—"

Dauntless never moved. He just unfolded his arms and stood with his hands ready. The armoured car dashed at him with terrific force.

Boooooooooooooooooom!

Edward's immense right fist had lashed out and landed clean on the bonnet of the armoured car! The car shivered with the force of the impact and then collapsed in a crumpled heap of iron and tin. The occupants jumped out and sprang at him, but—

Biff! Biff! Biff!

Edward Dauntless started to weigh in with his terrific fists. The three Peruvian bandits staggered back beneath the weight of those terrific blows.

One of them threw up his arms with a gurgle. The second pitched over the cliff and said no more.

But the third was much braver. He was a giant of a man standing nearly seven feet high. And he was fully armed with two revolvers, a shotgun, a small maxim and a sword.

He rushed upon Edward Dauntless and fired twice with his revolvers. Before he could sight his maxim Dauntless, with a great kick, shot it clean out of his hand. The Peruvian drew his sword but—

Biff! Biff! Biff!

Edward Dauntless—

(—received a biff on the nose from the Editor of the St. Frank's Magazine. He's in hospital now, and we shan't hear any more of him for a very long time.—NIPPER.)



He lifted horse and rider into the air and threw them over his shoulder.



PAINFUL PARODIES

PERPETRATED
By
Clarence Fellowe.

THE ARMADA (1924)

Attend all ye who list to hear
A tale of modern days.
I tell of darkly deeds now wrought
In mist and fog and haze;
When that great fleet invincible,
Against the shores of Maine—
With whisky straight from Scottish stills,
And reddest wines from Spain—

Came creepin' thro' the night so black
Upon the friendly tide,
With lights all doused and men all keen,
A-leaning o'er the side.
And then came flashing signals,
From launches near the shore.
And up sped eager Yankee men
Whose clients wanted more!

'Twas near the three-mile limit grim
Where these rum-runners lay;
And out beyond the pall of mist,
With none to say them nay.
Lurk'd Prohibition men galore,
Their duty none would choose;
They sought to stop these smugglers
bold
From landing all their booze.

Night lay upon the murky beach,
And on the misty sea.
And this Armada lingered there,
As still as still could be.
But bootleg men took launches full
Of good old honest Scotch;
And all the Prohibition guards
Kept vain and useless watch.

And so the prize was landed there,
Upon the coast of Maine;
For thirsty throats to swallow up
At prices quite insane.
Then off went the Armada grim
Across Atlantic seas,
For further cargoes of the stuff
At which the Yanks don't sneeze.

And here's the riddle wonderful
That none can hope to solve;
Though for the right solution you
May let your brains revolve.
There's not a doubt that Uncle Sam
Buys honest Scotch for gold;
Yet all the more he keeps away—
The more rank poison's sold!

✦ TIMELY TOPICS ✦

We hear that Griffith is thinking about buying a bowl of goldfish for Study J. We advise him to give up the idea at once. Somebody or other in the Remove is always broke, and when tea-time comes along, and the cupboard is bare— Well, even goldfish you know *

What is 'the difference between Ulysses Spencer' Adams and a jam-puff fresh out of the oven? No difference. They are both of pleasing appearance, and they are both full of hot air. * * *

Chambers, of Study No. 10, in the Fifth, has just bought a gramophone. Lots of Fifth Formers are asking why. We don't know. It seems to be sheer extravagance to have two gramophones in one study.

Poor old Fatty Little! He was in the tuckshop on Wednesday, dozing peacefully, and Singleton came in with a crowd. He'd just had a big remittance, and invited everybody in the tuckshop to order what they liked "on him." And Fatty didn't wake up until too late! Hard lines!

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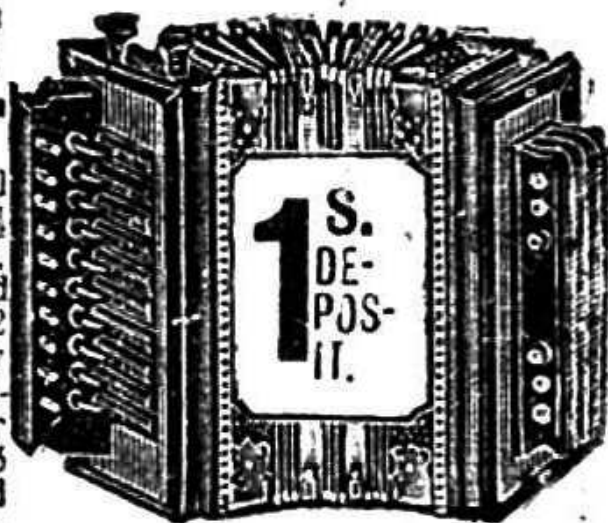
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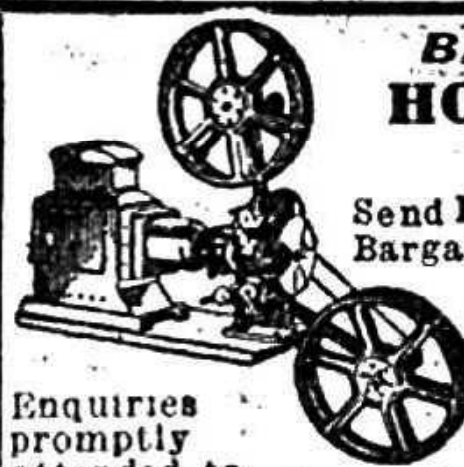
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Printed and Published every Wednesday by the Proprietors, the Amalgamated Press (1922), Ltd., The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Advertisement Offices, The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Subscription Rates: Inland and Abroad, 11/- per annum; 5/6 for six months. Sole Agents for South Africa: The Central News Agency, Limited. Sole Agents for Australia and New Zealand: Messrs. Gordon & Gotch, Limited; and for Canada: The Imperial News Co. (Canada), Limited.